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SETTLER ATTACHMENTS & ASIAN DIASPORIC FILM

BEENASH JAFRI

SETTLER ATTACHMENTS AND ASIAN DIASPORIC FILM

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Settler Attachments and Asian Diasporic Film

Beenash Jafri

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Introduction

DECOLONIZING SETTLER WORLDS

In Tracy Deer's 2020 semiautobiographical film *Beans,* a young Mohawk girl (Tekehentahkhwa, or "Beans") from Kanehsatake is witness to the events unfolding during the 1990 settler military siege of the Pines, a Mohawk burial ground on the outskirts of Montreal, Canada, and the site of a proposed golf course expansion. Oka was a highly mediated event, a fact that *Beans* incorporates into its narrative. Early in the film, Beans and her family watch news footage that includes a brief interview with their cousin Hawi, who has joined the camp at the barricades. "My cousin's famous!" proclaims Beans's younger sister, Ruby. At Beans's enthusiastic suggestion, the family takes a "road trip" to the barricades, where Beans and Ruby excitedly agree to collect firewood. They are quickly distracted by the tombstones they encounter; somber music plays as Beans and Ruby, surrounded by tall and majestic trees, silently collect and bury the golf balls that have gathered near the gravesite. The peace and optimism of the girls and those at the camp is shortly washed away, however, and the film's mood quickly shifts as Quebec riot police throw tear gas canisters and fire gunshots, leading Beans and her family to quickly flee the scene (Figure 1).

Beans, which is framed through the coming-of-age genre, stages the siege—commonly known as the Oka Crisis—not just as political event, but in terms of the psychic trauma of living through colonial terror. Though I was well aware of the events that took place in the summer of 1990, watching *Beans* prompted me to reflect on my own relationship to the crisis. It compelled me to confront the disjunct between what I *knew* to be true—the facts of the crisis—and what it *feels* like to live in a white settler society. I was close in age to Beans at the time, but my witnessing of the events—or rather, nonwitnessing—took place on fundamentally different terms. Though Asian diasporic subjects may not be the same as white settlers, our shared histories or experiences of colonization do not automatically generate connection,

FIGURE 1. Ruby and Beans at the Pines in *Beans*; photo by Sebastien Raymond, courtesy of Mongrel Media.

kinship, or solidarity with Indigenous peoples. That summer, I was visiting Pakistan with my mother and sisters. The early 1990s recession had begun, but its effects wouldn't be tangible in our family for a few more months; we still appeared upwardly mobile, and the illusion of the (North) American dream felt attainable. One of our stops included Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu, and Kashmir, where my uncle (a colonel in the Pakistani army) was stationed.[1] Like Beans, I come from a close-knit extended family and grew up surrounded by cousins and other relatives. And like Beans, my cousins and I experienced the typical forms of boredom many children experience during the slow summer. But whereas Beans deals with that boredom by joining older teenagers throwing firecrackers at Canadian soldiers, my cousins and I decided to organize a costume party at which Toronto-born, diasporic me chose to dress up as a cowboy, a literal and symbolic figure of American empire and colonization.

Beans's depiction of youth is of course a cinematic representation that cannot be evenly compared to my own life experience. Yet it is also one that dramatizes the "felt experience" of colonial violence, to use Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million's term.[2] I take the juxtaposition of myself and Beans as a starting point from which to

draw out some fundamental contextual differences across living as an Asian diasporic versus Indigenous person in a settler-colonial state. For Beans—like Deer and many other Mohawk children like herself—1990 was not just politically momentous but inherently traumatizing, a deeply painful and shocking reminder of ongoing colonization rendered through spectacular forms of violence and aggression. For myself, as a brown child, settler-colonial violence was discernable as something more abstract and diffuse. I was experiencing gendered forms of racism, aspiring to assimilation in Canada, a white settler society. Film and the figure of the Hollywood cowboy mediated my relationship to race, gender, and settler colonialism, not just because I absorbed stereotypes and misrepresentation, but because I was enthralled by the pleasures of cowboy cosplay. My cowboy-play was emblematic of my assimilatory desires: I was delighted by the fact that I could repurpose everyday items—like a *koti,* an embroidered vest, which I turned inside-out; a patterned, collared shirt that my aunt sewed for me; a feminine patterned scarf; and, of course, blue jeans—to mimic a masculine, Western-style outfit. I used eyeliner and mascara to fashion facial hair. I was pleased by my cousin's abundant collection of realistic toy guns, no doubt an effect of the militarization of Pakistani society, two of which complemented my costume. A cowboy hat, also drawn from my cousin's toy collection, completed the look. I was blissfully ignorant of the layered ironies of dressing up as a cowboy as a Pakistani-Canadian in Kashmir, where there was an ostensible difference between our familial experience of Kashmir's idyllic beauty, and that of Kashmiri peoples struggling for independence amid Indian occupation and Pakistani paternalism, the detritus of British colonial exodus.[3]

While I played cowboy in Kashmir in 1990, Mohawk land defenders were guarding barricades they had erected to prevent the proposed expansion of a golf course on sacred burial grounds. In the early morning hours of July 11, they were surrounded by approximately one hundred police officers—later followed by the military—the beginning of a seventy-eight-day siege. My cowboy play was not directly connected to the siege, yet the dissonance across these events illuminates the profoundly divergent relationships Asian diasporic and Indigenous peoples hold in relation to North American settler colonialism. For Indigenous peoples, land is never off the agenda. Land can never be taken for granted.

This book wrestles with the myriad contradictions contained in this relational anecdote. One might expect that the colonial and imperial processes that have shaped the world might generate a kind of automatic solidarity between all of us whose ancestors were subjects of the British empire, whether on the Indian subcontinent or here on Turtle Island. One might likewise expect solidarities to arise from the structure of settler racial capitalism in Canada and the United States, which required Native land and what interdisciplinary theorist Iyko Day calls "alien" labor.[4] And, indeed, they do. But solidarity is neither easy nor automatic.

Settler Attachments and Asian Diasporic Film theorizes such contradictions not as evidence of moral failure, but in terms of the attachments emanating from the structural position of Asian diasporas within settler-colonial societies. Those attachments may manifest as aspiration or longing for inclusion, or they may appear in the form of a persistent "stickiness," or entrapment within settler norms. *Settler Attachments* investigates how attachments to settler colonialism persist in spite of overlapping Indigenous and diasporic experiences of colonization and racism, and even in spite of Asian diasporic commitments to antiracism and decolonization. The book offers a method for thinking with and through what might be named a structural impasse between race and diaspora studies on the one hand, and Indigenous and settler-colonial studies on the other. Its stance is simultaneously pessimistic and hopeful, working from the premise that a modified, counterhegemonic hopefulness is necessary for imagining alternate worlds.[5] I draw attention to diasporic complicity with settler colonialism not in the interest of tearing down, but in the interest of building up, of worldmaking.

ON WORLDMAKING: SETTLER WORLDS, AND OTHER WORLDS

Worldmaking anchors each chapter of *Settler Attachments*. I move back and forth between two senses of worldmaking.[6] There is worldmaking in the sense of imaginary worlds that are brought to life in creative sites such as visual art, performance, film, or literature. But there is also worldmaking in the sense of living and breathing worlds in the flesh that is part and parcel of our everyday lives, or the alternate worldmaking that takes place in, for instance, queer or Indigenous spaces.

Imaginary worlds can be sites of experimentation, production, and reproduction; they are also always already intimately intertwined with those living and breathing worlds. As Lisa Duggan observes in dialogue with José Muñoz, queer worldmaking is an integral part of left queer politics: "Engaged anti-normative left politics is powered by the pleasures of bitterness, cynicism and pain, as well as by ecstasy, empathy and solidarity. But it gestures always necessarily through hope to the concrete utopias forged in our experimental intimacies and social forms."[7] The experimentation and "making" is key here. Worlds do not simply exist; they require imagining and crafting. They require work. They can be unmade and remade anew.

Settler Attachments places queer worldmaking in conversation with Indigenous decolonization, acknowledging the tensions inherent therein. As Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million's work suggests, decolonization requires critical imaginative dreamwork "without the boundaries of linear time," which necessarily bridges past and present relations in order to generate new ways of knowing.[8] As Million and others show us, Native communities already hold much of the knowledge and wisdom necessary for crafting other worlds, particularly given that, as Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa, Yurok, Karuk) writes, "Native people have actually survived apocalypses/the end of the world before."[9] Consider, for instance, Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Simpson's sensuous description of Indigenous (Nishnaabeg) relations to land that have been suppressed by settler epistemologies:

> Within Nishnaabeg thought, the opposite of dispossession is not possession, it is deep, reciprocal, consensual *attachment*. Indigenous bodies don't relate to the land by possessing or owning it or having control over it. We relate to land through connection—generative, affirmative, complex, overlapping, and nonlinear relationship. The reverse process of dispossession within Indigenous thought then is Nishnaabeg intelligence, Nishnaabewin. The opposite of dispossession within Indigenous thought is grounded normativity.[10]

Although Simpson poses dispossession in opposition to attachment here, we could equally say that dispossession of Indigenous lands and bodies is enabled and driven by different kinds of attachment: by attachment to settler norms, logics, and desires.

The ancestral knowledge Simpson evokes furnishes a powerful rebuke to settler attachment, as do contemporary modes of critical Indigenous relational dreaming. As writers and scholars Billy-Ray Belcourt (Cree) and Jas Morgan (Cree, Salteaux, Métis heritage) point out, queer/two-spirit/trans Indigenous young people are generating alternate modes of being, relating, and connecting based on their lived experience.[11] Morgan thus states that queer ethics are for them "a relational way of being that I learned in the street by being, doing, enacting, creating and resisting in the world in real time alongside my scrappy queer youth kin"; and that further, much of the queer Indigenous relationality they encounter has developed over social media, in "online communities in which queer Indigenous youth are disseminating lived values in quippy GIFs, memes and infographics."[12] Queer Indigenous relationalities, moreover, Belcourt and Morgan suggest, place pressure on concepts for political agitation, including sovereignty, a concept that this book cites on multiple occasions. "Sovereignty," notes Belcourt, "which is a charismatic concept in Indigenous studies, cannot be the ideational house for those of us who are queer and/or trans Indigenous and two-spirit. . . . [W]e participate in relational practices that agitate the body or the nation as inviolable containers for political life. Anything can become a site of severance, even the concepts to which we are most devoted."[13]

Multimedia Diné artist Demian DinéYahzi′'s four-and-a-half-minute short *Indigenous Luv,* developed for the 2015 anthology film *Hanky Code,* speaks to the queer Indigenous relationality that Belcourt and Morgan cite.[14] Organized by Periwinkle Cinema, a San Francisco queer and trans film collective, *Hanky Code* invited queer/trans artists to reflect on the hanky code (a system of communicating sexual preferences through a colored handkerchief in the back pocket, developed by gay men in the United States in the 1970s), culminating in twenty-five short films. While other participating artists took up a specific handkerchief color, DinéYahzi′ turns the code on its head. As he provocatively states in the video, "There is no hanky code/for Indigenous queers/cruising on the rez/or in colonized cities," gesturing to the colonial limits of the code. If, for non-Native queers, the hanky code has provided a means of communicating that circumvents the heteronormative regulation of public sex, it has not been capacious enough to communicate the specific kinds of desires that colonization

has generated—for sex that's wrought free from its racial and colonial entanglements.

Set to the soundtrack of indie band Helium's 1995 melancholic track "Honeycomb," the video has a 1990s DIY punk zine aesthetic (Figure 2). There is no dialogue. Running text in a Courier font against graph-paper-like background is interspersed with embedded video images of the landscape and of DinéYahzi′, some close-up and fragmented, others long shots. Some of the video images themselves mimic Helium's shots in the music video for "Honeycomb"—particularly those shot outside in a forested area (Figure 3). The music and images are slow, ephemeral, and melancholic, while the running text explicitly calls out the intersections of sex, gender, and colonization, placing them in historical context: "the myth of John Smith / getting it up the ass / with a third gendered cock." The juxtaposition of the text, which is angry and in-your-face (both in content and in its zine-like form), against the slow softness of the music and images suggests the uneven affects that emerge from the structural and historical conditions DinéYahzi′ references. Dwelling in such raw feelings, and citing such a broad range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural signifiers, the video gestures to a queer Indigenous mode of being that does not neatly map onto discourses of nationhood and sovereignty.

Acknowledging (without resolving) these tensions and debates concerning sovereignty, *Settler Attachments* centers a decolonizing framework (one that draws from Indigenous models), in order to attend to irresolvable differences and tensions between Asian diasporic and Indigenous imaginaries—including ways of conceiving of racial/colonial injury and trauma, and addressing that injury and trauma—considering how such a centering might simultaneously shift imagined diasporic futures and possibilities. How are Asian diasporic imaginaries undone and remade when interpreted and conceived in relation to Indigenous bodies and lands? *Settler Attachments* is thus a project of "decolonizing worldmaking" in the sense that it both offers a critique of Asian diasporic worldmaking *and* presents forms of Asian diasporic worldmaking that labor toward decolonizing. "Decolonizing" is here a verb, an active process. Decolonizing worldmaking is not the end point of political imagination, but the starting point for developing and strengthening Asian-Indigenous relations; for imagining beyond settler colonialism.

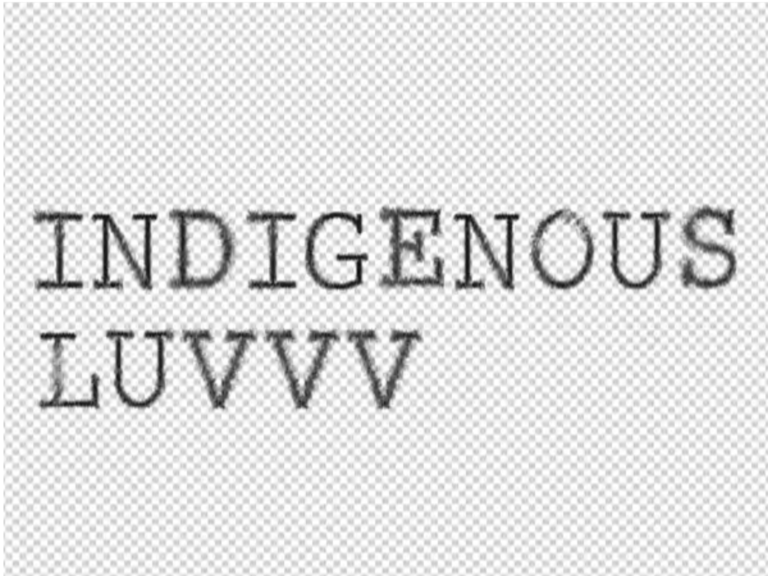

FIGURE 2. The DIY aesthetic of DinéYazhi''s film; screenshot from *Indigenous Luv.*

FIGURE 3. Video images mimic Helium's "Honeycomb"; screenshot from *Indigenous Luv.*

The neoliberal multicultural settler city of Toronto—from the Mohawk word *Tkaronto,* for "where there are trees in water"—emerges as a paradigmatic site here. It is no coincidence that the early seeds for this book were planted in Toronto, the traditional territories of multiple nations who have served as its caretakers, including the Anishinaabe, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee, and Huron Wendat; the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation are the current treaty holder.[15] Broadly speaking, Indigenous politics have both historically and in the present been more publicly visible and prominent in Canada than in the United States. Conversations around settler-Indigenous relations and solidarities have arguably had more time and space to percolate here than they might have in the United States. Canada's largest city, Toronto, is the fourth largest and most racially diverse city in North America—around 55 percent are BIPOC—and has a substantial Indigenous population; it is a home and gathering place for Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island, and across the world.

Toronto is also a settler city, part of the post-1492 "New World Order" of the Americas, to cite Sylvia Wynter, that inaugurated new modes of being, thinking, and sensing that were profoundly anti-Black and anti-Indigenous.[16] It is the financial center of Canada, a hub of immense wealth accumulated through centuries-long histories of resource extraction and labor exploitation. It is correspondingly also a hub for those seeking uneven forms of refuge from the violence of global capitalism and empire: Indigenous peoples migrating from the structural impoverishment of reserves, Indigenous and non-Indigenous migrants from the Global South. Although this book is not "about" Toronto, Toronto is a rich site from which to think through questions of relation and solidarity. The city's specific histories of encounter have rendered it a chaotic space of entanglement, one that has generated not only multifarious forms of violence but also multiple forms of resistance and resurgence, including critical conversations and imaginaries around Asian diasporic–Indigenous worldmaking. Here, Canada's Indian Act collides with Canadian policies of immigration, multiculturalism, and national security, generating forms of erasure, racialization, xenophobia, and exclusion, as well as limited forms of inclusion, while simultaneously giving rise to forms of refusal, resistance, and solidarity against the violence of this political infrastructure. The city's wealth and resources create conditions of violence and

inequity—and, simultaneously, spaces and opportunities for artistic and cultural production. This combination of social, political, and economic circumstances has contributed to the development of a range of depictions of diasporic–Indigenous relationality. Put another way, for artists, activists, and scholars located in Toronto, there is a convergence across the politics of diaspora and Indigeneity that is very much in-your-face, difficult to ignore. Thus, while the starting points of the book (in chapter 1) are the United States and United Kingdom, its subsequent points center on Toronto: chapters 2, 3, and 4 all examine the direct and indirect ways Asian diasporic artists and filmmakers have confronted questions of settler colonialism and Indigeneity.

Film has long held an especial place as a site for imagining new worlds. The relative verisimilitude of the medium—in contrast to other art forms—provides the occasion to reflect, imagine, and dwell in possibility. As Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt assert, "Cinema is always involved in worldmaking."[17] This includes settler worldmaking: the figure of Hollywood cowboy, for instance, is a paradigmatic emblem of settler worldmaking, one that appears at various moments across this book, evoking settler dreams, desires, and fantasies. Film and media are also instruments for antiracist and decolonial interventions, like the one Deer makes in *Beans,* and like the ones made by the artists and filmmakers featured in this book. However, these interventions are not necessarily equivalent, uniform, or commensurable with one another.

Placing this world-making potential of film in relation to queer worldmaking, as Schoonover and Galt do in *Queer Cinema in the World,* is both a fraught and exciting project. The ephemerality of "queer of color" coalitional work, which I return to in chapter 4, holds particular promise as a site for living, breathing, and imagining alternate worlds. It exemplifies queer cultural worldmaking in the sense discussed by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner in their essay "Sex in Public," but one that is infused with a reckoning with the colonial and racial underpinnings of heteronormativity.[18] The lengthy, awkward acronym "(QT)BIPOC"—a grassroots Toronto innovation that modifies the term "(queer and trans) people of color" to acknowledge the particularities of anti-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.[19] The modified frame of QTBIPOC also embod-

ies my approach to critique in this book, which is both paranoid and reparative.[20] It comes from a place of seeing critique and reflection as indispensable tools for repairing the havoc that racial and colonial violence wreak. As Grace Hong points out, "our long and sustained commitment to a coalitional and relational analytic and practice, a tradition that is newly critical and urgent in our time," is a distinctive feature of Asian American organizing and scholarship.[21] This type of reading is, moreover, indebted to a rich tradition of Black feminist thought—extending back to the foundational work of Audre Lorde and the Combahee River Collective—that engages the generative potential of difference and tension.[22] Bernice Johnson Reagon's 1981 remarks, directed to the women's movement at the time, are particularly apt: "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."[23] As Jennifer Nash argues, the sharp critiques of power that these foundational works issue have centered a politics of love and loving.[24] "Love" here connotes not only generosity and care but also the willingness to be vulnerable, to hold to account, and to work toward mutual spaces of healing. *Settler Attachments* leans into the diasporic–Indigenous impasse. I attend to fraught spaces of tension and difficulty from an ethic of love and care, not to tear down possibilities for relation and coalition, but to open such possibilities.

WHY SETTLER ATTACHMENTS? ON ASIAN DIASPORAS AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

Asian diasporas occupy a seemingly contradictory, paradoxical position in settler societies, including the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Israel, and South Africa. Broadly, settler colonialism names the *longue durée* of colonization in nation-states such as these, where the ongoing colonial violence that Indigenous peoples are subjected to is effaced and displaced onto the rubrics of neoliberal multiculturalism that presume to benevolently incorporate Native *groups* (rather than nations).[25] Although postcolonial theorists have clearly demonstrated how colonization's afterlives have persisted even following the mid- to late twentieth-century struggles for national independence across Asia and Africa, they have not tended to account for these settler-colonial cases, which have followed a different political

trajectory. At the same time, settler colonialism only exists in relation to other forms of colonization and imperialism. As Lenape scholar Joanne Barker, among others, writes in her critique of the concept of settler colonialism: "I am wanting to hold onto harsher terms like 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' proper to describe the current relationship of the United States to American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, and the indigenous peoples of its occupied territories in the Pacific and the Caribbean. . . . It is important and necessary to secure indigenous self-determination and decolonization to hold onto the 'empire' in our understanding, describing, and strategizing ways of empowerment and revolution."[26] I read Barker's refusal of settler colonialism and the "settledness" it implies as a form of resistance to its "logic of elimination."[27] Likewise, across the world, and in settler-colonial contexts, what Kēhaulani Kauanui (Kānaka Maoli) refers to as "enduring Indigeneity" powerfully refuses and pushes back against settler colonialism's attempts at Native erasure.[28] Forms of Indigenous resurgence and survivance, from land blockades, articulations of nationhood and sovereignty, to what Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) has named "grounded normativity"—"the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman other over time"—exemplify some of the myriad ways that Indigeneity endures.[29]

In contrast to white settlers, we might presume that Asian diasporic communities ought to know better, and perhaps sometimes *do* know better, but continue to be drawn in by the lure and attraction of settler colonialism's promises. How do we theorize the place of Asian diasporas in relation to their new homelands, particularly when those new homelands, to paraphrase Sherene Razack, Sunera Thobani, and Malinda Smith, are in a stolen place?[30] This is the central problematic animating this book. I intentionally use the descriptor of *Asian diasporic* rather than "Asian American," "Asian Canadian," or "Asian North American" in order to gesture toward the longer histories and trajectories of migration that lead particular communities to a particular place, which do not always evenly map onto status and belonging within nation-states. Such a use of the term *diasporic* is indebted to the Black British cultural studies scholars Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. Troubling the innocence or neutrality of the nation-state, Hall's and Gilroy's respective works have broadly emphasized the production of

race and racialization through the nation-state by theorizing the transnational formation of race, diaspora, and Blackness.[31]

Bringing Hall's and Gilroy's insights in conversation with Indigenous studies, I choose to use *diasporic* in order to foreground the relationships to nation, land, and migration that distinguish Indigenous and diasporic communities, even as race remains integral to the study. I use the term *diasporic* not in the technical sense of dispersed populations, but, following Lily Cho, in the sense of a subjective condition engendered by the aftermath of both national independence struggles across much of the Third World and the creation of a global system of nation-states following World War II.[32] The use of the term *diasporic,* in other words, signals attention to transnational processes of colonization, slavery, imperialism, and globalization that have created a fraught and messy landscape of relationalities.

"Asian," meanwhile, is a loose and broad signifier encompassing a vast range of histories, migration patterns, and experiences of settlement, to say nothing of other forms of stratification. I frame the book specifically in terms of *Asian* diaspora in order to mark its distinctions from the histories that frame Latinx and Black diasporic experiences. With that said, the examples in this book draw primarily from post-1960s waves of Asian migration. Immigration and refugee policies in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and other Western states shifted in this period to respond to labor shortages; not coincidentally, the turbulence of the Cold War and of the newly formed nation-states that emerged in the aftermath of decolonization across Asia and Africa compelled multiple forms of migration, both voluntary and involuntary. Migration in this period allowed for more permanent settlement of Asian diasporic populations—in contrast to the severe restrictions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for instance—and gave rise to new modes of state management of racial and ethnic difference. These changes also gave Asian migrants access to different relationships to—and subject positions within—settler-colonial states.

Even more specifically, this book homes in on post-1990s diasporic cultural politics, much of which has been inflected by the legacies of the 1990 Mohawk resistance at Kanehsatake and Kahnawake that Tracey Deer also takes up in *Beans.* That moment—particularly in Canadian cities like Toronto and Vancouver—inspired increased consciousness around questions of Indigenous land and sovereignty. The post-1990s context of Kanehsatake/Kahnawake appears again and again across this

book as a watershed moment, not only for Indigenous, but for diasporic cultural politics, although with vastly divergent stakes. The Mohawk resistance contextualizes, for example, the South Asian diasporic focus of chapters 2, 3, and part of 4. South Asian diasporic artists figure prominently in *Settler Attachments* because the Oka Crisis coincided with the early years of Desh Pardesh, a queer South Asian diasporic arts organization that took the lead in cultivating space for conversations on fostering support and solidarity with First Nations peoples. Desh's primary project was an annual arts festival that convened in Toronto from 1989 to 2001. As Sharon Fernandez notes in her retrospective essay on the festival, "Desh Pardesh was prescient in creating the conditions for the integration of diasporic subjectivities through its active encouragement of pertinent cultural participation in Canada."[33] The forms this "cultural participation" took were often counterhegemonic, including a rejection of model minority respectability and a refusal of the forms of liberal, multicultural relationality that the settler state produces. Many of the artists featured in *Settler Attachments*—including Shani Mootoo, Vivek Shraya, Ali Kazimi, and V. T. Nayani—emerge from the spaces of possibility opened up by Desh.

In the early 1990s, Desh was explicitly interested in forging connections with Indigenous struggles for sovereignty. In her opening address to the 1991 festival, scholar activist Punam Khosla stated, "[Desh Pardesh] is moving away from romantic notions of nostalgia towards a forum . . . from which we can extend genuine solidarity to . . . people of colour communities around us who also know in their bodies the experience of racism and, in North America in particular, the First Nations Peoples."[34] Fernandez notes that Desh worked with a number of Native organizations in the 1990s, including the Native Canadian Center, Native Women in the Arts, De-Be-Jeh-Mu-Jig, Stoney Point First Nations, and the Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts. Desh members also joined Native communities in 1995 protests against the police shooting of Dudley George (Chippewa) at Ipperwash Provincial Park in southwestern Ontario.[35] This reflected the organization's mission statement, which included as its fourth principle to work "in concert with other communities, artists, and activists of colour with compatible objectives to make links between South Asian, First Nations and people of color cultures and communities."

More broadly, the post-1990s moment can be situated within extant work on Asian diasporic literature, film, visual art, historical archives,

and contemporary activism, which has illuminated not only moments of Asian-Indigenous collaboration and connection but also Asian diasporic complicity with colonial violence.[36] In Hawaiʻi for instance, Asians have assumed positions of political power that enable them to enact settler forms of governance; at the same time, groups of what Candace Fujikane terms Asian "settler allies" have been supporting Indigenous-led movements to oppose the construction of a thirty-meter telescope at the Mauna Kea volcano, a sacred site.[37] Indeed, unlike white settlers, whose sociocultural dominance makes clear their investments in sustaining colonial power arrangements, Asian diasporas' relationship to settler colonialism is far more contingent, entangled as it is with multiple histories and legacies of colonization, and mediated by factors such as class, caste, and immigration status. The notion of "settler common sense," for example, developed by Mark Rifkin to characterize the aesthetic strategies of white American writers in the nineteenth century who took Indigenous erasure and displacement for granted, does not adequately explain the dynamics underlying Asian diasporic artists' deployments of similar aesthetics and representational politics.[38]

Attachment elucidates the ambivalent, uneven relationships of collaboration and complicity Asian diasporic people hold with settler colonialism. It gestures to the shared histories and trajectories of colonization across Asian diasporic and Indigenous communities that also lead to Asian migration to settler North America—to the potential for relationships of mutual support and solidarity that becomes occluded by desires for and investments in the settler-colonial project. Indeed, while there is a plethora of critique, particularly from queer and feminist scholars and activists, of communities of color and their propensity to engage in modes of oppression and domination ranging from cultural nationalism to sexism, homophobia, patriarchy, and classism, we have a great deal to learn about the "lateral" or "horizontal" relations of violence that structure and animate encounters between Asian diasporas and Indigenous peoples.[39] Yet *knowing* better is not quite the problem here: knowing in and of itself does not necessarily generate better relations. As Manu Karuka, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Alyosha Goldstein point out, although it is "colonial *unknowing*" that "endeavors to render unintelligible the entanglements of racialization and colonization, occluding the mutable historicity of colonial structures and attributing finality to events of conquest and dispossession,"

its opposite—knowing—is not, in fact, antidote.[40] Although research and activism enable me to *know better* when it comes to Indigeneity and Indigenous politics, this has not been enough to undo my attachments to settler colonialism. I remain attached to, and embedded within, settler landscapes—I am embedded in settler colonialism not out of choice, but through structure.

Shifting away from (un)knowing toward feeling, emotion, and affect, attachment attends to the deep-seated longings and investments for the settler colonial, signaled through desires for "New World" promises of wealth, freedom, and independence. This book's focus on the diasporic condition, which illuminates subjective experience and affect—as opposed to other terms, such as *settler, arrivant,* or *alien,* which emphasize positionality within a political-economic landscape—enables its exploration of attachment. Settler attachments are not necessarily tied to the exercise of violence, but cannot be separated from them, as Hagar Kotef points out in her theorization of Israeli settler subjects' "violent attachments": "when one longs for and belongs to this [settler] landscape, one does not take pleasure in the direct pain inflicted on others (the cruelty model), yet this pain cannot be fully separated from the spaces of belonging that construct the sense of self."[41] Such longings and desires. moreover, may coexist alongside active expressions of solidarity and struggle with Indigenous resurgence. More precisely, attachment is what Kadji Amin calls a "diagnostic" that attunes us to "the affective and imaginary processes of identification, attraction, and belonging that structure and bind any given relation."[42] Attachment disrupts the fiction that harnessing goodwill and studious awareness alone might undo the violence of settler colonialism. Instead, it invites us to shift our perceptions of how we understand forms of art, critique, and activism allied or in solidarity with decolonization: not as inherently good in and of themselves, but as examples of the ongoing labor and experimentation required to work toward decolonization.

The questions taken up in *Settler Attachments* emerge from conversations happening across a number of interlinked fields of study. This includes conversations in Native and Indigenous studies emphasizing land, sovereignty, and Indigenous resurgence; Black studies' calls to consider the foundational and constitutive role of anti-Blackness in shaping modernity; Asian American studies' emphases on entangled histories, relationality, and complicity; and, more broadly, the move-

ment toward critical race and ethnic studies approaches that resist the siloization and institutionalization of ethnic studies within the neoliberal university by emphasizing long histories of race, slavery, empire, and colonization.[43]

Among the earliest of these is the 2000 special issue of *Amerasia Journal* edited by Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, entitled "Whose Vision? Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i" and later expanded into the 2008 edited collection *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i.*[44] Placing Asian American studies in conversation with Indigenous (and specifically Kānaka Maoli) studies, both the special issue and book took up Native Hawaiian feminist Haunani-Kay Trask's assertion—from her keynote address to the 1997 Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S. conference—that Asians, not just whites, benefited from settler colonization of Hawai'i.[45] Her essay, "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: 'Locals' in Hawai'i," also published in that special issue, asked various Asian communities—Chinese, Japanese, Filipino—to consider the stakes of framing themselves as "locals" whose laboring histories entitled them to claim Hawai'i as their own.[46] Trask was in particular pointing to a stark division between Native Hawaiians and Asian diasporic communities, the non-Native majority who, though once marginal in status, now hold positions of economic and political power. More broadly, though, Trask, Fujikane, Okamura, and their fellow contributors centered Native Hawaiians in their analysis and theorized all others—regardless of history, social position, or class status—in relation, as "settler." Settler, in this instance, was a way to name oneself in respectful relation to Indigeneity.

Trask's question of people of color as settlers came to the fore in Canadian antiracism scholarship a few years later, in the 2005 essay "Decolonizing Antiracism," by South Asian antiracist feminist scholar Enakshi Dua and Indigenous studies scholar Bonita Lawrence (Mi'kmaq ancestry).[47] Dua and Lawrence argued that postcolonial and antiracist scholarship and activism (from the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada) unwittingly reiterated colonial discourses of Native peoples as dead or dying when grounded in the assumption that formal colonization was over; or, when critiques of the nation-state failed to recognize Indigenous nationhood as a distinct formation; or, when demands for equity within the nation-state failed to see the nation-state as a colonial state. Lawrence and Dua's argument,

along with those of Trask, Fujikane, Okamura, and others, was a contentious one that has provoked a wide range of debate, revision, and critique.[48] Among these has been the question of how to name non-Native others within these configurations of power, whether that be a modification of *settler* (settler of color, refugee settler, or minor settler), *alien,* or *arrivant.*

While there are significant distinctions between each of these terms, all are rooted in the basic premise—one that I share—that settler colonialism matters, and that we cannot understand processes of racialization except in some relation to it. Conceptually, scholars are engaging these terms to pose similar kinds of questions. As Dean Itsuji Saranillio reminds us, arguments over the taxonomies of terms such as *settler* or *arrivant* easily devolve into a "moral hierarchy of competing identities that can elide the very structure of settler colonialism, which remains the same regardless of what term one uses."[49] Moreover, as Malissa Phung points out, "Whatever the term, whatever the conceptual approach, whatever adjective used to describe these various overlapping, 'co-constitutive' genealogies of precarious resettlement and forced migration . . . non-Indigenous resettlement remains predicated on the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples."[50] My use of the term *diasporic* is not based on a moral or ethical claim. The central difference distinguishing the term *diasporic* from others is its primary emphasis on subjective experience, rather than on political or economic positionality. For example, *settler of color* (Trask; Lawrence and Dua), *refugee settler* (Gandhi), and *minor settler* (Huang) all gesture to one's position within a settler-colonial polity; *arrivant* (Byrd) signals a status within settler colonialism that is distinguished by mode of migration; and *alien* (Day) gestures to one's position within settler capitalism.[51] I foreground the diasporic condition in order to emphasize the forms of structural attachments and impasses that this generates.

My use of *diasporic* also takes its cue from the artists featured in this book, all of whom centrally engaged with their diasporic subjectivity. While some are more explicitly engaged with questions of Indigenous solidarity and relationality (Kazimi in chapter 3, Nayani in chapter 4, and Yoon in the Coda), the starting point for all of these individuals are the experiences and affects that arise from feeling unrooted, out of place, and marginalized. At the same time, my use of *diasporic* is not a call to replace other terms; rather, it is contingent and strategic. At dif-

ferent moments, other terms may be politically and ethically useful—for example, I use the term *settler* in the classroom when engaging both white and nonwhite students who have not thought of their access to forms of settler privilege. "Diasporic" does not as readily call forth such conversations.

Put another way, this book is indebted to the early provocations of authors such as Trask, Lawrence, and Dua—and the vexed conversations they have generated—not because of the terms of identification they proposed, but what they have generated: a now rich, nuanced body of thought examining the interconnections between forms of structural violence including anti-Blackness, colonialism, xenophobia, and war/militarism.[52] Chickasaw theorist Jodi Byrd's 2011 book, *The Transit of Empire,* provides the critical language through which to tease many of these interconnections. Bringing critical Indigenous studies to bear on postcolonial critique, Byrd argues that colonization produces a *cacophony* of competing and entangled representations and claims to land, identity, and politics.[53] For Byrd, these entanglements emerge through the context of empire, in which Indigeneity serves as a site of transit through which colonial ideologies and imperatives are transmitted from one imperial venture to another. Attentive to this colonial messiness, Byrd proposes Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite's term *arrivant* to describe the liminal position of non-Native, nonwhite subjects in settler colonies (for example, immigrants, refugees, descendants of the transatlantic slave trade)—those who have become implicated in settler-colonial dynamics, and who themselves have been affected by transnational circuits of empire. Drawing attention to these transits of empire, *cacophony* creates analytic space for understanding the complicity of racialized, non-Native populations in settler colonialism in terms of entangled colonialisms, rather than the interrelations of oppressed groups. The concept of *arrivant* necessarily works through this entanglement; more than an identity category, Byrd clarifies in a 2019 essay that *arrivant* "name[s] a process and make[s] messy the presumed circuits of white supremacist nationalism underlying certain strands of settler-colonial studies that relegate Indigenous peoples to elimination, refugees to settlers, and descendants of slaves to settler adjacents."[54] Byrd is responding in 2019 (at least partially) to the provocations of Black studies scholars, including Jared Sexton, Frank Wilderson, and in particular Tiffany Lethabo King (whose work locates critical resonances across Black

and Native studies), who, holding onto slavery's foundational and constitutive role in shaping Modernity vis-à-vis anti-Blackness, critique the omissions and occlusions of settler-colonial studies.[55] Byrd's framework of cacophony is one that takes seriously the "intimacies of four continents" created by processes of slavery, conquest, and empire, which, as Lisa Lowe describes, have placed discrepant bodies, objects, spaces, and times in relation to one another.[56] Whereas Fujikane and Okamura, Lawrence and Dua, and others make an argument for placing Native peoples and relationships to land at the center of discussions of racialization, Byrd suggests that it is the *longue durée* of colonization, slavery, conquest, and empire that must be placed at the center of studies of race and Indigeneity.[57]

These approaches are not necessarily in opposition to one another, but amplify two different aims: asking after ethics and relationality, and clarifying the structural generation of racial and colonial difference and tension. *Settler Attachments* joins recent monographs on Asian diasporas, Indigeneity, and settler colonialism—driven by some combination of both these imperatives—that attempt to think capaciously about relationality while offering nuanced theorizations of race, labor, migration, colonization, and Indigeneity. This has included centering processes of racial settler capitalism (Day's *Alien Capital*), thinking beyond the frame of the nation-state to transnational refugee settlements (Evyn Lê Espiritu Gandhi's *Archipelago of Resettlement*), de-exceptionalizing U.S. settler colonialism within a global imperial frame (Karuka's *Empire's Tracks*), developing hemispheric approaches (Quynh Nhu Le's *Unsettled Solidarities*), examining the crisscrossed transits of Asian and Indigeneity that emerge through entangled colonialisms (Hu Pegues's *Space-Time Colonialism*), deploying oceanic frameworks (Erin Suzuki's *Ocean Passages*); and considering the intersections of settler colonialism and dominant caste formation in Indian diasporas (Nishant Upadhyay).[58] Grounded in Asian American studies' impulse toward relational critique, these works offer nuanced theorizations of race, labor, migration, colonization, and Indigeneity that move beyond the framework of the nation-state. *Settler Attachments* shares with these works an ethical impulse to think about Indigenous land and sovereignty while attending to the uneven, contradictory, and messy enmeshment of Asian diasporas within settler-colonial state dynamics generated by global colonialism and imperialism. It differs from these books in two ways: first, in its specific focus on film

studies, and second, in its reframing of questions of solidarity and relationality in terms of the underlying psychic and affective dimensions of Asian diasporic investments in settler colonialism.

SOME NOTES ON METHOD: THE RACIAL AND COLONIAL EMERGENCE OF FILM

Settler-colonial imaginaries figure prominently in diasporic cultural production. Yet scholars have only recently begun the work of reframing diasporic existence in relation to Indigenous land: the diasporic condition has most often been theorized and imagined in terms of migration from old to new homelands, or problems of identity and belonging. For example, while Black, postcolonial, and feminist cultural critics such as Homi Bhabha, bell hooks, Kobena Mercer, and Trinh T. Minh-Ha have examined diasporic filmmakers' responses to conditions of racism, white supremacy, xenophobia, and cisheteropatriarchy in terms of the politics of visuality, analytical frameworks such as mimicry and the oppositional gaze are complicated when one poses questions about the layered enmeshment of marginalized groups and peoples in relation to one another.[59] Studies of diasporic film, which have been concerned with how the diasporic experience informs filmmaking production, reception, and distribution, have not tended to prioritize diasporic relationships to Indigeneity or settler colonization, largely because these have not been prioritized by diasporic communities themselves. Thus, for example, in his classic study *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking,* Hamid Naficy is primarily concerned with the ways in which filmmakers from the Global South mediate their relationships with migration and exile through filmmaking. For Naficy, the common thread tying together these filmmakers is "liminal subjectivity and interstitial location in society and the film industry."[60]

The claim I am making about diasporic film is more properly a claim about film broadly as a central site where settler culture coheres and proliferates. This requires a capacious understanding of film and its relationship to race, racism, and colonization, one that stretches far past questions of representation. Rather, I follow Curtis Marez's impulse in *University Babylon* to understand film as an object and instrument of structural power.[61] If, as Kara Keeling astutely notes, the birth of cinema in the late nineteenth century coincided with what

Du Bois termed "the problem of the color line," it also coincided with American westward expansion and its corresponding policies of Indigenous genocide, cultural and physical.[62] Thus both a racialized visual regime and a colonial sense of land—of vanishing Indians, empty wilderness, and the harsh frontier—underpin cinematic foundations of representation. As the late historian Cedric Robinson has observed, "with a reach and immediacy not obtained by previous apparatuses (museums, theaters, fairs, the press, etc.), motion pictures insinuated themselves into public life" at the precise moment that a white American national identity was being consolidated.[63] To put it another way, the history of film is deeply entangled with histories of racism and colonization.

The very first forays into filmmaking capitalized on the fetishization of Indigenous bodies and were directly connected to violent settler expansion. Early cinema was firmly embedded in late-nineteenth century cultural milieu that fetishized and exploited colonial and racial difference. The invention of film was happening at the same time that scientists were drawing on an emergent archive from erstwhile colonies across the world to classify humanity into races distinguished by sexed and gendered characteristics. It is not surprising, then, that film was not only informed by this context of racial science but also deployed as an instrument of asserting and performing racial-colonial dominance.

Film historian Tom Gunning characterizes early cinema as a "cinema of attraction": cinema primarily oriented around exhibition.[64] Yet, he also argues, this tendency for exhibition did not disappear with the emergence of narrative cinema. In these early years, Gunning suggests, cinema was exciting to the public, not as a medium of storytelling, but as a novel and amusing technology. Filmmakers such as Thomas Edison, Edwin S. Porter, and the Lumière Brothers were in the business not of entertaining but of scientific invention. Their films oscillated between depictions of the mundane and everyday—for example, Louis Lumiere's forty-six-second silent short *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière a Lyon* (1895) depicts workers leaving a factory—and the spectacular.[65] On the spectrum of the spectacular were short captures of dancers, boxing, and fighting matches. Colonial-racial difference here was one item on the laundry list of spectacular forms of entertainment. Many of Edison Studios' shorts fall in the latter category: *Princess Ali* (William Heise, 1895) and *Fatima's Coochee Dance* (James

White and William Heise, 1896) are short films of Egyptian belly dancers; *Watermelon Eating Contest* (William Heise and James White, 1896), *Chinese Laundry Scene* (William K. Dickson and William Heise, 1894), and *A Morning Bath* (James White and William Heise, 1896) draw on the tradition of minstrelsy to exploit public fascination with racial stereotypes. While the individual films corresponded to distinct histories of colonization and racialization, they also emerged in a collective context of scientific racism, Euro-American colonial empire, and the consolidation of transnational whiteness.

Among Edison Studios' offerings were *Sioux Ghost Dance* and *Buffalo Dance* (William K. Dickson and William Heise, both 1894), featuring Lakota Sioux dancers. Just a few years earlier, in 1890, American soldiers massacred three hundred Lakota people at Wounded Knee because of the perceived threat of an Indigenous resistance movement that mobilized this very dance to hail ancestors' help. The film's dancers—survivors of the massacre creatively navigating their new lives as performers—were participants in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, now a ready source of content for Edison's films. Buffalo Bill, aka Bill Cody, was a former Pony Express rider whose exploits journalists initially recorded in newspapers, and who had gained fame as a dime novel hero. Cody capitalized on this fame when he developed his traveling Wild West Show. Much of the intrigue of the show came from the fact that the "performers" in the show were real-life figures familiar to many, including Lakota Chief Sitting Bull. Cody's Wild West Show indulged audiences' pleasure by blurring the lines between fiction and reality. Edison saw in Cody's show the perfect site for his experiments with film: "real" scenes of spectacle ostensibly available for capture. By engaging such colonial scenes of difference as the first subjects of new cinematic technologies, Edison's experiments established their prowess as film technologies extended colonial imperatives of capture, control, and domestication. In combining verisimilitude with the spectacular, early film was instrumental to the process of crafting settler worlds, enabling audiences to understand themselves as settlers in relation to the colonized.

As repositories or archives of the world in which we live, films are archives of the settler world, but not in a straightforward way. The Asian diasporic films I examine in this book constitute sites of contestation and negotiation through which their directors, writers, and/or producers grapple in often uneven and contradictory ways with

cinematic histories, aesthetics, and representations, while also reckoning with personal, familial, and community histories and legacies.

APPROACHING FILM THROUGH CRITICAL ETHNIC STUDIES

Film's history has been hugely wedded to the histories of racism and colonialism. It is therefore surprising (or, perhaps it is not surprising at all) that while there is a robust body of work on gender, cinema, and media and a well-established canon of feminist film theory—held together by academic journals such as *Camera Obscura, Feminist Media Histories,* and *Feminist Media Studies*—there is no comparable "canon" of critical race or ethnic film studies. Institutionally, race is marginal within film and media studies, if measured by indicators such as academic journals, course offerings in curricula, and full-time faculty positions.[66] Despite this, the work of scholars such as Keeling, Michael Gillespie, Michelle Raheja (Seneca descent), Joanna Hearne, Dustin Tahmahkera (Comanche), Denise Khor, Jigna Desai, Ella Shohat, and Robert Stam, among many others, pushes film and media studies to think deeply about histories of race and colonization, particularly as they probe the absences and silences constituting film and media archives, representations, and aesthetics.[67]

Settler Attachments joins these scholars in drawing attention to absence: specifically, that of relationality and entanglement. As Lowe argues, the division of knowledge within the modern academy obscures and submerges historical connections between forms of racial, imperial, and colonial violence across the world, such that they appear discrete. Correspondingly, she says, "we know little about [the] intimacies of four continents."[68] Although Lowe focuses specifically on history, the afterlife of these obscured connections persists in the contemporary moment, informing the production, circulation, and reception of film and media. This includes scholarly reception of film and media, where conversations around race and ethnicity in film have followed the broader divisions of ethnic studies. Early race and film scholarship, which focused on the representation of racialized groups, did the painstaking and necessary work of addressing negative stereotypes and the inaccuracy of images of racialized people found on film. The work was—and remains—segmented by racial formation; thus, there are studies on representations of Black people in cinema;

Chicanx/Latinx communities; Arabs/Muslims; Native Americans/Indigenous peoples; and Asians.[69] Beginning in the 1980s, some scholars turned more broadly to the question of race writ large, but the question of relationality was not a central concern. Robert Stam and Louise Spence's essay "Colonialism, Racism and Representation," published in a special "race" issue of *Screen* in 1983, for example, critiqued the preoccupation with realism inflecting much film studies analyses of race at the time, and the foci of many of these analyses on singular dimensions of film, such as social portrayal, plot, and character.[70] They instead proposed analyzing racism and colonialism in film in terms of the cinematic dimensions of representation, including genre, spectatorship, composition, sound, editing, and framing. Toward the late 1980s and early 1990s, a greater number of scholars took up the inquiry on method initiated by Stam and Spence. Influenced, in part, by the increased presence of minority filmmakers in both mainstream and independent spaces, film studies theorists began to look beyond the question of positive and negative representations. They turned, instead, to the broader issue of centering race in film analysis.[71] This work linked together conversations on how to theorize race—for example, as biological truth or social construction—to the medium of film. These authors contextualized issues of representation and minority production in terms of debates on topics such as identity, essentialism, and authenticity. Thus, in a second special "race" issue of *Screen* from 1988, Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer's essay "De Margin and De Centre" argued that race should be central to all studies of film, rather than relegated to analyses of nonwhite subjects in film. In this same journal issue, Richard Dyer's essay "White" exposed the simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility of representations of whiteness on film.[72] Dyer's essay importantly suggested that a race analysis might expose the social construction of whiteness in film. Similarly, Daniel Bernardi, in his three consecutive edited collections on race, film, and whiteness, took a cue from Dyer in considering how American cinema constructed whiteness as normative, in relation to racial Otherness.[73] Later works on race and film have taken up these methodological concerns in a number of ways. Some have framed filmic representations of race in terms of material and discursive conditions through which they are shaped; some have theorized about spectatorship; others have offered critical perspectives on minority filmmaking practices, taking into account conversations on diaspora, transnationality, and

identity.[74] As a whole, the scholarship on race and film has contributed to a critical understanding of how cinema informs social construction of race. Cinema and media do not merely reflect "real" social identities, but actively constitute them.[75] Film and media can, therefore, reveal much about how to theorize race.

For the most part, however, film and media criticism has remained fragmented according to distinct histories of race, constrained by the siloed nature of its archives (film and media objects, along with their cultures, industries, and infrastructures). This is unsurprising given that patterns of film production and spectatorship have largely corresponded those same distinct histories; there are relatively few examples of film or media that are attentive to entangled relations, unless through the rubrics of multiculturalism and post-raciality. The *Fast & Furious* film franchise (2001–2023), Marvel Studio's *The Eternals* (2021), and *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) all feature multiracial casts, but these are not films that explicitly center cross-racial or cross-colonial encounter in the way that *Frozen River* (2008) or *Mississippi Masala* (1991) do.[76]

Even accounting for such examples, it remains the case that because critics interpret film and media primarily based on what is *there* rather than what is absent, archival absences constrain possibilities for what we can say. How do we see histories and connections that are not there? Are they simply not there, are they invisible, or are they submerged? How might we interpret Asian diasporic filmmakers' efforts to document Indigenous issues and struggles, such as Rucha Chitnis's short film *In the Land of My Ancestors* (2018), about Ohlone elder Ann Marie Sayers's reclamation of ancestral land in the San Francisco Bay Area; or Sanjay Rawal's *Gather* (2020)—produced by a team that included Jason Momoa (Kānaka Maoli) and Sterlin Harjo (Seminole)—about Indigenous food sovereignty movements? How might we identify and interpret traces or remains of connections, such as in the collaborative film and television work of Sandra Osawa (Makah) and Yasu Osawa, who met through the 1969 LA Rebellion film movement?[77] Importantly, how might a pivot to foregrounding structural violence, rather than representations of bodies, reorient the ways we interpret film?

To investigate these questions, *Settler Attachments* draws from relational methods of criticism—also referred to as *critical ethnic studies*—that scholars across Indigenous, Black, Asian American, and Chicanx/

Latinx studies have been developing to consider the entangled relationships emerging from the overlaps and disjunctures between racial capitalism, settler colonialism, and contemporary globalization.[78] As an epistemological formation, critical ethnic studies emerged in the early 2010s in response to the limitations of U.S. ethnic studies models that had become incorporated into the academy; UC Riverside's Ethnic Studies Department hosted the inaugural critical ethnic studies conference in 2011, and the Critical Ethnic Studies Association was established in 2013.[79] While it was the radical politics of antiracism, decolonization, and anti-imperial solidarity of late-1960s student movements at UC Berkeley, San Francisco State University, and elsewhere that resulted in ethnic studies programs in Black/African American, Asian American, Chicanx/Latinx, and Native American studies, the academic institutions housing these programs have had no investment in cultivating this critical ethos. Correspondingly, institutional requirements ensnare ethnic studies scholarship to create fields of study that are legible within traditional, disciplinary modes of scholarship, and which meet neoliberal demands of productivity.

Critical ethnic studies frames have challenged ethnic studies to work beyond siloed fields of study organized on the basis of racial formations in order to interrogate the interrelated logics of forms of structural violence: racial capitalism, anti-Blackness, colonialism, imperialism, white supremacy, xenophobia, war/militarism, heteropatriarchy. As Danika Medak-Saltzman and Antonio Tiongson Jr. suggest, critical ethnic studies might approach these connections through a focus on their entanglements—rather than comparison or analogy—across histories, epistemologies, aesthetics, narratives, social structures, arrangements, movements, and/or policies.[80] In this respect, *Settler Attachments* contributes to conversations animated by theorists such as the aforementioned Byrd, King, and Day, whose works illuminate the tensions and convergences between Indigenous, postcolonial, Black, and Asian North American studies.

Placing critical ethnic studies in conversation with film and media studies might take a number of shapes and forms; *Settler Attachments* offers one particular take.[81] First, I am particularly invested in thinking about film in terms of structural violence, rather than primarily in terms of stereotype and representation, opening up the possibility of considering film's agentic role in producing and sustaining structural violence. While stereotype and representation are very much

part of the conversation of this book, they are not the end point. Second, relational critique is central to this book. To that end, much of my analysis is oriented around absence and erasure: How do we track these in film? How do we think about entanglement and connection in the face of absence and erasure? More specifically, how are absence and erasure generated affectively and aesthetically in film? How do we work through these absences and erasures? My contention is that cultural criticism and film/media making alike provide opportunities to imagine different worlds—and to make sense of the ones in which we currently live. More broadly, *Settler Attachments* places pressure on implicit assumptions about what film studies is *supposed to* look like—and offers an alternate model for what it *could* look like: how might film studies learn from inter-, post- and transdisciplinary modes of inquiry? What happens when we let go of film or media as the central objects of concern, and instead prioritize the politically urgent questions they open up? Here, *Settler Attachments* shares similarities, but also significantly departs from the path-making work of Shohat and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* and Frank B. Wilderson III's *Red, White & Black,* both of which also attend to questions of relation and lateral violence.

Published in 1994, Shohat and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* predates critical ethnic studies but introduces a comparative, transnational framework for analyzing polycentric media representations of race in their analysis. Though their focus is broadly on popular media and not exclusively film, film nonetheless figures prominently in the book. Taking seriously the context of film's emergence under late-nineteenth-century conditions of racism and colonization into the 1990s, Shohat and Stam produce dense, rigorous media analysis that carefully attends to historical context and structure. In advancing a relational analysis of film and media, for instance, they pointed to the potential for racialized minorities to become complicit in racial violence, noting that "oppressed people can perpetuate the hegemonic system by scapegoating one another 'sideways,' in a manner ultimately benefiting those at the top of the hierarchy."[82] Yet, even as Shohat and Stam open up an exciting method for relational analysis, their work suggests that race is a uniform category of oppression. The lateral violence they speak of—which benefits "those at the top of the hierarchy"—implies that racial oppression is mediated primarily through *other* forms of difference (class or gender, for example), rather than the distinct and

uneven circulation of structural violence generated through slavery, racialization, and colonization that disproportionately impacts Black and Native peoples.

Frank B. Wilderson III's study of what he calls the "structural antagonisms" of U.S. society in film in *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* attends to this uneven relationality.[83] *Red, White & Black* provides the theoretical and methodological scaffolding for attending to race in film studies differently. While Wilderson's ideas have widely circulated within Black studies and adjacent fields, the book has not generally been received as a work of film studies. Critical theorist Nick Mitchell in fact describes it as "a book of political theory presented as a contribution to film studies"; and *Red, White & Black* has received relatively little attention in film and media studies, despite Wilderson's training in film studies and use of film studies methods.[84] Yet, *as a work of film studies,* Wilderson invites readers to meditate on what film does: how film reveals the structural antagonisms—as opposed to social conflicts—of U.S. society. While he addresses representation, it is not his overarching concern; he investigates cinema's relationship to reality, not for the purposes of determining its authenticity, but in order to think about what film is doing: how it is negotiating representation in a context of racial violence. Wilderson introduces a triangulated set of structural antagonisms through which to interpret U.S. racial dynamics—and by extension, cinema. According to Wilderson, slavery, Native genocide, and white settler supremacy form the triangulated coordinates of U.S. antagonisms—the positions of the Slave, the Savage, and the Settler/Master, to use his phrasing—and "cinematic strategies (lighting, camera angles, image composition, and acoustic design)" make visible "the grammar of Black and Red suffering," even in instances where the film's narrative attempts to present that suffering through a more humanist mode (i.e., one that presumes that there is a conflict causing the suffering that can be resolved).[85] Wilderson thus opens up space for film studies to consider the role of film in the production of ontologies. Considering race in film beyond the question of historically constituted stereotypes, he turns instead to the question of ontology and structural antagonism: to the question of how white being (more specifically, U.S. white settler being) is contingent on the nonbeing of Blackness (as well as Indigeneity). Thus instead of examining how particular films engage and respond to histories of racial

representation, Wilderson asks how the fundamental problematic of structural antagonism plays out in film. Rather than orienting his film study to the question of "How are Black people/Blackness represented in film?," Wilderson asks: "How do the structural antagonisms of U.S. society play out on film? How does anti-Blackness mediate all representations of Blackness?" While the former is an important question (one that we need not stop asking), the latter questions open up space to think beyond the question of the cinematic representation of bodies and identities, to the representation of structural violence.

Because Wilderson interprets the grammar of Black and Red suffering through film, his reading is necessarily totalizing. The cinematic strategies he presents to us—lighting, camera angles, image composition, and acoustic design—invite viewers' senses into the unthought. There is no easy way to imagine an outside to that, no alternate plots or endings: filmmakers use these strategies to create a world for their audiences. Wilderson accepts this; *Red, White & Black,* along with his subsequent works, suggests that Black non-ontology is an inevitable facet of our contemporary moment, and he is adamant that we never lose sight of this. It is perhaps because of this that Wilderson refuses to see Native sovereignty and nationhood as anything but complicit in anti-Black violence. Although Wilderson's model of structural antagonisms includes Native genocide—the position of the Savage—as one triangulated point, and although he argues that the denigration and suffering caused by genocide and chattel slavery profoundly link Black and Native communities, he argues that Native sovereignty is conditional on humanity, which is constituted through anti-Blackness, and thus inherently anti-Black.

In *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense,* Kara Keeling to an extent also accepts the totalizing force of anti-Blackness, but her historicization of Blackness vis-à-vis Gilles Deleuze's concept of *the cinematic* simultaneously describes and deconstructs anti-Blackness in more specific and concrete ways than Wilderson's rendering. Deleuze's theorization of the relationship between film and reality, Keeling suggests, opens up a more dynamic way of understanding the place of film within sociocultural relations. As she explains, quoting Deleuze: "Film becomes, on its invention, 'the organ, for perfecting' a 'new reality.' "[86] Film, from this perspective, is the machinery that enables our sense of reality to develop. Cinema does not merely represent reality, but mediates and infects it: reality

and screen bleed into one another. Beyond questions of representation, spectatorship, or consumption, the cinematic gestures to the process through which cinema becomes the medium through which viewers see and read everyday life and perception; through which film has "train[ed] the human sensorium to accommodate the demands of modern life."[87] This mediation process hinges on the activation of viewers' "cinematic perception," which relies on a sensory-motor schema that was initially cultivated through moving-image media, but is no longer limited to it.[88] In Keeling's estimation, cinema so profoundly mediates ways of seeing and knowing that our sense of reality exists only in relation to the infrastructure that film provides for seeing and interpreting the world; hence, the cinematic is synonymous with "twentieth [and now, twenty-first]-century reality."

Keeling engages this more capacious understanding of film in order to think about its role in anti-Black violence. Because of its central role in mediating reality, she argues that cinema has fortified hegemonic constructions of Blackness. Nonetheless—and here she draws on Antonio Gramsci's theorization of counterhegemonic common sense that proliferates in spite of more hegemonic common sense—these constructions of Blackness are nonetheless vulnerable to interruption and rupture, particularly by the marginalized, haunting figure of the Black femme. Keeling's Black femme is more than just disruptive, though: she exposes the possibility of other worlds and modes of being. For example, in her analysis of F. Gary Gray's *Set It Off* (1996), Keeling presents a nuanced interpretation of the femme character of Ursula, a supporting character with no lines whose primary role is as the "eye candy" girlfriend of Cleo (played by Queen Latifah). While Ursula is undoubtedly an erotic object consolidating hegemonic common sense in the film, Keeling suggests, her enigmatic presence in the film also exceeds legibility; her whereabouts and actions outside of the film's frame are opaque and unknown.[89] Her illegibility and incoherence thus "might force hegemonic common sense to make space and time for something new."[90] The Black femme, in other words, is doing important radical *world-making* work.

Settler Attachments draws inspiration from Keeling's method—of listening and attending to what remains possible even under the extenuating circumstances of totalizing violence. However, whereas Keeling's project finds in the Black femme a force that disrupts anti-Blackness, *Settler Attachments* seeks to decenter white (settler-)colonial cultures

through a systematic pivoting and reorientation of Asian diasporic culture toward Indigenous land, bodies, and (hi)stories. As Rita Wong has asked, "What happens if we position Indigenous people's struggles instead of normalized whiteness as the reference point through which we come to articulate our subjectivities? How would such a move radically transform our perceptions of the land on which we live?"[91] Revisiting my 1990 cowboy cosplay after watching Deer's *Beans,* for example, prompted me to reflect on my subject formation in relation not only to white settler cultures but also to Indigenous peoples and lands. My interpretations of Asian diasporic film are likewise attuned to the decolonial possibilities that open up when we center Indigenous presence, on- and off-screen. This includes excavating forms of Indigenous presence that are muted, obscured, or minimized. For instance, chapter 1's discussion of Asian diasporic cowboys examines the melancholic affects surrounding representations of Asian cowboys and poses questions about the loss of Asian-Indigenous relationality that such representations occlude.

Yet, a better politics of representation and aesthetics alone is not enough; decolonization is a long-haul process. I take up this question in the second half of the book, where I approach decolonial engagement as an ongoing process or practice. Thus, in chapters 3 and 4, my analysis of films by Ali Kazimi, V. T. Nayani, and Catherine Hernandez does not present these as perfect models to be replicated in service of decolonization. Rather, by situating the representational and aesthetic politics of these works in terms of their meta-contexts of development and production, I emphasize the ways in which these filmmakers labor and work toward the longer-term project of decolonization—one that we have not yet reached, but that is on the horizon.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This book is not a survey of Asian diasporic film. Its intervention is a methodological one that illuminates the potential of a critical ethnic studies film method. Thus, I have carefully selected filmic objects that register a range of competing and contradictory representations, aesthetics, and affects constituting Asian diasporic experiences. The book begins by fleshing out the dynamics of settler attachment and the structural impasse these create (chapters 1 and 2), before explor-

ing the generative possibilities of radical friendship and relational survivance under such conditions (chapters 3 and 4).

Chapter 1, "Melancholic Attachments: Asian Diasporic Cowboys," takes as its starting point the numerous examples of Asian North American visual art, film, and literature engaged with the figure of the cowboy in which Native people are conspicuously absent. I read this pattern of erasure not as moral failure, but as evidence of a melancholic attachment to settler colonialism that simultaneously registers impossible longings for recognition and legitimacy, and the often-unacknowledged loss of Asian-Indigenous relationality. I illuminate my argument with close readings of two films: *Wild West* (1993)—about a doomed-to-fail South Asian country band in London—and *Cowgirl* (1996), a comedic-dramatic short about a Korean American woman obsessed with all things western. The chapter proposes a critical viewing practice that sees these films not just as archives of Asian diasporic struggles with identity and inclusion, but also as archives of Indigenous erasure emanating from melancholic reactions to white settler colonialism. This viewing practice reveals the latent potential that is already present within the films. The two films take up the cowboy from distinct locations with respect to gender, nation, and geography, and depict distinct attachments to the cowboy: *Cowgirl*'s conclusion is mournful, whereas *Wild West*'s is melancholic. My discussion, however, emphasizes their dual registers in relation to one another: the explicit intention to archive struggles with identity and exclusion, against the unwitting archival of Indigenous erasure.

The second chapter, "Brown Queer and Trans Bodies at the Impasse of Diaspora and Indigeneity," turns to the work of South Asian diasporic artists Shani Mootoo and Vivek Shraya, whose attachments to settler-colonial landscapes and aesthetics persist in spite of their political commitments to Indigenous solidarity. Both Mootoo's and Shraya's work emerges from queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities in Toronto; both have been embedded in conversations concerning Indigenous sovereignty. I thus look at works by Shraya and Mootoo that take up the question of land: Mootoo's didactically oriented early 1990s experimental films *A Paddle and a Compass* and *Wild Woman in the Woods,* which critique white settler-colonial tropes of land and wilderness by inserting queer Brown bodies into them; and Shraya's 2021 photo essay "Legends of the Trans," which

pays disidentificatory homage to Tristan Ludlow, Brad Pitt's character from the 1994 film *Legends of the Fall.* I consider Mootoo and Shraya alongside one another in order to emphasize their different strategies—one that deploys Brown queer bodies to disrupt and interrupt violent constructions of nation and land (Mootoo), the other that imbues a Brown trans body with care and joy in order to critique embodied violence (Shraya)—and to draw attention to the ways these artists register the de facto separation of body and land. This experiential disentanglement is one source of diasporic/Indigenous tension. The broader implications of this argument are that ideological transformation—long the approach of social movements and activism—cannot undo diasporic attachments to settler colonialism.

The second half of the book, which is oriented around decolonization and futurity, may appear in some ways to be in tension with the first, insofar as the framework of settler attachments might seem to be a totalizing one. However, my intention across the book is to hold onto difference, tension, and incommensurability alongside hope, possibility, and futurity. If chapters 1 and 2 theorize totalizing violence in terms of attachment and impasse, chapters 3 and 4 turn to radical friendship and relational survivance as they reflect on the kinds of futures generated from spaces of difference, tension, and incommensurability. I turn to the distinct imaginative possibilities that three artists offer: South Asian diasporic filmmaker Ali Kazimi, who engages in intentional dialogue with Iroquois (Onondaga) photographer Jeffrey Thomas, and queer/trans Asian diasporic artists Catherine Hernandez and V. T. Nayani, who engage Indigeneity through queer of color political sensibilities. Chapter 3, "Friendship, Refusal, and Alternate Archives of Diaspora," focuses on Kazimi's collaborative experimental documentary with Thomas, *Shooting Indians: A Journey with Jeffrey Thomas* (1997). Although a close analysis of the film is central to the chapter, it is more broadly organized through a relational lens that examines Kazimi's work alongside two sets of relations. The first is his decades-long friendship with Thomas, which is central both to the film's narratives and to its aesthetic and representational politics, and which gestures to the radical potential of friendship. The second is the contexts of Indigenous resurgence—grounded in Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson's theorization of refusal—and South Asian diasporic activism, which condition the emergence of that friendship, and of Kazimi and Thomas's work. This is not a teleological reading,

but one that thinks about one particular artist as embedded within a wider web, one that is regenerative. As I show, Kazimi and Thomas's friendship is not isolated or exceptional, but one that can be mapped onto a constellation of other relations and movements, in Toronto, across Canada, and across North America.

Chapter 4, "Experiments in Relation: Queer Indigenous and Asian Diasporic Survivance in the Settler-Capitalist City," is about the experimentative decolonial work of V. T. Nayani's *This Place* (2022), and Catherine Hernandez's *Scarborough* (2021), two of the few feature-length dramatic films that not only place Indigenous and Asian diasporic communities together in a singular cinematic frame, but do so with a queer of color sensibility. *This Place* features two young women—Malai, a Tamil college student who lives with her brother and is coming to terms with the impending death of her estranged alcoholic father; and Kawenniiohstha, a Kahnawake Mohawk student and budding writer searching for her birth father, an Iranian man. *Scarborough,* the film adaptation of Hernandez's 2017 novel of the same name, tells the intertwined story of three children (Filipino, Mi'kmaq, and white) growing up in the Galloway neighborhood of Scarborough, Toronto's primarily working-class and immigrant of color east-end suburb. The chapter analyzes the "imperfect experiments" of these films in terms of queer of color ephemerality: in terms of the assemblage of intangible, felt experiences, affects, and identifications that generate powerful connections and relations for their Asian diasporic and Indigenous protagonists and that enable what I term—riffing off Gerald Vizenor—their "relational survivance" in the neoliberal multicultural settler city. The films' emphasis on felt experiences and affects suggest that queer of color ephemerality, while not a *solution* to the structural impasse between diaspora and Indigeneity, is nonetheless a resource for generating connections, relations, and solidarities.

As a whole, *Settler Attachments* has three complementary goals. The first, a methodological one, is to invite film and media scholars to consider how we might orient film methods to think about the absences generated by racism and colonization, particularly concerning cross-racial or cross-colonial intimacies. The second is to confront head-on what appear to be difficult and irresolvable tensions between the aesthetic and representational strategies of Asian diasporic artists to address racialized and gendered violence on the one hand, and Native sovereignty on the other. The final, more speculative, goal is to ask

what is possible under these conditions. What models, even imperfect ones, do Asian diasporic artists offer that can help us work through this quagmire? How do we understand and make sense of their work?

Settler Attachments is, in other words, about the problem of world-making. How does the ongoing violence of racism and colonization inform and constrain our ability to craft worlds? How do we grapple with the violence and injury that our world-making practices generate? What other kinds of worlds are possible? Underlying my cowboy cosplay in 1990 was a claim and desire for inclusion in a settler world, a desire that was not simply undone by reading in Indigenous studies—by, in other words, knowing better. That desire lingers. The artists presented in this book offer a window into the dynamic of attachment, and of the processes of laboring toward the decolonization that is somewhere on the horizon.

1

Melancholic Attachments

ASIAN DIASPORIC COWBOYS

How are settler worlds negotiated by those who are excluded from them and feel unable to assimilate to them? In Kenneth Tam's art exhibit *Silent Spikes,* images of Asian American men playing cowboy abound. Tam examines the relationship of Asian masculinities to this iconic figure of Americana as he speculates about the inner worlds and intimacies of the mostly unnamed Chinese workers who helped build the U.S. transcontinental railroad. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a two-channel video installation. Set to the soft accompaniment of a gentle *erhu,* the video weaves back and forth between a number of interrelated clips: Asian cowboys performing movements that mimic bull riding; a young Asian dancer on an urban street; a group of Asian cowboys against a studio green screen, casually discussing experiences with racism and discrimination, engaging in a series of movements and poses; shots of a dark tunnel overlaid by subtitled Cantonese narration about the 1867 labor strike. The exhibit recalls lost histories and silences, reflecting on the racialized and gendered exclusions and elisions of American national identity. However, rather than attempting to recuperate a heteropatriarchal form of masculinity—as, for example, writer Frank Chin did in his 1972 play, *The Chickencoop Chinaman*—Tam fabulates alternate masculinities forged through the intimacies of labor exploitation.[1] While remembering the "hard" labor of railroad construction, he also imagines the "soft" moments of sensuality, intimacy, and tenderness that might have characterized the lives of Chinese workers.

Tam's exhibit is a thoughtful and moving reflection on American western history and Asian American masculinity. It importantly registers the problems with hegemonic American masculinity and imagines alternatives beyond assimilation as antidotes to racialized and gendered exclusion. Yet, missing from Tam's piece are the Indigenous nations—those most violently impacted by American settler

expansion—such as the Paiute and Shoshone, who also participated in railway construction, forged intimate bonds with Chinese workers, and gave refuge to them.[2] As Hsinya Huang notes, because the railroad passed through their territories, Paiute and Shoshone workers were hired during the construction of the transcontinental railroad. The Central Pacific Railroad drastically underpaid Paiute, Shoshone, and Chinese workers and subjected them to far harsher conditions than their Irish and Italian counterparts; Chinese workers subsequently went on strike in 1867 to demand wage parity with white workers. These shared conditions of exploitation created new forms of intimacies between Chinese and Native (Paiute and Shoshone) nations, including via intermarriage.

That erasure has a longer history; as Manu Karuka points out, the exploitation of Chinese workers enabled Indigenous dispossession while simultaneously developing the U.S. project of imperial expansion.[3] Moreover, this coterminous attachment to exclusionary white settler colonialism—as expressed through affects such as grief, longing, and desire—and erasure of Indigeneity is not unique to Tam's installation. Works by emerging artists including Yowshien Kuo, Stephanie Mei Huang, and Oscar yi Hou have similarly been examining the impossibility of Asian subjects properly inhabiting the role of the cowboy.[4] Some of these works are ambivalent and use the figure of the Asian cowboy to raise questions about the violence of whiteness; others are more positively moored to the promises of U.S. assimilation. In the latter instances, the cowboy is not so much a melancholic object but a site of reclamation that more closely resembles Chin's *Chickencoop Chinaman.*

In addition to Chin's *Chickencoop Chinaman,* plays such as Sang Kim's *Ballad of a Karaoke Cowboy* and Michael Golamco's *Cowboy vs. Samurai* lament the paradox of the Asian cowboy. In these narratives, Asian cowboys in contemporary settings amplify the exclusion of Asian American masculinities from hegemonic constructions, often through representations of normative gender relations. In Golamco's *Cowboy vs. Samurai,* for example, a Korean American school teacher obsessed with cowboys competes with his white colleague for the affections of their new colleague, a Korean American woman. In *Ballad,* Kim stages a tragedy of multiracial encounter and role reversal under which Asian masculinities are unable to survive: Yong, a mentally ill,

karaoke-singing, Chinese Canadian man who believes himself to be Hopalong Cassidy, attempts to "ride off in the sunset" with Kiki, a Japanese ESL student. He suffers a tragic death at the hands of a Black sheriff during a showdown with two Cree men at an abandoned cottage in northern Ontario.[5] Modifying some of these conventions, in John Yau's short story "Hawaiian Cowboys," Hawai'i is a multicultural utopia where it is possible for Asian settlers and Native Hawaiians alike to be, and not just play, cowboy.[6] Likewise, historical revisionist fiction, such as C. Pam Zhang's *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* and Tom Lin's *The Thousand Crimes of Ming Tsu,* reimagines the American West from the perspective of Chinese labor and migration.[7]

Collectively, artists and writers such as these grapple with the effects of exclusion, though usually without attention to the broader histories and conditions of colonization that frame their experiences of marginalization and suppress Indigenous histories, relations, and modes of being. Though much Native studies scholarship has been dedicated to unraveling the peculiar American pastime of playing Indian, the phenomenon of playing cowboy has received less attention, perhaps because the reasons for white settlers taking on an exaggerated form of settler identity appear less unusual than choosing to dress up as a colonial stereotype.[8] The cowboy is the hero of Hollywood westerns, a persona adopted by U.S. presidents including Teddy Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, Ronald Reagan, and George W. Bush.[9] For Indigenous peoples, the figure of the cowboy evokes the trauma of colonialism; their cowboy play might reflect the internalization of colonial ideologies, or it might be a form of ironic critique. As Deena Rymhs's careful account shows, Indigenous writers, artists, and performers disrupt colonial associations of the cowboy through strategies ranging from critique to appropriation, to disidentification.[10] In the process, Rymhs suggests, they reveal the deep layers of entanglement through which the cowboy is intertwined with the Indian. Diasporic peoples playing cowboy, however, do so from a different social location than either white settlers or Indigenous peoples, raising questions about what this means: it is an aspirational performance of dominance, but one that is at some distance from the conditions of marginalization and subordination impacting non-Native diasporic peoples.

That much of this work is circulating in the wake of heightened anti-Asian violence during the Covid-19 pandemic, and amid continued

police brutality, incarceration, deportations, and environmental degradation under contexts of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism bears echoes of an earlier moment. During the 1992 uprisings that followed the Los Angeles Police Department's videorecorded assault of Rodney King, images of vigilante Korean American shopkeepers protecting private property from looters circulated widely. Reflecting on these images, David Palumbo-Liu has written that "Asians are again used as a fulcrum inserted between ethnic groups to leverage hegemonic racist ideology. A particular homology is set in place—Asians against blacks and Latinos as white settlers stood against 'pillaging' Indians. The Korean American 'cowboy' thus serves as a defamiliarized image of white America's manifest destiny."[11] Although many of the artists and writers I identify above present a critique of representations of the U.S. West, strategies like cowboy cosplay or revisionist histories also leave open the question: Where are the "Indians"? Byrd, who complicates Palumbo-Liu's influential reading with reference to the transit of empire, points us in some generative directions. As they point out, because significations of "Asianness" already contain "Indianness"—vis-à-vis the theory of Indigenous migration to the Americas via Asia, over the Bering Strait—"the Asian body is then made to bear cowboys *and* Indians."[12]

I am particularly interested in this doubleness, and how, rather than being oppositional, these positions—of Asians as cowboys or as Indians—may in fact be mutually reinforcing. Leaning into this ambivalence of Asian Americanness, this chapter examines the vexed relationships of Asian diasporic subjects to settler colonialism in order to ask, Why this consistent erasure, particularly in those instances where assimilation is understood as impossible, or, at best, marked by ambivalence? The turn to melancholia as a frame in this chapter pivots away from the notion of diasporic investments in settler colonialism as a moral failing, and instead as an uneven and contradictory process. My turn to melancholia also draws attention to the emotional draws of settler coloniality. In earlier iterations of this work, I described settler colonialism as "a project of desire," by which I meant that a dense node of feelings and affects animates settler colonialism, giving life to the legal and administrative apparatuses of settler states.[13] As Mark Rifkin asks in *Settler Common Sense,* "How do nonnatives actively participate in the ongoing remaking of settlement as a shift-

ing assemblage of ordinary actions, occupancies, ethics, aspirations, dispositions, and sensations?"[14] He goes on to describe as settler common sense the "nonconscious modes of settler habitation, habituation, and recalcitrance that displace engagement with ongoing Indigenous presence and peoplehood."[15] This might include, for instance, a feeling of connection or rootedness to place that displaces Indigenous knowledge, histories, and people. As the counterpart to settler laws and governance, the everyday "common sense" of settler colonialism, as outlined by Rifkin, coheres settler-colonial violence.

I follow Rifkin's line of inquiry insofar as I track melancholia—an everyday settler-colonial affect—but deviate from it insofar as I focus on the interior worlds of those who are "not quite" settlers, always improper mimics. I am riffing here, of course, on Bhabha's widely circulated insights into colonial mimicry. Colonial mimicry, according to him, refers to the way that colonial discourse ambivalently represents its Other "as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*"[16] In other words, the Other of colonial discourse is always already constituted through failure, consigned to being a poor copy of an original. Bhabha suggests that while colonial discourse relegates the Other to the role of mimic, this relegation simultaneously threatens the authority or authenticity of the colonial Self. To the extent that it reflects or exposes colonial discourse, he argues, the colonial mimic both reaffirms and undoes the authority of that discourse. While Bhabha's formulation makes sense within the context of colonizer/colonized discourse, it does not quite get to the "lateral" relations of difference that constitute the colonized position, particularly those that emerge through late capitalist globalization and multiculturalism. While the Brown non-Native cowboy does indeed both reaffirm and undo the presumed whiteness of the cowboy, I am not convinced that it unequivocally undoes its coloniality.[17] This is perhaps one effect of postmodern strategies of representation such as parody or mimicry that, as literary critic Linda Hutcheon points out, "[manage] to install and reinforce as much as they undermine and subvert the conventions and presuppositions [they appear] to challenge." Hutcheon refers to this effect as "complicitous critique."[18] There are, moreover, vastly different stakes in playing cowboy as a nonwhite and non-Native person than as a Native person. Sociologist Michael Yellow Bird (Three Affiliated Tribes) powerfully enunciates these differences when he

discusses the everyday implications of watching Hollywood westerns on the reservation.[19] I quote him at length here:

> Most of the men in my small reservation community made an everyday affair of wearing some vestige of cowboy apparel: hats, boots, shirts with mother-of-pearl buttons, silver belt buckles with golden inlaid bucking bulls or horses, and hand-tooled leather belts with an individual's first or last name engraved in western-style letters. Wanting so much to emulate the dress of our male role models, whom we noticed often occupied the alpha position in our community because of how they behaved, talked, and dressed, we young boys took to nagging our parents about getting us cowboy boots and clothes. . . .
>
> The everyday discourse of people in my community was also highly supportive of the master narrative. Many of the men called each other "cowboy," and some would self-identify as an Indian cowboy. Often when male children cooperated or did some good deed they would be praised by being called cowboys. One of the groups that policed our appearance were the older men in my community who would often say that we (young boys) didn't look like cowboys at all but instead "looked like girls" whenever our hair got even the slightest bit long. My grandfather, a product of Indian boarding schools who sported a crew-cut hairstyle, never failed to rescue us from this name calling. I remember many hot summer days when he would round up us boys (his grandsons) and take us to my mother's house and give us "marine-style" haircuts (which we called skinners) while my mother and our older female relatives looked on and praised our cooperation saying, "Gee, you look good now, you look just like a cowboy." However, getting our heads shaved was never a pleasant experience since it felt like being emotionally robbed of our spirit and our ability to say no. With tears running down our little brown, dirt-stained faces, we would walk out of the house, eyes cast down, feeling humiliated and violated, looking like small brown skinheads. I don't ever recall any adults saying to us, "Gee, you look good now, you look like an Indian."[20]

These are historically produced conditions of trauma and pain that are not equivalent to the sense of exclusion that nonwhite subjects might

feel in relation to the cowboy. What Yellow Bird describes here is "felt knowledge" of colonialism, to use Dian Million's (Tanana Athabascan) concept.[21] For Indigenous peoples, the hegemonic masculinity tied up with the figure of the cowboy is not just aspirational, but entangled with the intergenerational trauma of boarding schools. There, teachers denigrated Indigenous forms of masculinity, and attacked Indigenous forms of gender, sexuality, and kinship, reinforcing the heteropatriarchal ideologies embedded in federal policies such as the 1887 Dawes Act, which privatized communally held Indigenous lands by redistributing allotments to nuclear family households.

"Playing cowboy," then, is more than just a performance of dominance as described by Bhabha; the concept of mimicry does not fully capture its uneven stakes. Given these circumstances, how do we make sense of the diasporic feeling that one is not quite a cowboy, the quintessential settler—but aspires, wishes, and longs to be one? Yau's protagonist in "Hawaiian Cowboy" captures this sense when he thinks about his childhood fantasy of being a cowboy: "I remember a photograph of me when I was a child, dressed up like Hopalong Cassidy, and the Davy Crockett that I begged my mother to buy me for Christmas. This was before I realized I could never be Wyatt Earp, Jesse James, or Daniel Boone."[22] The sentiments shared by Yau's protagonist are made possible through the conflation of settler and national identity. The settler/native binary, for example, emerges through laws that regulate Native land and identity, a series of which dictate the rights and jurisdictions of Natives and settlers in the United States.[23] Across these, the settler subject *as a settler* is invisible, and folded instead into the categories of national citizenship (because settler states do not necessarily see themselves as colonial, and because "Native," though a colonial category, is perceived as a racial identity). "Settler," therefore, is a retroactive reading of a de facto position that emerges out of a colonial relationship.

The categories of settler/Native are complicated further in relation to other categories of citizenship, such as immigrant or refugee; discourses of cultural citizenship that are deeply entangled with race, gender, and sexuality render the category of settler even more incoherent.[24] Investigating this complicated, contradictory incoherence, I examine two films within the archive of Asian diasporic insertions into the western: Sunny Lee's short film *Cowgirl* (1996) and the dramatic feature *Wild West* (1992), directed by David Attwood and based

on a screenplay by Harwant Bains, who also served as a production consultant.[25] Though both are independent films, the conditions for their production are distinct. Sunny Lee self-financed *Cowgirl* shortly after graduating from college, relying on in-kind donations for equipment. Her plan at the time was to become a filmmaker; *Cowgirl* was her debut. The seventeen-minute film screened at a number of festivals across North America in the mid-1990s. It also screened on the Sundance TV channel in the United States and Women's Television Network in Canada, and in in-flight entertainment selections of Northwest, Singapore Air, Cathay Pacific, and Air New Zealand.[26] The film has been out of circulation since then.

The more amply financed *Wild West* was produced by Channel 4, the filmmaking wing of the BBC established by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1982. State owned but privately funded through ad revenues, Channel 4 was intended to boost market-driven cinema by providing a platform for independent film for minority audiences. Channel 4's primary role, in other words, has been to support distribution and circulation. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that following a limited run in British, U.S., and German cinemas—it screened at the Edinburgh and Toronto International Film Festivals as well as the Dallas-based USA Film Festival—*Wild West* is the only film discussed in this book that is available for streaming rental and purchase on Amazon Prime.

Despite these differences in production contexts, both films deploy the figure of the cowboy as a marketing hook for prospective audiences, and as an object of fascination for the films' protagonists, gesturing to its cultural currency. I have selected these two in particular not only for the "range" they represent—*Cowgirl* is one of the few films featuring a female protagonist; *Wild West* focuses on British South Asians—but for the distinct responses to racial-settler grief they present. These are films that speak to divergent histories and contexts of colonization, migration, and racialization. Each reflects intimate, melancholic meditations on the impossibilities of ever belonging completely to settler/colonial society. In them, the cowboy, and the American "Wild West" more generally, serve as fetish objects through which Asian diasporic subjects both process grief and loss, and project desires for home and belonging. Although pessimistic and ambivalent affects across these works offer poignant critiques of settler colonialism, there is also a pattern of consistent Indigenous erasure across these films and other

cultural objects. I hold onto the contradictions inherent in appreciating these films as simultaneous sites of critique, and as sites for critique that invite diasporic communities to meditate on our complicities.

ASIAN MELANCHOLIA

Sigmund Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia" defines two psychic processes that contribute to subject formation, and distinguishes them from one another. Mourning, according to Freud, is the reaction to an identifiable loss, such as "a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on."[27] It is a finite process in which one recognizes the loss and, eventually, lets go and moves on. But if the lost object withdraws from consciousness, the grieving process turns inward, and the subject swallows the lost object, infinitely deferring mourning's "end": this is melancholia. Melancholia refers to unnamable, undefinable grief—it is the *feeling* of loss that emerges when one identifies with the lost object and incorporates it to the extent that the previously mournable thing is forever lost and unknown. In her powerful extension of Freud's ideas, Anne Cheng argues that racialized subjects are both melancholic objects *and* melancholic subjects. For Cheng, Black and Brown bodies are the lost objects constituting the (American) white national ego-ideal, which disavows their labor and exploitation. As racialized subjects, they carry the grief that emanates from this exclusion. Yet racialized—or, for the purposes of this project, Asian diasporic—subjects are not uniform, and as melancholic subjects they are also constituted through other kinds of loss and erasure that are muddled and entangled with one another. Reflecting on the melancholia that hangs over Lee Isaac Chung's 2020 film *Minari,* Cheng writes that the film's "quiet fathoms . . . give us a patient and tender view into what it means to be sustained by a dream you can never fully occupy."[28] What Cheng leaves unanswered is the stakes of those dreams. What happens when we identify the melancholia of Asian diasporic subjects as related not just to their perpetual exclusion but also to their attachment to U.S. settler colonialism that generates and has been generated by violence? In posing such a question, I bring recent discussions of race and diaspora alongside settler-colonial and Indigenous studies to bear on Cheng's framework of racial melancholia. To lay it out: diasporic attachments to settler colonialism

register the lost possibility of assimilation into white settler culture. White settler colonialism is a lost object for diasporic subjects who are formed in relation to this lack, who desire incorporation into settler culture, and subsequently swallow, absorb, and incorporate settler coloniality—including its constitutive violence. As Cheng observes, riffing on Freud, "the melancholic eats the lost object—feeds on it, as it were."[29]

Cowgirl and *Wild West* examine divergent relationships to the cowboy. Across both films settler-colonial loss/attachment is projected onto a fetish object: the cowboy, including the many objects associated with it and the American West (from now forward, I will use "cowboy" as shorthand for all of these objects). For Freud, the fetish was a substitute for the loss emerging from the realization that the mother lacked a phallus.[30] He saw as perverse the inability to recognize that loss and to then direct one's attention from the fetish toward a more normative object choice. It is worth noting that in theorizing the fetish, Freud was engaging with a concept coined by French philosopher Charles de Brosse, and further developed by thinkers such as Auguste Comte, Immanuel Kant, and G. W. F. Hegel, each of whom drew from colonial travel writings from across the world, particularly West Africa.[31] For these writers, the fetish referred to improper objects of worship by Indigenous peoples, and the existence of fetish objects signified irrationality and savagery that was distinguished from the ostensible reason and civilization of Christian Europeans, one that Freud held onto in his own theorization, with "primitive" Indigenous societies serving as analogs for psychological under- or maldevelopment. At the same time (as Judith Butler has demonstrated) Freud's theory of fetish is rife with contradictions: if the fetish is substitutable for the phallus, the fetish also undoes the primacy of the phallus as site of pleasure.[32] Broken down this way, Freud's theory of fetish thus also implicitly destabilizes the colonial discourse that it is constituted by.

Cowgirl and *Wild West* each examine such "perverse" fetishizations of the cowboy, in the Freudian sense. Yet, the consumption is incomplete, never entirely possible.[33] *Cowgirl* makes sense of this impossibility eventually by letting go—the melancholic becomes mourned object. In *Wild West* there is a stubborn refusal to let go, and to remain perpetually ambivalent in relation to the cowboy. The cowboy as fetish object transforms from representative of settler-colonial culture into a thing unto itself. *Wild West,* Freud might say, is perverse in this

respect. This perversion opens up a space of possibility for the cultivation of alternate worlds at the conclusion of *Wild West,* but it also elides Indigeneity as South Asian "Indians" fully fuse with the cowboy.

THE CASUALTIES OF ASIAN DIASPORIC ATTACHMENTS

Freud notes too that melancholia is narcissistic: the lost object feeds and forms the ego (in this case, the Asian diasporic subject). Loss perpetuates narcissism insofar as it creates the conditions for a singular focus on the wound, injury, or lack. For instance, as David Eng discusses in *Racial Castration,* the racial injury inflicted on some racialized communities through their feminization within popular cultures and media serves to shore up dominant white masculinities. Yet when racialized subjects aspire toward this dominant construction of masculinity, he observes, "the struggle to recompose the psychic and material body of the racialized masculine subject can often result in the ascribing of conservative norms to emancipatory political projects."[34] Readers grounded in Asian American studies will remember that in his works, the canonical writer Frank Chin, for example—along with his collaborators on the 1974 *Aiiieeeee!* anthology—attempted to repair Asian American racial injury by portraying Asian masculinity as more pure or virile than white masculinity, with the Chinese railroad worker standing in as the ultimate man.[35] This is reflected in the main plot of Chin's play *The Chickencoop Chinaman,* which is intercut by scenes in which the protagonist, Tom Lum, converses with the Lone Ranger; Lum believes that the Lone Ranger wore a mask because he was in fact Chinese.

Such recuperative strategies are not unique to Asian American scholarship or cultural production; Billy-Ray Belcourt (Driftpile Cree) likewise critiques Native studies' installation of the "Red Power-like warrior" as the ultimate revolutionary subject, one which relegates Indigenous feminist and queer inquiry to the margins.[36] In *States of Injury,* feminist political theorist Wendy Brown correspondingly warns of the pitfalls of speaking as a wounded subject, cautioning that centering attention on experience and injury risks reinstalling (and thus essentializing) identity at the expense of interrogating how that identity comes to be produced in the first place.[37] Under the narcissistic conditions of melancholia, what happens to relationality? In the context of the AIDS epidemic, art historian Douglas Crimp has argued that the

inability to mourn deaths by AIDS produced melancholic gay conservative responses to the crisis that understood sexual pleasure and promiscuity as "infantile" and advocated for monogamous respectability.[38] In other words, in its turn inward and toward assimilation, the melancholic reaction in this case killed relationality. Stretching Crimp's formulation, I read the pattern of Indigenous absence in Asian diasporic westerns also as an effect of the Asian diasporic melancholic reaction: Indigeneity does not figure into the grief over Asian exclusion, over the uneven and imperfect incorporation of Asian subjects into white national cultures. It does not compute; it does not register. However, unlike gay conservatives who explicitly disavow relationality, there is not necessarily a parallel disavowal of Indigeneity. Instead, the narcissism of melancholia generates the erasure and absence of Indigeneity, such that the erasure appears incidental. Occluded in this schema are both historical intimacies—such as the queer cross-racial encounters between Asian and Native men described by the historian Nayan Shah in the homosocial context of the American West, or "queer frontier," as literary critic Blake Allmendinger calls it—as well as potential future ones.[39] To elucidate: settler colonialism is constituted through structural erasure and the infinite deferral and displacement of Indigenous presence; through the disavowal of Indigenous bodies, relations, and knowledge. If settler-colonial culture is the lost object of Asian diasporic subjectivity, then Indigeneity endures a double erasure, first through settler-colonial violence and subsequently through Asian diasporic absorption of settler colonialism that is unable to adequately register Indigeneity. Whereas Asian diasporic subject formation happens in reaction to the primary loss of settler colonialism, then fractured Asian-Indigenous relations are absorbed into that loss. *Cowgirl, Wild West,* and the work of Kenneth Tam and others painfully enunciate this argument: Asian-Indigenous relationality is the cost of diasporic attachments to settler colonialism.

This opens up onto another question: what happens to relationality when we are preoccupied with tending to the wounds of racism, exploitation, militarism, and colonization? The distinct responses that *Cowgirl* and *Wild West* propose to problems of diasporic exclusion and identity have in common a consistent pattern of Indigenous erasure. As examples of Asian diasporic westerns, these films amplify diasporic reactions to white settler society's exclusions. Yet all diasporic cultural production is narcissistic to the extent that it is, understandably, fo-

cused on the self (Asian diasporic subjectivity). To repeat, Asian-Indigenous relationality is the casualty in the struggle to address the harms diasporic subjects experience under white settler colonialism.

Amid this erasure, I see in the afterlives of both films possibilities that are never entirely foreclosed. While neither *Cowgirl* nor *Wild West* engage directly with Indigeneity, their mournful and melancholic affects create a sense of openness at the films' respective ends. Here, I wonder what might happen if we take and stretch Freud's theory of mourning and melancholia. What if, as a critical viewing practice, we mourn the Asian-Indigenous relations that have been lost—the missed connections, the missed love and care, the missed repair and reparation: the protests we failed to show up for, the solidarity we did not express, the friendships that did not happen, the collaborations that never materialized. What if we recognize the loss that has come from attending to the wounds of diasporic pain? Viewing these films as archives of Indigenous erasure emanating from melancholic reactions to white settler colonialism—rather than solely as archives of Asian diasporic struggles with identity and inclusion, for example—opens up the latent potential that the films' narratives already present. My discussion of the films considers both these registers: the explicit intention to archive struggles with identity and exclusion, against the unwitting archival of Indigenous erasure.

COWGIRL: CONSUMPTION AND DESIRE

Sunny Lee's *Cowgirl* situates Asian diasporic belonging in the context of the intimate entanglements of settler colonialism, militarism, sex, and desire.[40] It reveals, in other words, some of the "obscured connections"—to cite Lisa Lowe—of racial capitalism and empire.[41] However, to make these important connections, it ironically depends on the implicit substitution of South Koreans (and Korean or Asian Americans more broadly) for Native Americans, both framed as undifferentiated victims of colonization.

Sandra Oh plays Sara Huang in *Cowgirl,* a young Korean American woman in Los Angeles who is obsessed with all things western: she dresses in gingham and paisley, regularly dons cowboy boots and hats; and she loves country music, rodeos, westerns, and "cowboy food" like baked beans. Western paraphernalia signals the limits and impossibility of Asian diasporic belonging and assimilation; Sara's

obsession is over-the-top and excessive, both within the world of the film, and as Lee presents it to viewers. At the same time, Lee takes Sara's obsession seriously, taking care to situate and understand it. If Sara aspires to white settler assimilation, the film embeds that aspiration and desire within an entangled U.S.-Pacific history of colonialism, imperialism, and militarism through its citations of histories of food and popular culture. At the same time, presenting the cowboy and Wild West as metaphors and objects of consumption wrests them from their historical associations and significance for ongoing settler colonization. By framing these objects as primarily accessible vis-à-vis globalized culture, Lee implicitly situates settler-colonial meanings of the cowboy in a nineteenth-century past, effectively substituting the past violence of settler colonialism with the racism, displacement, and xenophobia of the globalized present. There is thus a tension in the film: it creates space for understanding desires for belonging and assimilation as fraught and enmeshed within entangled histories, but that space making ironically relies on the displacement of Indigeneity.

The film opens with Sara's voice talking over a romantic scene from a black-and-white western that she watches intently while eating a can of Spam with red chopsticks (Figure 4). The camera slowly pans from the small television set to various processed food items—Wonder Bread, a can of Ranch Style Beans, Ritz Crackers, a can of apple juice, a cheese plate—then moves up from her red cowboy boots, to her paisley-print western-style shirt, to her ten-gallon hat. The unexpected clustering of these objects with an Asian woman's body, in combination with the character's excessive desire in what seems a private, intimate moment—generates a comedic effect. As Lee recalls, there was often a lot of "chuckling" at screenings, though it "was not a 'LOL' film."[42] The scene's humor comes from its unsettling of expectations; in the process, it also clarifies what the expectations are: that the cowboy is not an object of consumption for Asian women—and that, perhaps, Asian women are not meant to be desiring subjects—that cowboys are men, and that they are primarily white men. As the historian Philip Deloria (Dakota) has argued in the context of representations of Indigeneity, "Expectations and anomalies are mutually constitutive."[43] Marking the Asian cowgirl as an anomaly simultaneously marks dominant cultural expectations for the gendered racialization of the cowboy.

This rich scene also establishes the film's seeing framework, inviting viewers to take in a number of intimate connections. Routing Sara's

FIGURE 4. Sara (Sandra Oh) eats Spam with chopsticks; screenshot from *Cowgirl.*

desire through processed foods, and specifically Spam—the ubiquitous, highly processed, canned pork-and-ham amalgam that the U.S. government distributed to army bases across the Pacific—and visually linking Spam to chopsticks, a salient signifier of East Asian cultures, Lee immediately situates Sara's obsession in relation to the U.S. military intimacies that have led to Spam's incorporation into Asian and Pacific Islander food cultures.[44] The cluster of signifiers in this scene implicitly gestures to the transformation of military outposts into settler spaces, which Jodi Kim refers to as the "settler garrison." As she writes, "The United States, in particular its military, can exercise certain jurisdictional and sovereign powers in specific locales or spatial exceptions across Asia and the Pacific that it has transformed into . . . the settler garrison. Thus, although Seoul . . . is a global megacity . . . it is the capital city of what is effectively a militarized U.S. neocolony."[45] By visually linking the cowboy to U.S. militarism, *Cowgirl* also invites the audience to see the cowboy as a transnational figure whose violent expansion of the American West symbolically and materially frames the U.S. empire. As Richard Slotkin explains, the "frontier myth" that many classic westerns promulgate has foundationally impacted American culture and politics, as evident in everything from the "cowboy presidencies" (Nixon, Reagan, G. W. Bush), to the frontier language that military and government officials and media pundits have used to code and describe America's wars in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.[46]

The mobilization of the cowboy and frontier mythology in the service or war and empire is not just an evocation of the distant past: as Kevin Bruyneel notes, this is an instantiation of "settler memory" that actively upholds ongoing settler-colonial violence.[47] Although Bruyneel theorizes settler memory primarily in terms of state memory, that memory is also absorbed and incorporated by the state's subjects. Is settler memory at work in *Cowgirl,* or does it in fact call attention to settler memory's machinations? This is open to interpretation. Though *Cowgirl* invites us to make connections between the cowboy and U.S. militarism, I wonder about the cowboy's counterpart: the Indian. It is the "Indian" of "cowboys and Indians" who makes the cowboy legible as a figure of manifest destiny, vigilantism, and lawlessness. With *Cowgirl,* I am left wondering whether the Indigenous peoples whose bodies and ancestors have been violated by the cowboy have not been substituted, ironically, by other kinds of colonial subjects: in this case, South Koreans, particularly those in the U.S. diaspora.

The film again underscores settler and military entanglements in a scene where elders invite Sara to take the karaoke stage at an intergenerational Korean barbecue. Sara requests John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads," which she sings with her childhood friend Steve. There are dense nodes of meaning knotted into this moment: "Country Roads" is a song about West Virginia, a celebration of white settler, rural Appalachian life and its attendant geographies.[48] But, as Karen Tongson notes, it is also a song that became popular across the U.S. Pacific (including the Philippines, Vietnam, and South Korea) through military radio, and is a frequent karaoke selection.[49] She states that "karaoke functioned as a vehicle of nostalgia for those in the diaspora who longed to connect with memories of 'home' through certain musical repertoires, even if some of those repertoires were actually already comprised of American pop hits folks grew to love when they were still 'back home' (e.g., songs by the Carpenters, or any of the Johns—Elton, Olivia Newton, Denver)."[50] Thus, while audiences outside these diasporic communities may hear it as nostalgia for a fantasy of American settler life, for those in-the-know, it more aptly signifies a nostalgia for "back home" in Asia. Sara's enthusiasm for "Country Roads" thus carries double meanings: as a wish to become indigenized in the United States, but also as a longing for an Asian "back home," if not in South Korea, then in the familiar diasporic spaces where she presumably grew up singing karaoke renditions of the song. In this

way, *Cowgirl* depicts Asian diasporic dislocations of the song's significations that enact unintentional cross-colonial solidarities, as they shift the song's meaning from a nostalgia for settler landscapes to a nostalgia for a familiar, homey experience of karaoke. At the same time, the original meaning of the song remains, held fast by Sara's assimilatory desires. The film thus registers the dissimilar experiences of colonialism that U.S. settler empire generates across differentiated sites, particularly as the double meanings of the song sit in fraught tension with one another.

Cowgirl draws attention not just to the everyday food and sonic cultures generated by U.S. militarism but also—perhaps most significantly—to the desire economies that it has cultivated. Such economies have cast Asian women alternatively as passive or lascivious sexual objects of an Orientalist, heteropatriarchal gaze. The film disrupts these economies by presenting Sara as an actively desiring subject, with food—and specifically white, "bland" dairy foods—as a symbol for Sara's excessive desires.[51] In one scene, she messily eats a vanilla soft-serve cone on the beach in her ten-gallon hat, red cowboy boots, and gingham bikini when she spots her object of desire, rodeo rider Dave. When he notices her, she self-consciously stops eating her cone. When they later share a meal at a nearby diner, she sips on a glass of milk through a straw, nearly spurting it out in excited laughter in the course of their fairly mundane conversation (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5. Sara drinks milk with Dave at a local diner; screenshot from *Cowgirl*.

Contrasting Dave—an improper object choice—is friend Steve, a car mechanic, who is the understanding voice of reason in the film. Steve calls Sara on her obsession but accepts it; during a scene at the barbecue, aunties knowingly nudge and wink at them and encourage Steve to "protect" Sara. Sara's obsession with Dave, and with the figure of the cowboy, unravels after she sees him with another (white) woman. She and Steve are at a diner together after the barbecue, and she eats voraciously, the implication being that she has saved her appetite for whiter foods. When she spots Dave and the woman in the parking lot, she scrambles to her car to follow them, but a group of white rednecks accost her from a neighboring car, mocking her cowgirl outfit and shouting Asian slurs. Sara responds by throwing leftover barbecue food at them. Food again serves as metaphor for her emotions, but this time it is Korean food that expresses antiracist rage. In the final scene, Sara is back at the beach. She carries back two soft-serve vanilla cones, but leaves her hat at the ice cream stand. She stands in the sand, looking out somewhere into the distance; as she does, we hear her singing "Country Roads" again, and the end credits roll. The "home" of "Country Roads" more firmly signifies now as Sara's return to her "roots" and to Steve, the ostensibly more proper object-choice. By abandoning her fetish (symbolized through the cowboy hat), Sara lets go of the lost object, and disassociates it from her sexual desires (symbolized through the ice cream). Her relationship to white settler culture transforms, no longer melancholic. The lingering "Country Roads"—in Sara's voice, not John Denver's—suggests more of a permanent incorporation and absorption; she has been forever changed.

One might read *Cowgirl*'s politics as conservative given that it appears to pit female desire against racial affiliation: she abandons her pursuit of Dave and her cowboy fetish, perhaps to settle with Steve. One might argue too that the "taming" of Sara's excess corresponds to diasporic cultural politics that seek to preserve culture with recourse to heteropatriarchal norms. But in contrast to Hollywood's overwhelming representation of Asian–white interracial romance in terms of anxieties around "yellow peril"—wherein, as Gina Marchetti has convincingly demonstrated, representations of relationships between Asian women and white men have served to "create a mythic image of Asia that empowers the West and rationalizes Euroamerican authority over the Asian other"—the film presents an alternate configuration of race and desire that upends assumptions about exotic

Asian femininity.[52] Moreover, the film's focus on the inner world of Sara *as a cowgirl* rather than on Sara's objects of desire (Dave or Steve) complicates an interpretation of the film as conservative. Rather, Sara's cosplay, which also increases her proximity to whiteness, is indicative of the entanglements of racialization, gender, and desire insofar as Sara believes her access to whiteness vis-à-vis heteropatriarchy—as symbolized by the western romance she watches in the opening scene—is conditional both on her own assimilation into whiteness and her attachment to the white cowboy, Dave. If, as Yvonne Tasker argues, "the Western is a genre in which white men and women achieve a freedom in class terms that is simply unimaginable in other genres," Sara's insertion into the genre *as a cowgirl* is also about her access to self-actualization and freedom.[53] In other words, her access to the privileges of white settler America hinges both on her own transformation to a specific kind of white femininity and her connection to Dave. The film thus invites us not just to think about the cowboy as a representation of idealized American masculinity but also to reflect on the politics of sex, gender, and desire as a means of negotiating racial injury. However, in contrast to Frank Chin's recuperation of Asian masculinity as more pure or virile than white masculinity, Sara wrests her Asian American femininity from the position of the already-excessively feminine by choosing to play cowgirl and not domestic goddess (or geisha, or "lotus blossom").[54] She thus mimics a form of white femininity that is transgressive of gender norms, even if not radically so.

I want to close out this section by thinking through the stakes of Lee's deployment of the cowboy and Wild West as metaphors for American culture that is out of reach. Two things are notable here. First, the film positions Asian diasporas as tenuously and ambivalently positioned with respect to the United States, including U.S. settler culture. Lee makes painfully clear that the cowboy is not equally consumable by everyone. In other words, despite the transnational proliferation of westerns and western paraphernalia, these objects remain cathected to white bodies, and to mythologies of Euro-American settler expansion. Thus, recognition as a cowboy—or, recognition in terms of everything signified by this figure—is conditioned through race. This inability to recognize the nonwhite cowboy recalls Fanon's classic discussion of Black identity in *Black Skin, White Masks,* where the Black male subject continually finds his subjectivity overdetermined by race,

unrecognized by the dominant gaze.[55] *Cowgirl* gestures toward the failure of recognition discussed by Fanon by continually pointing to the inevitability and impossibility of an Asian woman playing cowboy. This is a relationship of failure and negotiated belonging.

Second, as much as *Cowgirl* is a film about the inner worlds of its subjects, there are absences and silences that constitute its reflections. It is not that *Cowgirl* obliterates these other meanings tied to the cowboy/Wild West, but that there is an excision of the Indigenous histories, stories, and experiences that make the film's worlds possible. Whereas settler colonialism consigns Indigeneity to death and obliteration, *Cowgirl*'s appropriations of settler-colonial culture—as symbolized through the cowboy—unwittingly repeat the presumed inevitability of Indigenous death. This is the double erasure I referred to earlier in the chapter, or, in Hutcheon's terms, a form of complicitous critique. In registering the loss that Sara comes to terms with, the film both enacts settler colonialism's original erasures and, through Sara's performance of mimicry, repeats them. Within the structural frame of the film, which centers on the grief caused by settler colonialism's exclusions, Indigeneity—the absence and displacement of which constitutes settler colonialism—does not register. I thus watch this film not just with the hopeful sense that the protagonist has comes to terms with her identity and sense of belonging in white settler America, but also with the grief over the losses that remain unnameable within this frame, of Asian-Indigenous histories and relations.

WILD WEST: THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF RESIGNIFICATION

In *Cowgirl,* Sara consumes and attempts to absorb the cowboy and Wild West, the ultimate objects of white settler culture. In *Wild West,* the protagonists not only consume but attempt to resignify these objects—and consistently fail, maintaining an "unhealthy" obsession with the cowboy (Figure 6). The film is set in Southall, a predominantly working-class South Asian suburb of West London with a history of tensions between police and South Asian youth. In 1976, the death of a young Sikh man, Gurdip Singh Chaggar, sparked the formation of the Southall Youth Movement to protest racism and police brutality.[56] Though no one pressed charges, many believed that Chaggar was killed at the hands of white supremacist youth.[57] The movement was further galvanized in 1979 by the police murder of New Zealand

FIGURE 6. Naveen Andrews as aspiring country musician Zaf; screenshot from *Wild West.*

schoolteacher Blair Peach, at a rally to protest the growth of organized racism in East London.[58] *Wild West*'s narrative of youth rebellion and British South Asian working-class communities unfolds in this context of race and racism in Southall specifically, and Britain more generally.

The film's setting and context are significant insofar as they portray a more distant and transnational relationship to U.S. settler cultures and politics: in *Wild West,* the cowboy is a figure of possibility for non-Americans desiring recognition within a system of transnational whiteness. Whereas the cowboy for Sara in *Cowgirl* symbolizes white America, in *Wild West* the cowboy signifies differently as a marker of excessive difference and rebelliousness that contrasts against other kinds of music-based youth subcultures in the United Kingdom, such as those formed around rock, punk, reggae, or hip hop.[59] In the film, the cowboy and British South Asians share the status of being foreign and postcolonial in relation to the United Kingdom, odd cousins of the erstwhile British empire. It is worth noting here too that South Asian migration patterns to the United States and United Kingdom differ significantly. In the United States, South Asians have immigrated primarily as highly skilled workers.[60] This has

contributed to their perception as model minorities, and their participation in that myth. Vijay Prashad, among others, has argued that the model minority myth contributes to anti-Black racism, as South Asian success is attributed to the result of biological or cultural traits, wherein the myth obfuscates the systemic production of "success" and "failure" while denying the salience of race.[61] By contrast, in the United Kingdom, citizens from across Commonwealth countries gained entry into the state through Commonwealth rules following World War II.[62] Unlike their U.S. counterparts, British South Asians are predominantly working class.[63] Moreover, because of the structural similarities between South Asian and Afro-Caribbean migrants, there has been a longer history of alliance between the two, as race politics in the United Kingdom have been framed through discourses of national belonging, enabling increased possibilities for multiracial alliance formation.[64]

This working-class South Asian diasporic context frames the film. The slippage between Asian "Indians" playing cowboy and the cowboy's substitutability for "Indian"—where "Indian" stands in for the colonized, and where cowboys are conflated with Americans, who are former colonial subjects of Britain—sets up *Wild West*'s running punch line. The film mines the characteristic vigilantism and lawlessness of the cowboy to present the protagonists as an even more radical counterpart to other youth subcultural formations.[65] Though this might seem ironic, it speaks to the transnational appeal of the western. While the film theorist Andre Bazin—perplexed by the western's reach—attributes this to "a secret that somehow identifies [the western] with the essence of cinema," I would suggest that its appeal may lie in its paradoxically colonial anticoloniality.[66] As Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz astutely notes, while popular histories may mark 1898 as the beginnings of U.S. imperialism, " 'American' supremacy and populist imperialism are inseparable from the content of the U.S. origin story and the definition of patriotism in the United States today. . . . The founding of the United States marked a split in the British Empire, not an anticolonial liberation movement."[67] Although there is little disagreement that the western depicts conquest and colonization, it is conquest and colonization that doubles as anticolonial fantasy. Unlike aristocratic European colonization, popular conceptions of American colonization frame it as rough, uncouth, and lawless. The national mythology of the United States imagines Americans as simultaneously European and Indigenous, yoking together the historical prowess of Europe with the

authentic "savagery" of Indigeneity. According to Deloria, this paradox of American national identity emerged in relation to a desire to formulate a distinctly American sense of self that was distinguishable from a British or European one. He writes:

> Whereas Euro-Americans had imprisoned themselves in the logical mind and the social order, Indians represented instinct and freedom. They spoke for the "spirit of the continent." Whites desperately desired that spirit, yet they invariably failed to become aboriginal and thus "finished." Savage Indians served Americans as oppositional figures against whom one might imagine a civilized national Self. Coded as freedom, however, wild Indianness proved equally attractive, setting up a "have-the-cake-and-eat-it-too" dialectic of simultaneous desire and repulsion.[68]

If the crown and royal family symbolize British empire, the cowboy symbolizes American empire. America paradoxically spreads civilization *through* vigilante forms of justice that themselves lack civility. Absorbing and appropriating Indigeneity, American national imaginaries (as articulated through venues such as popular culture and political discourse) frame themselves as successfully *post*colonial in relation to Britain.

Wild West's protagonists mime and mine the cowboy's "postcoloniality." The film's plot centers on the struggles of an aspiring country music band composed of young South Asian men in the United Kingdom: Zaf Ayub (Naveen Andrews), along with his bandmates in the Honky Tonk Cowboys, dreams of making it big and moving to Nashville, Tennessee. He faces many obstacles along the way: his mother, who frequently admonishes Zaf and his brothers for bringing shame to their family; his disgruntled employers (he can't seem to hold a steady job); the vengeful Tappers (a local group of rocker/punk Brown men), who believe Zaf's brother Ali—a used car mechanic and salesman—has cheated them; and English society in generally, where systemic racism limits Zaf's potential for fame. Zaf's brief romance with Rifat (Sarita Chowdhury), a young woman in an abusive relationship, opens up a space of possibility for the Honky Tonks. Her singing talents and "exotic" looks help the band land a meeting with (fictional) Wild West Records. However, the record label producer ultimately decides that they want to produce Rifat as a solo act, because the Honky Tonks are otherwise not "marketable." In the end, Zaf and the band take off

to Nashville to realize their dreams. Echoing a trend in British South Asian film and writing more generally, the Honky Tonks perceive the "postcolonial" United States, in contrast to the United Kingdom, as a space of possibility and freedom.[69] Though the film troubles the perception of the United States as multicultural utopia, it does not necessarily upend the notion of a postcolonial United States. When the Wild West producer, for example, explains why the band would be untenable in the United States, he points to the slippages of U.S. multiculturalism through an overemphasis on visual registers of recognition, rather than historically distinct processes of racialization:

> Back in the US, they see a picture of you, they say, "Oh boy. Red Indians trying to play country." Maybe down in Texas . . . in Texas they say, "These hombros [*sic*] are Mexican! Trying to play our music." Then they get fucking historical. [They] say, "Remember the Alamo."

The film points out the representational limits of the cowboy, but in the process performs a slippage of its own: it implies that the stakes for South Asian "Indians" playing cowboy are the same as the stakes for Indigenous "Red Indians" playing cowboy. "Indians" are conflated with a generalized colonial or racially marginalized status that is equally, if variably, vulnerable to misrecognition.

Like *Cowgirl*'s Sara, *Wild West*'s protagonist, Zaf, is obsessed with all things western. And like *Cowgirl, Wild West* is also a reflection on how the figure of the cowboy circulates through global capitalism and is negotiated locally in complex and sometimes contradictory ways, drawing attention to its production and consumption within popular cultures. By re-presenting the cowboy as Brown, *Wild West* undercuts some of the racial and colonial coding of the western, and its 1990s Southhall setting spatially and temporally dislocates the western from the nineteenth-century American West. Through its mise-en-scène, *Wild West*—again, like *Cowgirl*—is attentive to the historical material processes through which these objects circulate transnationally even as they are part of the everyday world of Zaf and the Honky Tonks: early in the film, for instance, the camera focuses on a billboard for "Cowboy brand Blackeye Beans"; western paraphernalia covers Zaf's bedroom, including posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, the Lone Ranger, and a Confederate flag; and the family home doubles as

FIGURE 7. Billboard for Cowboy brand beans; screenshot from *Wild West.*

brother Ali's western-themed car shop, complete with a cactus advertising sign, saloon doors, and a wagon wheel (Figure 7). The unexpected clustering of these objects, particularly the Confederate flag, around Brown men's bodies undercuts the seriousness of the young men's aspirations, serving as a reminder that the United States is not the space of freedom that they believe it to be.

The Honky Tonks' version of cowboy, however, is distinctive from the U.S. one, a mimicry that is intentionally "not quite."[70] During their performances for example, the Honky Tonks' cowboy outfits are brightly colored, fringed, and sparkling. If Zaf's style seems excessive, it mirrors his mother's. The family living room is a mishmash of colors, patterns, and objects: the room is covered in patterned wallpaper, the red sofa is draped with a heavy gold throw blanket, on the floor is a Pakistani rug, while a large image of General Zia-ul-Haq adorned with sparkly garlands hangs next to an Islamic calendar.[71] Just as John Denver's "Country Roads" had a double, insider meaning in *Cowgirl,* the careful arrangement of mise-en-scène in *Wild West* suggests that Zaf's ostentation is not just overcompensation for his inability to fit in, but an extension of his familial identity. Here, the film draws lines of affiliation between the figure of the cowboy and South Asian "Indians" through an indigenization of the cowboy *as* British South Asian. We learn in the film that much of Zaf's obsession with the Wild West and country music centers on the question of identity and belonging.

The Honky Tonks perform Steve Earle's "Number 29," for example, the lyrics for which begin with "I was born and raised here, this town, my town." And, in his conversation with Rifat, Zaf tells her that he doesn't wear cowboy gear for the "shock value." "It's for myself, it's like the way I see things," he explains. Simultaneously, *Wild West* draws our attention to the uneven access to this settler culture, because their racial difference positions the Honky Tonks as perpetually outside of the significations of cowboy, itself an insider-outsider role. Early in the film, Zaf's mother cries in exasperation, "There are no Pakistani cowboys!"; at an Asian Talent Contest performance, the audience boos the Honky Tonks, yelling "bring back the bhangra" (referring to the previous band); and, during one of their first conversations, Rifat says to Zaf, "You don't see too many Asians wearing cowboy hats."[72] Following their rejection at Wild West Records, Zaf proclaims, "I always thought we could duck the punches, but these people got no sense of imagination. Just like the rest of this damn, deadbeat country. We're just Brown faces to them."

If in *Cowgirl,* Sara ultimately finds resolution and "moves on" from her obsession with the cowboy, in *Wild West,* Zaf and the band never let go. They stubbornly remain obsessed with their fetish, even in the face of a precarious future: they have no record deal and are only able to afford their airfare to the United States after having sold their family home in London. This lack of resolution in *Wild West* places pressure on utopian renderings of diaspora and migration.[73] Zaf and the band's "perverse" attachment to the cowboy in *Wild West* detaches it from its primary significations. The fetish ceases to be a *substitute* for an original lack and becomes a desirable object in and of itself. Rather than representing aspirations toward inclusion or historical revision, the cowboy in the film's U.K. context is a permanent form of difference—difference that the protagonists fully embrace. For the Honky Tonks, the cowboy is fully extractable from U.S. history as a standalone figure of freedom. In the penultimate scene, the Honky Tonks are decked out in summer shirts embroidered with palm trees and cowgirls, getting ready to board the plane for Nashville (Figure 8). The parting shot of the film is of the plane taking off, suggesting that they have finally realized their impossible dream of getting to Nashville. Their pioneering ambition and willingness to risk it all bears echoes of Euro-Americans venturing out to the frontier. The Honky Tonks too "go

FIGURE 8. The Honky Tonks en route to Nashville; screenshot from *Wild West.*

West" in search of fame and riches. Like *Cowgirl, Wild West* suggests the cowboy as a product of globalized culture, with its settler-colonial meanings functioning as metaphors for the impossibility of belonging and inclusion.[74] But given that the film takes place in the United Kingdom and not the United States, the originary lack here was never white settler culture, as it is in *Cowgirl,* but white British culture (which, of course, emerges from the colonial empire that gives birth to U.S. white settler culture). As metaphor, the cowboy in *Wild West* signals not so much Americana per se, but lawlessness and rebellion.

As a figure of freedom, the cowboy writ large is rife with contradictions: excessively masculine, faithful to but uninterested in heteropatriarchy. Indeed, if the cowboy is an object of desire for the Honky Tonks, it is also entangled with sex and desire. The protagonists' veneration of the cowboy and commitment to their craft is intelligible through sex and gender relations. Whereas in *Cowgirl,* Dave stands in for the cowboy/U.S. West and impossible assimilation in whiteness, in *Wild West,* Rifat stands in for the impossibility of heteronormativity. Hetero-romance appears initially as the film's promise: Zaf and the band are a safe haven for Rifat after she flees her white British husband, and in this sense Zaf fulfills patriarchal duty as a protector restoring racial equilibrium. But he is ultimately more faithful to his cowboy fetish than he is to Rifat, who is unable to help the Honky Tonks realize their Nashville dream. A producer at Wild West Records declares them not

marketable while favoring Rifat. As Jigna Desai points out in her astute reading of the film:

> Gendered Orientalism marks Rifat as commodifiable and desirable by a multicultural capitalist market and marginalizes Zaf and the other members of the band. . . . This film is conscious of the configuration of nonthreatening and commodifiable diasporic production—the band is acceptable only if they play bhangra, and Rifat is marketable because women can be exoticized.[75]

The film includes a comical scene that assures the audience that Zaf's perversion of desire—away from Rifat, the ostensibly proper object choice, and toward his cowboy/country music obsession—is quirky rather than queer. This rendering of the cowboy corresponds to genre conventions. As Roderick McGillis notes:

> Cowboys function as preservers, even nurturers, of community, and at the same time they remain outside community, uninterested in economic gain and political power. Often they interact with children, and when they do they are clearly role models for these children. Yet they do not marry, they do not hold jobs, they appear not to work. They exist on horseback, forever riding from one endangered community to another to set things right.[76]

In the scene, Zaf's mother stumbles across Rifat's undergarments in his bedroom, and assumes that Zaf is transgender. Her shock and despair centers on the repercussions this may have on his prospects for a heteronormative future: "You would not be happy as a girl. We could never find you a husband!" she exclaims in panic. "First you become a cowboy, and now *this*!" The mother, in this utterance, links two kinds of transgressions, first of racial-national identification, the second of gender. This moment in the film underscores what Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore argue is the relational construction of "trans-," which they suggest can never be understood as an isolated identity formation.[77] Here, Zaf's mother likens his failure as a diasporic subject to fully embody the American cowboy, to the failure of gender contained in the presumption of his transgenderness. The problem of gender nonconformity thus emphasizes for the audience the problem that Zaf's desire to be a cowboy poses, with

transgender problematically functioning as metaphor for *problem.* Zaf eventually reveals that the clothing belongs to Rifat, who has fled her abusive husband and is staying with Zaf. While his mother is not pleased, she accepts this transgression much more readily than the presumed transgression of gender. The confirmation of hetero- and cis-identification positions Zaf's otherwise nonnormative status closer to the conventions of genre: presumably heterosexual but uninterested in settling down.[78] It is worth noting here that the cowboy's masculinity is legible in relation to Indigenous masculinities that are perceived as hypermasculine, improperly so.[79] In popular discourse, the cowboy mirrors—or matches—the perceived wildness and strength of Indigenous masculinity, but whereas Indigenous masculinities are equated with savagery, the cowboy is deemed a servant of civilization. Yet, as Lisa Tatonetti points out, "popular culture's hypermasculine warrior ethos is a socially engineered and inadequate understanding of the myriad ways in which Indigenous peoples live and deploy gender"; historically, the expansiveness of Indigenous gender traditions proved threatening to English, French, and Spanish invaders.[80] When the film depicts a repudiation of transgender identity, then, it simultaneously depicts a repudiation of expansive Indigenous traditions of gender.

At the same time, though Zaf is an outcast cowboy figure who does not fit in, unlike the cowboy of classic westerns, he neither symbolically nor literally enables the settlement of others. Zaf's desire to be a cowboy, and what his mother assumes is a desire to be feminine, signal a betrayal of patrifilial attachments to the nation that are expressed through respect for the Father (or, for the Patriarchy). In his essay "Are You a Man or a Mouse?," Homi Bhabha emphasizes the continuities between the figures of father and son, and love for the nation, drawing attention to the relationship between patrilineality and nationhood.[81] Bhabha suggests that the fatherly desire for the son to embody an empowered masculinity—encapsulated in the question "Are you a man or a mouse?"—is ironically possible only through the son's respect for the father; a relationship of subservience. Zaf's cowboy ethos navigates this uneven terrain of masculinity. As he struggles to keep a steady job, his father's death due to years of overwork at the Southhall Meat Company haunt him. Zaf's honest but failed attempt to hold down a job at a halal butcher shop (despite being a vegetarian) echoes his simultaneous desire and inability to perform respect and subservience. Bhabha suggests that one likewise fulfills patriarchal

obligations to the nation only through service to, and respect for, the nation. In *Wild West,* Zaf's mother chastises him for failing to live up to his obligations as a Pakistani son. Yet Zaf's sense of service to masculinist ideals is tempered by raced and classed limits to national belonging, as evoked by the conditions of his father's death. His failure to live up to masculine duties extends to his brief but unrequited romance with Rifat, as Rifat snags a solo deal, while the Honky Tonks head to Nashville with no guarantee of success. If Zaf is a "failed" or incoherent postcolonial subject, he is fully coherent as a cowboy.

The protagonists' perverse attachment to the cowboy beyond the film's conclusion, on the one hand, disturbs the sanctity of the cowboy and firmly positions it as a free-floating object of consumption, rather than as a marker of belonging in the United States. The cowboy is simultaneously an impossibility, out of reach for the film's protagonists, and in this way the film nudges viewers to remember the colonial histories that structure representation and aesthetics. The cowboy is thus an unattainable site of desire. But I am left with some questions about the cowboy itself, and what it stands for: What is the unattainable thing that is framed as desirable? The film emphasizes the rebelliousness, freedom, and independence associated with the cowboy, with the protagonists finding in the cowboy a source of anticolonial solidarity. Although the decoupling of the cowboy from its specific role in U.S. history seems to extract it from its colonial associations, the cowboy as anticolonial figure is itself embedded in its longstanding status as a symbol of U.S. nationhood and ethos, one that is made possible in relation to Indigeneity—not just through the coupling of "cowboys and Indians" but also the perceived "instinct and freedom" that Indigenous communities were associated with.[82] If the U.S./cowboy is rebellious and free in contrast to the constrained civility of Britain, it is rebellious and free by virtue of its proximity to Indigeneity. The film's latent critique of colonial histories and the unattainability of the cowboy for the Honky Tonks is thus tempered by a loss, too. The extraction of the cowboy from its histories also swallows and absorbs Indigenous referents that make the cowboy legible as a figure of rebellion. As with *Cowgirl,* I am again left with grief and unease around what remains unregistered here: Asian-Indigenous relations, and the possibilities for transnational solidarity across empire(s). The open-ended nature of the film, however, leaves the possibility that anything could happen; the Honky Tonks will likely realize that Nashville is not

the fantasy land they have imagined. In the United States, the Honky Tonks are unlikely to be read as going against the grain, and more likely to be perceived as attempting to project a normative image—one which, because of race, may alternately be subject to ridicule or approval. They may also cause cultural confusion, as the Wild West Records producer informed them. Such speculative interpretations are possible because loss remains melancholic and infinitely deferred in *Wild West.* However, given that the pleasure of the film comes from the Honky Tonks' stubborn refusal to let go of their obsession, it is simultaneously impossible to imagine that there is ever a future in which the Honky Tonks are not playing cowboy. Their dogged desire is precisely the film's point.

In both *Cowgirl* and *Wild West,* the cowboy is a means to navigate problems of diasporic exclusion. Each film evinces the range of distinct meanings, intentions, and pleasures associated with "playing cowboy." For the young men in *Wild West,* there is the thrill and excitement of identifying with the cowboy's rebellious nature and vigilantism, which they see as oppositional to British and Pakistani cultural norms, but aligned with their hybrid identities as South Asian diasporic subjects. For *Cowgirl*'s Sara, the cowgirl/cowboy embodies the promise of acceptance, recognition, and inclusion as an Asian American woman. Like many other diasporic films released during the 1990s, *Wild West* and *Cowgirl* draw on postmodern aesthetics and strategies of representation in order to advance critiques of whiteness, xenophobia, and national identity. Because they draw attention to the impossibility of Asian diasporic belonging, they are unable to process another kind of loss, that of Asian-Indigenous relationality. The loss is structurally generated.

This prompts the questions that lead to the next chapter: Does knowing more or knowing better generate different kinds of representational and aesthetic strategies? What happens when artists more attuned to the politics of Indigenous sovereignty address issues of racism and exclusion?

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2

Brown Queer and Trans Bodies at the Impasse of Diaspora and Indigeneity

> Impasse: a situation in which no progress is possible, especially because of disagreement; a deadlock: *the current political impasse.*
>
> —*New Oxford American Dictionary*

What might it mean to dwell in the impasse, in the seeming deadlock, of diaspora and Indigeneity? And, contra *Oxford,* what kinds of "progress"—or, futurity—are possible under the conditions of impasse? To the extent that progress and futurity imply mobility and movement to an elsewhere, dwelling—staying in-place—may, by contrast, seem a regressive or passive strategy. Colonial and capitalist assumptions about dwelling might evoke property ownership and normative forms of kinship. But when our practice of dwelling centers Indigeneity—what is then opened up?

Multidisciplinary South Asian diasporic artist Vivek Shraya dwells in the impasse in her 2016 book of poetry titled *even this page is white,* which includes multiple poems exploring and acknowledging her complicity in anti-Blackness and settler colonialism, and of which half the author royalties went to the Native Youth Sexual Health Network.[1] In "indian," she reflects on the practice of Indigenous land acknowledgment that often happens at the start of academic, activist, and art events:

> 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.[2]

The poem reflects on the paradox of performing solidarity through land acknowledgment while simultaneously benefiting from occupation. It indexes the limitations of land acknowledgment as a performance of solidarity that fails to ever completely capture one's complicity in ongoing colonial violence.

Shraya's poem captures some of the conundrums that are at the heart of this chapter: What, really, does it mean to "be in solidarity"? Does the recognition or acknowledgment of other forms of structural violence fundamentally alter the way that we see and narrate our own experiences of pain and trauma? Does an awareness of the mutual imbrication of disparate struggles in and of itself break apart the impasse? In other words, given what we know about the historically constituted and sedimented entanglements of violence that structurally position groups in oppositional ways, is it more nuanced understandings of those entanglements that are necessary here? Consciousness-raising, for example, has been a vital strategy within feminist movements for understanding one's social position within systems of oppression and exploitation, and enabling the collective building of emancipatory projects.[3] Yet feminist consciousness-raising focused on strengthening a common cause. To what extent does a strategy such as consciousness-raising help when it comes to thinking through deep entanglements, nonequivalence, and the incommensurable? What is the common cause of the moment? Or: how might we imagine shared political horizons under the context of diffuse and disparate struggles?

While this chapter does not address all of these questions, I begin to scratch the surface by meditating on the limitations of awareness. I turn to the work of Shraya and writer/artist Shani Mootoo in order to reflect on how they register the attachments to settler-colonial landscapes and aesthetics that persist in spite of their political commitments to Indigenous solidarity. I focus particularly on works by Shraya and Mootoo that take up the question of land: Mootoo's didactically oriented early 1990s experimental films *A Paddle and a Compass* and *Wild Woman in the Woods,* which critique white settler-colonial tropes

of land and wilderness by inserting queer Brown bodies into them; and Shraya's 2021 photo essay "Legends of the Trans," which pays disidentificatory homage to Tristan Ludlow, Brad Pitt's character from the 1994 film *Legends of the Fall*. I consider Mootoo and Shraya alongside one another in order to emphasize their different strategies—one that deploys Brown queer bodies to disrupt and interrupt violent constructions of nation and land, the other that imbues Brown trans bodies with care and joy in order to critique embodied violence—and to draw attention to the ways their works register the de facto separation of body and land. This experiential disentanglement is one source of diasporic/Indigenous impasse. In his relational analysis of Black and Indigenous studies, Mark Rifkin similarly describes the distinct orientations between the two fields/movements in terms of flesh and land, or "a contrast between a focus on the violence of dehumanization through fungibility and occupation through domestication."[4] For South Asian diasporic subjects such as Shraya or Mootoo, neither fungibility nor domestication in these senses quite describes the particular forms of racialization they experience. However, while the racial trauma of non-Black people of color may not be explained through dehumanization through fungibility, it is felt on the body and *experienced* as dehumanizing. The bifurcation of body/land remains, and structurally generates diasporic attachments to settler colonialism.

Both Mootoo's and Shraya's work emerge from queer/trans Black, Indigenous, and people of color (QTBIPOC) communities in Canada (including Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver), and specifically queer South Asian diasporic communities that have come into formation in relation to Indigenous decolonization movements.[5] As noted in the introduction, since the 1990 Oka Crisis, South Asian Canadians have had continual conversations about diasporic relationships to Indigenous self-determination, particularly vis-à-vis the queer South Asian diasporic festival Desh Pardesh. 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.[6] If Shraya or Mootoo displace and erase Indigeneity in (some of) their work, then, it is not for lack of knowledge. Rather than indicting the propensity of either as individual artists to gravitate toward settler imaginaries, I want to

probe further to consider the structural relation that generates that gravitation and furthers the impasse between diaspora and Indigeneity. I note this particularly because of Shraya's and Mootoo's activist lineages. This suggests that there is something else happening to create this repeated erasure, which I locate in the disjuncture between diasporic and Indigenous strategies of critique and survival.

This disjuncture is 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.[7] Family and kinship structures emerged as key sites for the regulation of racialized-colonized bodies. In *Aberrations in Black,* Roderick A. Ferguson describes how this naturalization of heteropatriarchy by the capitalist nation-state has been taken for granted by Marxism, liberal pluralism, and Black revolutionary nationalisms, such that, for example, the family remains the site of rescue from capitalism's wreckage.[8] 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. Ferguson emphasizes the contributions of women of color feminism, particularly Black lesbian feminism, as offering alternate forms of critique "that eschewed nationalism, rather than facilitated it."[9] By "helping to designate the imagination as a social practice under contemporary globalization," writes Ferguson, "women of color feminism, generally, and black lesbian feminism, particularly, attempted to place culture on a different path and establish avenues alternative to the ones paved by forms of nationalism."[10] I will return to this imaginative practice, and the possibilities it furnishes, in chapter 4.

However, as Rifkin has argued, although queer diasporic and queer of color critiques expose the violence of modern biopolitics, they also obfuscate the alternate sociopolitical formations that racial-colonial capitalism has erased and displaced.[11] These often fall by the wayside

even in the alternate imaginaries of queer and feminist of color work. 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. While Mootoo and Shraya, for example, are able to account for the nation-state's violence, this is precisely where solidarity reaches its limit. 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. To be sure, such critiques also name the violence of heteropatriarchy of some formations of Indigenous nationalisms, as does Jennifer Denetdale (Diné) in her reading of the Navajo nation's support for the U.S. war on terror in the early aughts, and the 2005 Diné Marriage Act, which mobilized particular interpretations of gender, militarism, and tradition.[12] Denetdale concludes that "we must be willing to raise questions and interrogate those beliefs and practices that are presented as tradition but, in truth, are meant to uphold American imperialism."[13]

Still, 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.[14] Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson bluntly names this the settler state's "sovereign death drive."[15] It is for this reason that, as Lisa Tatonetti demonstrates, Indigenous artists and activists' performance of non-cis masculinities leverage a challenge, not just to gender norms narrowly conceived, but to the mutual imbrication of gender and sexuality with colonization.[16] In her analysis of Anishinaabe writer Louise Erdrich, for example, Tatonetti observes that "rather than presenting female masculinity as a stage of stunted psychological growth, the stuff of gender anxiety and bodily horror, [Erdrich] presents female masculinity as a type of affective power constructed in and through relationship."[17] Elaborating on the links between settler bio- and necropolitical violence and attacks on Native sovereignty, Audra Simpson powerfully writes:

> An Indian woman's body in settler regimes such as the US, in Canada is loaded with meaning—signifying other political orders, land itself, of the dangerous possibility of reproducing Indian life and most dangerously, other political orders. *Other* life forms,

> other sovereignties, other forms of political will. Indian women in the aforementioned example of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy transmit the clan, and with that: family, responsibility, relatedness to territory. Feminist scholars have argued that Native women's bodies were to the settler eye, like land, and as such in the settler mind, the Native woman is rendered "unrapeable" (or, "highly rapeable") because she was like land, matter to be extracted from, used, sullied, taken from, over and over again, something that is already violated and violatable in a great march to accumulate surplus, to so called "production."[18]

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, and that settler regimes targeted for extinction. From the Anishinaabe tradition, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson expansively describes sovereignty (via her Elder, Gidigaa Migizi) as "Kina Gehi Anishinaabe-ogaming," or "the place where we all live and work together."[19] Linking bodily and national sovereignty, she notes: "My body sovereignty is not subject to attack just because it is an Indigenous woman's body. My body sovereignty is subject to attack because it exists as a Nishnaabeg political order."[20] L. B. Simpson's discussion of land pedagogies, moreover—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.[21]

I name the diasporic/Indigenous impasse as structural because ignorance, a lack of will, or moral failure alone are not enough to account for these disjunctures. The impasse is easily dismissed as a problem of framing: of perceiving categories such as diaspora, hybridity, and Indigeneity as mutually exclusive when they are not. One could point to how processes of migration and displacement that have been central to Indigenous experiences, for example. As a case in point, Ho Chunk anthropologist Renya Ramirez's work shows how Native youth moving to urban spaces are diasporic in relation to their reservations. One could equally consider the transnational dimensions of Indigenous politics. As Maylei Blackwell (with Kēhaulani Kauanui) writes, Indigenous feminism is "already transnational due to its Indigenous nation-to-nation commitments, the way it navigates and challenges colonial

settler nation-states, and creates alternative relationalities grounded in Indigenous epistemologies that cross multiple national borders and question the colonial constructs of those borders."[22] One might also point to the misuse of categories such as "native" and "indigenous." For example, in some iterations of postcolonial and diaspora studies, diasporic subjects are framed as hybrid, mobile, and postcolonial against implicitly Indigenous ones who are framed as authentic, rooted in place, and fixed.[23] This has perhaps been an unintended consequence of critical studies of diaspora, which have critiqued conservative configurations of diaspora that figure homelands as spaces of purity and authenticity while encouraging diasporic communities to adopt conservative family values and politics as a means of preserving the "original" nation. Critical studies of diaspora have complicated discourses such as these by drawing attention to the imbrications of diasporic formations in heteropatriarchy, caste, and capitalism; in the process they have taken for granted the conservative significations of indigenized homelands. Gayatri Gopinath's *Impossible Desires,* for example, describes the conservatism of South Asian diasporic formations that cling to essentialized constructions of authentic homelands characterized by heteronormative family structures; Jasbir Puar correspondingly argues for queer diasporic assemblages that are unmoored from homelands and instead oriented by affective forms of connection.[24]

Yet, the diasporic/Indigenous impasse cannot only be explained as a problem of imprecise words or categorization, given that there are qualitative *experiential* differences across these sociocultural formations. I return again to Lily Cho's instructive formulation of diaspora not as explanatory descriptor but as historically constituted subjective condition. Indigeneity as a critical category is likewise not merely a *description,* but a particular condition that emerges from histories of colonization, genocide, and dispossession. The conditions of diaspora and Indigeneity are intertwined insofar as they are the products of centuries of pillage and plunder. But they are not the same, and their particularities deserve attention.

Queer relational critique by authors such as Tiffany Lethabo King and Gopinath offers new and promising possibilities for holding onto these particularities while enacting alternate forms of relation, kinship, and affinity.[25] In *The Black Shoals,* King powerfully homes in on tensions in Indigenous sovereignty discourse that queer Indigenous scholarship

(and art and activism)—which has critiqued the heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia inherited from colonial violence and trauma within contemporary articulations of sovereignty—has identified.[26] Billy-Ray Belcourt and Jas Morgan, for instance, argue that the privileging of sovereignty and governance *over* embodied experience effaces or minimizes the work queer/two-spirit Indigenous peoples must do just to be and exist; to enact, in Gerald Vizenor's words, survivance.[27] Queer/two-spirit and feminist Indigenous critique has in this way done important bridging work that understands problems of land sovereignty and governance as intimately intertwined with the embodied violence that women, trans/two-spirit, queer, and/or nonbinary individuals experience most acutely. Attuned to this experience of embodied violence, King thus reads for resonances across the work of Belcourt, and Black lesbian feminist poet Audre Lorde. Both Belcourt and Lorde, King shows, see promise—the possibility for alternate modes of being and being-in-relation—in the chaos and unpredictability of love and desire.[28] For King, the erotic breaks apart the Black/Native impasse.

Gopinath, through her relational readings of Indigenous and diasporic artists Tracey Moffatt, Seher Shah, and Allan deSouza in *Unruly Visions,* likewise proposes queer diaspora studies and queer of color critique as frameworks capacious enough to capture the distinct histories and experiences that fall under the rubrics of diaspora and Indigeneity. Gopinath specifically suggests that attention to aesthetics opens up a fruitful space for considering diasporic–Indigenous relationality, noting, "The aesthetic practices of queer diaspora demand a pause in thinking of the relation of indigeneity to diaspora in terms of either opposition or equivalence, and to think of it instead in terms of affinities, encounters, and conversations that avoid congealing into fixed political positions."[29] By considering the relation and queer diaspora and Indigeneity in terms of affects rather than the sociopolitical positions generated by forms of structural violence, Gopinath, like King, expands the horizon for imagining connections and forging intimacies.

And yet there is a crucial difference here that cannot be ignored: the Indigenous erotic—as evidenced across the work of writers including Beth Brant (Mohawk), Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Anishinaabe), Deborah Miranda (Esselen and Chumash), and Carole LaFavor (Ojibwe), among others—is fundamentally tied to land.[30] While such writers, observes Lisa Tatonetti,

"build off Lorde, they extend her theory by constructing an erotic that focuses on an embodied sense of Native history, land, and sovereignty. . . . Native peoples' relationships with and understandings of land and tribal responsibility therefore play key roles in an Indigenous erotic."[31] Queer and two-spirit Indigenous writers and artists grapple not only with the embodied experiences and affects generated by colonial and racial violence but also with the intertwined forms of violence wrought on body and land.

Thus, while I am excited and moved by both Gopinath's and King's visions, I also want to sit—linger—with the impasse of diaspora/Indigeneity. Although connection seems vital in the face of the colonial strategy of divide and conquer, I wonder: Where might the impasse take us? Though impasse or limbo might feel risky or even terrifying, might dwelling in the impasse help forge more resilient relations? I highlight Gopinath's and King's interventions here because I want to make clear that my goal in this chapter is not oppositional to theirs; rather, I am insisting that queer affect, sensations, and aesthetics rupture, but do not necessarily destroy, the impasse. Though the impasse does not make relations impossible, dismissing the impasse may impede them. I dwell in this impasse not out of despair (as the next two chapters of this book demonstrate), but out of a desire to better understand its production and sustenance. I follow Mishauna Goeman (Tonawanda Seneca) here, who, drawing on Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua, suggests that "many settler discourses (and Native discourses affected by settler notions of time and space) proceed with the conception of body-contained and land-contained entities."[32] She powerfully argues for settler-colonial critique that is attentive to the interconnections of body and land:

> If the aim of settler colonial studies is to confront colonial structures, it must consider an investigation of embodied practices in settler societies beyond the way that settler knowledge represents the indigenous as absent. *Settler colonial theory needs also to be accountable to how bodies move through spaces and the scales of space set up through imposed criteria—or a logic of containment.* Furthermore, embodied practices must move beyond a notion of the body as individual, private and moving independently as a fixed entity. Instead, the body is often written on in both historical and geographical ways.[33]

To illustrate her theorization of "how bodies move through spaces and the scales of space set up through imposed criteria," Goeman turns to Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan's 1994 novel, *Solar Storms.* She identifies three scales on which body operates in the novel:

> the individual bodies of [the protagonist, mother, and grandmother] and of the community that stands in for the social body; the individual and her relationship to the land that literally sustains us; and the social body of the Native community and the national bodies of the United States, Canada, and Quebec. Rather than thinking of these scales as disconnected, we need to think of the social processes that "freeze" them.

Indeed, as Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice has noted with respect to Indigenous literature, *relationship* is integral here.[34] It is particularly the second scale that Goeman observes—of the body in relation to land—that diasporic art and criticism engages less consistently and frequently and that introduces a disjuncture between the diasporic and Indigenous condition. This is the impasse in which I will be dwelling.

VIVEK SHRAYA: BROWN TRANS FEMME CORPOREALITY, CONTAINED LAND

Vivek Shraya, a trans/femme/bisexual-identified South Asian artist, was born in Edmonton, Alberta. She moved to Toronto in her twenties, where she began her artistic career and spent fifteen years as the positive space coordinator at George Brown College.[35] In 2018, she took up a creating writing assistant professorship at the University of Calgary.[36] Prolific and multidisciplinary, Shraya counts among her projects musical albums, films, photography, poetry, and novels that 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. Her online presence has been integral to her success: although, like many other artists in Canada, Shraya draws from public sources of funding ("Legends of the Trans" was supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, for instance), her website—which includes access to many of her works—and social media engagement

have enabled her to extend her reach outside of traditional institutions like museums, galleries, and university libraries. Shraya's work foregrounds her activist commitments, which often appear in the form of direct and explicit statements, but those commitments are also uneven and contradictory, as suggested by her role as brand ambassador for MAC cosmetics and Pantene shampoo.

I focus here particularly on Shraya's strategy of amplifying Brown trans/queer corporeality and life, and what this consequently means for Indigenous relations. If Shraya, as emblematic of many diasporic artists, is unable to fully account for land, this is because land/land relations are not constitutive of the diasporic *condition*—and specifically, the trans/queer diasporic condition—in the same way that they might be for Indigenous condition: Indigenous mobilizations of the erotic are distinct from diasporic ones. As a trans artist, Shraya's work is particularly attuned to the bio- and necropolitical circulation of racial violence and thus amplifies the diasporic/Indigenous impasse I aim to elucidate.[37]

Shraya's work responds to her own experience as a queer/trans Brown femme. It is a response to necropolitical violence, as her website's About page implies when it states that it is "the digital archive for a living trans artist of colour."[38] If, as C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn observe, "globalized homonormative and transnormative political projects" extract value from trans of color death, Shraya amplifies her vitality across her work.[39] Whereas anti-trans violence is often excessive and spectacular, or, as Eric Stanley describes it, purposefully "overkill" in order "to do violence to what is *nothing*," Shraya emphasizes her corporeality, and on her terms, not on the terms of dominant national or popular discourses.[40] In an interview with media scholar Nicole Morse, she says of her social media selfies: "I think selfies have been a way for me to reclaim the gaze or return the gaze back to me. It's one of the only times that I can essentially own the gaze, and certainly it has been pivotal in my coming out as trans."[41]

Beyond her selfies, the reclamation and return of gaze reverberates across Shraya's works. If, following Stanley, perpetrators of anti-trans violence communicate the disposability and inherent violability of trans bodies through excessive, gratuitous harm, Shraya's oeuvre, which focuses particularly on dazzling trans embodiment, homes in on this bodily experience of transness. Across her website, we see Shraya, Shraya, and more Shraya. She wears stylish outfits, sports flawlessly

coifed hair and makeup, and gazes defiantly across the screen. The photographs particularly emphasize her hair and face. She wants the audience to see her fully, and she creates the terms and conditions for that looking. Whereas, as Nael Bhanji observes, trans of color bodies are made hypervisible through death and memorialization, Shraya is hypervisible through vivification.[42] The excess and spectacularity of her work suggest that it is not for the benefit of the settler nation or of normative conceptions of beauty. In contrast to popular trans femme figures such as Caitlin Jenner, who traffic in their ability to pass, Shraya dwells with her Brown queer trans beauty *as is.* While most of her looks are high-femme, neither does she shy away from sporting facial hair when performing in projects such as *How to Fail as a Popstar.* As Morse asserts, "Within a world that marks queer, brown transfemininity as not only undesirable but abject, Shraya's act of directing her look toward herself is not merely a practice of self-love in the present. Instead, the directionality of the look, and the iterative act of repeatedly staging the look toward the self, points toward [Brown, transfeminine] futures."[43]

Witness Shraya's recent works, including her promotion of the "Vivek Forever" T-shirt, commemorating Shraya's twenty-year career, and her play *How to Fail as a Popstar,* with its accompanying music video "I'm a Fag 4 U." Shraya boldly and pleasurefully inserts herself into pop icon-dom. In the soft-lit "Vivek Forever" video promo, for instance, she channels Madonna as she sings and dances in a shoulder-padded, sparkling baby-blue minidress as a crowd of male-signifying admirers surround her. In "I'm a Fag 4 U," the title of which riffs off Britney Spears's 2001 single, "I'm a Slave 4 U," she adopts an early 1990s hip-hop aesthetic (Figure 9). The video begins with black-and-white documentary-style interviews with Shraya and two collaborators (Rodney Diverlus and Phil Villeneuve), each reflecting on the first time they heard the word *fag;* Shraya then reflects on reappropriating the term, and the video moves into music-video mode that features Shraya, Diverlus, and Villeneuve each dancing on the streets of downtown Toronto. As the music crescendos, the video eventually shifts to full color. Shraya, Diverlus, and Villeneuve appear together for the first time in the video, and Shraya appears in a new outfit—out of the "Wham" style baseball cap, single earring, and denim shorts-jumpsuit to a glamorous femme look with an 1980s-style dress, long blonde hair, and frosty makeup. Land and landscape are not absent

FIGURE 9. Vivek Shraya dances in the city; screenshot from "I'm a Fag 4 U."

from these works (or, in many of Shraya's other works) but serve as the backdrop, the setting, for the amplification of queer trans bodies.[44] In "I'm a Fag 4 U," Shraya and her collaborators purposefully and pleasurefully take up space in a public urban setting where they might otherwise experience homophobic and transphobic violence; the "Vivek Forever" promo is similarly unabashed in the way that it takes up urban public space. In response to the excessive character of anti-trans violence, these works are excessively bold, playful, and pleasureful. If the urban can be the container for violence, then Shraya removes and replaces that violence with queer and trans beauty.

Yet it is precisely this focus on the body—the body extracted from its other relations—that generates a disjuncture between diaspora and Indigeneity. I want to listen to the aporia that this strategy creates. Shraya herself is aware of this: in the poem "amiskwacîwâskahikan" from *even this page is white,* she makes note of how one's preoccupations with one's own struggles cloud over possibilities for seeing others. amiskwacîwâskahikan, which translates into English as "Beaver Hills house," is the Cree word for Edmonton.[45] Shraya writes:

so preoccupied
with my own displacement
didn't notice
i was displacing
                you

gave myself
a white name
adam in place of
divek civic ribbit
didn't bother to learn
yours[46]

Shraya astutely identifies how in tending to one's own injuries, one easily and unwittingly forgets those of others. While Shraya writes here in the past tense, suggesting that she has since learned from these omissions, reading this poem alongside her other work ironically provides a frame for seeing how these omissions continue to manifest. Solidarity reaches its limits: having *experienced* the land as container for violence, Shraya—like many diasporic subjects—takes for granted that land is there to be emptied and refilled. This is the framework of "land as container" that Goeman cites. Shraya feels the violence, but does not necessarily think, feel, or understand the land, except perhaps as container. Divorced from the body, the land is not a living, dynamic source of the erotic. One might draw a comparison here, for example, to two-spirit Ojibwe writer/activist Carole LaFavor's mobilization of her embodied knowledge of sexual violence and HIV/AIDS to also advance an argument for Indigenous health sovereignty.[47] To quote two-spirit Opaskwayak Cree educator and activist Alex Wilson, "Bodily sovereignty is inseparable from sovereignty over our lands and waters. It means that we are reclaiming and returning to traditional understandings of our bodies as connected to land."[48] The conceptualization of land as container, by contrast, is embedded in settler imaginaries, perpetuated as it is by settler policies that, as Goeman notes, transformed land from a place of storied, intergenerational connection and relation into privatized property.[49]

This disjuncture subsequently surfaces more acutely in Shraya's photo essay "Legends of the Trans," which ran from October 18, 2021, to February 6, 2022, at Calgary's Akimbo gallery, with a simultaneous opening on her website. "Legends of the Trans" takes inspiration from *Legends of the Fall,* a western epic that follows a family of three brothers and their father in rural Montana, spanning from the early to mid-twentieth century. However, the film and Shraya's "Legends of the Trans" photoshoot share a location: Calgary, traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina,

the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, and the Métis Nation (Region 3). In *Legends,* Pitt portrays the youngest brother, Tristan, who is the most "wild" of the three cowboys, connected to nature and the more-than-human, and to Native communities and customs. More so than the other characters, Tristan straddles the line between "savagery" and "civilization"; he embodies the "regeneration through violence" that Richard Slotkin argues characterizes the myth of the American frontier, wherein, to successfully clear the frontier for civilization, the cowboy must match or outdo the savagery of the "Indian."[50] Unlike the John Wayne cowboy of classic westerns, however, Tristan's savagery is a gentle or "noble" one.

Like Shraya's other work, the "Legends of the Trans" photo essay is stunning. Across the twenty-two photos comprising the series, we see Shraya posing like Tristan in ethereal green landscapes, mimicking classic shots from the film. Some of these are close-up frames of Shraya's face, a green or blue bindi visible on her forehead; others are wider shots emphasizing her full figure against the landscape (Figure 10). As in her other recent projects, like the documentary/music video "I'm a Fag 4 U," hers is less a project of critique than an attempt to recuperate the violence wrought on Brown femme trans bodies.

The photos in "Legends of the Trans" particularly emphasize Pitt/Tristan's long blonde hair, intertextually linking this photo essay with

FIGURE 10. Shraya as Tristan in "Legends of the Trans"; photo by Zachary Ayotte, courtesy Vivek Shraya.

Shraya's earlier focus on hair in projects such as the short story collection *God Loves Hair.* In an interview with Calgary radio station CJSW podcast *The Almanacs,* Shraya muses about growing hair long enough to fulfill this fantasy of portraying Tristan. Yet, similar to the Brown protagonists of *Wild West* that I discussed in chapter 1—who align themselves with the cowboy's perceived outsider or outlaw status—Shraya identifies not so much with Brad Pitt's peak white masculinity but with the rebellious, nonconforming, queer elements of Tristan's cowboy character.

In some respects, "Legends of the Trans" mirrors Shraya's earlier photo essay "Trisha," in which Shraya restages vintage photographs of her mother, mimicking her clothing, expressions, and gestures. In the accompanying text, Shraya reflects on coming to terms with her mother's choices resulting from interpellation into cisheteropatriarchy—and the hurt and sadness those choices caused Shraya—while also expressing admiration for her mother. As in "Trisha," in "Legends of the Trans" Shraya pays loving homage to a role model: as the accompanying text suggests, Shraya found solace and pleasure watching Tristan as a thirteen-year-old trans child, particularly where other role models were a rarity. Shraya's performance of Tristan (and, in the earlier photo essay, her mother) corresponds to the practice of disidentification, as theorized by José Muñoz:

> Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus, disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture.[51]

As a strategy of disidentification, Shraya posing as Tristan exposes the signifiers of cisheteronormative (white settler) masculinity that construct the cowboy as hero—and Pitt as heartthrob and object of desire—while at the same time resignifying Pitt/Tristan as a genderqueered object of identification and longing, by amplifying Tristan's

nonconformist characteristics. However, what about those meanings that might remain opaque, even for Shraya? Muñoz's theory works from the assumption that all encoded meanings are available to the artist (or recoder). The assumption is that the artist's standpoint enables them to see encoding meanings that may not be immediately apparent to those occupying more dominant social locations.

The settler-colonial meanings of *Legends of the Fall,* for instance, might have been opaque to Shraya. On the one hand, just as *even this page is white* includes explicit declarations of support for Indigenous solidarity, these questions loomed for Shraya as she worked on "Legends of the Trans":

> When people talk about Alberta, there's this sort of redneck stereotype that's projected here. And after living here for a few years, I actually find it really frustrating because I think every time we project that onto this place, we a) *erase the history of who this land belongs to,* and b) I think we also invalidate the lives of people of colour who live here and queer people who live here and trans people who live here. Those are some of the things that I was thinking about in relation to this project.[52]

Yet, despite this stated intention to consider "the history of who this land belongs to," I am left wondering where to read that history in "Legends of the Trans," and how to make sense of its absence. When the photo essay exhibit opened at Calgary's Akimbo gallery, Shraya simultaneously made the essay available on her website. One can mimic the exhibit experience in the website version by playing an audio clip of the film soundtrack while viewing the photos and reading the accompanying text. The combination of orchestral music and ethereal photographs along with the all-caps serif font of the text creates a mythos-like aesthetic. The text recounts Shraya's experience relating to Tristan as a young trans teen: "Tristan wasn't like the other boys and neither was she." The penultimate paragraph reads:

> Tristan sought kinship and meaning beyond his blood and whiteness. Tristan loved the wilderness—they were matched in their unpredictability. This is actually what frightened her about nature: it never felt as serene as it looked surrounding him. But she did find solace when she conversed with the sky and imagined one

> day the wind would agree to be her lover like it was for Tristan. Tristan loved horses and horses loved Tristan back. Tristan was a hunter, and was eventually hunted. His friend, One Stab, described him best: "He had always lived in the borderland anyway, somewhere between this world and the other."

This paragraph provides a clue as to how to read Indigenous absence in the exhibit. The "kinship and meaning beyond his blood and whiteness" ostensibly refers to Tristan's friendly relations with Cree people—including his marriage to Cree woman Isabel Two, with whom he has two children—that the film amplifies through narrator and supporting character One Stab, a Cree man and longtime friend to the Ludlow family (portrayed by the late Cree actor Gordon Tootoosis). Such an indigenizing strategy mirrors the film *Dances with Wolves,* in which U.S. army captain John Dunbar, portrayed by Kevin Costner, befriends the Lakota Sioux. By the film's conclusion, the Sioux claim they see Dunbar not as a white man but as a fellow Sioux warrior, whom they anoint as "Dance with Wolves." In *Legends,* Tristan's rebelliousness and connections with nature are likewise linked to an honorary Indigeneity that this character clinches vis-à-vis marriage and friendship, affirmed by One Stab's narration. The extent to which Shraya also exposes the original film's indigenization of that nonconformity—and hence Pitt/Tristan as ultimate American—is unclear.[53] Shraya's (dis)identification with Tristan potentially echoes Scott Morgensen's theorization of queer indigenization. In his ethnography of the California Radical Faeries community, Morgensen shows how white queer settlers perform indigenization by situating themselves within a universal "queer" lineage that positions Indigenous communities as originary queer ancestors to contemporary white queers.[54] By portraying Tristan as a kind of genderqueer hero—and in particular, by conflating those characteristics of Tristan that the original film deems proximate to Indigeneity with genderqueerness—Shraya implicitly celebrates a settler strategy of white assimilation and metaphorical Native displacement, enacting a form of regenerative violence in the process. The Indigenous nations who have traditionally lived and moved across Calgary—the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Tsuut'ina, Métis, and Îyâxe Nakoda Nations—fall to the wayside. Paradoxically, then, the exhibit brings into relief the very problems with performing solidarity that Shraya calls out in her poem "indian."

As noted earlier, the photo essay not only takes up this strategy of foregrounding and celebrating trans beauty but also combines this with a strategy of disidentification that is implicitly indigenizing. It is useful here to take stock of the differences between "Legends of the Trans" and Shraya's earlier photo essay "Trisha." In the latter, Shraya disidentifies with the heteropatriarchal ideologies framing her mother's life while exposing and admiring the "joyfulness and playfulness" that old photographs of her mother exude. Yet, in "Legends of the Trans," Shraya's disidentification amplifies Tristan's latent indigenization. It is the film's indigenization of Tristan that removes him from the register of dominant white cisheteromasculinity, and it is precisely these indigenized characteristics that Shraya identifies with—and which remain latent in her interpretation of the character. There is, moreover, another kind of erasure insofar as Shraya's trans femme identification with Tristan, a white settler, relies on symbolically analogizing anti-trans violence with intrasettler violence. In the film, Tristan loses his brothers and lover to exceptionally violent deaths; Shraya ostensibly identifies with that loss as a trans person who has lost trans community members: in the "climax" of the photo essay Shraya's poses become meditative, culminating in photos in which she is crying. The accompanying text echoes these themes of violence, grief, and injustice:

> But [Tristan's] efforts to protect and provide were in vain because people he loved suffered violent deaths. Committed to upholding what he believed was fair, he often turned to vengeance. [Shraya] too craved justice, and [Tristan] showed her that maybe the only way to get it was to fight for it.

Here, Tristan's losses are analogues for Shraya's queer/trans loss, and Tristan's drive for justice is analogue for Shraya's. This is perhaps the inverse of what Treva Ellison, Kai M. Green, Matt Richardson, and C. Riley Snorton observe when they remark that "though the popular representation of fabulousness and the crises of the trans subject are represented primarily by Black transwomen and transwomen of color, the field of transgender studies, like other fields, seems to use this Black subject as a springboard to move toward other things, presumably white things."[55] There is also the silent grief of Indigenous loss—particularly as Tristan in the film, and Shraya in the photo

essay, move through Native land. In Shraya's case, Brown femme trans grief is paradoxically made more whole through its relation to white settler grief. What does it mean to grieve trans lives on Indigenous land, under the structuring conditions of anti-Blackness, if anti-trans violence is made intelligible in relation to violence among white settlers? In other words, the anti-trans violence that Shraya's photo essay brings to the surface is made legible and *human* to audiences through its relation to Tristan/Pitt. It is not so much that Shraya renders Indigenous or Black lives ungrievable, but that in Shraya's adulation of Tristan/Pitt, those losses *remain* ungrieved, enfolded as they are within the structural violence of racial capitalism and settler colonialism that consigns Black and Indigenous peoples to death. It is for this reason that Eva S. Hayward ponders how "trans negativity" might "help expose how the order of the subject, and the matter of ontology, are what make black trans women, in particular, vulnerable to violence? Trans negativity turns against liberal (white) transgender projects about visibility, accessibility, and progressivism, to expose how these political logics are predicated on racialized humanism."[56] If Shraya's presentation of Tristan's grief as comparable to trans grief relies on a humanizing move, then those consigned to death within modern conceptions of the human remain the constitutive Others of that humanization. The loss of Black life remains ungrieved. So too do the losses of Indigenous bodies and political orders, specifically the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Tsuut'ina, Métis, and Îyâxe Nakoda Nations on whose traditional territories settlers built the city of Calgary. Solidarity, again, reaches its limits.

SHANI MOOTOO: QUEER BROWN DISRUPTION, AND ITS LIMITS

Shani Mootoo, like Shraya, is a prolific multidisciplinary artist: a novelist, poet, and visual artist. Mootoo's works examine themes of violence, desire, displacement, and belonging. While she began her career in the 1980s as a painter and video artist, Mootoo gained critical acclaim as a writer; her 1996 novel *Cereus Blooms at Night* was shortlisted for the prestigious Scotiabank Giller prize in Canada, and her subsequent novels have received similar accolades. Born in Dublin, she grew up in Trinidad and moved to Vancouver at age nineteen; she has also lived in Toronto, New York City, and elsewhere in southern Ontario.

She currently teaches creative writing at the University of Guelph.[57] Mootoo's experimental documentary *A Paddle and a Compass* (1992) and campy short *Wild Woman in the Woods* (1993) are among a small collection of films she directed in the 1990s. Mootoo worked on these while participating in "Race and the Body Politic," a 1992 residency for artists of color at the Banff Centre for the Arts.[58] Although the Banff Centre for the Arts is a nonprofit organization, it funds its residencies through state sources at both the federal and provincial levels, including the Canada Council for the Arts. The residency took place at a time in the late 1980s and early 1990s when BIPOC artists' advocacy led to the creation of state-funded support and resources for their work. The intention of "Race and the Body Politic" was to support individual artists in the exploration of race, politics, and identity in their projects, a directive that Mootoo follows but also subverts as she draws attention to the structural violence of racism and colonization.[59]

A Paddle and a Compass and *Wild Woman in the Woods* are purposeful meditations on the exclusions and elisions of white settler nationalist constructions of land and landscape. They reflect a longer preoccupation with land; in her website bio she states that "an ongoing interest concerns the tensions between the landscapes of Trinidad and Canada."[60] As filmmaker and critic Richard Fung notes, "Her work reveals a preoccupation with place and displacement."[61] In a series of paintings from 2015 to 2016, for example, Mootoo presents landscapes of southern Ontario in ways that reflect her diasporic Trinidadian sensibilities, noting, "They are a study of the flora of the Southern Ontario landscape, and attempt to 'see' this landscape, but to render it without losing my Trinidadian 'accent.' "[62] In *Cereus Blooms at Night,* she engages the colonial discourses of natural history to meditate on how colonial norms inflect the present.[63] Her 2020 novel, *Polar Vortex,* which is set in a snowy rural Canadian town, likewise reflects on desire, violence, and intimacy in the context of the fantasy of escaping from the city to "the country," and was inspired in part by Mootoo's own move from city to rural life.[64] Whereas Shraya's work is about feeling and experiencing her Brown trans body as rejoinder to racist, anti-trans violence, Mootoo in these films, as in much of her work, considers the problem of diasporic exclusion and directs her critique toward white Canadian settler culture. She engages the queer diasporic body as an instrument of disruption in service of such a critique, reflecting a pattern across her work of engaging her own experience to intervene into

broader debates and conversations. As Fung writes, "The 'I' [her films] deploy is not a transparent, unmediated subject; rather it is a strategic device in which the artist performs her 'self.' In putting her image and voice into her work, Mootoo carries on a longstanding tradition of self-reflexive performance in Canadian experimental video."[65] Yet Mootoo's purposeful foregrounding of land paradoxically registers the same diasporic/Indigenous impasse as Shraya's, suggesting again that this impasse is generated neither through ethical shortcomings nor through problems of categorization, but through historically constituted difference.

Cowritten and directed with video and installation artist Wendy Oberlander, the ten-minute short *A Paddle and a Compass* was filmed in Banff, Alberta. A resort town and major tourist destination, Banff is located within Canada's first national park. In 2016 the Canadian government settled an ongoing land dispute with the Siksika Blackfoot nation, whose ancestral lands—known to settlers as "Castle Mountain"—were incorporated into the park without consent or compensation in 1908.[66] As the film begins, we hear gentle waves, birds, and then muffled, happy-sounding voices over a black screen. The camera eventually reveals a group of middle-aged South Asians standing on a dock who are preparing to step into a canoe (Figure 11). Mootoo, who is off-camera, informally interviews them; all agree that it is unusual to see Brown folks in this outdoorsy setting. Their presence at Banff potentially gestures to multiple histories of erasure and exclusion: the unmarked graves of the thousands of Chinese workers who died during the construction of the transcontinental railroad; the Japanese Canadians who until the late 1940s were barred from entry west of the Rockies following their internment during World War II; the restrictions on Black and Chinese men accessing bathing pools at Banff in the early twentieth century.[67]

From this preface, which immediately sets up a focus on the exclusion of Brown immigrants from dominant constructions of white Canadian place and nationhood, the film switches primarily to narration—mostly by Mootoo, but occasionally interspersed with Oberlander's—overlaid onto shots of Alberta's Lake Louise, the Rocky Mountains, and canoers on the water. These images of the outdoors simultaneously situate Mootoo, Oberlander, and their film project, while the conspicuous absence of either Mootoo or Oberlander from the frame invites the audience to think about the construction

FIGURE 11. South Asian canoers at Lake Louise; screenshot from *A Paddle and a Compass.*

of settler landscapes as alienated and devoid of humans. Their co-narration extends this invitation, as it encourages the audience to think about uneven and differential relationships to land and nation as constructed through race, gender, and colonization.

Oberlander's voiceover, for example, communicates a relationship to the outdoors that is mediated by white settler-colonial histories. As the camera pans across different mountain formations, some snowy, some green and tree-lined, she reminisces about adventurous relatives scaling tall mountains in Europe and Canada and wonders whether her mother worries about her when she climbs the Rockies. Oberlander also utters the film's last lines, which explicitly draw attention to settler colonialism: "I grew up singing the Canadian version of 'This land is your land, this land is my land. From Buona Vista to Vancouver Island, from the Arctic Circle to the Great Lake Waters, this land was made for you and me.' I wonder if Woody Guthrie ever saw the Canadian Rockies, and I wonder whose land this really is."

Against this direct and explicit white settler relationship to land, Mootoo's narration presents one more complicated and ambivalent,

as she focuses on her encounters with the Canadian landscape and outdoor culture as an immigrant from Trinidad. She begins, however, by foregrounding her desires for the settler pleasures she encountered through the Sears Roebuck catalog as a child in Trinidad. Gesturing to the entanglements of U.S. militarism and settler imaginaries—echoing Sunny Lee's *Cowgirl* from chapter 1—she recalls that American friends from the U.S. naval base in Chaguaramas would loan Mootoo's family the catalogue so that they could order items through their privileges.[68] She muses that for her, the most exciting part was the advertisements for outdoor camping gear, often attached to images of happy heteronormative family life, even as she must have been alienated by the American setting of pine trees, green lakes, and bluish-white, snowcapped mountains—similar to the Banff Rockies landscape we see flash across the screen. Recounting an experience mimicking the catalog's images, she brings into relief the casual circulation of colonial discourse and her bare registration of it as a child: "One Christmas, I got an orange-colored cotton tent with an image of a cowboy roping a horse stenciled in black on one side, and a Native American's head on the other. Every day for a while, I set up the tent on our front lawn. The hibiscus fence and [inaudible] palm were my backdrop."

Moving forward to the present, Mootoo recounts a phone call to her parents in which she presses them for information about Trinidad, asking to find out about the longest river and the highest mountain. Her father points out that she has begun speaking in superlatives: "Canada has the tallest freestanding structure." Her father's observation suggests that an epistemological shift has taken place as Mootoo attempts to relate to Trinidad in terms of the settler scale she has internalized in Canada, one concerned with metrics, measurement, and the management of landscapes. Yet, there is another layer of erasure here as Mootoo implicitly figures herself as foreign to Canada and indigenous to Trinidad. If Mootoo is indigenous to Trinidad, then what of the Arauca, Garini, Nepuyo, Shebaio, and Yaio peoples that Columbus encountered in 1498?[69] Mootoo's indigenized claim to Trinidad is an instantiation of what Shona Jackson describes as "creole indigeneity."[70] Jackson employs this term in the context of the Caribbean to describe the way in which the laboring capacities of enslaved Black people and indentured Brown workers became the paradoxical locus for their assertions of national belonging and independence. She writes:

> Despite having been in the Caribbean islands for at least 6,000 years and in the mainland territories for twice that length of time, Indigenous Peoples have largely faced the substitution of cultural representation for political power. In contrast, the descendants of enslaved and indentured peoples hold a greater degree of cultural and political power, with better access to capital.[71]

While *A Paddle and a Compass* meditates on the problems of Canada's settler nationalism, Trinidad thus remains an indigenized site of de facto authenticity.[72] Mootoo self-consciously reflects on such a construction of Trinidad in dialogue with fellow Trinidadian artist Richard Fung:

> It intrigues, and infuriates me that my fifth generation family is not in touch with local bush remedies, barks of trees, teas from plants, that your mother has passed on to you, and that your mother knows how to speak patois, while none of my family for as far as I could remember knew more than a word here and there, and that one tying up the tongue on its torturous exit. I wonder where is the "creolised" part of the, or rather, my, Hindu Indian identity. When a phrase in patois glides out of your mouth I admit to a feeling of having been robbed of authenticity, a feeling that I don't remember having had in Trinidad, but experience here, in Canada.[73]

Mootoo observes here an indigenized experience of Trinidad that she wishes she could share with Fung, one that she feels entitled to. However, as Jackson cautions, this material and symbolic displacement differs from processes of white settler states such as Canada or the United States:

> Displacement and objectification of Indigenous Peoples is a complex part of the new material and ontological relationship that blacks and Indians developed to the land under colonialism, and it cannot strictly be understood through the terms of white settler colonial paradigms such as those of North America.[74]

The reflections that Mootoo shares with Fung about being both Trinidadian *and* Trinidadian-Canadian register the complexity and

contradiction at the nexus of settler colonialism, postcolonialism, globalization, and multiculturalism: she *becomes* an Indigenous Trinidadian in relation to Canadian settler multiculturalism that indigenizes white settlers as the rightful contemporary inhabitants of Canada. As Bruno Cornellier and Michael Griffiths write, contra Canadian multiculturalism's promises of equity and inclusion, "Liberal multicultural policies act comparably across multiple sites and spaces as avenues for the re-institution of dispossession."[75] Being in Canada's settler multicultural landscape that indigenizes whiteness while displacing Indigeneity and excluding all other nonwhite Others compels Mootoo to locate herself as indigenous to somewhere else.

The fourteen-minute *Wild Woman in the Woods* is set in the snowy Canadian Rockies. In contrast to the more direct address of *A Paddle and a Compass,* it playfully disrupts audience expectations about land, bodies, and the settler nation even as it registers the impasse of diaspora/Indigeneity. The film's prologue is set to classical Indian music; we see images of various objects, including fruit and candles, that the film reveals to be part of an altar. As Mootoo—playing Pria, a fictional version of herself—pays her respects, she awakens the goddess Durga. Durga, a major deity in Hindu scripture, is revered as a mothering figure who protects against evil, and she appears in *Wild Woman* as a protective, guiding force for Pria.[76]

The screen darkens after this initial scene, and the film's more linear narration begins, as Pria learns that her romantic prospect Tara is getting married. We see Pria making an offering at the altar again. In a subsequent scene, she meets Alexis, a white friend who speaks about skiing in the hills nearby. Pria's face registers shame and embarrassment as she tells Alexis, "I don't really know how to ski. Actually, I never learned." Alexis then invites her to a "little day hike . . . up there." The camera quickly zooms to capture a tall mountain peak in the distance before moving to a close-up of Pria's nervous and vulnerable face as she suggests coffee instead (Figure 12). Soon after, she catches a glimpse of a colorfully dressed figure sporting an orange sari, red long underwear, and heavy gold jewelry along with a bowler hat and ski boots. They eventually reveal themself to be the goddess Durga (played by interdisciplinary artist Shauna Beharry) (Figure 13). A trickster-like figure, Durga playfully pushes at Pria's comfort zone and slyly convinces her to cross-country ski over to a campsite with a circle of Brown women doing a *dandiya* dance with tree branches.[77]

Like Durga, they are hybrid, inauthentic subjects mixing bright sari fabrics with winter gear. Durga explains to Pria that she lives in the woods with these women and that "we have no roles, and no rules. You simply are as you are: perfect." Pria eventually loses some of her awkwardness as she meets them and presumably gets ready to join in the pleasure of dancing in the snow. The discomfort she registers in the earlier encounter with her white friend melts away as the snowy white landscape is no longer pristine and inaccessible, but a place inhabited by familiar Brown bodies. The presence of the goddess resignifies the sublime as Brown, queer, and feminist. As the film ends, it shifts to slow-motion and we hear Mootoo in voiceover reciting a poem, which the end credits identify as "Are They Lotuses," by the lower-caste sixteenth-century Telugu poet Atukuri Molla, known for her rebellious ways: "Are they lotuses, or are they the arrows of Cupid? / Difficult to say of her eyes / Is it the moon, or is it the looking glass? / Difficult to say of her face / Is it a flow of sapphires, or is it a flock of bees? / Difficult to say of her hair." The closing poem both gives voice to Pria's wonder and admiration for Durga and the dancing women, and places them in relation to a centuries-old South Asian feminist icon, again anointing the land with Brown femme authority.

Like Iyko Day argues with respect to artists Tseng-Ming Chi's and Jin-Me Yoon's interventions into U.S. and Canadian settler landscape art, Mootoo in *Wild Woman* redeploys the perversion associated with perpetually foreign Brown bodies to disrupt and queer white settler aesthetics.[78] This perversion corresponds to the romantic anticapitalist discourse that Iyko Day locates within nineteenth-century histories of transcontinental railroad construction: "The Chinese male body in North America was historically constituted as nonreproductive, perverse, and feminized, which was reinforced through legal and extralegal restrictions on interracial intimacies, restrictions on the immigration of Chinese women, and aggressive enclosure in the domestic labor market."[79] Mootoo's instrumentalization of queered Brown femme bodies equally places pressure on the configuration of South Asian women as intelligible only vis-à-vis heteropatriarchal norms. This was evident, as Enakshi Dua shows, during debates concerning South Asian migration in the early twentieth century, in which discourses of racial purity framing the Canadian imagined community perceived South Asian women as a threat to Canadian nation building. Dua writes that "the gendering of South Asian women as creators of

FIGURE 12. Pria's encounter with Alexis and the mountains; screenshot from *Wild Woman in the Woods.*

FIGURE 13. Durga in the woods; screenshot from *Wild Woman in the Woods.*

ethnic communities paralleled the gendering of Anglo-Saxon women as reproducers of the nation. However, while the work of Anglo-Saxon women in reproducing the Canadian nation was to be valued, South Asian women were seen as a menace to that same nation—threatening to spawn the kinds of communities that would imperil the nation-building project."[80] Against the purity of white snow that symbolizes national racial purity bound together by normative gender and sexuality, queer pleasure and jouissance in *Wild Woman* gesture to alternate ways of conceiving of belonging and community. This reflects Grace Hong's observation that Mootoo's "relationship to nature is . . . not the normatively masculine one of mastery, but more a displaced identification and kinship."[81]

The inclusion of Durga, moreover, interrupts the Christian morality and respectability associated with settler-colonial nationalism. Whereas Christian morals and religiosity provided ideological justifications and imperatives for colonial projects the world over, Western epistemologies have framed non-Western spiritual and religious traditions as savage, barbaric, and perverse.[82] Durga's presence thus resignifies the white national imaginary, and by resanctifying it with another religious tradition, Mootoo dislodges the landscape from its white settler hold. It is important to note here that although Durga in the context of 1990s Canada has a disruptive effect, contemporary right-wing Hindu movements both in India and across diasporas invoke the gender subversions and nonnormativity of ancient Hindu scriptures as a homonationalist strategy for advancing casteist, exclusionary agendas that further entrench Kashmiri occupation while inflicting exclusionary violence over non-Hindu minorities.[83] At the same time, Mootoo is Hindu from the Trinidadian diaspora, where lower-caste Indians forcibly migrated as indentured workers. I thus read her mobilization of Durga—particularly a hybridized, inauthentic Durga in ski boots—as far removed from right-wing Hindutva ones.

Still: the place of Durga, a Hindu goddess, in a place storied by Indigenous spirits and ancestors raises questions about how non-Native people of color lay affective claim to land.[84] If Durga disturbs Christian settler morality, where does she stand with respect to Indigenous relations? While Mootoo effectively interrupts a white settler imaginary, she leaves muted the Indigenous stories and histories that would respond to the question Oberlander poses in *A Paddle and a Compass*: "I wonder whose land this really is." To better emphasize this

problem posed by the destabilizing force of Durga—as well as Brown queer bodies—in *Wild Woman,* it is useful to compare Mootoo's aesthetic strategies to two-spirit/queer artists such as Kent Monkman (Cree) and Adrian Stimson (Siksika/Blackfoot nation) who also deploy their bodies to disrupt settler-colonial landscapes and identities, but with vastly different stakes. Whereas Mootoo's work introduces queer Brown bodies as externally rupturing forces, for Monkman and Stimson, the land holds deeply enmeshed entanglements of bodies and violence. To draw on Tatonetti, their works exemplify how "the [Native] body archives Indigenous knowledges."[85] In his series of landscape paintings, Monkman introduces his alter ego—Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, a trickster figure who dresses in flamboyant colors, high heels, and G-strings—into nineteenth-century-style paintings of otherwise pristine and majestic North American landscapes. Miss Chief's erotically charged presence in these scenes provokes the viewer to imagine the colonial encounter as one complicated by the entanglements of sex, desire, and violence. Nineteenth-century artists such as Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, Frederic Edwin Church, and Albert Bierstadt infamously painted large-scale works that romanticized the American landscape in the vein of Manifest Destiny: pristine, majestic, empty, and untouched "nature" awaiting God-ordained preservation and cultivation by Euro-Americans. Such works reinforced the doctrine of *terra nullius* and the discourses of Indigenous erasure that enabled the violent policies and practices of nineteenth-century U.S. westward expansion. Interrupting this canon, in many of Monkman's paintings, such as *Sunday in the Park* (2010), Miss Chief appears as painter, standing in front of an easel with a canvas covered in primitivist-style figures. *Sunday in the Park* offers a critique of twin art practices that promulgated Indigenous erasure: the aforementioned landscape art, and primitivism, which indulged fantasies of the noble savage stereotype. It also presents a speculative commentary on the queer/two-spirit presence that might have traversed such landscapes: in the painting, long-haired, colorfully and scantily clad Brown-skinned dandies lounge on the grass next to a lake that sits at the foot of towering mountain peaks. As viewers of this piece, we are forced to reckon with how settler discourses of land might have impacted queer or two-spirit Indigenous peoples, with stories and histories that may have been lost.

In his performance art installation *The Life and Times of Buffalo Boy,* Stimson, a residential school survivor, introduces his alter ego

Buffalo Boy, which riffs off the infamous "Buffalo Bill." As a Blackfoot artist indigenous to the places where Mootoo's (and Shraya's) art pieces are grounded, Stimson's work particularly brings to the surface the impasse that structures diasporic art and film. Just as Buffalo Bill Cody toured his Wild West Show, Stimson tours across Canada, Europe, and the United States with his hybrid cowboy-Indian persona, engaging queer aesthetic strategies such as camp and parody as a means of confronting the multiple forms of pain and violence of colonization. His lavish and outlandish outfit—cowboy boots, sequined cowboy hat, fishnet stockings, bison pelt G-string and corset, fringed leather jacket, white pearl necklace, blue eye shadow, bright red lipstick, and braids—draws attention to the historical presence of queer and two-spirit peoples whose very existence threatened colonial authorities. His performance of the cowboy references his own family history of cow herding (which is distinct from the cinematic cowboy), while his use of bison as costume fabric cites the nineteenth-century slaughter of bison across Canada and the United States. Bison, as Stimson has noted, were the lifeblood of his people, the Blackfoot, and the extermination of the animals was part of a colonial strategy to starve out Indigenous peoples across the North American Plains. Buffalo Boy reappears in Stimson's oeuvre at different locations, including the annual Burning Man festival in Nevada, and Banff, where he sits in the snow, posing in front of the Rockies. Stimson's site-specific interventions—undertaken in playful and provocative poses and outfits that appropriate the figure of the cowboy and mash it up with signifiers of queer sexualities and Blackfoot histories—remap Indigenous place and meaning onto settler-colonial space, thereby enacting a reclamation of both body and land that have endured multiple modes of violence (from residential schools to land seizure and resource exploitation, to violence against queer and two-spirit Indigenous peoples). Whereas Mootoo introduces queer Brown bodies as external interruptions to white settler imaginaries, the ruptures that Monkman and Stimson enact are deeply personal and intimate. Their bodies share with the land wounds and scars in the process of repair.

DWELLING IN THE BODY/LAND IMPASSE

The impasse is a terrifying place for social movements looking to build relations, alliances, and coalition. We are comfortable with coming to

an impasse with those outside of our movements; with oppressive state regimes, nasty employers, and reprehensible corporations. We expect to find ourselves at the impasse with them. But we are less comfortable confronting the impasses we find ourselves at with ostensible comrades and allies. These impasses may seem minor. And indeed, perhaps they do not always matter.

I came to acknowledge the impasse of diaspora/Indigeneity because I could not ignore the harms flowing from diasporic spaces and people to Indigenous ones. I stay with it out of curiosity and interest, and with the belief that there is something generative here. Shraya and Mootoo's works, which are differentially attentive to the body, aptly register the impasse of diaspora/Indigeneity. Reading them in relation to Indigenous questions about land, body, and sovereignty invites us to reflect on the costs of enacting repair and healing in the wake of racial violence.

The impasse is structurally produced; it emerges not from mere ignorance or moral failing, but from relationships to land that are incommensurable with one another. Acknowledging the impasse—acknowledging, in other words, the structural circumstances framing diasporic–Indigenous relationality—does not render connection and relation impossible. However, it contextualizes some of the tensions and challenges that might make them difficult or contentious. I stay with those tensions as I move to consider collaboration and relationality in the two chapters that follow.

3

Friendship, Refusal, and Alternate Archives of Diaspora

Early in his experimental documentary *Shooting Indians* (1997), filmmaker Ali Kazimi describes an interaction with border officials while traveling with Iroquois (Onondaga) photographer Jeff Thomas to Buffalo, New York, the traditional territories of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy where Thomas grew up. The American border guard asks, "Nationality?" Mobilizing an Iroquois interpretation of the 1794 Jay Treaty, Thomas replies "Six Nations"; Kazimi says, "Indian."[1] This experience at the border underscores the complexities of colonial naming, geographies, and identification: Thomas has to pass a checkpoint in order to move within the traditional territories of his nation, but in asserting his nationality as Six Nations, he—like so many of the Iroquois Confederacy—"refuse[s] the absolute sovereignty of at least two settler states, and in doing so . . . reveal[s] the fragility and moral turpitude of those states." Kazimi's Indian citizenship and passport serve as a reminder of the transit of "Indian" that shaped the colonization of North America, and the subsequent division of land that violently displaced the Onondaga and other Native nations.[2] Though over two decades have passed since its (limited) release, Kazimi's thoughtful film deserves renewed attention, especially in light of ongoing conversations around theorizing the entangled web of relations that position non-Native people of color within settler colonialism in uneven and contradictory ways, including their relationship to Indigenous nations.[3] In this book, I have sought to make sense of that entangled web in terms of attachments to settler colonialism that are structural and not easily overcome by accumulating knowledge, or by knowing better. This raises an important question: What kinds of (future) relations are possible under these conditions? For non-Native people, coming to terms with the reality of ongoing colonization can provoke an existential crisis, one that I have observed both in the

classroom and in activist spaces: What is my place here? Are we going to get kicked out? Do I need to have my bags packed and ready to go home? Some perceive Indigenous movements for sovereignty and nationhood to be inherently antimigrant, even as coalitional artistic, activist, and scholarly work suggests the opposite. Mutual aid and support across movements for Black Lives Matter and No Dakota Access Pipeline, or the solidarity actions between Indigenous and migrant justice activists from New Mexico to British Columbia, suggest that Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty are expansive and capacious, rather than xenophobic and restrictive.[4]

I do not propose a solution to this existential dilemma, but I believe there is much to be learned from artists who engage in the process of working through relation and respect.[5] Kazimi is a prolific documentary filmmaker particularly known for feature-length works such as *Continuous Journey* (2004), which revisits the 1914 *Komagata Maru* incident in which the Canadian government denied entry to a Japanese charter ship carrying 376 Indians (Sikh, Hindu, Muslim); *Narmada: A Valley Rising* (1994), about the movement to prevent the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam project in India; and *Beyond Extinction: Sinixt Resurgence* (2022), about the struggles of the Sinixt nation to regain recognition after being declared officially extinct by the Canadian government. Born and raised in a Muslim family in Hyderabad, India, he moved to Toronto in the early 1980s to study film. Kazimi's own experiences of difference, racism, and migration permeate his films, which are broadly interested in social justice and activism, touching on questions of representation, history and archives, and mass mobilization against injustice.[6] Similar to Shani Mootoo, Kazimi came of age as a filmmaker during a pivotal moment in the 1980s and 1990s when BIPOC artists were garnering more support and recognition for their work: *Shooting Indians* received funding from multiple state sources, including the Canada Arts Council, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council, as well as the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund, a now-defunct private body that was established (1991) and later dissolved (2009) by the federal government. While these funders were designed to support artists in creating works about individual lives and experiences—or, of their respective communities—relational and coalitional conversations emerged as an unintended outcome, largely due to artists' collective organizing efforts.[7]

In the spirit of such collectivity, while this chapter is "about" Ali

Kazimi's work, it is a specifically relational study of Kazimi's work. I consider Kazimi's work alongside his friendship with Thomas and the contexts of refusal and activism that condition the emergence of that friendship, and of both Kazimi's and Thomas's projects. This is not a teleological reading but one that thinks about a particular artist as embedded within a wider web, one that is regenerative. Kazimi and Thomas's friendship is not isolated or exceptional, but one that I map onto a constellation of other relations and movements, in Toronto, across Canada, and across North America.

The film's longevity mirrors, and is perhaps mutually informed by, the friendship between Thomas and Kazimi that anchors both the film's aesthetic and representational politics and the ethic of relation and "epistemology of respect" it establishes.[8] In 1984, Kazimi, then a film student at York University in Toronto, began shooting his thesis, a portrait of Iroquois (Onondaga) photographer Jeff Thomas, after seeing some of Thomas's work published in *Sweetgrass,* a local Native magazine. After a nearly decade-long pause, Kazimi and Thomas reunited in 1993 to begin shooting again, at which point the filming process became introspective, as Thomas viewed and reflected on older footage of himself, now part of the archive. The film, an experimental documentary entitled *Shooting Indians: A Journey with Jeffrey Thomas,* was completed four years later, in 1997. In 2005, Kazimi and Thomas paired up again, this time to participate in a cross-country set of conversations between South Asian and Indigenous artists that also featured a screening of *Shooting Indians.* A few years later in 2009, Toronto's South Asian Visual Arts Collective (SAVAC) curated an art exhibition inspired by *Shooting Indians* and featured Kazimi and Thomas in conversation. In 2021, Toronto's Reel Asian and ImagiNATIVE film festivals collaborated to present a screening of *Shooting Indians* alongside a moderated discussion with Kazimi and Thomas.

I am struck both by the endurance of *Shooting Indians*—an independent film that has screened primarily at film festivals and, occasionally, in Canadian postsecondary classrooms—and by the endurance of Kazimi and Thomas, not just as lifelong friends, but as friends so committed to this project that they return to the film again and again in public forums (not a common practice by any means). *Shooting Indians* is a unique film in this regard. Among the handful of feature-length documentaries that examine Asian-Indigenous relationality, many have been profiles of those with Asian and Native ancestry. Though

these films importantly excavate heretofore unknown or marginalized histories, their focus on ancestry reasserts the primacy of biological reproduction as a mode of connection and relation. *Cedar and Bamboo* (2010) profiles four individuals of Chinese and Native ancestry in British Columbia; Alejandro Yoshizawa's *All Our Father's Relations* (2016) is about four Musqueam siblings who travel to China to connect with their Chinese father's roots; and Lucy Ostrander and Don Sellers's *Honor Thy Mother* (2021) is about the Indigenous women who migrated to Bainbridge Island (Squamish territories) in the early 1940s to pick berries for Japanese American farmers and later married their fellow workers, Filipino immigrant men.

Two recent documentaries focus on other forms of relation. Ann Kaneko's *Manzanar Diverted: When Water Becomes Dust* (2021) is about a coalition between Japanese Americans, Paiute peoples, and California ranchers that emerges in the context of Los Angeles's water crisis. By evoking the entanglements of Paiute displacement, Japanese World War II incarceration, and environmental health at the Manzanar internment camp, *Manzanar Diverted* focuses not on interpersonal relationships but on the forms of structural violence (colonial land dispossession, incarceration, ecologically destructive infrastructure development) that place Paiute, Japanese American, and rural white Americans in relation to one another. Another film, Chris Hsiung's *Elder in the Making* (2015), about Hsiung's road trip with Cowboy Smithx (Blackfoot) to Smithx's traditional territories, shares similarities with *Shooting Indians* insofar as it focuses on Hsiung's journey of learning from Smithx. Yet *Shooting Indians* is crucially different from all of these films in its depiction and facilitation of *enduring* friendship, both on- and off-screen.

By anchoring this chapter in friendship—by amplifying the radical potential of friendship—I am reading queerly, anchoring futurity in platonic intimacy rather than the (hetero)normative and reproductive couple. It is worth pointing out here the significance of radical friendship as a mode of relationality that is generative, without being biologically reproductive. In popular imaginaries, friendship is often adjunct to romantic partnership: friendships facilitate romantic love by offering spaces for advice, gossip, and venting; for addressing emotional or intellectual needs that other social or familial arrangements do not fully meet. Yet queer and feminist scholars and activists have had a great deal to say about the generativity of friendship. As

bell hooks writes, "Friendship is the place in which a great majority of us have our first glimpse of redemptive love and caring community."[9] Collectivity and collaboration have been touchstones for undermining the aims of heteropatriarchy, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism.[10] The open-endedness of friendship and the looser expectations and lower stakes surrounding friendships give them radical potential. In conversation with his friend Maura Roberts, Cree poet and scholar Billy-Ray Belcourt muses that "friendship offers up a kind of sociality that makes experimentation in the name of a larger political project possible. Loose ends don't have to be tied up."[11] The friendships and collectivities developed in response to the AIDS crisis, for example, generated experimentation with collective models of care that have offered alternate ways of thinking about kinship and relation. However, friendship is not inherently radical or utopian. For its part, queer friendship can ironically be complicit in the very normative structures it imagines it disrupts; as Leah Claire Allen and John Garrison point out, the idea of "chosen family" that is oppositional to biological family problematically relies on that neoliberal cornerstone, "choice."[12] To meet their radical potential, friendships take work. Sarah Hunt/Tłaliłila'ogwa (Kwagiulth, Kwakwaka'wakw Nation) and Cindy Holmes point out that when friends are unevenly located with respect to power and difference, there is an opportunity to build allyship, but this requires accountability on the part of those with privilege rather than reciprocity on the part of those more marginalized.[13]

Kazimi and Thomas's deep connection is resonant with the Indigenous feminist and queer studies scholarship on Indigenous models of kinship that not only disrupt homo- and heteronormative relationship structures privileged by neoliberal capitalism but also suggest alternate decolonial possibilities. Native Hawaiian scholar Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio argues that restoring *pilina,* which roughly translates to connection or association, by cultivating relationship and reciprocity is essential to decolonization given that colonization has disrupted such connections through the imposition of heteropatriarchal, capitalist modes of relation. Difficult to translate to English, these are rich, layered, storied forms of connection and kinship between humans, and across human and more-than-human beings.[14] Kim TallBear likewise notes that the language and discourse to write and think about multiple forms of relationality, including sexual and nonsexual ones, have historically been far more expansive in Dakota

traditions.[15] The Dakota language does not posit a binary between the human and nonhuman, for example; nonhuman beings are respected as kin and relatives with their own nations and polities.[16] Western discourses are inadequate by comparison. Though *Shooting Indians* does not address human–nonhuman relations, the connection and reciprocity that the film has cultivated between Kazimi and Thomas (first in its production, then later in its distribution and circulation) seems continuous with—or, at minimum, aligned with—the forms of relationality described by Osorio and TallBear that are not easily captured by settler structures of relation. As Jafari S. Allen writes, "The practice of loving friendship is a powerful tool (that we have now) that can be used to heal from the multiple and compounded traumas of race/sex terror."[17] Extending Allen, we might say that friendship is a tool not just for healing from multiple forms of violence, but for building alternate futures.

Just as friendship is generative, so is refusal. In *Shooting Indians,* friendship and refusal collide, becoming mutually reinforcing. Kazimi and Thomas's friendship is integral to the film's politic of refusal—a concept most forcefully developed by Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson, who argues that Kahnawake Mohawk nationalism is characterized by a politics of refusal.[18] She writes that "[Mohawks] interrupt and fundamentally challenge stories that have been told about them and about others like them, as well as the structure of settlement that strangles their political form and tries to take their land and their selves from them."[19] She concludes that Mohawk refusal is *generative* as Kahnawake Mohawk members exercise new modes of survival, existence, and sovereignty. Rather than merely negating U.S. or Canadian state sovereignty, refusal generates alternative forms of nationhood, sovereignty, and belonging. The seventy-eight-day standoff against the Canadian military by Mohawk citizens of Kahnawake and Kahnestake in 1990—an uprising popularly known as the Oka Crisis—was generated by this culture of Indigenous refusal. Simpson discusses the refusal of Kahnawake Mohawks both as ethnographic subjects (refusing to be transparently available as objects of study) and as political subjects articulating claims to nation, identity, and sovereignty (refusing settler state accommodations, for example). Simpson herself enacts a refusal to reproduce expected forms of anthropological knowledge. I extend Simpson's argument to reflect on the potential of Indigenous politics of refusal to generate alternate, critical forms of diasporic belonging and participation within (and ultimately, against) white settler

societies. The Mohawk uprising, for instance, generated new kinds of diasporic cultural politics across Canada, as this public moment of colonial encounter brought into relief the suturing of settler structure with colonial event.

Shooting Indians is a film that both emerges from the cultures of refusal that Indigenous politics have helped to cultivate within South Asian diasporas in Canada and generates continued forms of refusal, if unevenly. In form and content, *Shooting Indians* archives counter-hegemonic forms of diasporic–Indigenous relationality. The film responds to the Hollywood western's long legacy of constructing audience expectations of the imaginary Indian. These expectations, as Philip Deloria (Dakota) theorizes, emerge through, and produce, the colonial-imperial relations shaping settler societies. Expectations signal normative assumptions and beliefs, as they constitute "the dense economies of meaning, representation, and act that have inflected both American culture writ large and individuals, both Indian and non-Indian."[20] The film excavates what Deloria refers to as the "ghostly presences" of expectations that "materialize at critical moments to shape reactions in subtle ways."[21] The film's interruption of these expectations echoes Maile Arvin's observations on how refusal operates in the context of visual art: through the "refusal to participate in the production of 'natural,' 'authentic' Indigenous subjects who might be easily apprehended and utilized by either Western social scientific knowledge production or the Western contemporary art canon."[22] In this way, *Shooting Indians* expands the scope of diasporic film toward the lateral, countercolonial relationalities that settler states tend to submerge within dominant frameworks of multiculturalist belonging and identification. To interpret *Shooting Indians* through this frame, I first situate it in terms of the Toronto-based South Asian diasporic cultural politics from which it emerged. I then analyze some of the ways the film itself, in form and content, enacts a practice of refusal; this analysis includes close readings of key scenes and a reflection on its experimental mode. Finally, I assess the generative effects of the film, both on Kazimi's own work, and on the conversations and cultural politics that the film continues to inspire decades after its release.

Before that, some contextualizing notes. This chapter focuses on the entanglement of state politics of "race," "ethnicity," and/or "culture" with settler colonialism: specifically, the ways in which the laws, policies, and cultural practices of white settler states provide structural

incentives to diasporic populations to adopt dominant modes of belonging and identification. South Asian diasporic politics steeped in conservatism, constituted through colonialism, capitalism, caste, cisheteropatriarchy, and anti-Blackness are an effect of these incentives.[23] This dynamic is best understood in terms of the competing and entangled representations and claims to land, identity, and politics that multiple histories and processes of colonization and imperialism generate. In Canada, official and unofficial forms of multiculturalism—promoting liberal-pluralist models of recognizing cultural difference—sit in tension with Indigenous sovereignty, which challenges their elisions. Settler national imaginaries entice non-Indigenous, nonwhite populations to escape marginalization by aligning with settler power. Settler power compels "ethno-racial groups" to assimilate into white settlerhood and/or participate in neoliberal logics of competition for scarce resources and recognition: these are the dominant forms of cross-racial relationality available. Antiracist responses thus often forge collaborative links between groups, without necessarily upheaving their framing as discrete "groups." In other words, they do not always see an outside to the settler state.[24] By contrast, the work of diasporic writers such as Rita Wong, Larissa Lai, and SKY Lee, and activist organizations such as No One Is Illegal, gestures toward the ongoing work of forming diasporic identities that seriously engage with questions of Indigenous sovereignty.[25] To return to Wong's provocation: "What happens if we position Indigenous people's struggles instead of normalized whiteness as the reference point through which we come to articulate our subjectivities? How would such a move radically transform our perceptions of the land on which we live?"[26]

COUNTERHEGEMONIC RELATIONALITIES

I situate *Shooting Indians'* production and reception within the artistic-activist work of South Asian diasporas in Toronto that has been generated through Indigenous refusals of the colonial nation-state. Anthropologist and historian Carole McGranahan, in a special issue of *Cultural Anthropology* that includes and builds on Simpson's work, situates refusal within broader debates in anthropology, noting the concept's initial use by Marcel Mauss in 1967.[27] She details three aspects of refusal. The first is that refusal is social and affiliative.[28] By refusing the state's structures of social and cultural organization, prac-

tices of refusal enable the (re)production of new forms of community. The second is refusal's distinction from resistance. As Audra Simpson notes, resistance "overinscribe[s] the state with its power to determine what matter[s]."[29] Whereas resistance unwittingly reaffirms terms of engagement set by the state, refusal critiques them and, in the process, fashions new forms of relationality and coexistence. McGranahan states, "If resistance involves consciously defying or opposing superiors 'in a context of differential power relationships,' then refusal rejects this hierarchical relationship, repositing the relationship as one configured altogether differently."[30] Finally, refusal is hopeful and willful; underpinning acts of refusal is the promise of other modes of existence and relationality.[31]

Unlike Simpson's work, the refusal I outline here is not an Indigenous refusal of settler-colonial epistemologies or ontologies that attempt to displace and erase dynamic sovereignties and modes of existence, either on my part as researcher or on the part of the filmmakers or artists. While Indigenous refusal emerges directly from conditions of dispossession and violence produced by settler colonialism, diasporic refusal requires the development of a critical consciousness around complicity in ongoing colonization: diasporic peoples may have the privilege to consent to settler power and to accrue its benefits, even marginally. However, the diasporic practices I describe are made possible through Indigenous refusal, which provides the impetus to counter cultural imaginaries that reproduce settler-colonial epistemologies and ontologies. They support Indigenous refusal, but do not and *cannot* substitute for Indigenous refusal. Rather than normalizing the colonial conditions of existence that mark diasporic life in settler societies, these cultural productions explicitly identify settler-colonial erasure and deferral, refusing to take these for granted. It is useful here to invoke Michelle Raheja's concept of visual sovereignty, which she develops to describe the critical aesthetic, representational, and spectatorial practices of Indigenous actors, directors, and audiences.[32] Visual sovereignty, in other words, describes specifically Indigenous responses to visual culture. Jeff Thomas's work quite clearly enacts forms of visual sovereignty. Kazimi's work is not enacting visual sovereignty—it does not have the authority to do so—but there is something happening here that is about being *in relation to* Thomas's visual sovereignty. It is a sideways or lateral relation that Kazimi develops beside Thomas, on the basis of shared craft and

deepening vision—one that also opens up the possibility for thinking beyond the constraints of sovereignty, not necessarily to supplant sovereignty, but to supplement it. This is possible, again, because of refusal's generativity.

As described in previous chapters, the Mohawk Uprising/Oka Crisis was key in the cultivation of this refusal politics within South Asian diasporic communities. This moment of colonial encounter brought into relief the suturing of settler structure with colonial event, compelling the Canadian public to reflect on its significance. As Robinder Kaur Sehdev remembers:

> When the news camera captured images of soldiers erecting razor wire and shooting tear gas at crowds, those of us watching the evening news could disapprove while, thanks to geographic distance, we could also remove ourselves from the state-caused state of crisis. Yet we were called upon, Haudenosaunee or not, Native or not, when negotiators and warriors reminded us that this crisis was produced by the state, and when they asked us where the honour of *our* leaders had gone. In these questions, we were challenged to consider our belonging in communities that seek justice or those that have benefitted from injustice and dispossession.[33]

Kaushalya Bannerji's poem "Oka Nada" references both the assault on Mohawks during the crisis as well as its broader colonial genealogies:

> I am from the country
> Columbus dreamt of
> You, the country
> Columbus conquered.
> Now in your land
> My words are circling
> blue Oka sky
> they come back to us
> alight on tongue.
> Protect me with your brazen passion
> for history is my truth,
> Earth, my witness
> my home,
> this native land.[34]

Other examples of the South Asian diasporic politics can be found in the magazine *Rungh* (on whose board of directors Kazimi serves). Rajinderpal S. Pal's poem "Collective Amnesia," published in 1998 shortly after the release of *Shooting Indians,* included this stanza:

> the massacre more subtle
> than blood covered midnight trains
> in this country with collective amnesia
> we Hollywood eyes
> cowboys and Indians
> we don't talk of
> tuberculosis smallpox or alcohol numb(ers)
> we talk of two founding nations
> and founding fathers
> but nothing had been lost till they arrived.[35]

Pal makes a number of interconnected points: he draws parallels between the spectacular violence of India's partition in 1947 ("blood covered midnight trains") and the slow deaths due to disease and alcoholism in Canada (though, to be sure, there were also more spectacular forms of violence); mirroring the themes of *Shooting Indians,* he also suggests that the pedagogies of Hollywood westerns enforce a "collective amnesia" that supports Canada's national origin stories of "two founding nations" (English and French), and founding fathers. In an essay conversation published in this same issue of *Rungh,* Métis two-spirit writer Sharron Proulx-Turner and queer South Asian activist Sanhita Brahmacharie discuss immigrant communities' expectations of First Nations peoples. Brahmacharie reflects: "It was not until I was much older that I realized . . . that, in fact, aboriginal peoples were as invisible to me as I was, in all my 'visible minority' glory, to white Canadian culture";[36] Proulx-Turner observes: "Immigrants learn to hate aboriginal peoples right away. If not at home, then in the history books, the art, novels, movies, ESL classes, TV, newspapers, ads, comics, video games, and so on."[37] Proulx-Turner continues, "So when we aboriginal folks carry out our duty to protect mother earth from slaughter, when we push for settlement of centuries-old land claims, when we demand our right to self-determination, join us. Join us as our sisters and allies. Join us as our brothers."[38] In June 2005, it was the radical/progressive South Asian community fostered by Desh that

protested an annual Toronto AIDS fundraiser fashion show organized around the theme of "Bollywood Cowboy."[39] A press release by lead organization the Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention stated: "The pairing of cowboys and Indians alludes to the exploitation and extermination of Aboriginal peoples. While in this case South Asians are the primary target, the colonial connotations remain extreme, unfair, and racist. We are committed to ensuring that this type of representation does not occur in the future."[40]

Alongside examples such as these, *Shooting Indians* reflects a preoccupation and focus in the 1990s and early to mid-2000s with the colonial expectations and intimacies linking South Asians and Indigenous nations in North America. The film's title evokes these intimacies on multiple levels: it might refer to a tradition of cowboys killing Indians in many Hollywood westerns, or to visual cultural interests in capturing Indians (South Asian or First Nations) through film and photography. It could also refer to Indians (South Asian or First Nations) like Thomas and Kazimi who engage in photographic and filmic capture themselves. It is worth noting that the work of Kazimi, the queer South Asian festival Desh Pardesh, and others was examining connections between diaspora and indigeneity outside the settler state well before the theoretical language for understanding the particular dynamics of settler colonialism began to circulate across activist, scholarly, or artistic communities.[41]

PHOTOGRAPHIC INTIMACIES

Ongoing conversations among Toronto artists/activists on South Asian relationships to Indigenous politics generated the creative opening through which *Shooting Indians* developed. In other words, South Asian artists/activists' refusal and disruption of the model minority discourses that position them as communities of productive citizens in relation to Indigenous communities generated possibilities for Kazimi's critical lens. *Shooting Indians* enacts a refusal of the colonial modes of knowledge production that produce the imaginary Indian as fossilized relic, and meditates on practices of photographic and filmic portraiture in order to forge diasporic–Indigenous intimacies.[42] There are multiple layers: Kazimi meets Thomas through a shared interest in Edward Curtis, whose infamous portrait series of "vanishing Indians" had come under fire in the early 1980s for being staged to produce a

constructed authenticity.[43] When they meet, Thomas is working on a project that critiques Curtis. *Shooting Indians* itself is a kind of filmic portrait of Thomas, one that excavates the intimacies embedded in the practice of creating portraiture: the process of constructing a portrait authentic to the inner world of its subject arguably demands a self-awareness on the part of the photographer (or filmmaker, in this instance) about their expectations.

Kazimi correspondingly places himself into the narrative: the first few photographs we see in the film are of him: first as a child in 1965, greeting a visitor from England who brought him a toy set of cowboys and Indians, and then as a young filmmaker looking through the lens of a video camera (Figure 14). This is followed by three of Curtis's portraits, and then again an early 1980s photo of Kazimi behind the camera. The succession of photographs immediately posits a chain of meaning that links together Kazimi's early experiences with cowboys and Indians to his development as a filmmaker, a link that Curtis's legacy only contextualizes further. Kazimi places this personal history within a longer transnational one, signaled by the opening shot of a spinning desk globe—symbolizing the post-1492 spatial remapping of earth—in combination with a voiceover: "My journey begins where Columbus's journey was supposed to end: in India."[44] It's when he arrives in Canada as a film student, he notes, that people refer to him as "East Indian." Shortly thereafter he discovers Curtis's vanishing Indians, which for Kazimi evoke the Indians of Hollywood westerns. In this respect, *Shooting Indians* is a diasporic response to Hollywood westerns, which Kazimi grew up watching in India. This speaks to a common experience, one emerging from the transnational circulation of westerns. For example, in his foreword to *The Magic of Bollywood: At Home and Abroad,* political scientist Ishtiaq Ahmed similarly reflects: "As a teenager, I flocked to Hollywood films showing in Lahore cinemas and would invariably side with the white man fighting the Red Indians [*sic*]."[45] Indigenous spectators have responded to westerns in similar ways: in her comparative study of perceptions of *The Searchers* among American Indians and Anglo-Americans, JoEllen Shively found that Native respondents, like white respondents, identified with John Wayne's character, while distancing themselves from the film's Indian characters.[46] An early montage in *Shooting Indians* includes a childhood photograph of Thomas and his brother dressed up in cowboy outfits, holding rifles and posing in front of a Christmas tree

FIGURE 14. Cowboy and Indian figurines with Kazimi's childhood photograph; screenshot from *Shooting Indians.*

FIGURE 15. Jeff Thomas and his brother, dressed up as cowboys; screenshot from *Shooting Indians.*

(Figure 15). However, as *Shooting Indians* makes clear in its examination of Kazimi and Thomas's relationships to the imaginary Indian, there are distinct stakes for the internalization and incorporation of this cultural construction depending on one's social location as Native or non-Native. Thomas, for instance, turned to photography following an accident that left him with chronic pain because doctors refused to treat him on the assumption that he was a "lazy Indian" who was "malingering." For Thomas, impact of the imaginary Indian has been felt and embodied.[47]

By contrast, as the film shows, for Kazimi the imaginary Indian has been a more distant source of curiosity, confusion, and complicity. Linking his internalization of the imaginary Indian to Columbus's "Indian," Kazimi both presents a critique of colonial nomenclature and implicates himself as part of Columbus's transnational historical legacy. His self-reflection begins to excavate the social conditions of the emergence of his identity as an "East Indian" in relation to the "Red Indian" and colonial expansion. That self-reflexivity presents a critique of documentary convention, which as Bill Nichols argues,

> posits an organizing agency that possesses information and knowledge, a text that conveys it, and a subject who will gain it. He-who-knows (the agency is usually masculine) will share that knowledge with those who wish to know; they, too, can take the place of the subject-who-knows. Knowledge, as much or more than the imaginary identification between viewer and fictional character, promises the viewer a sense of plenitude or self-sufficiency.[48]

Conventional documentary's promise of mastery over knowledge belies its constructions of truth and reality. As filmmaker and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha boldly asserts, "There is no such thing as *documentary*"; documentary films rely on techniques such as minimal editing, long takes, and handheld cameras to achieve the "look" of realism.[49] *Shooting Indians* does not share this commitment to realism or authenticity, though the premise of *Shooting Indians* seems conventional at first: Kazimi follows Thomas as he develops his latest project, which critically engages with Edward Curtis. However, the interruption of filming midway through expands the scope of the film, turning it into

a journey. Interspersed through the portrait of Thomas are Kazimi's own questions and reflections by both Thomas and Kazimi on their relationship with one another, as filmmaker and subject. In its emphasis on the constructedness of meaning and critique of the authority of the filmmaker, *Shooting Indians* belongs to a genre of film that is often referred to as "experimental documentary."[50]

Moreover, as cultural critics Margot Francis and Peter Feng have noted, *Shooting Indians* is also a critical revision of the ethnographic documentary.[51] Ethnography, the predominant research method of anthropology, seeks to record and document a culture or community; ethnographic film uses documentary techniques to do so. Since at least the 1980s, anthropology as a field has debated the power dynamics shaping this research method, underscoring issues of positionality, social location, ethics, and the presumptions of neutrality and objectivity.[52] The ethnographic film has been subject to similar sorts of criticism, largely following on the heels of movements for decolonization, feminism, and Black power, and against war and imperialism, in the 1950s–1970s.[53] As Catherine Russell notes, "Ethnographic film theory and criticism is an ongoing discussion of issues of objectivity, subjectivity, realism, narrative structure, and ethical questions of representation."[54] Trinh's 1982 film *Reassemblage* was exemplary of this critique: Trinh refused to ethnographically "capture" Senegalese culture, providing no narration and compelling the viewer to meditate on their need to assign particular types of meaning to the images they see on the screen.

As a non-Indigenous filmmaker seeking to capture the elusive "real Indian," Kazimi is an ethnographer of sorts; he comes across a profile of Thomas in an art magazine while "hunting for the subject of a thesis film," and this initial pursuit of Thomas stems from a desire to find the authentic Indians popularized by both Hollywood and Curtis. However, he subverts the conventions of this genre by laying bare his own desires, assumptions, and misconceptions. As Francis explains:

> *Shooting Indians* repeatedly undermines those aspects of the documentary form (such as anonymous voice-overs, seamless editing, and camera invisibility) which work to assert the filmmaker's authority. While the video refuses an "omniscient eye" through visual and narrative strategies that foreground Kazimi's

> self-reflexive analysis, at the same time it acknowledges his draw to "exotic" representations of First Nations peoples.[55]

The film suggests that there are multiple sites of complicity, contestation, and negotiation within dominant representational politics. Rather than presenting himself as the expert behind the camera, documenting the authentic truths of his subject, Kazimi questions the sources of his knowledge, and continues to unravel them as the film progresses. *Shooting Indians* thus troubles this promise of knowledge through ethnographic documentary: even if there are things to be learned from the film, they simultaneously demand a commitment to *unlearning* that leads not to a sense of mastery over a topic but to the cultivation of humility in relation to knowledge. The film's disjointed structure compels the audience to engage in unlearning. For example, the film stops production midway through due to extenuating circumstances in Thomas's personal life. The newer footage, shot ten years later, presents the audience with Thomas's transformed relationship to Curtis. In the early 1980s, Thomas saw Curtis's oeuvre as primarily exploitative and grossly inauthentic; by the 1990s, while holding onto that critique, he also reinterprets Curtis's work in terms of the agency of those he photographed, thus unraveling our assumptions with respect to Curtis as well. *Shooting Indians* thus forces us to question the knowledge we acquire at the start of the film.[56]

Kazimi's self-reflexivity in the film not only critiques ethnographic approaches but also transforms ethnography via autoethnography. Mary Louise Pratt distinguishes between the two: "If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations."[57] While autoethnographic texts may not necessarily be more truthful than ethnographies, they self-reflexively draw attention to issues of social location, authenticity, and power relations with respect to marginalized subjects. In *Shooting Indians,* Kazimi reflects on his identity in relation to not only dominant identities but also Indigenous ones. Moreover, he positions himself not simply as a marginal subject, but as a marginal subject who is implicated in reproducing the marginalization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. As Francis comments, Kazimi does not merely "reverse" the gaze, but complicates

the presumption that he is capable of reversing it, given that his "narration . . . reminds us that the global reach of American popular culture provided him with a steady diet of western kitsch. . . . Kazimi frequently reveals his own presumptions about Aboriginal cultures precisely in order to analyze his implicatedness in mainstream culture."[58] Thus, Francis suggests, the film invites spectators to do the same.[59]

Shooting Indians' self-reflexivity is not narcissistic but profoundly invested in forging an intimacy between Kazimi as filmmaker and Thomas as subject. The still shots of Kazimi's photos and Curtis's portraits segue into a close-up of a set of hands flipping through a magazine featuring Thomas's work before settling onto another, this time of two successive photos of Kazimi filming Thomas. We then see the film's first live shot of Thomas—a blue-tinted close-up against a black backdrop—and then, finally, the main title card. The succession of frames suggests that viewers understand Thomas *in relation to* Kazimi, not only contextualizing their encounter but, through the two photographs, providing us with a sense of their closeness: the 3″ x 3″ black-and-white prints with white borders have a vintage look that visually recalls the childhood photo we see earlier in the film. The photos are shot *as photos* that we view as if flipping through a family picture album, inviting us to consider the intimacy cultivated by Kazimi and Thomas through the documentary. Routing friendship through the photo album—a bastion of familial intimacy—the film presents an affective link between the latent reproductive function of the family and the generative possibilities of friendship. This early scene is a crucial one. It serves as synecdoche for the film itself as it evokes the authority of the photograph in order to craft an archive of countercolonial relationality. As Ann Cvetkovich observes, "As an archival object, the photograph's power derives as much from its affective magic as from its realist claims, and ultimately from the powerful combination of the two."[60] That the photos of Kazimi and Thomas together are black-and-white prints is not incidental; evoking a distant past, they insert their friendship into the historical record. Because we see them in relation to their personal histories, these photos queer time, interrupting the privileged status of biological reproduction as marker of time and (re)generation within colonial capitalist frames. That their friendship is familial, rather, offers a more expansive interpretation of intimacy and relation.

DIALOGIC RELATIONALITIES

While the interplay of photography and film creates an affective intimacy in *Shooting Indians,* we see other forms of relationality emerge through the film's establishment of a dialogue between Kazimi and Thomas that disrupts and refuses multiculturalist representation. In her essay "Consent's Revenge," Audra Simpson asks:

> How . . . do those who are targeted for elimination, those who have had their land stolen from them, their bodies and their cultures worked on to be made into something else articulate their politics? How can one articulate political projects if one has been offered a half-life of civilization in exchange for land? These people have preexisting political traditions to draw from—so how do they, then, do things? They refuse to consent to the apparatuses of the state.[61]

A static and flattened conceptualization of "culture" informs the state apparatus of Canadian multiculturalism—both its official and unofficial forms—which is framed through ahistorical notions of authenticity and essentialism. As long established by scholars of race and racism in Canada, this multiculturalist construction of difference props up a whiteness as the simultaneously hypervisible and invisible core of Canadianness, eliding ongoing assaults on Indigenous land and peoples, the exploitation of racialized labor, anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, and other forms of violence. Under multiculturalism, "dialogue" is welcomed as a benign and neutral form of relationality that does little to upset dominant ideologies of racism and colonization.

While this is the hegemonic understanding of "dialogue," there are also submerged forms of dialogue oriented toward more transformative politics. If the superficial forms of relationality cultivated vis-à-vis multiculturalism consent to statist modes of belonging, then the generation of radical relationalities that bypass white settler interlocutors constitutes a form of refusal. *Shooting Indians* is exemplary of these. The film's focus is not on learning about cultural difference, but about the historical and political contexts that create cultural difference. The signs of cultural difference are a starting rather than end point, and ultimately it is converging (and diverging) experiences of oppression

that form the basis for dialogue. For example, Kazimi sonically gestures to the dialogic aspects of the film through a range of soundtrack accompaniments: a track by Indian fusion rock band Indian Ocean opens the film, while a piece by Six Nations women singers closes it. Against the "sonic dissonance"—to cite Comanche scholar Dustin Tahmahkera—generated by what Jodi Byrd calls "cacophonies of colonialism," the film's acoustic aesthetics introduce possibilities for a decolonial relational soundscape.[62] Kazimi more didactically muses on relationality with the inclusion of Thomas's reflection on their relationship. While cognizant of the nonequivalence of their experiences, Thomas notes the ease and connection that came specifically from a sense of their shared experiences of marginalization:

> I liked what you were doing, the fact that you were a student and that you had an interest. And I think, if I remember correctly, you talked too about that sense of being an outsider in Canada and the kind of problems that we had were both parallel. So in a sense I thought that it would make . . . it was just interesting to do it from that standpoint. I don't think I would have been comfortable doing it with anybody else.

The dialogic practice of the film is held together through the metaphor of journey. Hamid Naficy, in his now-classic survey of diasporic cinema, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking,* notes that journeys and journeying are a key feature of diasporic films, whether physical or metaphorical.[63] He observes three patterns of journeys across these films: "outward journeys of escape, home seeking, and home founding; journeys of quest, homelessness, and lostness; and inward, homecoming journeys."[64] The metaphor of the journey is certainly central to *Shooting Indians,* as referenced in the title ("A Journey with Jeffrey Thomas"), and explicitly named by Kazimi at different moments. As a film that is concerned about the racial-colonial politics of identity and exclusion in North America, it corresponds most closely to the pattern of "outward journeys of escape, home seeking, and home founding."

Yet *Shooting Indians* crucially revises expectations around diasporic narratives that are structured by the conflicts and tensions inherent in migrating from old to new homeland by implicitly engaging with Celia Haig-Brown's question: "What does it mean to take seriously

not only the land from which one comes, but the land and original people of the place where one arrives?"[65] It questions the binary of "old" and "new" homelands by situating migration in terms of the interlinked forms of colonization that both bind together Kazimi and Thomas as two "Indians" and hail Kazimi's participation in colonial logics. The film's first shot—the spinning globe, mentioned earlier—and Kazimi's voiceover concerning Columbus's journey immediately make this link. More compellingly, the film visually constructs Kazimi's "new homeland" as Indigenous rather than settler land, by filming Thomas across a range of settings, signaling the Indigenous presence that persists even within colonized landscapes. This is one of the most powerful aspects of *Shooting Indians* as it mirrors Thomas's own photographic practice, which inserts Indigenous bodies into settler spaces. As depicted in the film, Thomas's *Bear Portrait Series* features his son across urban settings: "The first Bear Portrait set in motion a new way of looking at the city and . . . my revolution was against the invisible urban Iroquois presence."[66] The series speaks back to long histories promulgating the myth of the vanishing Indian vis-à-vis settler spaces that colonizers subsequently claim as their own. In *Shooting Indians,* Thomas's photographs serve as a pedagogic model for how to reconceptualize land and Indigeneity under colonial conditions, thus creating a dialogue between Thomas and Kazimi's respective crafts. Three scenes are notable: Thomas at the Six Nations reserve in southwestern Ontario, where he (partly) grew up; in Toronto's multiracial enclave, Kensington Market; and in Ottawa, Canada's capital city.

The scene at the Six Nations reserve comes early in the film; Kazimi accompanies Thomas for a photoshoot of Thomas's grandmother, Emily. The reserve is particularly important as the site where Kazimi and non-Native audiences would most expect to encounter Native people: the space where the contemporary settler imagination would relegate Indigenous bodies. Noting his own misperceptions, Kazimi recalls: "I look for totem poles. Jeff patiently points out that they are Indigenous only to west coast cultures. I'm embarrassed. I quickly tell him about India's many official languages, its tribal peoples, the differences in culture." For his part, Thomas shares that he is nervous given colonial histories of reserve photography, and his potential complicity with them: "When I first began photographing here, I was hesitant to take pictures. I was afraid of the attitudes that always existed about people coming in and taking photographs. In the early part of

the century, they had a lot of people coming here. . . . These people came, took something, left, and they never came back; it was never an exchange of anything, it was just a taking away of documentation." Although the film never explicitly states it, Thomas's confession here also serves as a gentle reminder to Kazimi of his ethical responsibilities as a filmmaker of Thomas at the reserve.

Kazimi follows Thomas's cue in his documentation of the reserve as an intimate space of home and community, rather than a site of ethnographic consumption. Thomas visits his sister-in-law and nephew before seeing Emily; filmed at mid-range, these scenes position Thomas and his relatives in-place without spectacularizing the reserve. We see the everydayness of the reserve space: a mix of green foliage and bare autumn trees, gently swaying goldenrod, a house undergoing renovation (Figure 16). Moreover, as *Shooting Indians* shows, while it holds a special place for Thomas—he spent a great deal of time here as a child, at his grandmother's house—he grew up in Buffalo, New York, and isn't inherently "at home" here either. Nor can his relationship to the reserve be explained through the framework of assimilation: he is both urban and strongly rooted in the reserve. His photos—presented in still shots interspersed between live-action shots of Thomas at work with his camera—depict Thomas's sense of the rich and quiet beauty of the space (Figure 17). To return to Deloria, assumptions concerning the spatial ordering of Native bodies/communities are instances of the sorts of expectations that emerge from, and sustain, the colonial-imperial relations of the settler state. As Kazimi recounts at the end of this scene, "My worldview has changed after our visit to the reserve. I had gone expecting the beads, feathers, and teepees of the Curtis images. Images that Jeff's been trying to confront in his photographs."

If settler imaginaries relegate Indigeneity to reserve spaces, then they perceive urban spaces to be devoid of Indigeneity; to be quintessentially *non*-Indigenous. It makes sense, then, that *Shooting Indians* segues from Six Nations to a brief scene in Toronto's Kensington Market. Shots of Thomas in Kensington are notably the only ones that were filmed on the streets of Toronto (Figure 18).[67] This is a significant directorial choice, given Kensington's place in the cityscape: it's a historic, multiethnic neighborhood with eclectic markets and shops, and a hub for independent art and music. With its dense concentration (even in the early 1980s) of East and Southeast Asian, Caribbean, Latin American, and Eastern European vendors, the neighborhood embodies

FIGURE 16. Approaching Emily's house; screenshot from *Shooting Indians.*

FIGURE 17. Jeff taking photographs at his grandmother's house; screenshot from *Shooting Indians.*

the ethos of Toronto as multicultural city. However, the subsumption of Indigeneity within multiculturalism—in both its official and unofficial forms—also has the effect of reconfiguring Indigeneity as ethnic group and correspondingly diminishing Indigenous sovereignty claims.[68] As Bruno Cornellier and Michael Griffiths assert, "Liberal multicultural policies act comparably across multiple sites and spaces as avenues for the reinstitution of [Indigenous] dispossession."[69] The choice to film Thomas in Kensington thus places a submerged Indigenous presence back into multicultural space, mirroring Thomas's own portrait series of his son Bear. Although Kensington is vibrant and bustling on most days, in the film Thomas is wandering around taking photos of a nearly empty, seemingly dead neighborhood. This may have been circumstantial (it appears to be a rainy, cloudy day), but the effect is to amplify the authority of Thomas's body and movements in this iconic space. By contrast, filming Thomas amid a sea of multiracial figures would have reproduced the notion of Indigenous peoples as minority group, rather than members of nations. *Shooting Indians* in this scene thus not only undoes assumptions about Indigenous urban absence but also—for those familiar with Toronto's geographies and Kensington Market specifically—gestures to the distinction between Indigenous *nations* and postcolonial diasporic *groups.*

FIGURE 18. Jeff in Toronto's Kensington Market; screenshot from *Shooting Indians.*

FIGURE 19. Jeff pointing to his home, past the church spire; screenshot from *Shooting Indians.*

FIGURE 20. Jeff at the Canadian National Archives; screenshot from *Shooting Indians.*

The other urban space featured in the film is Ottawa, Canada's capital city. These scenes are particularly significant for their emphasis on Thomas's body against the backdrop of the Canadian parliament buildings, symbolizing settler power, and monuments, fetishizing (and memorializing) the imaginary Indian. Here Kazimi mirrors again Thomas's practice of reinserting Indigenous presence, this time not just into urban space but also a locus of settler power. Thus, a wide shot of the parliament buildings segues into a close-up of Thomas, who subsequently points toward a church spire (gesturing to where he lives). Here Thomas is in the agentic pose of onlooker gazing past a historical site of colonial power (Figure 19). Another scene at the Canadian National Library and Archive features a medium shot of a backlit Thomas reviewing Curtis's photographs against a large window looking out onto high-rise buildings (Figure 20). He is doubly in the position of engaging in a practice of critical spectatorship—reviewing and returning Curtis's gaze—and taking up space in a contemporary urban setting. These moments in the film are mundane yet powerful mediations into hegemonic representational politics: Kazimi's journey with Thomas is a journey toward developing an alternate diasporic archive of land, Indigeneity, and settler culture.

COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND GENERATIVE EFFECTS

A central aspect of refusal is that it is generative, moving beyond critique of/resistance to the state—which Simpson argues repeats hegemonic structures—to model new forms of relationality. Beyond rehearsing a critique of colonial knowledge, *Shooting Indians* models alternative forms of knowledge production that are dialogic and collaborative. In this sense, it is an example of what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Māori) refers to as a "connecting" project.[70] She notes that "connectedness positions individuals in sets of relationships with other people and with the environment. . . . To be connected is to be whole."[71] Kazimi is not all-knowing at the start of the film, nor does he suggest that he has reached that status by the end of the film. However, he does shift from searching for authentic "Red Indians" to acquiring a more nuanced understanding of indigeneity in Canada. By the end of the film, he admits that he has unlearned many of his assumptions: "Aboriginal cultures, like all cultures, including my own, have borrowed, incorporated,

and absorbed influences from all encounters, reviving—and at times reinventing—themselves. In the end, what has vanished is *my* image of the mythic, imaginary Red Indian." By repurposing the colonial euphemisms of discovery, journey, and exploration, Kazimi unhinges them from their associations with conquest and exploitation, and reattaches them to a self-conscious ethical curiosity and interest. An implicit question underpinning the film is what a process of countercolonial, cross-racial learning and dialogue across difference would look like. The film *shows* us that this learning process is relational for Kazimi and Thomas: it happens through dialogue and collaboration. That the two are even able to embark on this journey hinges on a mutual sense of trust. For Kazimi, the collaboration was transformative. At the 2011 Rebels with a Cause Film Festival screening, Kazimi discussed how his journey with Thomas inspired his subsequent research into early South Asian history in Canada: "Our engagement has been absolutely instrumental to the work I do, to the point that I don't think we can talk about the so-called exclusion of South Asians or Asians from early Canadian history without acknowledging the paradox of Aboriginal colonization." That influence is evident in his 2004 feature-length documentary, *Continuous Journey,* which brought public attention to the Canadian government's refusal to allow the 376 Indian passengers of the *Komagata Maru* charter ship to enter Canada in 1914. The passengers were laying claim to their legal right as British subjects to travel freely across the Commonwealth. Kazimi's film, which draws on years of meticulous archival research, reveals the government's choices to be clearly embedded within official policy and public culture that aim to maintain Canada as a "White Man's Country." In their speeches and letters, Kazimi finds that government officials drew reference to the precedent set by policies of genocide and assimilation that targeted Indigenous peoples. Though these connections were at times implicit, Kazimi amplifies them by overlaying images of government officials atop images of Native people while a voiceover reads these key texts; as we hear Mackenzie King (then bureaucrat, and later prime minister) state in a confidential report, "That Canada should remain a White Man's Country is believed to not only be desirable, but necessary on political and social grounds," a black-and-white picture of King casually posed on a chair is overlaid on a sepia photograph of a suited and mustached white person measuring a Native (Plains Indian) person's height, as two others watch, seated on the ground in front of a teepee.

In Kazimi's film *Narmada: A Valley Rises,* the connections are discernable in a different way. Kazimi worked on this film after he had begun initial work on *Shooting Indians.* Here, he shifts focus from Canada to India, and from questions of Native representation in Canada to the struggles of Indigenous peoples—Adivasis—in India.[72] The style and aesthetic of *Narmada* are quite distinct from but related to *Shooting Indians*: whereas *Shooting Indians* responds to the conventions of ethnographic documentary, *Narmada* captures an unfolding social movement. Kazimi is present in the film as narrator, and he identifies and positions himself in the first scene, but the concern of this film is less self-reflexivity and representational politics than it is the politics of documenting a mass mobilization in the Third World, for an ostensibly First World audience. The film follows the six-thousand-person march of primarily Adivasis and rural people—those most vulnerable to flooding from the Sardar Sarovar dam—to protest the World Bank–funded project. In an interview with Michael Hoolboom, Kazimi reflects that the questions that he had begun to explore around representation with Jeff Thomas surfaced in his approach to the film, as he encountered discourses of authenticity and purity with respect to Adivasi people:

> I used everything that I had learned and reflected upon in Jeff's work in my own representation of the indigenous people of India. I caught myself circling around ideas of "the pure tribal," a term even activists used. The suggestion was that deep in the country's interior one might encounter "real tribals" wearing loin cloths, carrying bows and arrows. I remember undertaking a trip and catching myself with this question: what am I doing? I felt I was in a trance, once again seduced by clichés.[73]

In his observations about the allure of stereotypes and clichés, Kazimi reminds us that the loss of diasporic–Indigenous relationality is deep seated, and that there remain persistent limits of solidarity and knowing better. Though these questions of authenticity do not surface in the film as explicitly as they do in *Shooting Indians,* from the outset the film frames the struggle against the dam as an Indigenous one. The early contextualizing scene uses long shots to emphasize the richness, sacredness, and beauty of the Narmada Valley, and one-on-one interviews underscore the significance for land-based Adivasi people.

Kazimi is also careful and intentional in his depiction of the movement and march participants. His use of medium shots and one-on-one interviews not only captures the energy and momentum of the movement but also narrows the gap between viewers who might perceive a distance between themselves and the documentary's subjects. Kazimi actively sought out one-on-one interviews to counter the perception that "one-to-one discussions in collectivized societies and cultures like India were uncommon. And it would take an extremely talented director to draw out of ordinary Indians how they really felt."[74] Against the depiction of Global South underclasses as blurred, nameless masses of people, *Narmada* humanizes its subjects, even as Kazimi's class and linguistic proclivities (and perhaps, my own as a viewer) end up centering some voices—in particular, those of English-speaking spokespeople and leaders Medha Patkar and Baba Amte—at the expense of others.[75]

Kazimi and Thomas's friendship has had ripple effects beyond the film—gesturing to the hope and possibility of moving beyond the impasse of diaspora/Indigeneity—though these have been uneven. The dialogic framework modeled by Kazimi and Thomas has generated conversations and artistic work among South Asian diasporas and Indigenous peoples in Canada; in this way the film's refusals have helped to nurture a community of people invested in relational work. In 2005–2006, the Toronto-based SAVAC partnered with TRIBE, an Aboriginal arts collective based in Saskatoon, to host a series of panel discussions across Canada among South Asian and First Nations artists, called "Define Indian"; Thomas and Kazimi participated in the Saskatoon leg of the discussions. Echoing the unfinished, ongoing nature of Kazimi and Thomas's conversation in the film, Thomas observed at a *Shooting Indians* screening at the 2011 Rebels with a Cause Film Festival at York University that during the Saskatoon discussions,

> there was a tension in the room. . . . You could kind of feel like people were angling to express themselves, but not quite feeling comfortable enough to do it. And I think that's what resonates with the film, and why it's still so important in a lot of ways. . . . We haven't reached that point yet where we are actually having those conversations, from my perspective, in an art gallery.

A few years after the SAVAC-TRIBE project, in 2009, SAVAC curated a *Shooting Indians*–inspired exhibit entitled *Crossing Lines: An*

Intercultural Dialogue at the Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant (in southwestern Ontario, Canada), which featured the work of eight South Asian and Indigenous artists who examine "the issues of connection and disconnection" and "the sites of intersections and divergence that exist between them."[76] The dialogic nature of the content was mirrored in the exhibit's opening reception, in which SAVAC transported a busload of Torontonians to the Glenhyrst Gallery; Kazimi and Thomas joined participants on the thirty- to forty-minute journey for a conversation and reflection on *Shooting Indians.* In a catalog essay for the exhibit, curator Srimoyee Mitra explains:

> *Shooting Indians: A Journey with Jeff Thomas* helped me understand the strategy of developing cross-cultural dialogues as a process of building trust and mutual respect. It formed a touchstone for this exhibition. As a next-generation immigrant and cultural practitioner, I felt that it was important to highlight and revisit the discussion started by the duo in this exhibition.[77]

The exhibit was uneven in its engagement with the notion of dialogue. On the one hand, Mitra's essay moves—to some extent, at least—beyond a liberal framework of cross-cultural dialogue to link the strategy of cross-cultural dialogue explicitly to shared and divergent experiences of colonization elsewhere in the curatorial statement, as evident in questions such as "Do immigrants perpetuate the brutal legacy of colonialism established by European settlers when we migrate to Canada? Can Indigenous communities and immigrants work towards a framework of decolonization that transforms the social, political, and cultural landscape and empowers us to coexist peacefully along with the dominant cultures with dignity and mutual respect?"[78] At the same time, keywords such as *colonialism, decolonization,* and *dominant cultures* are buried underneath the exhibit title and the imagery of the catalog cover page, which features Afshin Matlabi's *Natives* (2009). The piece features two figures, one ostensibly Native, the other South Asian, marked by stereotypical hand gestures: one stands with a hand raised in greeting (Native); the other holds an Indian classical dance pose (South Asian). Mitra notes that Matlabi subtly gestures toward the disjointed, fraught relationship between South Asian and Indigenous communities through the use of multidirectional color strokes

and differential placement of the two figures.[79] However, because the piece neither signals toward historical or political contexts nor offers ways of reading these figures beyond stereotype, those without prior knowledge could easily experience it as repetition of stereotype and liberal forms of dialogue. Here, again, is the structural impasse that does not simply disappear. Most pertinently, those steeped in hegemonic colonial ideologies would likely take what Stuart Hall refers to as "negotiated" or "oppositional" positions in relation to such a piece in order to protect those ideologies.[80]

This is a concern that one could raise with respect to *Shooting Indians* as well. While the film is an important one, it cannot do this work of refusal on its own. It is therefore important, as I have emphasized throughout this chapter, to consider the film alongside a broader trajectory and political culture of Indigenous and diasporic refusal. One film alone cannot bear the sole responsibility for carrying this project. To return to Simpson, the generativity of refusal is partly what makes it so powerful. *Shooting Indians* was born through existing cultures of refusal in Toronto's South Asian diasporic communities and has inspired emerging practices of refusal, grounded in diasporic–Indigenous connectivity. The film resonates *because of* its connection to this broader context.

In the more than two decades since the release of *Shooting Indians,* there has been deepening engagement with relational methods across multiple (inter)disciplines and activist spaces; those invested in that work will find the film an important one to (re)visit as an archive of relationality. The film cultivates and documents diasporic–Indigenous relationality through its meditation on, and repetition of, the intimacy of the photograph, inviting us into Kazimi and Thomas's journey of friendship. Kazimi's profile of Jeff Thomas not only provides audiences with a window into his life and work but also begins to develop an aesthetic of land and Indigeneity that mirrors Thomas's own refusals of settler imaginaries. The film thus develops a practice of cinematic refusal, crafting a diasporic archive that rejects the multiculturalist modes of belonging and identification while reclaiming the radical potential of cross-colonial/racial dialogue. This cinematic refusal works to undo the forms of liberal recognition and national interpellation characteristic of hegemonic films, which are perhaps most evident in the limitations of the diasporic westerns discussed in chapter 1.

In doing so, the film has strengthened and nuanced the imaginary threads of diasporic–Indigenous relationality, from the coalitional migrant justice organizing of No One Is Illegal, to Desh Pardesh, to the 2011–2013 study/action group South Asian Settler Colonialism, which organized South Asians in Solidarity with Idle No More.[81] By capturing the radical potential of enduring friendship, *Shooting Indians* opens onto a portal of alternate possibilities for living and loving on occupied Indigenous land.

4

Experiments in Relation

QUEER INDIGENOUS AND ASIAN DIASPORIC SURVIVANCE IN THE SETTLER-CAPITALIST CITY

> I look at my work in storytelling and filmmaking and television as world-building. . . . I always hope to reimagine and create new worlds through narrative work, a world that's influenced and impacted by everyone I collaborate with.
>
> —V. T. Nayani

> For over two decades I have worked to empower marginalized artists to trust their ability to tell their truth in a world that focuses on white able-bodied heterosexual lives to foster their safety. I also create a world in which they are held with respect, and that means I have to wade through countless difficult conversations to encourage sincere and sustainable change.
>
> —Catherine Hernandez

If Hollywood builds particular kinds of worlds—worlds that symbolically regenerate the American settler nation and empire—there is also a long-standing tradition of queer/feminist of color worldmaking and speculation toward forging radical futures, across the imaginative spaces of activism and cultural production. As Walidah Imarisha writes—linking activist and artistic imaginaries—"Whenever we try to envision a world without war, without violence, without prisons, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fiction."[1] I made note of such generativity in chapter 2 by way of Rod Ferguson. Of the imaginative capacity of queer and feminist of color critique and politics, Ferguson has noted that by "helping to designate the imagination as a social practice under contemporary globalization . . . women of color feminism, generally, and black lesbian feminism, particularly, attempted to place culture on a different path and establish avenues

alternative to the ones paved by forms of nationalism."[2] I also noted in that chapter that there is a structural impasse of diaspora–Indigeneity, as evidenced in my examination of works by Vivek Shraya and Shani Mootoo, particularly vis-à-vis their routing through distinct conceptions of the erotic.

This chapter leans into a contradiction: the longstanding tradition of working, living, and loving together *despite* the impasse on the level of theory and critique. The radical women of color anthology *This Bridge Called My Back,* for example, includes writing by Menominee poet Chrystos, as well as Hunkpapa Lakota writer Barbara M. Cameron; later editions include the photography of Seminole-Muscogee-Diné artist Hulleah J. Tsinhahjinnie. These queer and feminist Native women are arguably marginal voices in *This Bridge,* absorbed by its coalitional women of color politics, but they are there. The tradition of living, loving, and working together does not break apart the impasse; that tradition coexists alongside the impasse. Yet there is a seed of possibility within the imaginative capacity that is worth paying attention to, worth holding onto. That seed of possibility is quite often intangible, felt, and ephemeral; it is a queer of color ephemerality. I read *queer of color* in this instance as the intangible felt assemblage of experiences, affects, and identifications that holds together Asian-Indigenous intimacies, kinship, and community in terms of the world-building practices that Nayani and Hernandez both cite in the epigraph.

This chapter is thus about the experimentative decolonial work of Asian diasporic artists: work that attempts to imagine queer of color worlds that take Indigenous land and peoples seriously. In the years since I began thinking about the ideas that came to shape this book, there has been a great deal of critical thinking and laboring toward meaningfully addressing Indigenous erasure and supporting Indigenous sovereignty on the part of Asian diasporic artists, activists, and scholars. Although that relational work potentially takes many forms, I reflect on the possibilities and limitations of "queer of color" as a frame of engagement. V. T. Nayani's *This Place* (2022) and Catherine Hernandez's *Scarborough* (2021)—the focus of this chapter—are two of the few feature-length dramatic films that not only place Indigenous and Asian diasporic communities together in a singular cinematic frame but do so with a queer of color sensibility.[3] Asian diasporic identity and experience are the grounding cores of these films: the social locations from which the filmmakers craft their imaginaries. How-

ever, the worldmaking happening in these films is not solely about building Asian diasporic–Indigenous futures, but is more expansively located within traditions of queer of color worldmaking that see multiracial futures beyond white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and settler colonialism.

The city is a space rife with both violence and possibility. As I discussed in the introduction, Toronto paradigmatically emphasizes these contradictions. Cities accumulate wealth through the exploitation of labor, land, and resources continuous with the historical legacies of chattel slavery and colonial dispossession and displacement. Cities emerge, in other words, through the context of settler racial capitalism. But it is precisely within and through these processes of violent accumulation that disparate bodies and histories collide. In her essay "Flirtations at the Foundations," about Helen Lee's short film *Prey* (1995), Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Seneca) suggests that the city—specifically, Toronto—is a site that both generates colonial and racialized subjects, and propels them and their histories together, in uneven ways.[4] The interracial romance portrayed in the film (between a Native man and a Korean diasporic woman), suggests Goeman, brings the differential painful costs of city life into relief. Like *Prey, Scarborough* and *This Place,* also set in Toronto, are attuned to the uneven violence of racial settler capitalism. But they also amplify Indigenous lives and experiences within queer of color imaginaries. Simultaneously, they raise questions about the possibilities and limitations of these forms of cinematic land acknowledgment.

The production contexts of the films reflect such contradictions. Both *Scarborough* and *This Place* received funds from the Telefilm Canada (a crown corporation at arm's length from the Canadian government) and additional funds from private (nonprofit) and public sponsors. While it can be exciting to see these forms of support for queer of color projects, Ruthann Lee reminds us that unofficial and official public support for QTBIPOC artists emerges in the context of Canada's national image and identity as a multicultural LGBTQ "haven" that boasts friendly relations with Indigenous peoples.[5] We are in the midst of a global moment of homonationalism and pinkwashing, and Canada infamously brands itself as the more multicultural, diverse, and friendly counterpart of the United States.[6] These conditions frame production, distribution, and circulation, both directly and indirectly informing the way artists carry out their

work—circumscribing its possibilities and limits. With these caveats, I examine *This Place* and *Scarborough* as imperfect but simultaneously indispensable models of relationality that do the important work of experimenting toward forging connection and solidarity.

This Place is the feature film debut of V. T. Nayani. At the time of writing, the film had just screened at the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival and was seeking distribution. Set in downtown Toronto in 2011, *This Place* features two young women: Malai, a Tamil college student who lives with her brother and is coming to terms with the impending death of her estranged alcoholic father, and Kawenniiohstha, a Kahnawake Mohawk student and budding writer searching for her birth father, an Iranian man. The 2021 film adaptation of Catherine Hernandez's 2017 novel, *Scarborough,* had a modest theatrical run followed by screening on streaming platforms in Canada. It also won several prominent Canadian film awards, including Best Director, Picture, and Screenplay at the 2022 Canadian Screen Awards, and Honorable Mention for the Toronto International Film Festival People's Choice Award.[7] *Scarborough* tells the intertwined story of three children (Filipino, Mi'kmaq, and white) growing up in the Galloway neighborhood of Scarborough, Toronto's primarily working-class and immigrant of color east-end suburb. *Scarborough*'s emphasis is not on adult dating lives, but on the lives of young children. However, it shares with *This Place* a focus on intimacy, kinship, and community under the contexts of racism and colonization. Placing these together in relation creates an expansive through line across distinct forms of intimacy and community, echoing queer scholarship that has urged us to reframe our understandings of sex as confined to the private domain, to sex as publicly constituted and regulated.[8]

Scarborough and *This Place* offer better representations of Indigeneity than most that circulate across popular cultures. But what do their representations mean for questions of Indigenous sovereignty? What does it mean for Indigenous sovereignty, furthermore, to bring together diasporic and Indigenous artists within the relational frame of "queer of color"? *Scarborough* and *This Place* register tensions within proposals for queer of color relationality, leaving open the question of what Indigenous sovereignty could look like, and how cross-racial desire *rends*—to cite Billy-Ray Belcourt (Cree)—the sovereignty of the autonomous body (whether of the individual or of the community).[9] Queer of color relationality, in other words, levels a critique against

white settler colonialism and racial capitalism, but what does it do for Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood?

Indeed, these films do not constitute forms of what Michelle Raheja terms "visual sovereignty." Rather, I propose that *Scarborough* and *This Place* register the forms of relational survivance that emerge in the context of the neoliberal multicultural settler city. My use of *relational survivance* here is a modification of Chippewa scholar Gerald Vizenor's formative concept. For Vizenor, survivance names the articulation of Indigenous presence—Indigenous being and vitality—in the face of discourses and practices of erasure and genocide.[10] More than "mere reaction," asserts Vizenor, "Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion."[11] Relational survivance places Indigenous struggles against colonization on Turtle Island within a transnational frame that connects (but does not subsume) them to those who have endured and persisted in the face of empire, slavery, and colonization the world over. It names their collision, their coming together. But it also grounds these in the specificity of the Indigenous lands upon which that collision takes place. In the case of *This Place* and *Scarborough,* both of which are set in Toronto, it is the traditional territories of multiple nations who have served as its caretakers, including the Anishinaabe, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee, Huron Wendat, and the current treaty holder, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Relational survivance recognizes that Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island survive and resist transnational structures of violence alongside other Indigenous and diasporic peoples in contradictory, uneven, and disparate ways. The neoliberal multicultural settler city is a space where multiple forms of violence collide, entangle, and intensify: dispossession, displacement, genocide, exploitation. But those whose bodies bear the weight and residue of that violence also become enmeshed and intertwined in the city. The city, in other words, ironically creates the possibility for relational survivance to develop. Under these circumstances, relational survivance is a resource constituting a necessary adjunct to decolonization struggles.

QUEER OF COLOR WORLDMAKING: REFUGE AND RISK

Although *queer of color* is not a formation that is exclusive to Asian diasporic and Indigenous relationalities, I explore it in this chapter as

one of the de facto frames through which Asian diasporic and Indigenous peoples and experiences are brought together in relation. More specifically, as ephemeral assemblage, *queer of color* might be understood as a starting point for generating political projects, coalitions, bonds, or alliances on the basis of shared experiences informed by contexts of white supremacy and heteronormativity. These bonds are not automatic or natural, but require work. *This Bridge Called My Back* is exemplary of such a project. Although Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa articulated *This Bridge* as "women of color feminism" rather than as a "queer of color" project, an analysis of sexuality and critique of heteronormativity was woven into the intersectional feminism they advanced.[12]

In chapter 2, I discussed the limitations of queer of color critique with respect to understanding the necessity and urgency of calls for Indigenous decolonization in terms of nationhood and sovereignty. Those observations still stand; this chapter's discussion of queer of color ephemerality does not cancel out such criticisms. What this chapter does highlight are the contradictions between theory and practice. Whereas queer of color critique emerges from lived and embodied experiences, the critique as it has been ossified does not capture the full breadth of experiences that may come under its sign; nor does it capture work happening on the ground and in real time. Just as queer or feminist critique writ large have tended to centralize, normalize, and universalize white subjects, Indigeneity has been marginalized and often occluded within queer of color theory and politics. Still, the question remains: Might queer of color ephemerality offer different directions for thinking through relationality and connection? What might these cinematic experiments tell us? What is being worked through or labored toward in the moment that might yield other kinds of futures and possibilities?

This chapter thus pays attention to the imperfect relational work that is taking place under the sign *queer of color* in spite of its tensions and limitations, in spite of the impasse. Works such as *Scarborough* and *This Place* do not eliminate the impasse but raise questions about what it means to work through it. What possibilities and futures emerge in the face of the seeming impossibility of the impasse? How do Nayani and Hernandez attempt to address the impasse, and what can we learn from their imperfect experiments?

This Place and *Scarborough* are not isolated in their attempts to en-

gage queer of color imaginaries as sites of expansive and capacious possibility. Like Kazimi's *Shooting Indians, This Place* and *Scarborough* developed in the context of activist cultures in Toronto and beyond, where there has been increased attention directed toward something I would characterize as relational survivance. In recent years, queer of color activists there have generated the modified acronym QTBIPOC—queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and people of color—to emphasize the fraught and uneven relations across those marginalized by white supremacy. *This Place* and *Scarborough* emerge out of the thick of such debates, discussions, and conversations concerning how to attend to unevenness and difference while holding onto possibilities for coalition, alliance, and relation. The modification QTBIPOC reflects a broader conversation across antiracist and decolonizing social movements, not exclusive to queer social movements, in which "people of color" has been modified to the disaggregated "Black, Indigenous, and people of color." It is a direct response to academic-activist conversations about the gaps and failures of antiracist coalitions.[13] Political and artistic projects organized through this frame often (though not always) emphasize the foundational significance of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism to racism and white supremacy. In these instances, the rubric of QTBIPOC calls forth seen and unseen connections across queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and people of color as a resource for imagining possibilities for abolitionist and decolonizing futures, despite the nonequivalence and unevenness of these identity formations.[14]

The Toronto-based community mapping project Marvellous Grounds, for example, unearths QTBIPOC stories about the city. The collaborative project intervenes in dominant multiculturalist and homonationalist renderings of the city that make invisible the ways that QTBIPOC people walk, live, and make community in Toronto. A short introductory video by filmmaker Min Sook Lee, commissioned by the project, captures its ethos. Dancers from the ILL NANA/DiverseCity Dance Company—a queer of color dance troupe—perform a choreographed piece in various spots of Church Street, Toronto's Gay Village. It is winter, and they are dressed in toques, gloves, and heavy coats. We see them exhale puffs of cold air. Still, they dance beautifully, taking up space against the odds of weather and the dictates of space (white, middle-class, cis, gay masculinity dominates Church Street). In ILL NANA's words, "For this short

film, we purposely took up space and danced in several locations in the Gay Village, a space where our bodies, art, and presence are often underrepresented and excluded from, and where we face violence."[15] A music track by the local indie electronic band LAL plays in the background as voiceovers by queer Black, Indigenous, Asian, and Latinx artists reflect on their relationships to the city. The coalitional frame not only emphasizes the interconnectivity of struggle, and of emancipation, but also telegraphs a future where queer of color bodies can unabashedly take up space.

The filmmaker, poet, and visual artist Jess X. Snow, who "creates genre-defying inter-generational stories from a queer Asian immigrant lens," likewise takes up the critical potentiality of QTBIPOC. As of 2022, they are enrolled in the New York University Tisch School of the Arts MFA program, and have a long list of accolades and an oeuvre that spans feature and short-length films, a children's book, and published poetry. Much of this work confronts questions of coalition and relation, often explicitly foregrounding the framework of QTBIPOC, as in their public mural project in New York City's Chinatown, *Between You & Me,* which Snow organized as a fall 2021 student artist-in-residence at NYU's Asian/Pacific/American Institute.[16] Snow describes the mural:

> Behind this Chinatown mural is a portal to a future. There is a place on the other side where, without the state, without prisons, we keep each other safe. Untouchable by white supremacy, uncontainable by nations and binaries. Our elders always make it home. The land is returned to Indigenous hands. And our children grow up knowing that one community's safety cannot come at the cost of another's.[17]

Snow conceived of the mural alongside community collaborators in response to a rising tide of anti-Asian violence in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Rather than isolate the experience of Asian communities, Snow relationally framed the mural in terms of a critique of neoliberal conceptions of safety that depend too heavily on the police and criminal legal system. The mural foregrounds decolonial and abolitionist futures made possible by centering community care, respect, and mutual aid, and emphasizes the inextricability of Asian diasporic futures from those of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities. A

community conversation reflecting on the mural-making process accordingly brought together speakers from these communities, many of whom had participated in the mural in some way, and all of whom were Snow's friends and comrades.

Many of Snow's other works take up similar themes, including their narrative shorts *Roots that Reach Toward the Sky* (in postproduction) and *Motherland* (2019) and experimental documentary *Afterearth* (2018). *Afterearth,* for example, illuminates the connections across the narratives of four Asian and Indigenous women who reflect on the impending effects of rising sea levels on their homelands from their respective locations in Hawaiʻi, the Philippines, China, and the United States. By filming these women on their homelands as they sing songs and recite poetry that shares the land-based knowledge they have cultivated, *Afterearth* generates a sense of collectivity. That is, the critiques and affects concerning climate change these women share are not merely four disparate ones, but deeply intertwined.

Projects such as these focus on the futures that queer of color relationalities make possible: futures where land is decolonized, and violence is abolished. In the work of Snow and Marvellous Grounds, QTBIPOC signals a kind of safety—a refuge from white supremacy, anti-Blackness, settler colonialism, and cisheteronormativity of both public and counterpublic spaces. Safety is both enticing and elusive. As Christina Hanhardt explains, *safety* has been an important term for LGBTQ activism: "At many colleges and universities the mere words *safe space* on a sticker on a door may signal that those inside are sympathetic to LGBT students without naming those very identities. And then there is *safe sex*: some public health advocates like to clarify the point that no sex is without risk and thus prefer the term *safer sex.*"[18]

Whereas conservative politics frame safety in normative terms that position the police and legal system as its arbiters, abolitionist organizing has attempted to reframe safety in terms of notions of "bottom-up" justice that consider who is most vulnerable to violence in order to create justice for all. As Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade point out, "Building a trans and queer abolitionist movement means building power among people facing multiple systems of oppression in order to imagine a world beyond mass devastation, violence, and inequity that occurs within and between communities."[19] Safety in this sense may be aspirational. An authentic safety for all may be the end goal of abolition. Yet, as Hanhardt further points out, safety

becomes even more complicated when positioned against *risk*.[20] For conservatives, a certain measure of financial risk taking and speculation generates wealth and (de facto) safety; for queers, a certain measure of risk (in terms of pushing back against normative expectations) generates (de facto) safer futures in which multifarious forms of love, pleasure, and justice might proliferate.

Although the intention of QTBIPOC is to address uneven and disparate forms of structural violence, it is an imperfect representational strategy that does not fully resolve the incommensurabilities it names. It is not unequivocally "safe." Nayani's and Hernandez's QTBIPOC imaginaries likewise address Indigenous erasure even as they do not resolve the disjunctures between diaspora and Indigeneity. This chapter also does not resolve this tension. However, I position these tensions as part of a *longue durée* of future-making conversations yet to be had. Assuming, as I have argued across this book, that diasporic attachments to settler colonialism are structural, then their unraveling is also a long-term project that will require a great deal of work, both imaginative and theoretical, as well as material and practical.

Nayani and Hernandez engage queer of color as a frame of speculation and utopian potential in their films, one in which Indigenous lives and experiences are central. In both films, the lines between the real and the fictional are blurry, provoking reflection on what could be. Their experiments remain messy, chaotic, and incomplete. However, they redirect us toward other ways of understanding the connections across diaspora and Indigeneity: toward imagining safer spaces of unknowing and not-knowing, of risk and possibility. They compel us to consider the forms of relational survivance that are already afoot in the settler city, and the decolonial possibilities these open up.

THIS PLACE: DIDACTICS AND FELT CONNECTIONS

This Place started as an experiment. "The original idea," says Nayani, "was two friends: one is Indigenous and one is Tamil. They meet. What conversations do they have?" In the film, two young women—Malai, who is Tamil, and Kawenniiohstha, who is Mohawk with Iranian ancestry—meet by chance in downtown Toronto. Malai is a college student gifted in math who is struggling to find direction in her life: her mother has passed away and she lives with her older brother, who also works to support them both; her father, whom she is estranged

from, is dying of cancer. The film suggests that he turned to alcohol to manage the stress of war and migration, which has both strained his relationship with his children and wreaked havoc on his body. Kawenniiohstha is a student and writer who has just moved to the city from the Kahnawake reservation, in large part because she wishes to find her biological father, an Iranian man.

Malai and Kawenniiohstha find solace in one another as they navigate their respective familial challenges. They briefly separate when Kawenniiohstha returns to Kahnawake to confront her mother, where she learns that her mother chose her love for Kahnawake over her love for Kawenniiohstha's biological father Behrooz, because they appeared irreconcilable. Kawenniiohstha then makes the choice to return to Toronto and Malai, who is now grieving the loss of her father.

This Place emphasizes the histories and forms of trauma that are knotted together in the collision between Malai and Kawenniiohstha. Beyond registering a critique of racial settler capitalism, however, *This Place* intentionally attempts to make Indigeneity central to its exploration of global war, displacement, and trauma. Nayani notes that "yes, [Tamil refugees] escaped and found some semblance of safety. . . . We found some semblance of safety on land that's been stolen, where violence is still committed against the communities that this land belongs to." The film raises the question: How does one make Indigeneity central to diasporic film?

This Place signals its political commitments most explicitly through its opening title card, an extended land acknowledgment that not only notes the writing and production locations of the film but also invites viewers "to reflect on the land that you are on, who the traditional keepers of the land are, what the treaty relationship is, or if it's unceded territory" (Figure 21). As the plot shifts locations, title cards announce their Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) place names alongside English ones: Tiohtià:ke (Montreal); Aterón:to (Toronto); Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Territory. While now commonplace at public events, including film festivals, it is rare to find a land acknowledgment within a film, whether by Indigenous or non-Indigenous filmmakers.

The practice of land acknowledgment itself began on the west coast of Canada, much of which remains unceded territory, or land which was never officially transferred to settler ownership through treaties (as it was on the east coast). There, a land acknowledgment at the start of a community or government meeting served as a reminder

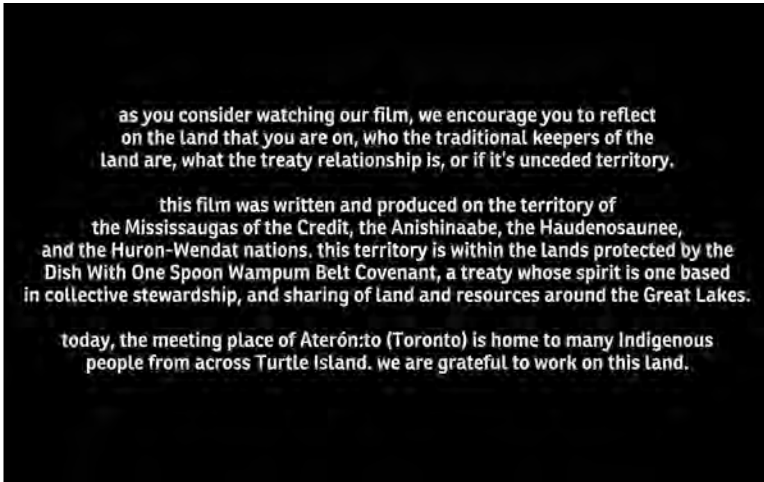

FIGURE 21. Detailed cinematic land acknowledgment that states: "As you consider watching our film, we encourage you to reflect on the land that you are on, who the traditional keepers of the land are, what the treaty relationship is, or if it's unceded territory. This film was written and produced on the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the Huron-Wendat nations. This territory is within the lands protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, a treaty whose spirit is one based in collective stewardship, and sharing of land and resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Aterón:to (Toronto) is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We are grateful to work on this land." Screenshot from *This Place.*

to non-Native peoples of the uncomfortable reality that this meeting was taking place through Indigenous land dispossession. More recently, particularly in the wake of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Indigenous recognition and reconciliation have become institutional buzzwords in Canada.[21] Across the continent, on both east and west coasts, Indigenous land acknowledgments have become more widespread, incorporated into corporate, university, and government websites and meetings, with this practice now spilling over into the United States.

Critics debate the function and efficacy of land acknowledgment, however. As Métis writer Chelsea Vowel points out, "When territorial acknowledgments first began, they were fairly powerful statements of presence, somewhat shocking, perhaps even unwelcome in settler spaces. They provoked discomfort and centered Indigenous priority on these lands."[22] However, their effects have become more uneven

in recent years: while they sometimes continue to provoke settler discomfort and compel a confrontation with Indigenous presence, they also often function as tokenistic or reconciliatory gestures.[23]

In *This Place,* the land acknowledgment title card serves as a citation of the wider practice of land acknowledgment; it also invites viewers into community with those who understand and reflect on Indigenous land and presence. Its existence in the film does not escape debates around land acknowledgments. However, because this is a film rather than a public event, it serves not just as a declaration, but also as a framing device. In fiction film, text is often superimposed onto moving image in order to establish setting—along the lines of "City, Year"—which *This Place* also does when it tells us that the film setting is now "Aterón:to (Toronto), 2011," for example (Figure 22). The addition of the land acknowledgment title card invites us to read those setting announcements not just matter-of-factly, but in terms of Indigenous place and colonial histories. It also provides some context for understanding the bilingual (Mohawk and English) naming of place. Most viewers will watch the film knowing that it is about a relationship between a Mohawk and Tamil woman; the land acknowledgment immediately suggests that the film's events are not just about interracial intimacy but also about taking seriously questions of land, settlement, and colonization.

The film's activist orientation makes sense given that its filmmaker, V. T. Nayani, was initially trained as a journalist at Toronto Metropolitan University and has had a longstanding interest in thinking about "lateral" forms of violence.[24] Her first foray into filmmaking (and

FIGURE 22. Kawenniiohstha writes in her journal in a Toronto laundromat in 2011; screenshot from *This Place.*

major work prior to *This Place*) was *Shadeism: Digging Deeper* (2015), a documentary feature that investigates light-skinned privilege and discrimination against dark-skinned peoples in communities of color. She has also written and directed a number of music videos and short films engaged with race, gender, and sexuality in collaboration with other BIPOC artists. Nayani began developing the film following a provocation by family friend Darshika Selvasivam during the worldwide protests against the Tamil Genocide in 2009.[25] According to UN reports, the Sri Lankan government killed 40,000–70,000 Tamils during the 2009 Mullivaikkal massacre, in the last stages of the Sri Lankan civil war.[26] The Tamil diasporic mobilization in 2009 also prompted the community to reflect more deeply on the question of Indigenous sovereignty, particularly following an invitation for conversation by Haudenosaunee (Six Nations Confederacy) activists. Tamil activists and Six Nations members issued a joint solidarity statement following that meeting.[27] In the vein of such mutual solidarity and conversation, Nayani's friend asked: "What does it mean to protest on Indigenous land for land elsewhere that's been denied to us or is stolen?"[28]

TORONTO: *THIS PLACE* OF COLLISION AND CHAOS

This Place: the film's title names its rootedness and groundedness in Toronto, its referent. But it is also a play on the word "displace" that recalls the multiple forms of movement and displacement that come into contact in Toronto. As film cowriter Golshan Abdmoulaie notes, the relationship between Malai and Kawenniiohstha is "just a normal relationship in the city of Toronto: people colliding into each other with really complex histories that we all have, whether we're refugees or we come from the impacts of colonization. It was just about how all those things collide." Nayani adds that "Toronto is this place where things just collide. You meet randomly somewhere, you have a moment, you build a lifelong friendship, you build a love story. . . . We wanted to capture that." The generative collision that both Abdmoulaie and Nayani observe in Toronto bears echoes of the generativity of chaos that Choctaw writer Leanne Howe discusses in her short story "The Chaos of Angels"—specifically, the Choctaw cosmological concept of *haksuba,* "chaos." *Haksuba* occurs, she explains, "When the Upper and Lower Worlds of the Southeastern Indians collide in the Between

World," resulting in "a reaction in This World."[29] Extending *haksuba* to the contemporary moment, she suggests that *haksuba* likewise "occurs when Indians and non-Indians bang their heads together in search of cross-cultural understanding."[30] Howe interprets *haksuba* as generative, though also traumatic and violent, emerging as it does from histories of slavery and conquest: in the short story, Howe meditates on the chaotic frictions between French colonizers, enslaved Black people, and Choctaw peoples that formulate what the character of the grandmother in the story refers to as the "cross-cultural afterlife." Leaning into *haksuba*'s generativity, Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) suggests, "When the boundaries between worlds break down and the distinctive characteristics of each world begin to collapse upon and bleed into the others, possibilities for rejuvenation and destruction emerge to transform this world radically. The goal is to find balance."[31] Howe's and Byrd's writings suggest that collision and encounter initiate processes of *working through* the mess of destruction, and making anew.

This Place dives deep into the raw potential of chaos and cacophony. It articulates—without naming it as such—a queer of color political formation that emerges at the nexus of that chaos. It also reflects the afterlife of various forms of violence—from colonization, to war, to migration, to displacement—that form the underbelly of the film's events. These collisions are apparent in the opening scene. On an airplane en route to Montreal in 1989, a dark-skinned Brown man rushes to the airplane bathroom in a panic and attempts to destroy his Sri Lankan passport, before finally shoving it in the trash receptacle. He returns to his seat and takes a swig of alcohol. A few rows ahead, two lighter-skinned Brown men chat with one another. "When will we arrive?" one asks the other. At the airport, the darker-skinned man declares himself a refugee while the lighter-skinned men take the opportunity to rush past security, unnoticed. We shortly learn that these are the fathers of the film's protagonists and lovers, Malai and Kawenniiohstha. This scene of migration and arrival suggests that their lives are already entangled in one another in deeply intimate ways, both through structure and through serendipity.

THIS PLACE'S WORLD

The world of *This Place* emerges out of the chaotic collision of global itineraries of war and racial capitalism. Malai and Kawenniiohstha's

first encounter takes place at a laundromat, a space of historical significance for Asian—specifically Chinese—migrants in North America. Following the construction of the transcontinental railroad, Chinese men who remained on the continent were barred from taking up most professions, and were relegated to feminized labor in restaurants and laundromats.[32] In the film and in the contemporary moment, the laundromat is not a place of labor but a site of encounter that gestures to the shared class status of the two women and the realities of rental housing in a downtown metropolis. Their meeting at the laundromat in 2011—born of their respective familial histories of displacement and migration—is also continuous with the early twentieth-century histories of migrant collision in the North American west that historian Nayan Shah has detailed, where transient, precarious, and vulnerable Black, Brown, and Indigenous people were brought into intimate relation as a result of uneven and contradictory policies of migration, economic development, and nation building.[33] In 2011 the characters similarly come together in the neoliberal multicultural city for a range of reasons: Indigenous land dispossession and displacement across many years leads Kawenniiohstha to leave her reserve community to follow career goals; Sri Lanka's civil war and Tamil genocide lead Malai's family to seek refuge in Toronto.

These global itineraries that collide in Toronto are inseparable from the film's romantic plot. Although the romance between Malai and Kawenniiohstha is at the film's core, it does not follow the conventions of romantic film; there is never a real obstacle to their union, though it is briefly interrupted as Kawenniiohstha struggles with her parents. Rather, the relationship serves as a node of the broader familial networks that each woman hails from: the two women are drawn to each other as they navigate grief, tension, and reconciliation with their families of origin. Their parental conflicts—inseparable from global political events—are as central to the plot as their romance. The film thus draws the audience's attention toward the entanglement of romantic and nonromantic forms of love and intimacy.

Kawenniiohstha's character development, for example, gains momentum after a tender love scene between her and Malai. It is after this scene that Kawenniiohstha gathers the courage to seek out her father, Behrooz. As Behrooz sees her, memories of his last encounter with Kawenniiohstha's mother Wari flood his mind, an encounter that

is likewise framed by war and colonization. The first thing we see in this flashback is a TV screen of an image seared into the minds of those who remember: residents of the Quebec town of Chateaugay burning a Mohawk effigy during the 1990 siege at Kahnesatake (Figure 23). Wari is tearfully packing up her belongings as Behrooz enters the room and tries to convince her not to head back to her home. As the news footage plays in the background, he says to her, "I don't understand. I left everything because of war." Wari replies: "Some wars you run from. You had to run from yours. You don't need to understand. . . . I have to be with my community. Everything in my body is calling me home to Kahnawake. I mean just look what's happening." Behrooz turns his head to look at the TV screen, which now shows two soldiers armed with rifles in front of a battle tank. Wari continues: "If I don't go now, I will regret it. It's like I'm being called home." Later, when Kawenniiohstha confronts Wari about her refusal to disclose the truth about Behrooz, Wari confesses that her love for her community ultimately exceeded her love for Behrooz:

> I loved your father. I thought I was going to spend the rest of my life with him. But then 90 happened and the community needed us.[34] I couldn't bring him back with me. I chose us. I chose our culture. And as much as it killed me, my love for being Kanien'kehà:ka overrode my love for Behrooz. And I don't regret loving him. And I don't regret having you. But I do regret having you with Behrooz. . . . I'm already mixed. I've had to defend our position in this community because of my blood quantum, so I needed you to be Kanien'kehà:ka. So I came to terms with letting him go. And I rooted you to this place.

For Wari, the bond with Behrooz was not enough to undo the structural impasse of diaspora/Indigeneity that led her back to Kahnawake. Recognizing the cost of that decision, Kawenniiohstha makes a different choice: she returns to Malai so that they can confront their respective struggles together.

The question of whether their relationship will endure or succumb to the impasse like Behrooz and Wari's is an open one. Here it is the felt connection between Malai and Kawenniiohstha that suggests futures beyond, yet unknown: futures that cannot be captured by the

FIGURE 23. Burning Mohawk effigy on television; screenshot from *This Place.*

didactic dialogue that makes explicit links between overlapping histories, forms of violence, and displacement. That felt connection is depicted by the actors through their shy smiles, awkward glances, intense gazes, and raw chemistry; it is also captured by the cinematography—specifically, the use of rich, warm, and lush purple, brown, and yellow hues—and by the film's dream-like orchestral soundtrack. The affective charge between them exceeds the histories of structural violence they allude to in their conversations with one another, and with their family members, speculatively gesturing to the possibility of other worlds: What possible kinds of intimacies and new kin formations are opened up (Figure 24)?

Malai and Kawenniiohstha's initial encounter at the laundromat, for example, is a quiet scene that consists primarily of furtive looks of recognition and appreciation. We are introduced to Kawenniiohstha through a medium shot, as she sits amid the warm hues of dimly lit laundry, writing in a journal. She looks up and the camera shifts to a medium close-up of Malai, who has just walked in the door and looks directly at Kawenniiohstha. As the scene continues, the background music shifts to a racier tune; Kawenniiohstha continues to glance with interest at Malai, who is now facing the washing machine before exiting the laundromat. She has left behind her journal, which Malai later notices and begins to peruse. The missing journal then becomes the basis for their next encounter and eventual romance. In later scenes, the affective charge between the two intensifies. At a dance party, slow nondiegetic music and close-ups zero in on the growing connection between Malai and Kawenniiohstha. The uninhibited intimacy portrayed here evokes what feminist philosopher María Lugones has de-

FIGURE 24. Malai and Kawenniiohstha laugh together; screenshot from *This Place.*

scribed as the love that is generated by "world-traveling"—travel not in the physical sense, but in the sense of dwelling in the perceptual and affective orbits of others.

Speaking to the necessity of loving relations for feminist coalition building, Lugones suggests that forging connections across difference requires fully inhabiting the joy and pleasures of others' worlds. Central to world-traveling, she argues, is a sense of playfulness, or "an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight."[35] The joy that Malai and Kawenniiohstha exude in these scenes conveys the love that emanates from them as they easily inhabit one another's worlds. A dinner date scene includes some of that raw tenderness and intimacy alongside a conversation about their identities and community histories. The difference between the sensuous, felt connection between the two women and their cerebral discussion of misrecognition, Mohawk citizenship, Tamil genocide, and migration is stark. Though the two are not antithetical to one another, this juxtaposition suggests that relationality might be cultivated not only through better or precise analytics but also through small moments of felt connection.

The closing scene of *This Place,* which returns to the laundromat, reemphasizes these felt connections. There are no words in this scene. We see a medium close-up of Kawenniiohstha folding her laundry; she glances over to her left, and smiles lovingly. The camera reveals Malai, also folding laundry. Kawenniiohstha turns to Malai, and together they fold a bright yellow fabric; as they do so, they gaze at

FIGURE 25. Malai and Kawenniiohstha fold laundry together; screenshot from *This Place.*

one another, happy and relaxed (Figure 25). They exit the laundromat together and make their way back home through an alleyway. Kawenniiohstha reaches for Malai's hand, and they walk off into the distance as the credits roll. Unlike the rest of the film, this scene is brightly lit, signaling toward optimistic futures.

The film's happy ending is arguably in tension with its plot, which points to the overdetermining role of structural violence in the characters' lives. However, reading the film as a site of experimentation, the happy ending that does not "make sense" might gesture to relational survivance that persists in the neoliberal multicultural settler city in the face of conditions of egregious violence. More aptly, the film's happy ending is a metaphor for the film's production process, which, like Kazimi's *Shooting Indians,* was collaborative. Nayani co-wrote the script with Mohawk actress/director Kawennáhere Devery Jacobs (who also plays the lead role of Kawenniiohstha) and Iranian diasporic writer Golshan Abdmoulaie. For Nayani, these collaborative efforts constitute a world-making project; for that reason, one of the opening intertitles reads "a v.t. nayani world," rather than "a v.t. nayani film."[36] As she states in an interview:

> I look at my work in storytelling and filmmaking and television as world-building. Everyone is part of that world that we're building. I have a vision that they're bringing to life and so it felt true and honest for me to call it "a v.t. nayani world," because that's what I hope to do. I always hope to reimagine and create new worlds

> through narrative work, a world that's influenced and impacted by everyone I collaborate with.[37]

The collaborative nature of the film is reflected in its plot and character development. Each writer mined their own experiences and family histories of colonization, war, and displacement: the genocidal Sinhalese war against Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Iran–Iraq War and Iran's authoritarian theocracy, Canadian settler colonialism and settler military siege at Kahnawake and Kahnesatake in 1990.

While the writers initially imagined Malai and Kawenniiohstha to be friends rather than lovers, this changed as the story developed, mirroring developments in the writers' lives. Says Abdmoulaie: "At the time when we discussed the two characters' relationship, Devery was falling in love and coming into her queerness. So was I. And I was like, I think they should fall in love. I don't know about them staying together because I'm a little jaded."[38] If Malai and Kawenniiohstha's union as plot point is not as fully developed as to be convincing, as avatars for the film's collaborators, their coming together conveys the relational survivance that is a reality of life in the settler city of Toronto. More than this, though, what is most striking about *This Place* is the contrast between the seemingly totalizing conditions of structural violence it repeatedly emphasizes and the affective bonds between the two women that are not easily explained. Affect, then, exceeds containment by plot here. Troubling the limitations of critique and analysis, the film gestures to the radical possibilities of affects and feelings, and their place within decolonial worldmaking.

RELATIONAL SURVIVANCE IN-PLACE: *SCARBOROUGH*

The Toronto of Catherine Hernandez's *Scarborough* is not the same as the Toronto of *This Place.* Whereas *This Place* emphasizes the chaotic entanglement of migration and displacement bringing people together in Toronto writ large, *Scarborough* homes in on the lives and experiences of those in Toronto's east end. This is a working-class suburb, a place where people are portrayed as—and may often feel they are—entrapped or stuck in place due to circumstance. While many of the same forms of structural violence shape the lives of *Scarborough*'s characters, it is their everyday struggles in place that inform its narrative.

FIGURE 26. Ms. Hina at the literacy program; screenshot from *Scarborough.*

However, by centering the perspectives of children in both form and plot, the film also depicts Scarborough as a place of joy, wonder, and possibility. The film focuses on three children: Bing, who is Filipino, is a genderqueer child who lives with his single mother, an esthetician who has fled from her abusive husband; Sylvie, who is Native (Mi'kmaq), lives with her mom, chronically injured father, and autistic brother in a shelter; Laura, who is white, has been abandoned by her mother and lives with an abusive father, a former skinhead and white supremacist. Bing, Sylvie, and Laura are brought into community through the school's before-school literacy program run by a hijabi Muslim social worker, Hina, who forms close bonds with the children and their families while confronting the racist and classist condescension of her supervisor Jane, a white woman (Figure 26).

Scarborough emerges from the shared context of Toronto QTBIPOC organizing and visioning that Hernandez, like Nayani, is embedded in. The queer Filipinx diasporic writer states that she is of "Filipino, Spanish, Chinese, and Indian descent and married into the Navajo nation."[39] Apart from her career as a novelist, Hernandez worked as a caregiver, running a home daycare in Scarborough; she has also spent many years writing, directing, and performing in theatre. In that capacity, she was the founder and artistic director of the Sulong Theatre Collective, dedicated to showcasing work by and about women of color.

Hernandez's personal and professional background manifests in the queer of color sensibility framing *Scarborough.* The film is not conventionally "queer": it does not center queer sex or romance, and

although one of the protagonists (Bing) is queer, this is not the film's central plot line. However, the film's formal and narrative attention to the nonlinearity of children's navigation of the world queerly interrupts what Elizabeth Freeman calls "chrononormative" impulses that direct one toward property ownership and the nuclear family.[40] Much of the novel and the film narrate their story from the children's perspectives, occasionally shifting to adults. In the film, the camera's point-of-view mirrors the children's gaze, accentuated by the use of a handheld camera. In the first few scenes of the film, we are introduced to Bing, Laura, and then finally Sylvie, each of whom is slowly processing the harried panic and stress of their parent. We see partial shots of adults, often from below, often from the neck down; we hear adults speaking in frenzied tones as the children watch and listen. Hernandez's selection of Shasha Nakhai and Rich Williamson as the film's directors—both of whom come from documentary backgrounds—and casting of nonprofessional child actors enhances the sense of the film's realism and authenticity.[41]

This realism is not just essential to the verisimilitude the film establishes; it also invites the audiences to queerly inhabit the world as experienced by children. When asked what makes *Scarborough* a queer film, Hernandez replied, "Overall, 'queer' is more a verb to me. You 'queer' something because you're trying to imagine something better, right? It's not only about body parts, it's not only about orientation. I really feel queerness is just as much about imagining things and making it happen."[42] Hernandez's explanation echoes Sara Ahmed's framing of queerness in terms of phenomenological orientation, as she suggests that compulsory heterosexuality is made normative by directing subjects toward particular objects: "Subjects are required to tend toward some objects and not others as a condition of familial as well as social love. For the boy, to follow the family line, he 'must' orient himself toward women as loved objects. For the girl, to follow the family line, she 'must' take men as loved objects."[43] Rather than following the normative paths that children's lives take, *Scarborough* asks us to follow the "sideways" paths of children.[44]

Because it moves alongside its child protagonists, *Scarborough*'s plot does not follow a conventional path. Rather than building up to a singular climax, the story leads to multiple climactic moments and continually brings the audience back to the interconnectivity that stitches the characters together. Laura's death in an apartment fire, for

example, takes place well before the film's conclusion. Though it is a spectacular death, it is not presented as spectacle in the film, though it is foreshadowed in the previous scene during Christmas mass. We share the shock of Bing and his mother as they hear sirens and see the burning building from a distance, but unlike the characters, we do not witness the incident up close. The film shifts quite quickly to the aftermath of the fire, as we see the other characters grieve, mourn, and process the loss. The decision to position Laura's death at this particular point in the film's timeline—neither very early on, nor at the conclusion—suggests that while the tragic effects of structural poverty and domestic violence are within the purview of its characters, there are also dynamic forms of community support and love that hold them together and enable them to move on with their lives.

Scarborough's queering, then, is about presenting an alternate assemblage of kinship and intimacy, something it models both in plot and form. Against the hegemony of patrilineal connection, it portrays the intimacy of lives brought together through the structural precarity of Scarborough's working-class residents. The friendship between Sylvie and Bing—which emerges organically out of their life circumstances and particularly through Sylvie's ability to connect with people—is the film's centerpiece. Their friendship brings together their mothers and allows Sylvie and Bing to form a connection with Laura.

The joy and chemistry between Bing and Sylvie is captured across multiple scenes, but particularly in an extended scene at Edna's nail salon. The bleak difficulties presented in earlier scenes melt away as the children roleplay as doctors in the back room of the salon, race across the floor on swivel chairs, lounge on massage seats, watch neighborhood artist Victor as he sketches, play tic-tac-toe with nail polish bottles, and finally, as evening approaches, sneak out to the back parking lot to chat with Starr, who works at a nearby spa. In one memorable moment, a medium-long shot captures them with their heads bobbing and mouths agape as they enjoy the vibrations of the massage chair. The gentle music composition of this scene, in which piano and xylophone are audible, heightens the sense of childlike wonder and pleasure permeating the scene. Like many of the film's scenes, it feels raw, organic, and unscripted; Hernandez describes Nakhai and Williamson's approach as "setting up environments, letting the actors just be who they are and staying ready to capture the right moments" (Figure 27).[45]

FIGURE 27. Sylvie and Bing at the nail salon; screenshot from *Scarborough.*

That *Scarborough*'s reassemblage of kin and intimacy is anchored in a specific place is not incidental. The film significantly intervenes in dominant depictions of Scarborough, which Torontonians often refer to as "Scarlem," "Scartown," or "Scarberia," usually portrayed in the mainstream as dangerous, crime ridden, and impoverished, in large part due to the high concentration of social housing dispersed across the suburb. Services, resources, and capital are oriented not toward Scarborough, but instead toward downtown Toronto and wealthier suburbs. It is perceived as a space of degeneracy, danger, and immorality, and occasionally as a fetishized space of difference. In contrast to the more glamorous and glitzy high-rises of downtown Toronto, Scarborough is not perceived as a destination, even as recent patterns of gentrification have shifted some focus there, particularly its unique and eclectic range of cuisines.[46]

Scarborough's fictional rendering of its protagonists' lives, and the interconnected webs of relations that bind them together, queers and remaps these dominant spatial narratives about racism, violence, and overlapping layers of oppression. In one scene, for instance, Marie is rushing to take her chronically injured husband to the hospital, with Sylvie and Johnny in tow. To Marie's protests, Sylvie pauses at the nail salon when she sees Bing. Sylvie is relieved when Edna, who is working a shift, offers to look after Sylvie and Bing. This scene reorients the audience to the geography of Scarborough as navigated by its residents, one that generates intimacies between them. Marie, Sylvie, and Johnny pass by the nail salon because it sits between their home (the shelter) and the bus stop. Notably, the inadequate transit infrastructure of Scarborough is the subject of much public debate

in Toronto. It is a large and sprawling suburb where many rely on a patchwork of buses, light rapid transit, and limited subway access; the lack of density has meant that subway construction is especially costly. The film conveys the intolerable sprawl of Scarborough: as the single camera follows Marie running from the shelter to the bus stop, the audience gets a sense of the everyday challenge of getting from place to place. Yet, even as inadequate transit creates difficulty for the characters of *Scarborough,* they navigate its challenges through informal mutual aid networks that emerge incidentally and organically out of that same geography.

More than just a depiction of a specific place, however, *Scarborough* provides a paradigm for imagining urban queer diasporic and Indigenous relationalities outside of frames such as Canadian multiculturalism or U.S. assimilation. It engages, in other words, in a kind of speculative practice for what might be possible. Ruha Benjamin notes that under current conditions of crisis, "novel fictions that reimagine and rework all that is taken for granted about the current structure of the social world—alternatives to capitalism, racism, and patriarchy—are urgently needed."[47] Although Benjamin is thinking more in the realm of science fiction here, there is a utopian promise to *Scarborough* that I interpret as speculative, as that which could be. The film queerly reimagines racial difference on terms that exceed the frameworks of both multiculturalism or assimilation. In Canada, the framework of multiculturalism—both as official state policy and as informal cultural discourse—frames racial and ethnic difference in relation to whiteness. Multicultural ideology accommodates or "tolerates" difference in primarily "cultural" terms, where culture is understood through superficial markers such as clothing, food, and music.[48] In the United States, where there is no official policy of multiculturalism, assimilation or absorption into the American national imaginary is the expectation and norm, as marked by the proliferation of "hyphenated" identities. The management of racial difference (Blackness, Indigeneity, Latinidad, Asianness) takes place at the intersections of multiple forms of racial and colonial histories that often come into tension with one another. Grassroots forms of multiculturalism or multiracialism from below challenge not only the logics of assimilation but also relation vis-à-vis competition for status, recognition, or resources.[49] Likewise, in contrast to hegemonic forms of multiculturalism, *Scarborough* invites us to see the interconnection of everyday lives that are brought together due

to structural circumstances. Casting choices reinforce this: Toronto-based queer Blackfoot actor Cherish Violet Blood—familiar to many in *Scarborough*'s local queer of color audiences—plays Marie, Sylvie's mother, linking together the imagined relational utopia of the film with one that is lived and experienced on-the-ground in Toronto.[50]

Despite this emphasis on interconnection, there is an unevenness to the film's representations that raises questions about the film's limits. Sylvie and her mother are never announced as Native or Mi'kmaq, a representational choice that powerfully emphasizes affect and ephemerality even as it folds Indigeneity into the multiracial body politic of Scarborough.[51] The quiet presence of Indigeneity in the film is risky in this sense, particularly as it is Bing who is the most well-developed character. Of the three children, his arc is also the most triumphant. Laura's ends in death; Sylvie finds some peace with her home situation, but her growth is not charted as clearly as Bing's, nor do we witness her inner world as clearly. She is the caretaker and storyteller of the trio, the one who looks out for Bing and Laura and defends them against bullies. At the end of the film, Bing is headed off to a school for gifted children, his friendship with Sylvie still strong, and Marie has made progress in learning to communicate with Sylvie's brother Johnny.

At the same time, Sylvie's character, while not as well fleshed out, upends expectations of Native representation.[52] Most notably, of the trio, Sylvie is the most mobile and engaged with space. We see Laura, for example, most often in closed spaces, usually her apartment or the school. Bing is likewise most often featured in confined spaces, such as school, the nail salon, or his apartment. By contrast, the film frequently shows Sylvie, her mother, and her brother walking back and forth from the shelter, to school, and to appointments. Long shots position Sylvie and her family within Scarborough's urban landscape. *Scarborough*'s depiction of Indigenous bodies in the city counters tired stereotypes relegating Native people to the reservation, to rural spaces, or to "wilderness"; they also contrast depictions of houseless urban Native people that deploy tropes of deviance, decay, or degeneracy. Instead, we see Sylvie confidently and unabashedly take up space as she stops to talk with various community members: Victor, a young Black artist who is often outside painting street art, or Christy and Cindy, two white women who live at the shelter.

A scene depicting a mourning ceremony for Laura in which the literacy program community participates likewise portrays Ojibwe

ceremony with depth and richness. In this scene, children and adults gather outside in the snowy cold around a fire as Fay, an elder, leads the group to send prayer to affirm Laura's life. Those around the circle cry and huddle together as they pass around the tobacco Fay shares with them. Medium shots capture the community circled together, and the smudging and prayer are included in the frame but with no close-up shots. The film presents the mourning ceremony as neither a spectacle nor a foreign ritual, in neither exotic nor fetishizing terms. Instead, the ceremony is shown to be a source of nourishment for all, particularly as it starkly contrasts the next scene, in which Hina confronts the clueless professionalism of her supervisor Jane, who has requested she strategize about "self-care" rather than attend Laura's funeral.

The depth of feeling palpable in the mourning scene is mirrored by the choice to refrain from announcing or explaining the racial identities of characters but rather to portray them in felt and affective ways. As discussed earlier, this is a risky choice with respect to the film's portrayals of Indigeneity. But it also emphasizes the lived connections between characters. We know that Bing and his mother (Edna) are Filipino primarily because of language and speech; she frequently uses terms of endearment such as *anak* ("child" in Tagalog), for example. Hina is a hijab-wearing Muslim woman, and the film treats her identity matter-of-factly: it just is. The only moments where it becomes more "visible" are vis-à-vis overt expressions of racism: when Hina's supervisor chides her for appearing at a public event with a South Asian political candidate (conflating the foreignness of Hina's hijab with the candidate's turban); when Laura asks Hina if she "eats babies," as her father claims; when Corey refers to her as a "towelhead." The film's choice to treat identity as felt or experienced, rather than explicitly named, enables discrete experiences to be stitched together relationally. We see the shared connections across their distinct experiences of trauma, grief, and hardship, as well as joy and pleasure, particularly when they are together at the literacy center enjoying some respite from the stresses of the outside world.

These shared connections are amplified in the penultimate scene that is the film's climax. At the school talent show, Bing performs Whitney Houston's "I Wanna Dance with Somebody" with a karaoke machine his mother has purchased from a pawn shop (Figure 28). His voice is not perfect, but raw and authentic. As he sings, he throws off his black blazer to reveal a gold sequined vest underneath. It is a joy-

FIGURE 28. Bing performing “I Wanna Dance with Somebody”; screenshot from *Scarborough.*

ful scene of love and communion: Bing fully expresses his queer self, to the thunderous applause of his mother, teachers, and classmates; Hina laughs and beams off-stage. The next scene, at the film’s close, is by contrast a quiet one. A gentle breeze sweeps through the school as we see a stray balloon idle in the shadows of the school hallway; toys strewn across a play area in Hina’s classroom; a picture of the literacy program class next to a yellow paper duck Laura once made using old eviction notices; the children’s artwork, desks, and schoolwork; a large balloon that the film features prominently as a space of wonder, play, and pleasure; a tree outside the window.

In the novel, this last scene represents Laura’s spirit visiting the places special to her, but that point of view is not clear in the film. What is more clearly conveyed in the film adaptation across these two scenes is the ephemerality of the community that is held together both through exuberant queer performance and within a space such as a school literacy program—one that is difficult to capture within official reports or policy documents such as those signaled through the email correspondence between Hina and her supervisor, Jane. This scene, and the film as a whole, suggest that it is these intangible, felt relations and experiences that generate resilience and make futures possible.

Scarborough, in sum, foregrounds the queer of color relationalities that emerge out of place and circumstance. While this includes a nuanced depiction of a Mi’kmaq child and her family, the film’s emphasis on relationality simultaneously decenters them. *This Place* registers the structural nature of diasporic/Indigenous impasse—and the overlapping histories of colonialism, war, and displacement that generate

them—but gestures optimistically to the potential for affective connections to exceed the impasse. Viewing them together, one gets a sense of the rich potential of queer of color ephemerality as resource: in *Scarborough,* the shared experiences that emerge organically out of place bind together residents of a working-class, multiracial neighborhood; in *This Place,* affective connections create a powerful bond between two women across overlapping but incommensurate experiences of war, colonization, and displacement. Both films emphasize, moreover, the crucial necessity of the felt and the intangible; particularly the potential of the felt and the intangible to exceed the limits of didactic critique and analytics.

The felt and ephemeral connections and relations depicted in these films say much about place, but not so much about land or sovereignty, but this does not mean they are antithetical to one another. Felt connections are a potential resource for the concrete demands of the Land Back movement. They are there, impossible to ignore, and require a reckoning with. “Decolonization is not a metaphor”—yes, undoubtedly, but how do we make sense of the actions, connections, or relations that do not fit neatly into definitions of decolonization but that may be vital supplements to it?[53] Might the child-oriented joy of Sylvie and Bing in *Scarborough,* or the intangible tenderness of Malai and Kawenniiohstha in *This Place,* be generative sources for mapping out paths toward decolonization and the reimagination of kinship and intimacy that that entails?

Recent discussions in and across Indigenous and Black studies that have sought to trouble the limitations of sovereignty, both as a concept and as a political project, and that have—sometimes implicitly, sometimes more explicitly—raised questions about the significance of the fleeting and ephemeral, offer some clues. In a dialogue on queer Indigenous ethics with Jas Morgan (Cree-Métis-Saulteaux), for instance, Billy-Ray Belcourt (Cree) pushes back against what he describes as the “charisma” of the concept of sovereignty, opining that “we participate in relational practices that agitate the body or the nation as inviolable containers for political life.”[54] He continues: “Queerness . . . makes trouble for the diagnostics that are used to spot resistance or to repair suffering; sex, for example, can be a space in which care is enacted by those who have elsewhere been barred from it. What this means, then, is that those who are Indigenous and differ-

ently gendered and/or sexualized will seek and/or perform alternative sites of political action and community-building."[55]

By implicitly endorsing queer politics that are illegible through the registers of sovereignty and nation building, Belcourt gestures instead to an otherwise that is in excess of those registers (and, perhaps, akin to rich Indigenous traditions of relationality across human and more-than-human). When he names "alternative sites of political action and community-building," I read this to include the acts (both small and large) that may appear imperceptible as capital-S Sovereignty: sex, a drag show, a queer party. Although decolonization is undoubtedly "not a metaphor"—it is about the very real, material question of land—neither can we dismiss the feelings and affects that accumulate through such alternative sites and generate momentum for Sovereignty.[56]

I am struck here by the resonances of Belcourt's comments with Sandra Harvey's suggestion to consider registers of sovereignty that reside outside of the realms of politics and governance. Harvey is particularly responding to Afropessimist critiques of Native sovereignty, which suggest that it is embedded in a project of Modernity that is anti-Black at its foundation:

> In one sense, orientation or acting is the sort of sovereignty that does not depend on recognition from or against an Other. But it is also about the law-making actions that produce ruptures in the colonial and slave owning symbolic order. I understand Fanon's reflections on violence in this vein, but I also consider that the way "speaking" (as Kelly [Limes-Taylor] has pointed out) and ceremonies, as Tiffany [King] puts it in *The Black Shoals,* "carry potential for transformation" (199). Rather than foundational, institutional, or grounded sovereignty (noting that Jared Sexton critiques a certain understanding of sovereignty with land as its basis), this notion of sovereignty is fleeting, emergent, and relational. It is found in Standing Rock, Alcatraz, the Dakota road blocks, and in the defiance of the uprising for Black lives.[57]

Harvey here repurposes the meaning of "sovereignty" as it has developed vis-à-vis Enlightenment philosophies. In opposition to the sovereignty of the autonomous, free-thinking self that develops as a result

of the bifurcation of mind/body, she hails as an alternate mode that is activated through relational encounters found in ceremony, on the land defender road block, on the front lines against police violence. Cree scholar Karyn Recollet's powerful work on Black and Indigenous relationalities in urban dance performances likewise gets to this potential of bodies in motion as she cites the energy and dynamism that collective performance generates. In "Choreographies of the Fall," Recollet places Afrofuturist and Indigifuturist scholarship in conversation. In her dynamic interpretations of Indigenous art and performance, Recollet foregrounds the centrality of migration and motion, and pushes back against the perception of Indigeneity as "land locked."[58] It is in the thick of these moments of encounter that new modes of being and relating open up.

What I gather from the collective insights of Belcourt, Recollet, Harvey, King, Morgan, and others is that sovereignty is not a zero-sum game. Decolonization is not a metaphor, but neither is it possible without metaphor—without the capacious dreamwork that artists, writers, and performers have always offered. Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate) writes: "Recognizing possibilities of other kinds of intimacies—not focused on biological reproduction and making population, but caretaking precious kin that come to us in diverse ways—is an important step to unsettling settler sex and family. So is looking for answers to questions about what intimacies were and are possible beyond the settler impositions we now live with."[59] TallBear's words are directed to a presumably Indigenous audience and thus materially tie her calls to Indigenous land and histories. But I also hear and wonder about them in the context of the relational survivance taking place in the city through circumstance. The affective bonds, the intangible connections: the reorientations of intimacy depicted in *This Place* and *Scarborough,* while not instances of visual sovereignty, capture forms of relational survivance that might nourish and supplement Indigenous-led decolonization.

Coda

INTERRUPTING THE SETTLER-COLONIAL SENSORIUM

The saguaro cactus is a significant part of the iconography of the American Southwest. Popular representations of westerns, cowboys, and Tex-Mex culture often include its image, presumably following Hollywood western director John Ford's choice to place the plants in his depictions of Monument Valley, beginning with *Stagecoach* (1939). Film critic Edward Buscombe writes that the image of the cactus first circulated via Edward Curtis's 1907 photograph *Saguaro Fruit Gatherers—Maricopa.*[1] The photograph depicts three Maricopa women standing next to the tall (up to twelve meters high) cactus. The cactus's height in this photo is stunning, accentuated by the women standing beside it. Given that, perhaps it is unsurprising that Ford extracted and popularized the image of the cactus, but not the Maricopa women. Yet, Curtis was a portrait photographer, and the title of the photograph suggests that it is indeed the women, not the cactus, whom Curtis intended as its primary subjects, as does his caption: "Like their Piman neighbors, the Maricopa gather large quantities of the fruit of the saguaro, or giant cactus, which they relish in its natural state as well as in the form of wine or preserve."[2] Joanna Hearne notes that Curtis's tendency to leave his subjects nameless, particularly female ones, left them vulnerable to forms of empty signification.[3] Ford's extraction and isolation of the cactus from this photograph—and the de facto excision of the Maricopa women—completes the erasure that Curtis begins in order to repeat a settler-colonial pattern of constructing a frontier imaginary evicted of meaningful Indigenous presence. In this instance, as in Ford's larger oeuvre, the suppression of Indigenous bodies, relations, and experiences amplifies settler people, stories, and places; it makes settler relations and aesthetics visible.

Ford's vision is an iconic one whose ideological transfer has taken place many times over, sedimented so as to become normative and banal. They become sites of attachment because we become accustomed to

such ways of perceiving the world. Making settler relations and aesthetics visible across independent Asian diasporic film and art—in works such as Sunny Lee's *Cowgirl,* David Attwood's *Wild West,* as well as in works by multidisciplinary artists Shani Mootoo and Vivek Shraya—likewise makes clear that settler modes of being and relating to land are also sources of desire, longing, and belonging for those excluded from them. Such desires are understandable insofar as they emerge from a set of historical and political circumstances. There is pleasure associated with seeing oneself projected on screen, in spaces and places that are familiar and comfortable, particularly in the face of marginalization and exclusion. Yet settler aesthetics and representations also regenerate the everyday colonial violence that is so essential to settler colonialism. Other worlds become possible when such normative visions are revealed. Parallel to Kānaka Maoli feminist scholar Maile Arvin's insistence on naming normative white feminisms as *settler* feminisms, exposing settler positionalities and perspectives not only constitutes a form of critique but also serves as an invitation for committing to ending settler colonialism and crafting new, decolonial worlds.[4]

These alternate forms of worldmaking are happening as we speak, many of them—as in the work of Ali Kazimi, V. T. Nayani, and Catherine Hernandez—through cinematic experimentation. The work of these artists is not prescriptive. These are not the dictates of closed or fixed futures. Rather, they are examples of imaginative possibility that gesture to the labor and experimentation involved in making new worlds that are oriented toward Indigenous land, bodies, and (hi)stories. Film and moving image media provide the occasion to momentarily inhabit new worlds, to feel and sense them. These works remain marginal and ephemeral, their audiences small. Yet it is precisely the smaller scale of these works that has allowed these artists to not only engage different kinds of representations and aesthetics but also cultivate these alongside Indigenous collaborators and comrades. As a hub of QTBIPOC community that has fostered diasporic–Indigenous relational conversations and projects, particularly in the wake of 1990 resistance at Kanehsatake (also known as the Oka Crisis), Toronto has been paradigmatic in this regard.

Settler Attachments has, in part, gestured to the limitations of "knowing better" as a means for addressing diasporic entanglements in settler colonialism. In chapter 4, I discussed the imperfect but generative experimentative work of the films *This Place* and *Scarborough* as raising

questions and working through alternate possibilities for diasporic–Indigenous futures. As I close out this book, I pause to reflect on how we might navigate the structural impasse of diaspora–Indigeneity through other forms of knowing or—more precisely—sensing. If knowing better does not lead us out of the impasse, where might feeling and perceiving the world differently take us? What new possibilities are opened up through new sensory pathways?

Here, I turn to the pathbreaking work of Korean-born, Vancouver-based artist Jin-me Yoon's 2020 video and interactive art project *Untunnelling Vision.* The project might be read as the logical culmination of Yoon's decades-long art practice that has persistently offered critical interventions into questions of nation, identity, land, and militarism, through a transnational lens.[5] In *Untunnelling Vision,* Yoon meditates on the connections across Indigenous and diasporic histories and experiences vis-à-vis sensory disruption. By actively engaging participants in the filming itself, the project also attempts to activate an attunement toward such connections: to "untunnel" vision. Shot with a 360 camera, the twenty-one-minute experimental short toys with our expectations by distorting the audiovisual field: it juxtaposes and alternates between a range of frames, perspectives, sounds, colors, and hues, shaking us out of our comfort zones. Its nonlinear arc heightens our awareness of the video's audiovisual elements, taking viewers on a journey that is disorienting and unexpected.

The video's opening scene is shot from below. As we look onto a sunny, grayish-blue sky and scattered clouds, distorted sounds play, and the camera tracks across delicate reeds, eventually approaching the ruins of a wooden structure. Playing with perspective and point of view, it is jarring and unsettling, showing us the world from a different place. The distorted sounds fade into a carnivalesque soundtrack, as the video then abruptly cuts to its next scene—still from this perspective from-below—the top of a colorful spinning carousel covered in quaint, folksy landscape paintings, possibly depictions of Canadian sites. These are visions of early settler-colonial imaginaries. Diminished in size and positioned atop the rotating carousel, the images invite us to consider the nostalgic pleasure of an old amusement park ride—and, perhaps, the way such nostalgia generates commonsensical attachments to hegemonic imaginaries. As we follow the circular repetitions of the carousel, we hear the sound of a train, and the video cuts again, this time to a black-and-white close-up of the bottom of

a passing train, our eyes now directed to its linear movements from left to right. The train departs the frame to reveal tourists wandering through an old-timey village (Calgary's Heritage Park Historical Village). The camera now remains stationary as people walk in and out of frame, some visible in the distance, and others visible right up close. It is a slow depiction of settler space and its histories that are mundane and everyday, generally taken for granted, and a nod again to the colonial histories that shape and live on in our present. As one individual pauses in front of the camera to take a photo, cymbals suddenly interrupt the scene as another jump cut takes us to a jarring close-up of Rubble the Clown, a figure who frequently and erratically appears in *Untunnelling Vision.* An amalgam of Asian clown and cowboy, Rubble dons a painted face complemented by a ribboned wig of Korean *saekdong* colors that emphasize harmony—and (in the context of the project) symbolize relation and difference—and a crocheted off-white cowboy hat (Figure 29). Rubble appears momentarily, in fast time, teasing and confusing our expectations: Who is this strange figure, and what are they doing in the video?

Untunnelling Vision switches focus here, but the sound of crashing cymbals persists, suggesting that Rubble has introduced an interruption to the previous scenes. We are now in a dark tunnel—symbolic of modernity, progress, and development—and our vision is about to become untunneled. The camera wobbles and shakes before finding focus again, showcasing again a perspective from below.

We are still in the tunnel, but it is no longer dark. We see the fine

FIGURE 29. Rubble the Clown; screenshot from *Untunnelling Vision.*

FIGURE 30. Yoon-Henderson and dodginghorse walk through the tunnel; screenshot from *Untunnelling Vision.*

granularity of sand on the ground, and, in the distance, the light at the end of the tunnel. Two figures soon appear: Yoon's son, Hanum Yoon-Henderson, and multidisciplinary Tsuuti'ina artist seth cardinal dodginghorse (Figure 30). The tunnel is, in fact, Calgary's southwest ring road, part of a decades-long project to create a road to circle the city and facilitate transport.[6] The construction displaced members of the Tsuut'ina nation off their land, including dodginghorse and his family.[7] Yoon-Henderson and dodginghorse begin to experiment with making a musical soundscape using their bodies and various found objects, countering the "sonic dissonances" generated by "colonial cacophonies."[8] Their repurposing and reclamation of space momentarily interrupts the progress of construction, serving as a reminder of the histories, lives, and experiences that linger and remain. Yoon-Henderson and dodginghorse's site-specific intervention is thus especially meaningful as it responds to ongoing processes of dispossession and primitive accumulation.

Yoon-Henderson and dodginghorse walk through the Heritage Park together, now empty. We see the park in full color, devoid of tourists. There are occasional, fleeting glimpses of people in nineteenth-century clothing, relics of the past. An antlered deer saunters by, taking up space in the new emptiness. The shift to color along with the emptiness of the tourist site invites audiences to ponder on the possibilities that Yoon-Henderson and dodginghorse's bodies signal, particularly as they take up space laden with colonial significance, recoding it as a space of potential diasporic–Indigenous relation.

The subsequent segment of the video was shot on Tsuut'ina Nation land that was leased to the Canadian Armed Forces' Calgary base from 1910 to 1998. The military used this land extensively as a site for "manoeuvre training that included land and air launched rockets and grenades"; thus, when they returned the land to the Tsuut'ina, it was filled with unexploded munitions.[9] Some of those munitions were subsequently cleared in order to shoot the 2008 feature film *Passchendaele,* about a Canadian soldier in World War I; in the Canadian settler imaginary, Passchendaele is significant as a battle in which Canadian troops established themselves as culturally and nationally distinct from Britain. The set for *Passchendaele* was left in place in the hopes that the site might be transformed into a tourist destination. Yoon—an artist whose oeuvre has been engaged with the intersections and entanglements of militarism, tourism, and colonialism—chose this site for *Untunnelling Vision* to further probe those connections alongside a group of invited participants. The video pauses to gaze at the rubble and decaying structures. Equally, the camera directs us to the wild grasses and flowers growing amid the ruins, reclaiming the land anew, emphasizing possibility in the wake of wreck. Rubble reappears in their blue-collared shirt with patchwork adornments and matching patchworked pants. Their assemblage of excess, particularly in relation to the subdued hues of the ruins and landscape, invites us to consider the cacophonies of colonialism and the entanglements that it generates.

As in the films of Kazimi, Nayani, and Hernandez, the work for Yoon's video—and this second segment in particular—extended beyond the frame. The filming process was incorporated into a multiday workshop that Yoon organized in 2019 for BIPOC artists entitled "Relation Making in the Context of Racism and Settler-Colonialism." Inspired by Martiniquais scholar-poet Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation,* Yoon cofacilitated the workshop with her sister, the activist and community organizer Jin-Sun Yoon, with graphic recording by artist Tiaré Jung.[10] Writing from and through the specificities of Martinique and the Caribbean, where cross-cultural encounters have emerged through violent histories of conquest, colonization, slavery, and imperialism, Glissant proposes that

> relation is learning more and more to go beyond judgments
> into the unexpected dark of art's upsurgings. Its beauty springs
> from the stable and the unstable, from the deviance of many

> particular poetics and the clairvoyance of a relational poetics. The more things it standardizes into a state of lethargy, the more rebellious consciousness it arouses.[11]

Glissant theorizes relation here as poetic, imaginative, chaotic, and risky, as it creates space for new and unexpected possibilities. The first day of Yoon's workshop, which focused on deepening participant understandings of racism and settler colonialism, likewise delved into the chaotic and unexpected. It was concerned not just with deepening intellectual awareness, but also with considering how participants "experientially embody and name what it is like to carry these experiences." Filming itself took place on the workshop's second day. Participation was optional; volunteers were instructed to "carry out a series of simple actions at the site," which included

> looking for a piece of rubble, carrying a small piece of rubble and placing it in a pile, then passing it around with the group. Such simple gestures are performed in front of a camera, in a group context, using both a conventional camera and a 360 camera. More gestures will be devised by Jin-me Yoon and included once she has experienced the workshop alongside the participants.[12]

In the video, we see the participants sit together in a circle on the grass with their found pieces of rubble and begin to make sounds (Figures 31–32). This segment of musical improvisation was facilitated by Yoon-Henderson and dodginghorse and culminates in the video as a musical composition in which distinct elements retain their unique qualities while at the same time forming harmony with other elements.

Leading up to the filming of *Untunnelling Vision,* Yoon led a workshop at the 2018 Mountain Standard Time Performance Arts Festival in Calgary entitled "Relaxing into Relation," in which participants were invited to float in sensory deprivation tanks in order to alter their perception and compel the formation of new neural pathways that would facilitate the group discussion on Indigenous and people of color relationality and decolonization. Plunged into the "unexpected dark of art's upsurgings," the emphasis here was on the sensory and affective—rather than the intellectual—as modes of mobilizing different ways of being and seeing in relation.[13] Artist and writer Ashley Bedet, who participated in the workshop, reflects on the shift in

FIGURE 31. Participants gather for a sound-making session on Tsuut'ina Nation land; screenshot from *Untunnelling Vision.*

FIGURE 32. Participants improvise sound making; screenshot from *Untunnelling Vision.*

group feeling and discussion tenor following the sensory deprivation experience:

> Upon reuniting with the group our discussion expanded further. People felt calmer and could clearly articulate similar territories to those I had been meditating. Our understandings of place however still jarred all of us. . . . Gentle and tentative conversation timidly moved forward as our group clumsily conversed about our experiences, discoveries, and then ultimately our fears and anxieties.[14]

If, as Glissant suggests, "The highest point of knowledge is always a poetics," the experience of sensory deprivation compelled workshop participants toward dwelling in the feelings, affects, and sensations of the impasse, including its awkward, clumsy, or uncomfortable aspects.[15]

In the video's next segment, a group of seated Korean and Tsuut'ina elders observe participants pass colored pieces of rock to one another (Figure 33). These rocks, placed on site by Yoon, are painted in traditional Korean *saekdong* colors that emphasize harmony and (in the context of the workshop) symbolize relation and difference. Interjecting these scenes of group bonding is, again, Rubble the Clown. In the final shots of the video, Rubble's movements intensify, moving at hyperspeed. There is a heightening of distorted sounds; our vision becomes muddied. Images blend and meld together: we see the grass, we see the sky; they are upside down, they are painted fantastical colors. They form a tunnel-like shape that the camera moves away from in backward spirals, echoing Manu Karuka, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Alyosha Goldstein's provocation to consider thinking with nonlinear spatial forms such as circles and spirals (Figure 34).[16] As *Untunnelling Vision* concludes, the screen fades to black and we are plunged into darkness. Just as participants in "Relaxing into Relation" suspended their perception as they floated in sensory deprivation tanks, our visual perception here is flipped, turned inside-out and on its head. We are floating in the water. Speculating on what could be, the video's conclusion invites us to consider seeing differently.

Holding space for the insights from *Untunnelling Vision,* I return to the example of the saguaro cactus. I wonder: What is made possible when we delink the saguaro cactus from Curtis's and Ford's settler imaginaries? I dwell on what might open up when we see the saguaro cactus as embedded in dynamic webs of human and nonhuman relation, no longer extracted from its relationship to Maricopa women: the saguaro cactus not as a majestic plant from which value can be extracted, but as a plant whose past and future is bound up with Indigenous people, places, and stories. I would like to not only know and remember this connection, but also reach the point where we collectively feel and perceive this. Whereas attachments and investments in settler colonialism are ultimately narcissistic, centering Indigenous modes of being and knowing opens onto new portals and worlds, inviting us to

FIGURE 33. Participants prepare to pass rocks to one another as elders look on; screenshot from *Untunnelling Vision.*

FIGURE 34. Untunneling vision; screenshot from *Untunnelling Vision.*

differently move and inhabit space, in ways that are attuned not only to survival under a settler capitalist regime but to something wholly different. What stories might Maricopa peoples have to share about the saguaro cactus? How do we see and perceive plants when they are recognizable, not just through their taxonomic classifications or their extractive value, but through these other stories?

Even as I dwell in such possibility, I return to that impasse of diaspora/Indigeneity that is still unresolved. I remember, too, that reckoning with impasse and impossibility is generative. Work and

experimentation is required here. That work will be incomplete and imperfect, but also profoundly necessary. I end *Settler Attachments* with a nod to the difficult task of holding onto hope and possibility as we wrestle with impossibility and impasse. I wonder what sights, scents, textures, and sounds could we be attuned to in decolonial futures, and I think about the work ahead, somewhere on that distant horizon. Let's go.

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Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. I included an earlier version of this anecdote in my dissertation, but omitted the detail about Kashmir, which speaks to a kind of willful unknowing on my part of the significance of the layered and overlapping colonial contexts at play here.

2. Dian Million, "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 53–76.

3. For example, see the work of scholars such as the anthropologist Ather Zia. With Javaid Iqbal Bhat, Zia notes that "Kashmiris continue to demand that sovereignty be added as an option to reflect their desire for nationhood, a struggle they insist is older than India or Pakistan," in "Introduction," *A Desolation Called Peace: Voices from Kashmir,* ed. Ather Zia and Javaid Iqbal Bhat (New York: Harper Collins, 2019), 10.

4. Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016).

5. Queer scholars have developed modified formulations of hope vis-à-vis their critiques and complications of Lee Edelman's and Leo Bersani's respective embraces of negativity and antifuturity. See Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004); Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996). For the late José Esteban Muñoz, that promise was located in the not-yet-hereness of queer cultures; as he famously wrote in *Cruising Utopia,* "Queerness is not yet here. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with possibility" (Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* [New York: New York University Press, 2009, 1]). Sara Ahmed has likewise suggested 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 (Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010]). For additional critiques, see Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011); and Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011).

6. For other ways of theorizing worldmaking see Nelson Goodman,

Ways of Worldmaking (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1978); Mark Jerng, *Racial Worldmaking: The Power of Popular Fiction* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); Ronak Kapadia, *Insurgent Aesthetics: Security and the Queer Life of the Forever War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019); Dorinne Kondo, *Worldmaking: Race, Performance, and the Work of Creativity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018).

7. Lisa Duggan and José Esteban Muñoz, "Hope and Hopelessness: A Dialogue," *Women & Performance* 19, no. 2 (2009): 281.

8. Dian Million, "Intense Dreaming: Theories, Narratives, and Our Search for Home," *American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2011): 315.

9. Cutcha Risling Baldy, "Z Nation was the first post-apocalyptic zombie tv show to feature Native Americans and it was bad . . . bad . . . really bad . . . I'm sure there was something redeeming . . . Eddie Spears is cute," *Sometimes Writer-Blogger Cutcha Risling Baldy,* November 18, 2015, http://www.cutcharislingbaldy.com/blog/z-nation-was-the-first-post-apocalyptic-zombie-tv-show-to-feature-native-americans-and-it-was-bad-bad-really-bad-im-sure-there-was-something-redeeming-eddie-spears-is-cute. Should be Risling Baldy cites Deborah Miranda's memoir, in which Miranda (Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen) describes the California mission system as "the end of the world." See chapter 1 of Miranda, *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday, 2013).

10. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 43, emphasis mine.

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

12. Jas Morgan in Belcourt and Nixon [Morgan], "What Do We Mean by Queer Indigenous Ethics?"

13. Belcourt, in Belcourt and Nixon [Morgan].

14. It is worth noting that as the founder of the artist/activist collective R.I.S.E: Radical Indigenous Survivance & Empowerment, DinéYahzi′ collaborated with queer Asian multimedia artist Jess X. Snow on *Solastalgia,* a "queer eco-feminist poetry tour" that took place in 2016–2017, culminating in a zine. DinéYahzi′ and Snow define solastalgia as "the pain experienced when the place where one resides or one loves is under immediate assault." The framing of the tour and zine through solastalgia elicits interconnectivity and relation, as both Snow and DinéYahzi′ meditate on the pain of colonization, displacement, and ecocide. Snow's poetry features in the first half of the zine; DinéYahzi′'s in the second. Preceding these two sections are two introductory poems, one by Snow, and one by DinéYahzi′, which set the stage for the zine as they reflect on themes such as collective

pain, privilege, solidarity, and resistance. The organization of the zine thus invites readers to appreciate both sets of writing in terms of solastalgia.

15. While Toronto might technically be considered ceded land, the scope and validity of treaties signed between settler and Native nations—such as Treaty 13, signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, or the Williams treaty, signed between settlers and multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands—have been contested and subject to debate. See, for example, this summary of negotiations around the Williams Treaty: https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1542370282768/1542370308434#:~:text=1923%3A%20Williams%20Treaties%20signed%20to,seeking%20justice%20and%20fair%20compensation. The details of Treaty 13 are here: https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1370372152585/1581293792285#ucls13.

16. Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View,* ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 5–57.

17. Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt, *Queer Cinema in the World* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016), 5.

18. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 547–66; Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* 3, no. 4 (1997): 437–65; Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

19. Use of the acronym BIPOC to denote "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color" (rather than "bisexual people of color") first appears around 2013 in posts on Twitter (now X) by Toronto-based user accounts. The Marvellous Grounds archive project captures the Toronto-specific relational ethos I speak of: see Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, and Syrus Marcus Ware, *Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2018) and the accompanying website, http://marvellousgrounds.com.

20. See chapter 4 of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

21. Grace Kyungwon Hong, "Comparison and Coalition in the Age of Black Lives Matter," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 20, no. 2 (2017): 275.

22. Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017); bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995); Audre Lorde, "Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," in *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Freedom, Calif.: Crossing, 1984), 124–33; Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology,*

ed. Barbara Smith (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 264–74; Maria Lugones, "Hard-to-Handle Anger," in *Overcoming Racism & Sexism,* ed. Linda A. Bell and David Blumenfeld (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 203–18. See also Grace Kyungwon Hong, *Death Beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), for her useful reading of Audre Lorde's conceptualization of difference and incommensurability. For a recent reflection on Indigenous feminist rage, see Sarah Deer, Jodi A. Byrd, Durba Mitra, and Sarah Haley, "Rage, Indigenous Feminisms, and the Politics of Survival," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 46, no. 4 (2021): 1057–71.

23. Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology,* ed. Barbara Smith (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 356–57.

24. Jennifer Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019), 115–18.

25. The late historian Patrick Wolfe's succinct observation that "settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event," provided a rubric for how to understand this *longue durée.* Wolfe argued that the framework of colonial invasion was insufficient for understanding ongoing attempts to eliminate Indigeneity (whether through physical genocide or cultural genocide, aka assimilation) in order to appropriate and lay claim to Native land as settler land. By naming colonialism as a structure, Wolfe highlighted how bureaucratic mechanisms of law and governance cemented settler-colonial power, while disappearing (or, attempting to disappear) Indigenous nations. Unfortunately, as Vimalassery, Hu Pegues, and Goldstein point out in their introduction to a 2016 special issue of *Theory & Event,* "On Colonial Unknowing," Wolfe's work has frequently circulated in ways that posit a too-reductive binary between structure and event. Consequently, they note, scholars take up Wolfe and then frame settler colonialism as a modular form of colonialism, rather than a historically situated formation that is entangled with slavery, imperialism, and other forms of structural violence. Moreover, as Tiffany Lethabo King argues in *The Black Shoals,* privileging settler-colonial structure over event crowds out attention to the violence of conquest lived and survived by Indigenous and Black peoples. Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019).

26. Joanne Barker, originally posted on her blog, *Tequila Sovereign*; republished by Devon G. Pena on his blog, *mexmigration: History and Politics of Mexican Immigration,* http://mexmigration.blogspot.com/2014/01/decolonize-this-joanne-barkers-critical.html.

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

28. Kēhaulani Kauanui, "'A Structure Not an Event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association* 5, no. 1 (2016), https://csalateral.org/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-settler-colonialism-enduring-indigeneity-kauanui/.

29. Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 13.

30. Sherene Razack, Sunera Thobani, and Malinda Smith, "Introduction: States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century," in *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century,* ed. Sherene Razack, Sunera Thobani, and Malinda Smith (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2010), 2.

31. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference,* ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 222–37; Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

32. For Cho, diaspora is "a subjective condition marked by the contingencies of long histories of displacements and genealogies of dispossession. Diaspora is not divorced from the histories of colonialism and imperialism, nor is it unmarked by race and the processes of racialization. It is not defined by these histories and social practices, but these histories and practices form a crucial part of the condition of diaspora's emergence." Lily Cho, "The Turn to Diaspora," *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 17 (2007): 14.

33. Sharon Fernandez, "More Than Just an Arts Festival: Communities, Resistance, and the Story of Desh Pardesh," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31, no. 1 (2006): para. 1.

34. Punam Khosla, "Desh Pradesh: South Asian Culture in the Diaspora: Opening Address," *Rungh Magazine* 1, no. 1–2 (1991): 5.

35. Fernandez, "More Than Just an Arts Festival," para. 2.

36. For example, see Evyn Lê Espiritu Gandhi, *Archipelago of Resettlement: Vietnamese Refugee Settlers and Decolonization across Guam and Israel-Palestine* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022); Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008); Quynh Nhu Le, *Unsettled Solidarities: Asian and Indigenous Cross-Representations in the Americas* (Philadephia: Temple University Press, 2019); Juliana Hu Pegues, *Space-Time Colonialism: Alaska's Indigenous and Asian Entanglements* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021); Erin Suzuki, *Ocean Passages: Navigating Pacific Islander and Asian American Literatures* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press,

2021); Nishant Upadhyay, *Indians on Indian Lands: Intersections of Race, Caste, and Indigeneity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2024).

37. See Candace Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawaiʻi* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2021).

38. Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). Other authors who have theorized settler subjectivity include Hagar Kotef, *The Colonizing Self: Or, Home and Homelessness in Israel/Palestine* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2020); Scott Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Sherene Razack, *Dying from Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries into Indigenous Deaths in Custody* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

39. Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xxxiv, 53.

40. Manu Vimalassery, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Alyosha Goldstein, "Introduction: On Colonial Unknowing," *Theory & Event* 19, no. 4 (2016): para. 1, emphasis mine.

41. Hagar Kotef, "Violent Attachments," *Political Theory* 48, no. 1 (2020): 19–20.

42. Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017), 13.

43. For example, in Native American and Indigenous studies, see works such as Joanne Barker's *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), and Byrd's *Transit of Empire*; in Black studies, King's *The Black Shoals* and Kyle T. Mays's *City of Dispossessions: Indigenous Peoples, African Americans, and the Creation of Modern Detroit* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022); in Asian American studies, see Day's *Alien Capital* and Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawaiʻi* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2008). For an overview of critical ethnic studies, see Critical Ethnic Studies Editorial Collective, "Introduction: A Sightline," in *Critical Ethnic Studies: A Reader,* ed. Critical Ethnic Studies Editorial Collective (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016), and John D. Marquez and Junaid Rana, "On Our Genesis and Future," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1–8.

44. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, eds., "Whose Vision? Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawaiʻi," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000); Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism.*

45. For an account of Trask's MELUS address and responses to it, see Cynthia Franklin, "Introduction," in *Navigating Islands and Continents:*

Conversations and Contestations in and around the Pacific, Selected Essays, ed. Cynthia Franklin, Ruth Hsu, and Suzanne Kosanke (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), xvii.

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

47. Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism," *Social Justice* 32, no. 4 (2005): 120–43.

48. For instance, Black studies scholars such as Jared Sexton have pointed out that to conflate anti-Black racism with other forms of racism and discrimination is to effectively flatten out history, ignoring the ways that transatlantic slavery—along with attempted Native genocide and land seizure—have profoundly changed the course of the world as we know it. Jared Sexton, "The Vel of Slavery: Tracking the Figure of the Unsovereign," *Critical Sociology* 42, no. 4–5 (2016): 583–97. To render slavery as essentially equivalent to other forms of migration is thus to ignore what Saidiya Hartman has called the "afterlife of slavery." Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 6. Also see Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright, "Decolonizing Resistance, Challenging Colonial States," *Social Justice* 35, no. 3 (2008–9): 120–38.

49. Dean Saranillio, "Haunani-Kay Trask and Settler Colonial and Relational Critique: Alternatives to Binary Analyses of Power," *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 4, no. 2 (2018): 38.

50. Malissa Phung, "Indigenous and Asian Relation Making," *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 5, no. 1 (2019): 22.

51. See Trask, "Settlers of Color"; Lawrence and Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism"; Gandhi, *Archipelago of Resettlement*; Yu-Ting Huang, "Writing Settlement: Locating Asian-Indigenous Relations in the Pacific," *Verge* 4, no. 2 (2018): 25–36; Byrd, *Transit of Empire*; Day, *Alien Capital.*

52. Scholars across Black and Native studies in particular have engaged in difficult and generative conversations to tease out the co-constitutive nature of anti-Blackness and settler-colonial violence. For example, see Jackson's *Creole Indigeneity*; King, *The Black Shoals*; Sexton, "The Vel of Slavery"; T. J. Tallie, *Queering Colonial Natal: Indigeneity and the Violence of Belonging in Southern Africa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

53. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire.*

54. Jodi Byrd, "Weather with You: Settler Colonialism, Antiblackness, and the Grounded Relationalities of Resistance," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 5, no. 1–2 (2019): 210.

55. Tiffany Lethabo King, "New World Grammars: The 'Unthought' Discourses of Black Conquest," *Theory & Event* 19, no. 4 (2016); Sexton,

"The Vel of Slavery"; Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010).

56. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2015).

57. For example, see the 2016 special issue of *Theory & Event* edited by Vimalassery, Hu Pegues, and Goldstein, "On Colonial Unknowing," as well as their introduction to it; Barker's *Tequila Sovereign* blog posts; and the 2019 special issue of *Critical Ethnic Studies,* "Solidarities of Nonalignment," edited by Michael Viola, Dean Itsuji Saranillio, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Iyko Day. See also Shaista Patel's essay, "The 'Indian Queen' of the Four Continents: Tracing the 'Undifferentiated Indian' through Europe's Encounters with Muslims, Anti-Blackness, and Conquest of the 'New World,' " *Cultural Studies* 33, no. 3 (2019): 414–36.

58. Day, *Alien Capital*; Gandhi, *Archipelago of Resettlement*; Hu Pegues, *Space-Time Colonialism*; Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019); Le, *Unsettled Solidarities*; Suzuki, *Ocean Passages*; Upadhyay, *Indians on Indian Lands.* In addition to these monographs, please see the works of authors such as Yu-Ting Huang and Shaista Patel: Patel, "The 'Indian Queen' of the Four Continents"; Huang, "Writing Settlement."

59. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End, 1992); Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

60. For example, Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 10.

61. Curtis Marez, *University Babylon: Film and Race Politics on Campus* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

62. Kara Keeling, *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

63. Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 13.

64. Gunning describes the cinema of attraction more "as a way of telling stories than as a way of presenting a series of views to an audience, fascinating because of their illusory power (whether the realistic illusion of motion offered to the first audiences by Lumière, or the magical illusion concocted by Méliès), and exoticism. In other words, I believe that the relation to the spectator set up by the films of both Lumière and Méliès (and many other

filmmakers before 1906) had a common basis, and one that differs from the primary spectator relations set up by narrative film after 1906. . . . I believe that this conception dominates cinema until about 1906–1907. Although different from the fascination in storytelling exploited by the cinema from the time of Griffith, it is not necessarily opposed to it. In fact the cinema of attraction[s] does not disappear with the dominance of narrative." Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 382.

65. Rebecca Weaver-Hightower and Janne Lahti, "Introduction: Reel Settler Colonialism: Gazing, Reception, and Production of Global Settler Cinemas," in *Cinematic Settlers: The Settler Colonial World in Film,* ed. Janne Lahti and Rebecca Weaver-Hightower (New York: Routledge), 5.

66. *Black Camera,* a journal of Black film studies, is one of the few publications that might fall under this category. In terms of faculty lines, it is only relatively recently that film and media studies departments at universities such as UC Berkeley (2020), the University of Toronto (2019), and the University of Washington (2020) have hired for race-focused positions.

67. Keeling, *The Witch's Flight*; Michael Boyce Gillespie, *Film Blackness: American Cinema and the Idea of Black Film* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016); Michelle Raheja, *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Joanna Hearne, *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012); Dustin Tahmahkera, *Tribal Television: Viewing Native People in Sitcoms* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Denise Khor, *Transpacific Convergences: Race, Migration, and Japanese American Film Culture before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022); Jigna Desai, *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

68. Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents,* 1.

69. On representations of Blackness, see Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Bloomsbury, 1973); Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900–1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Daniel Leab, *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975). On representations of Latinx/Chicanx people, see Charles Ramírez Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Frank Javier Garcia Berumen, *The Chicano/Hispanic Image in*

American Film (New York: Vantage, 1994); Allen L. Woll, *The Latin Image in American Film* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1980). On representations of Arabs and Muslims, see Tim Jon Semmerling, *"Evil" Arabs in American Popular Film: Orientalist Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006); Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch, 2001). On representations of Native Americans, see Angela Aleiss, *Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood Movies* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2005); Gretchen M. Bataille and Charles L. P. Silet, *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980); Jacqueline Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999). On representations of Asian Americans, see Gina Marchetti, *The Chinese Diaspora on American Screens: Race, Sex, and Cinema* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012); Eugene Franklin Wong, *On Visual Media Racism: Asians in American Motion Pictures* (New York: Amo, 1978).

70. Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation," *Screen* 24, no. 2 (1983): 3.

71. Daniel Bernardi, ed., *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Daniel Bernardi, ed., *Classic Hollywood, Classic Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Daniel Bernardi, ed., *The Persistence of Whiteness: Race and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Routledge; 2008); Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer, "De Margin and De Centre," *Screen* 29, no. 4 (1988): 2–11; Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism.*

72. Richard Dyer, "White," *Screen* 29, no. 4 (1988): 44–65.

73. Bernardi, *The Birth of Whiteness*; Bernardi, *Classic Hollywood*; Bernardi, *The Persistence of Whiteness.*

74. For example, see Desai, *Beyond Bollywood*; Manthia Diawara, ed., *Black American Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Peter X. Feng, *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002); Raheja, *Reservation Reelism.*

75. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," in *Film and Theory: An Anthology,* ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000), 714.

76. See Laura Sachiko Fugikawa, " 'To Get *Here*?' The Onscreen/Offscreen Relations of Biopower and Vulnerability in *Frozen River,*" *Critical Ethnic Studies* 4, no. 2 (2018): 118–40.

77. Hugh Hart, "Here's the Camera: Go!" *UCLA Magazine,* June 14, 2022, https://newsroom.ucla.edu/magazine/la-rebellion-multicultural-filmmakers. For more on the multiraciality of the LA Rebellion, see Josslyn Luckett's work; e.g. Josslyn Luckett, "Searching for Betty Chen: Rediscov-

ering the Asian American Filmmakers of UCLA in the Seventies," *Film Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2020): 34–40.

78. For works outlining the difference between comparison and relationality, see Danika Medak-Saltzman and Antonio Tiongson Jr., "Racial Comparativism Reconsidered," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2015): 1–7; and Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick Ferguson, *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011). Other examples of relational theorizing include Byrd, *Transit of Empire*; Day, *Alien Capital*; Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*; King, *The Black Shoals.*

79. For more on critical ethnic studies, see Critical Ethnic Studies Editorial Collective, *Critical Ethnic Studies: A Reader* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016). Also see John D. Marquez and Junaid Rana, "On Our Genesis and Future," *Critical Ethnic Studies Journal* 1, no.1 (2015): 1–8. The Critical Ethnic Studies Association is currently inactive due to limited funds and resources.

80. Medak-Saltzman and Tiongson Jr., "Racial Comparativism Reconsidered."

81. Khor's recent *Transpacific Convergences,* for example, disrupts dominant modes of film historiography and assumptions about the centers and peripheries of filmmaking as she frames early Japanese film and its infrastructures in relation to forms of interracial encounter and intimacy, including African American filmmaking and Filipino spectatorship (Khor, *Transpacific Convergences,* 11).

82. Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism,* 19.

83. Wilderson, *Red, White & Black.*

84. Nick Mitchell, "The View from Nowhere: On Frank Wilderson's Afropessimism," *Spectre Journal* (Fall 2020): 111. As of June 21, 2022, on Google Scholar, *Red, White & Black* has been cited 103 times in 2022; of these, only nineteen are citations from film and media studies, broadly construed.

85. Wilderson, *Red, White & Black,* 5, 4.

86. Keeling, *The Witch's Flight,* 3.

87. Keeling, *The Witch's Flight,* 16. For the latter insight, Keeling draws on Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

88. Keeling describes cinematic perception as "not confined to interactions with moving-image media such as film and television. Involved in the production and reproduction of social reality itself, these perceptual and cognitive processes work to order, orchestrate, produce, and reproduce social reality and sociality. In other words, in addition to operating in and through the variety of technological apparatuses for the 'mechanical reproduction'

or 'electronic transmission' of objects as images, cinematic processes govern (in the sense of exercising continuous sovereign authority over) the selection of which images can appear and of what is likely to be perceptible in their appearance. They designate a specific perceptual schema that is adequate to the task of perceiving those images and that corresponds to a 'matter' that is itself cinematic. Neither cinematic perceptual schemas nor cinematic matter precedes the other. Together they constitute the cinematic, an assemblage that might also be referred to as 'twentieth-century reality' because we neither posit nor access 'reality' except via these processes, which were perfected by film." Keeling, *The Witch's Flight,* 11–12.

89. Keeling, *The Witch's Flight,* 130–31, 137.

90. Keeling, *The Witch's Flight,* 131.

91. Rita Wong, "Decolonizasian: Reading Asian and First Nations Relations in Literature," *Canadian Literature* 199 (2008): 158.

1. MELANCHOLIC ATTACHMENTS

1. Frank Chin, *The Chickencoop Chinaman/The Year of the Dragon: Two Plays* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981).

2. Hsinya Huang, "Tracking Memory: Encounters Between Chinese Railroad Workers and Native Americans," in *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad,* ed. Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fisher Fishkin (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2019), 182. Chang, Fishkin, and Obenzinger write that there is further evidence that thousands of Chinese workers died under grueling circumstances and harsh weather. Gordon H. Chang, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, and Hilton Obenzinger, "Introduction," in *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad,* ed. Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fisher Fishkin (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2019), 14.

3. See Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

4. The film *Minari* similarly mines history and autobiography in order to stake a claim to live and belong (see also Steve Yuen's *GQ* photo shoot following *Minari*). In Jackie Chan's *Shanghai Noon,* while the cowboy is also a figure of desire, as a co-production between Hollywood and Hong Kong studios, the marketing and framing of *Shanghai Noon* focus primarily on the mash-up between the martial arts and western genres. In *Shanghai Noon,* it is *genre* that is the object of consumption, for transnational audiences.

5. Writer Clarence Mumford invented the character of Hopalong Cassidy, who appeared in a number of film and television shows beginning in 1935.

6. While Native people are not erased in Yau's story, their incorporation within a multicultural Hawai'i in which "Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Polynesian, and Samoan" are all substitutable for one another also performs an erasure of settler-colonial violence and Indigenous sovereignty that has been soundly critiqued. See John Yau, *Hawaiian Cowboys* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1995), 100. For critiques of multicultural discourses of Hawai'i, see Haunani-Kay Trask, "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: 'Locals' in Hawai'i," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): 1–24; Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–4 (2013): 280–94; Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008); Judy Rohrer, *Staking Claim: Settler Colonialism and Racialization in Hawai'i* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016).

7. Set in nineteenth-century California, *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* centers on two orphaned siblings, queer and nonbinary, struggling to survive racism and sexism of the harsh frontier. Though its epigraph, "This land is not your land," might seem to be a critique of settler claims, the plot suggests that it is primarily a critique of Asian exclusion. C Pam Zhang, *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2020). Tom Lin's *The Thousand Crimes* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2021), which is a revenge fantasy written from the perspective of an aggrieved Chinese worker, more closely parallels Frank Chin's *Chickencoop Chinaman* in its attempts to stake a claim for an Asian American masculinity that is commensurate with white masculinity.

8. On playing Indian, see Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999); Rayna Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe," *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1988): 30–55.

9. See David A. Smith, *Cowboy Presidents: The Frontier Myth and U.S. Politics Since 1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021).

10. Deena Rymhs, " 'It's a Double-Beat Dance': The 'Indian Cowboy' in Indigenous Literature, Art, and Film," *Intertexts* 14, no. 2 (2010): 75–92.

11. David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 188.

12. Jodi A. Byrd, *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 209–10.

13. Beenash Jafri, "Desire, Settler Colonialism and the Racialized Cowboy," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, no. 2 (2013): 73–86.

14. Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 11.

15. Rifkin, 37.
16. Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (1984): 126, original emphasis.
17. The Native mimic has a different relationship to the figure of the cowboy that would more closely correspond to Bhabha's formulation. See Deena Rymhs's discussion of "Indian cowboys" in literature and visual art, for example. Rymhs, " 'It's a Double-Beat Dance.' "
18. Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1–2.
19. Michael Yellow Bird, "Cowboys and Indians: Toys of Genocide, Icons of American Colonialism," *Wicazo Sa Review* 19, no. 2 (2004): 33.
20. Yellow Bird, 40–41.
21. Dian Million, "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 58.
22. Yau, *Hawaiian Cowboys,* 100. Similarly, Herb Jeffries began making Black-cast musical westerns in the late 1930s partly to provide relatable heroes for Black children; he recalls seeing a Black boy crying because his friends wouldn't let him play cowboy. See Mary Dempsey, "The Bronze Buckaroo Rides Again," *American Visions* 12, no. 4 (1997): 22–25.
23. The Canadian state consolidates much of this legal framework in the Indian Act.
24. On the vexed relations interplay between refugee and settler, see Evyn Lê Espiritu Gandhi's work on what she calls the "refugee settler condition." Gandhi, *Archipelago of Resettlement: Vietnamese Refugee Settlers and Decolonization Across Guam and Israel-Palestine* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022).
25. Among the other Asian diasporic films that engage with the western in some way are Michael Kang's short, *Japanese Cowboy* (2000), Nikhil Kamkolkar's *Indian Cowboy* (2004), and Jackie Chan's Hollywood coproduction *Shanghai Noon* (2000). Aside from *Wild West,* Bains was the creator and writer of the television series *Grease Monkeys* (2003–2004), which ran for ten episodes and centers on "a dysfunctional Asian family in Manchester." See https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0361187/?ref_=nm_flmg_wr_4 for more on *Grease Monkeys.* For *Wild West*'s "Release Info" see https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0105820/releaseinfo?ref_=ttrel_ql_2.
26. *Cowgirl* is Lee's first film. The second is a six-minute short called *Chinese Food and Donuts* (1999). Lee is currently a story analyst at Warner Brothers.
27. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV,* ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1964), 243.

28. Anne Anlin Cheng, "The Double Meaning of the American Dream," *The Atlantic,* February 19, 2021, para. 13, https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2021/02/minari-lee-isaac-chung-visual-melancholia-american-dream/618064/.

29. Anne Anlin Cheng, *Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 8.

30. Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XXI (1927–1931),* ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1927), 152–57.

31. Rosalind C. Morris and Daniel H. Leonard, *The Returns of Fetishism: Charles de Brosse and the Afterlives of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte,* trans. Harriet Martineau (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1858); Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 111; and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 2004).

32. See Judith Butler, "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary," in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

33. By contrast, films such as *Indian Cowboy* or *Shanghai Noon* indulge the fantasy completely: the lost object is no longer lost. The protagonists become cowboys—in *Shanghai Noon,* through historical revision; in *Indian Cowboy,* through the metaphorical substitution of American westward expansion with (South Asian) Indian transnational mobility. On the latter, see Jafri, "Desire, Settler Colonialism, and the Racialized Cowboy."

34. David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 136.

35. Frank Chin, Jeffery Chan, Lawson Inada, and Shawn Wong, eds. *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (New York: Doubleday, 1974).

36. Billy-Ray Belcourt, "Can the Other of Native Studies Speak?," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society Blog,* February 1, 2016, https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2016/02/01/can-the-other-of-native-studies-speak/.

37. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

38. Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002). In particular, see Crimp's introduction.

39. Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

2011); Blake Allmendinger, "The Queer Fronter," in *The Queer Sixties,* ed. Patricia Juliana Smith (New York: Routledge, 1999), 223–36.

40. *Cowgirl* is Lee's first film; the second is a six-minute short called *Chinese Food and Donuts* (1999). Lee is currently a story analyst at Warner Brothers.

41. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2015), 2.

42. Lee, personal conversation, December 21, 2021.

43. Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 5.

44. For example, see Mire Koikari, "*Love! Spam*: Food, Military, and Empire in Post–World War II Okinawa," in *Devouring Japan: Global Perspectives on Japanese Culinary Identity,* ed. Nancy Stalker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 171–86.

45. Jodi Kim, *Settler Garrison: Debt Imperialism, Militarism, and Transpacific Imaginaries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2022), 2.

46. Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

47. Kevin Bruyneel, *Settler Memory: The Disavowal of Indigeneity and the Politics of Race in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

48. In 2014, the West Virginia legislature declared "Take Me Home, Country Roads" one of the state's official songs. The song also plays at the end of every football and basketball game at West Virginia University. See Chris Dorst, "W.Va Takes Home 'Country Roads'," *Charleston Gazette-Mail,* March 7, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20140316212401/http://www.wvgazette.com/News/201403070150.

49. See Sarah Kessler and Karen Tongson, "Karaoke and Ventriloquism: Echoes and Divergences," *Sounding Out! A Sound Studies Online Journal,* https://soundstudiesblog.com/2014/05/12/karaoke-and-ventriloquism-echoes-and-divergences/.

50. Kessler and Tongson.

51. The equation of "white foods" with blandness emerges from the racialization of whiteness as pure, normative, and unmarked. For example, see Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

52. Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the Yellow Peril: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 6.

53. Yvonne Tasker, *Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 53. See also Laura Horak's "Landscape, Vitality and Desire: Cross-Dressed Frontier Girls in Transitional-Era American Cinema," *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 4 (2013): 74–98.

54. For example, Renée Tajima notes in her classic essay of Asian American women stereotypes that "there are two basic types: the Lotus Blossom Baby (a.k.a. China Doll, Geisha Girl, shy Polynesian Beauty), and the Dragon Lady (Fu Manchu's various female relations, prostitutes, devious madams)." Renée Tajima, "Lotus Blossom Don't Bleed: Images of Asian Women," in *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writing By and About Asian American Women,* ed. Diane Yen-Mei Wong (Boston: Beacon, 1989), 309.

55. Fanon describes the everyday experience of being read not as human, but as a Black body; as an object of fascination and fetishization. In an oft-quoted passage, he recounts being pointed and gawked at by a child, who exclaims to his mother, "Maman, look, a Negro; I'm scared!" The child's misrecognition of Fanon forces him to now rediscover himself as a subject overdetermined by race, unable to be seen outside of Blackness, including its historical associations and stereotypes. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove, 2008), 91.

56. Ernest Cashmore and Barry Troyna, *Introduction to Race Relations* (Bristol, Pa.: Falmer, 1990), 155.

57. Campaign Against Racism and Fascism and Southall Rights, *Southall: The Birth of a Black Community* (London: Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights, 1981), 51.

58. Institute of Race Relations, "Remembering Blair Peach: 30 Years On," April 23, 2009, https://irr.org.uk/article/remembering-blair-peach-30-years-on-2/.

59. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 1979); Paul Gilroy, *"There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack": The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

60. See Rajiv Shankar, "Foreword: South Asian Identity in Asian America," in *A Part Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America,* ed. Lavina Dhingra and Rajini Srikanth (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), xii.

61. Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

62. Muhammad Anwar, "Introduction I: The Context of Leadership: Migration, Settlement, and Racial Discrimination," in *Black and Ethnic Leaderships: The Cultural Dimensions of Political Action,* ed. Pnina Webner and Muhammad Anwar (London: Routledge, 2009), 1.

63. Anwar, 7–8.

64. On South Asian and Afro-Caribbean solidarities, see Campaign Against Racism and Fascism and Southall Rights, *Southhall.* On race and nation in the UK, see Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack.*

65. Supporting such a reading, critic Robert Ebert noted in his review of the film, "Although some of the London critics immediately insisted on a

comparison with Hanif (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) Kureshi, [Wild West writer Harwant] Bains will have none of it: His generation, he says, doesn't identify with Britain or the Indian subcontinent, but are forming a new identity of their own." Roger Ebert, "Wild West," December 10, 1993, *Rogerebert.com.*

66. Andre Bazin, *What Is Cinema? Volume II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 141. Bazin communicates his befuddlement when he goes on to exclaim in the same passage: "Its world-wide appeal is even more astonishing than its historical survival. What can there possibly be to interest Arabs, Hindus, Latins, Germans, or Anglo-Saxons, among whom the western has had an uninterrupted success, about evocations of the birth of the United States of America, the struggle between Buffalo Bill and the Indians, the laying down of the railroad, or the Civil War!"

67. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, "The Grid of History: Cowboys and Indians," *Monthly Review* 55, no. 3 (2003): para 28.

68. Deloria, *Playing Indian,* 3.

69. See Ruth Maxey, *South Asian Atlantic Literature, 1970–2010* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 63–65.

70. Cf. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 126.

71. Zia-ul-Haq served as military general for the Pakistani army until 1977, when he declared martial law. He served as president until 1988, when he died in a plane crash.

72. The racial coding is clearly noted through the band's name, "The Honky Tonks": "honky" is vernacular for "white."

73. The film's nuanced portrayal of mobility and travel as both joyful and risky also places pressure on such renderings. For example, Zaf rides home into the sunset on his bicycle on a vast expanse of a road, in an early shot of the film that repeats a common opening shot in many western films. Zaf's bicycle is flamboyantly decorated (complete with fringed leopard-print banana seat, and a furry tail), and his expression communicates satisfaction, confidence, and determination. While in many westerns, the camera focuses on the skill and physique of the cowboy on his horse, *Wild West* zooms in on the spectacle of Zaf, on his simple bicycle, decked out in a fringed buckskin jacket, pointed cowboy boots, and hat, with a guitar slung over his back. When Zaf enters the city streets again a few scenes later, he discovers that someone has stolen his bicycle. The contrast between the liberating bike ride across the empty road and the restriction on mobility resulting from the theft of his bicycle references the town/country dichotomy of the classic western.

74. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.

75. Jigna Desai, *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 91–92.

76. Roderick McGillis, *He Was Some Kind of Man: Masculinities in the B Western* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), 13.

77. Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Moore, "Introduction: Trans, Trans-, or Transgender?," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3–4 (2008): 11–22.

78. For more on masculinity and the western, see Janet Thumim, " 'Maybe He's Tough but He Sure Ain't No Carpenter': Masculinity and In/competence in *Unforgiven,*" in *The Western Reader,* ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 341.

79. On the construction of Indigenous men as hypermasculine, see Sam McKegney, *Masculindians: Conversations about Indigenous Manhood* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 1.

80. Lisa Tatonetti, *Written by the Body: Gender Expansiveness and Indigenous Non-Cis Masculinities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 7 and 4. For a discussion of more expansive Indigenous traditions of masculinity, see Ty P. Kawika Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008).

81. Homi Bhabha, "Are You a Man or a Mouse?," in *Constructing Masculinity,* ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 57–65.

82. Deloria, *Playing Indian,* 3.

2. BROWN QUEER AND TRANS BODIES AT THE IMPASSE OF DIASPORA AND INDIGENEITY

1. Shraya mentions the distribution of author royalties in the author's note at the end of the book. There she also writes: "as a non-black person of colour writing a book about racism, i felt it necessary to acknowledge anti-black racism. my hope is that this comes through in this book. i also felt it necessary to consider what it means to be given a platform to discuss racism while being a settler in canada, where indigenous people have faced and continue to face racial violence, and the dismissal of this violence." Vivek Shraya, *even this page is white* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016), 109.

2. Shraya, 17.

3. It was specifically radical feminist organizers in the 1960s and 1970s who developed the tactic of consciousness-raising. See the collection of writing on consciousness-raising as a movement method in Barbara Crow, ed., *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

4. Mark Rifkin, *Fictions of Land and Flesh: Blackness, Indigeneity, and Speculation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019), 4.

5. At times in this chapter, I refer to *queer* and *trans* as distinct formations; at other moments I collapse them under *queer.* My shifting usages of these terms is intentional, signaling their imbrications in one another, without fully collapsing their differences.

6. See Jin Haritaworn, Ghaida Moussa, and Syrus Marcus Ware, *Marvellous Grounds: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2018) and the accompanying website, http://marvellousgrounds.com.

7. E.g., see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).

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

9. Ferguson, 117.

10. Ferguson, 117, 118–19.

11. Mark Rifkin, "Making Peoples into Populations: The Racial Limits of Tribal Sovereignty," in *Theorizing Native Studies,* ed. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014), 149–87.

12. Jennifer Denetdale, "Securing Navajo National Boundaries: War, Patriotism, Tradition, and the Diné Marriage Act of 2005," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 131–48.

13. Denetdale, 146.

14. Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, eds., *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011).

15. Audra Simpson, "The State Is a Man," *Theory and Event* 19, no. 4 (2016): para. 1.

16. Lisa Tatonetti, *Written by the Body: Gender Expansiveness and Indigenous Non-Cis Masculinities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021).

17. Tatonetti, 133.

18. Simpson, "The State Is a Man," para. 17.

19. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "The Place Where We All Live and Work Together: A Gendered Analysis of 'Sovereignty,'" in *Native Studies Keywords,* ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 18.

20. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 117–18.

21. See Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg

Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 1–25.

22. Maylei Blackwell in Maylei Blackwell, Laura Briggs, and Mignonette Chiu, "Transnational Feminisms Roundtable," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 36, no. 3 (2015): 4.

23. See Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," *GLQ* 16, no. 1–2 (2010): 41–68.

24. Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005); Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 172.

25. Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019). The Black-Native relations that King speaks of are also historically and contextually specific, and not easily translatable to other kinds of relations.

26. Billy-Ray Belcourt, *A History of My Brief Body* (Columbus, Ohio: Two Dollar Radio Press, 2020); Chris Finley, "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,* ed. Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010); Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*; Lisa Tatonetti, *The Queerness of Native American Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Joshua Whitehead, *full-metal indigequeer* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 2017).

27. Billy-Ray Belcourt and Lindsay Nixon [Jas Morgan], "What Do We Mean by Queer Indigenous Ethics?" *Canadian Art,* May 23, 2018; Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

28. King, *The Black Shoals,* chapter 4.

29. Gayatri Gopinath, *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018), 92.

30. See Tatonetti's tracking of the Indigenous erotic of the work of these writers in *Written by the Body* (particularly chapters 2 and 5).

31. Tatonetti, 156.

32. Mishuana Goeman, "Ongoing Storms and Struggles: Gendered Violence and Resource Exploitation," in *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies,* ed. Joanne Barker (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017), 100.

33. Goeman, 102. My emphasis.

34. Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literature Matters* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018), xix.

35. In Karen Fricker, "What Do You Do When the Love of Your Life Fails You? Vivek Shraya Turned It Into a Solo Show," *Toronto Star,* February 18, 2020, https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/stage/2020/02/18/what-do-you-do-when-the-love-of-your-life-fails-you-vivek-shraya-turned-it-into-a-solo-show.html.

36. Heath McCoy, "Author, Musician and Artist Vivek Shraya Joins English Department," *University of Calgary News,* January 11, 2018, https://ucalgary.ca/news/author-musician-and-artist-vivek-shraya-joins-english-department.

37. To be clear: I am engaging in Shraya's work here not as analogy *for* diaspora, but as exemplifying what is at stake in focusing on corporeality.

38. See https://vivekshraya.com/about/.

39. C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn, "Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife," in *Transgender Studies Reader 2,* ed. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 67.

40. Eric Stanley, "Near Life, Queer Death: Overkill and Ontological Capture," *Social Text* 29, no. 2 (2011): 10. Calvin Warren's generative critique of Stanley further raises questions about the disproportionate violence enacted on trans of color bodies—and specifically, on Black trans bodies. See Calvin Warren, "Onticide: Afro-Pessimism, ~~Gay~~ Nigger #1, and Surplus Violence," *GLQ* 23, no. 3 (2017): 391–418.

41. Nicole Morse, "The Transfeminine Futurity in Knowing Where to Look: Vivek Shraya on Selfies," *TSQ* 6, no. 4 (2019): 661.

42. Nael Bhanji, "Necrointimacies: Affect and the Reverberations of Violent Intimacy," *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry* 1, no. 4 (2019): 118.

43. Morse, "The Transfeminine Futurity," 666.

44. Shraya's animated short *Reviving The Roost* (2019) is one of the few of her works that explicitly thinks about place, in this case, the former Edmonton gay nightclub The Roost. The film is a nostalgic reflection on the communality that thrived at The Roost because of its status as *the* gay bar in town. However, while it meditates on *place,* it thinks less about land.

45. See https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/edmonton_archives/origins-of-naming-in-edmonton.

46. Shraya, *even this page is white.*

47. Tatonetti, *Written by the Body,* 150–53.

48. This quote comes from Wilson's interview with Marie Laing (Kanyen'keh.:ka); it is cited in Tatonetti, 154.

49. Mishuana Goeman, "Land as Life: Unsettling the Logics of Containment," in *Native Studies Keywords,* ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves,

Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 74.

50. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973/2000).

51. José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 31.

52. Quoted in Peter Knegt, "Legends of the Trans: Vivek Shraya Queers Brad Pitt (and His Hair) in Her Latest Project," *CBC*, November 18, 2021, para. 12, https://www.cbc.ca/arts/legends-of-the-trans-vivek-shraya-queers-brad-pitt-and-his-hair-in-her-latest-project-1.6252798. My emphasis.

53. This recalls the paradox of American national identity discussed in chapter 1, wherein Americans are imagined to be simultaneously European and Indigenous. See Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 3.

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

55. Treva Ellison, Kai M. Green, Matt Richardson, and C. Riley Snorton, "We Got Issues: Toward a Black Trans*/Studies," *TSQ* 4, no. 2 (2017): 162.

56. Eva S. Hayward, "Don't Exist," *TSQ* 4, no. 2 (2017): 192–93.

57. See https://www.shanimootoo.com/.

58. For more on the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, see https://www.banffcentre.ca/history-banff-centre-arts-and-creativity.

59. See Monika Kin Gagnon and Richard Fung, *13 Conversations about Art and Cultural Race Politics* (Montreal: Artextes Editions, 2002).

60. See https://www.shanimootoo.com/.

61. Richard Fung, "Bodies Out of Place: The Videotapes of Shani Mootoo," *Women & Performance* 8, no. 2 (1996): 162.

62. Shani Mootoo, "Selected Paintings," https://www.shanimootoo.com/visual-art.

63. Grace Kyungwon Hong, " 'A Shared Queerness': Colonialism, Transnationalism, and Sexuality in Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*," *Meridians* 7, no. 1 (2006): 74.

64. See Deborah Dundas and Sue Carter, "How a Move from Toronto to Prince Edward County Sparked Writer Shani Mootoo's #MeToo Novel," *Toronto Star*, March 4, 2020, https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2020/03/04/how-a-move-from-toronto-to-prince-edward-county-sparked-writer-shani-mootoos-metoo-novel.html.

65. Fung, "Bodies Out of Place," 162.

66. Marie Conboy, "Siksika Nation Reclaims Land at Castle Mountain, Wrongfully Taken in 1908," *Calgary Herald,* June 7, 2022, https://calgary herald.com/news/local-news/siksika-nation-reclaims-land-at-castle -mountain-wrongfully-taken-in-1908. For details on the settlement, see https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SI-2016-32/page-1.html.

67. See Kyo Maclear, "The Accidental Tourist," in *Private Investigators: Undercover in Public Space,* ed. Kathryn Walter and Kyo Maclear (Banff: Banff Centre for the Arts, 1999), 9; Meg Stanley and Tina Loo, "Getting into Hot Water: Racism and Exclusion at Banff National Park," *NiCHE: Network in Canadian History & Environment,* August 26, 2020, https:// niche-canada.org/2020/08/26/getting-into-hot-water-racism-and -exclusion-at-banff-national-park. For a reading of the discourses of race, sexuality, and whiteness underpinning cultural constructions of Canadian national parks, see Margot Francis, "The Lesbian National Parks and Services: Reading Sex, Race, and the Nation in Artistic Performance," *Canadian Woman Studies* 20, no. 2 (2000): 131–36.

68. Chaguaramas is an area in the northwest peninsula of Trinidad. The peninsula was leased to the U.S. military from 1940 to 1963.

69. See the website of the Santa Rosa First Peoples community in Trinidad: https://web.archive.org/web/20190207102958/http:// santarosafirstpeoples.org/.

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

71. Jackson, 3–4.

72. Mootoo's novel *Cereus Blooms at Night* is set in a colonial Caribbean landscape modeled after Trinidad. The novel is attuned to the enmeshment of colonization, sex, gender, and violence, but it is primarily concerned with European colonization rather than lateral relations of violence. Shani Mootoo, *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1996).

73. Richard Fung and Shani Mootoo, "Dear Shani, Hiya Richard: A Dialogue by/with Richard Fung and Shani Mootoo," *Felix: A Journal of Media Arts and Communication* 2, no. 1 (1995): n.p. http://www.e-felix.org /issue4/shani.html.

74. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity,* 4.

75. Bruno Cornellier and Michael Griffiths, "Globalizing Unsettlement: An Introduction," *Settler Colonial Studies* 6, no. 4 (2016): 306.

76. For more on Durga, see David R. Kinsely, *The Goddesses Mirror: Visions of the Divine from East and West* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

77. *Dandiya,* which comes from Gujurati dance traditions and is popular at weddings, usually involves a group of dancers performing with sticks in a circle.

78. Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016), chapter 2.

79. Day, 86.

80. Enakshi Dua, "The Hindu Woman's Question," *Canadian Woman Studies* 20, no. 2 (2000): 110.

81. Hong, "A Shared Queerness," 89.

82. Sonja Thomas writes: "In 1452 a papal bull was issued by Pope Nicholas V. It gave the Portuguese permission 'to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans and to take all their possessions and their property.' In 1493 the bull was strengthened when Pope Alexander VI granted authority to Spain and Portugal to take all lands and possessions if no other Christian ruler had claimed them. These two bulls are called the Doctrine of Discovery. The Doctrine religiously sanctioned the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples especially in the Americas." Thomas, " 'Studying Up' in World Christianity: A Feminist Analysis of Caste and Settler Colonialism," *Journal of World Christianity* 11, no. 2 (2021): 196.

83. For more on this, see Nishant Upadhyay, "Hindu Nation and Its Queers: Caste, Islamophobia, and De/coloniality in India," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 22, no. 4 (2020): 464–80.

84. Mootoo provides an endorsement for Shraya's *even this page is white* (on the book's back cover) in which she writes, "Like a Durga goddess, Shraya juggles with deft hands the multiple aspects of desire, race, gender, queerness, and contemporary pop culture." Unlike Mootoo, however, Shraya comes from an upper caste background.

85. Tatonetti, *Written by the Body,* 21.

3. FRIENDSHIP, REFUSAL, AND ALTERNATE ARCHIVES OF DIASPORA

1. On Iroquois border crossings and the Jay Treaty of 1794, see chapter 5 of Audra Simpson's *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014).

2. Simpson, 115; on the transit of "Indian," see Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

3. For example, see Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016); Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Politics of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008); Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism," *Social Justice* 32, no. 4 (2005): 120–43.

4. Exemplary of such an interpretation of Indigenous movements is Nandita Sharma, *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Migrants and Natives* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2020).

5. See the work of scholars such as Larissa Lai, Marie Lo, Malissa Phung, and Rita Wong, who have done formative work that accounts for relations of respect within Asian Canadian literature. Larissa Lai, "Epistemologies of Respect: A Poetics of Asian/Indigenous Relation," in *Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies,* ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Christl Verduyn (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), 99–126; Marie Lo, "Model Minorities, Models of Resistance: Native Figures in Asian Canadian Literature," *Canadian Literature* 196 (2008): 96–114; Malissa Phung, "Asian-Indigenous Relationalities: Literary Gestures of Respect and Gratitude," *Canadian Literature* 227 (2015): 56–72; Rita Wong, "Decolonizasian: Reading Asian and First Nations Relations in Literature," *Canadian Literature* 199 (2008): 158–80.

6. In interviews, Kazimi frequently recalls the aggressive questioning he was subjected to at the border by immigration officers who questioned the authenticity of their passports and visas. Ultimately, the officer told Kazimi, "The only reason I'm letting you in to my country is because you speak such good English. You will remember me and thank me for doing this." Becky Rynor, "A Career Exploring Race, Racism and Stereotypes Earns Cinema Professor Ali Kazimi a Lifetime Achievement Award," *University Affairs,* June 5, 2019, https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/a-career-exploring-race-racism-and-stereotypes-earns-cinema-professor-ali-kazimi-a-lifetime-achievement-award/.

7. Richard Fung's projects "Shooting the System" and "Race to the Screen" are examples of such collective projects. See Monika Kin Gagnon and Richard Fung, *13 Conversations about Art and Cultural Race Politics* (Montreal: Artextes Editions, 2002), 24–26.

8. Cf. Lai, "Epistemologies of Respect."

9. bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 134.

10. For example, see Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology,* ed. Barbara Smith (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 264–74; Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name—A Biomythography* (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone, 1982); Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," *Radical Teacher* 7 (1978): 20–27; Richa Nagar with Ozlem Aslan, Nadia Z. Hasan, Omme-Salma Rahemtullah, Nishant Updahyay, and Begum Uzun, "Feminisms, Collaborations, Friendships: A Conversation," *Feminist Studies* 42, no. 2 (2016): 502–19.

11. Billy-Ray Belcourt and Maura Roberts, "Making Friends for the End of the World: A Conversation," *GUTS,* May 23, 2016, https://gutsmagazine.ca/making-friends/.

12. Leah Claire Allen and John S. Garrison, "Against Friendship," in *Queer Kinship: Race, Sex, Belonging, Form,* ed. Tyler Bradway and Elizabeth Freeman (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2022), 233.

13. Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization: Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 19, no. 2 (2015): 162.

14. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, *Remembering Our Intimacies: Moʻolelo, Aloha ʻĀina, and Ea* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), especially chapter 1.

15. Kim TallBear, "Reviving Kinship and Sexual Abundance," *For the Wild Podcast,* April 27, 2022, https://forthewild.world/podcast-transcripts/dr-kim-tallbear-on-reviving-kinship-and-sexual-abundance-encore-284.

16. TallBear, "Reviving Kinship and Sexual Abundance."

17. Jafari S. Allen, *¡Venceremos? The Erotics of Black Self-Making in Cuba* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 131.

18. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*; Audra Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016): 326–33.

19. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 3.

20. Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 11.

21. Deloria, 11.

22. Maile Arvin, *Possessing Polynesians: The Science of Settler Colonial Whiteness in Hawaiʻi and Oceania* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019), 201.

23. See Shaista Patel, "Complicating the Tale of 'Two Indians': Mapping 'South Asian' Complicity in White Settler Colonialism Along the Axis of Caste and Anti-Blackness," *Theory and Event* 19, no. 4 (2016): n.p.

24. See Lawrence and Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism."

25. Lai, "Epistemologies of Respect"; SKY Lee, *Disappearing Moon Café* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990); Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (New York: AK Press, 2013); Wong, "Decolonizasian."

26. Wong, "Decolonizasian," 158.

27. Carole McGranahan, "Theorizing Refusal: An Introduction," *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016): 319.

28. McGranahan, 322.

29. Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," 330.

30. McGranahan, "Theorizing Refusal," 323.

31. McGranahan, 323.

32. See Michelle Raheja, *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty,*

and Representations of Native Americans in Film (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

33. Robinder Kaur Sehdev, "Lessons from the Bridge: On the Possibilities of Anti-Racist Feminist Alliances in Indigenous Spaces," in *This Is an Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades,* ed. Keira Ladner and Leanne Simpson (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2010), 106.

34. Kaushalya Bannerji, "Oka Nada," in *A New Remembrance: Poems* (Toronto: TSAR, 1993), 20.

35. Rajinderpal S. Pal, "Collective Amnesia," *Rungh Magazine* 4, no. 1–2 (1998): 25.

36. Sharron Proulx-Turner and Sanhita Brahmacharie, "A Braided Silken Cord: Aboriginal Women & Women of Colour Working Together," *Rungh Magazine* 4, no. 1–2 (1998): 12.

37. Proulx-Turner and Brahmacharie, 13.

38. Proulx-Turner and Brahmacharie, 13.

39. John Kennedy, "Bollywood Blow-Up: Fashion Cares' Hijacking of Hindu Religious Symbols Sparks Outrage," *NOW Magazine,* June 2, 2005.

40. Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention, "Rethinking Bollywood Cowboy: A Statement from the Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention" (press release), http://canadiandesi.com/community_news.php?news_id=18.

41. For example, Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*; Tiffany Lethabo King, "The Labor of (Re)reading Plantation Landscapes Fungible(ly)," *Antipode* 48, no. 4 (2016): 1022–39; Lai, "Epistemologies of Respect"; Lawrence and Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism"; Ruthann Lee, "Portraits of (Un)settlement: Troubling Multicultural Masculinities in Dominique Hui's *Quiet North* and Kent Monkman's *Shooting Geronimo,*" *GLQ* 21, no. 4 (2015): 459–99; Lo, "Model Minorities, Models of Resistance"; Patel, "Complicating the Tale of 'Two Indians' "; Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Wong, "Decolonizasian."

42. Robert Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Marcia Crosby, "Construction of the Imaginary Indian," in *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art,* ed. Stan Douglas (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991), 267–91; Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, *Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005).

43. Other Native photographers have similarly engaged with Curtis's oeuvre. A 2016 exhibition entitled "Contemporary Native Photographers and the Edward Curtis Legacy" at Portland Art Museum, Oregon, features the work of Wendy Red Star (Montana Crow Tribe), Will Wilson (Dine),

and Zig Jackson (Mandan/Hidatasa/Arikara), who share distinct but similarly complex, negotiated relationships to Curtis's work. See Tess Thackara, "Challenging America's Most Iconic (and Controversial) Photographer of Native Americans," *Artsy,* March 1, 2016, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-challenging-america-s-most-iconic-and-controversial-photographer-of-native-americans.

44. Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View,* ed. V. Lawrence and R. Nettleford (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 5–57.

45. Ishtiaq Ahmed, "Foreword," in *The Magic of Bollywood: At Home and Abroad,* ed. Anjali Gera Roy (New Delhi: Sage, 2012), xiv.

46. JoEllen Shively, "Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films among American Indians and Anglos," *American Sociological Review* 57, no. 6 (1992): 727.

47. The "lazy Aboriginal" stereotype is a close cousin of the "noble savage"—stoic and strong, but outside of civilization—that was the fantasy of Curtis, and of Kazimi at the start of the film. "Laziness" fed into colonizers' perceptions of Native lands as empty, unworked, uncultivated, and available for conquest. See Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995).

48. Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 31.

49. Trinh T. Minh-Ha, "Documentary Is/Not a Name," *October* 52 (Spring 1990): 76.

50. Daniel Jewesbury, "On the Real and the Visible in Experimental Documentary Film," in *Truth, Dare or Promise: Art and Documentary Revisited,* ed. Gail Pearce and Jill Daniels (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), 67.

51. Margot Francis, "Reading the Autoethnographic Perspectives of Indians '*Shooting Indians,*'" *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 7 (2002): 5–26; Peter X. Feng, "Ethnography, the Cinematic Apparatus, and Asian American Film Studies," in *Asian American Studies After Critical Mass,* ed. Kent A. Ono (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005), 40–55.

52. See James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

53. Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 176–77.

54. Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 10.

55. Francis, "Reading the Autoethnographic Perspectives," 6–7.

56. Joanna Hearne has noted that "indigenous repurposing of earlier photographs and footage in a cinematic narrative accomplishes both a critical, pedagogical stance that remembers the history of colonization, and simultaneously a more direct embracing of indigenous subjects, images, and memories in intimate tribal, clan, and familial terms." Thomas's repurposing of Curtis's work similarly recalls not only histories of colonization but also an active, agentive Indigenous gaze, one that Thomas both documents and practices. Joanna Hearne, *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 185.

57. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 9.

58. Francis, "Reading the Autoethnographic Perspectives," 14.

59. Francis, 14.

60. Ann Cvetkovich, "Photographing Objects as Queer Archival Practice," in *Feeling Photography,* ed. Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014), 276.

61. Simpson, "Consent's Revenge," 329.

62. Dustin Tahmahkera, "Becoming Sound: Tubitsinakukuru from Mt. Scott to Standing Rock," *Sounding Out!,* October 9, 2017, https://soundstudiesblog.com/2017/10/09/becoming-sound-tubitsinakukuru-from-mt-scott-to-standing-rock/; Byrd, *The Transit of Empire.*

63. Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 222.

64. Naficy, 223.

65. Celia Haig-Brown, "Decolonizing Diaspora: Whose Traditional Land Are We On," *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry* 1, no. 1 (2009): 16.

66. Jeff Thomas, *The Bear Portraits,* https://jeff-thomas.ca/2014/04/the-bear-portraits/.

67. The only other definitively Toronto-based scene is filmed at the edge of the city, around the Toronto Island docks.

68. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire.*

69. Bruno Cornellier and Michael R. Griffiths, "Globalizing Unsettlement: An Introduction," *Settler Colonial Studies* 6, no. 4 (2016): 306.

70. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 148.

71. Smith, 148.

72. *Adivasi* is a collective self-identification referring to the original inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. They are not officially recognized by the Indian state.

73. Quoted in Michael Hoolboom, "*Shooting Indians*: An Interview with Ali Kazimi," https://mikehoolboom.com/?p=19663.

74. This was a choice Kazimi made in response to an essay by film

scholar Tom Waugh. He notes in an interview that "Tom Waugh had written a piece in *Cineaction* on the documentary . . . and one of the things he'd [talked about] in it was the dominance of the talking group shot in Indian cinema. His argument in this article—which I'd read just before going to do the shoot, and in a sense it motivated me, because it did upset me—his argument was that the one-to-one interview comes out of a very Western notion of the confessional and that one-to-one discussions in collectivized societies and cultures like India were uncommon. And it would take an extremely talented director to draw out of ordinary Indians how they really felt. And therefore he concluded the lack of single one-to-one interviews. I was outraged. And I felt that, ok I will do one-to-one interviews with people who are ostensibly the most disempowered, the most unprivileged, the most oppressed people in India, and see how it works. And that's why I did all the interviews [that way]. I wanted to interview all the people, both the tribal and the rural people in a straightforward way, giving them the same kind of respect and screen space and angles and positioning that is given to the so-called 'experts' in documentaries. It was a very clearly thought out process that I wanted to use." Quoted in Marcy Goldberg and Firoza Elavia, "An Interview with Ali Kazimi," *Cineaction* 37 (1995): 16.

75. Kazimi makes note of these privileges and affinities along class and linguistic lines. See Hoolboom, "*Shooting Indians.*"

76. Srimoyee Mitra, "Learning through Crossing Lines: An Intercultural Dialogue," in *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity,* ed. Ashok Mathur, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagne (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011), 280.

77. Mitra, 282.

78. Mitra, 278.

79. Mitra, 283–84.

80. Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," in *The Cultural Studies Reader,* ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 1993), 90–103.

81. Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (New York: AK Press, 2013), chapter 2, "Cartography of NOII," 95–118; South Asian Settler Colonialism Group, "South Asians in Solidarity with Idle No More," Facebook, January 9, 2013, https://www.facebook.com/aruna.zehra/posts/313177328801507. The latter's call, which arose out of the organizing context documented in this paper, echoes the ethics of refusal elaborated in Kazimi's film: "[Idle No More] is a call to collectively commit to decolonizing ourselves, our communities and our relationships with Indigenous peoples and nations. To this end, it is not enough to just take part in protests, marches, flash mobs—although our presence is necessary. We also need to develop an ethic of cultivating relationships with Indigenous sovereignty movements by learning the colonial nature of the

Canadian state, the treaties and status of land claims on the lands we occupy, the historical and ongoing struggles of Indigenous communities and understanding our complicities on these colonized lands. Decolonization of Turtle Islands is not just an Indigenous issue. Idle No More and Indigenous sovereignty is not just the responsibility of Indigenous peoples. It is part of broader of [*sic*] anti-racist or anti-capitalist struggles. We need to join Indigenous communities in imagining and working towards a stronger and sustainable future for all by recentering Indigenous struggles, knowledges and worldviews."

4. EXPERIMENTS IN RELATION

1. Walidah Imarisha, "Introduction," in *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements,* ed. adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha (Chico, Calif.: AK Press, 2015): 3.

2. Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 117, 118–19.

3. Helen Lee's independent feature *The Art of Woo,* starring Sook-Yin Lee and Adam Beach, is another notable film that features Indigenous–diasporic interracial romance. Films such as *Thomasine and Bushrod* and *Posse* include Native characters in supporting roles.

4. Mishuana Goeman, "Flirtations at the Foundations: Unsettling Liberal Multiculturalism in Helen Lee's *Prey,*" *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 139.

5. Ruthann Lee, "Portraits of (Un)settlement: Troubling Multicultural Masculinities in Dominique Hui's *Quiet North* and Kent Monkman's *Shooting Geronimo,*" *GLQ* 21, no. 4 (2015): 483.

6. On homonationalism, see Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007). On pinkwashing, see Sarah Schulman, "Israel and 'Pinkwashing,'" *New York Times,* November 22, 2011.

7. For context, many of the winners of the TIFF People's Choice Award have gone on to receive further honors, such as the best picture Oscar Award. See https://www.indiewire.com/2022/09/tiff-2022-peoples-choice-award-winners-list-1234763848/.

8. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 547–66; Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Kim TallBear, "Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sex and Family," in *Making Kin Not Population,* ed. Adele E. Clarke and Donna Haraway (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2018).

9. Billy-Ray Belcourt, "Indigenous Studies Beside Itself," *Somatechnics* 7, no. 2 (2017): 184.

10. Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

11. Vizenor, vii.

12. Cherríe L. Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Berkeley, Calif.: Third Woman, 2002).

13. Jared Sexton, "People-of-Color Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery," *Social Text* 28, no. 2 (2010): 31–56; Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism," *Social Justice* 32, no. 4 (2005): 120–43; Haunani-Kay Trask, "Settlers of Color and 'Immigrant' Hegemony: 'Locals' in Hawaiʻi," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): 1–24.

14. The term *BIPOC* (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) has received mainstream press criticism in venues such as the *New York Times,* which seem to misapprehend the term as an identity category rather than as a political project, particularly one grounded in feminist histories of coalition building. See John McWhorter, " 'BIPOC' Is Jargon. That's OK, and Normal People Don't Have to Say It," *New York Times,* March 25, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/25/opinion/bipoc-latinx.html.

15. Min Sook Lee, *Marvellous Grounds Short Film* (2016), http://marvellousgrounds.com/short-film/.

16. See http://www.jessxsnow.com/ABOUT.

17. See https://apa.nyu.edu/event/jess-x-snow-fall-2021-student-artist-in-residence-welcome-event/.

18. Christina Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 30.

19. Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade, "Building an Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We've Got," in *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex,* ed. Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith (Oakland, Calif.: AK Press, 2011), 35.

20. Hanhardt, *Safe Space,* 31.

21. The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in response to the Indian Residential School Agreement negotiated between the Canadian government and several thousand residential school survivors in 2006. See https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525.

22. Chelsea Vowel, "Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments," *âpihtawikosisân* (blog), September 23, 2016, https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/.

23. For more on the debates surrounding land acknowledgment, see Theresa Stewart-Ambo and K. Wayne Yang, "Beyond Land Acknowledgment

in Settler Institutions," *Social Text* 39, no. 1 (2021): 21–46; Michelle Daigle, "The Spectacle of Reconciliation: On (the) Unsettling Responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples in the Academy," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37, no. 4 (2019): 703–21; Richard Pickard, "Acknowledgement, Disruption, and Settler-Colonial Ecocriticism," *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 25, no. 2 (2018): 317–26; Theresa Warburton, "Land and Liberty: Settler Acknowledgement in Anarchist Pedagogies of Place," *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* 2021, no. 1 (2021): 43–70; Rima Wilkes, Aaron Duong, Linc Kesler, and Howard Ramos, "Canadian University Acknowledgment of Indigenous Lands, Treaties, and Peoples," *Canadian Review of Sociology* 54, no 1. (2017): 89–120.

24. On Nayani's journalism background and transition to dramatic film, see Christine Aguilar, "Journalism Alum V. T. Nayani's Feature Film Debuts at the Toronto International Film Festival," Toronto Metropolitan University Creative School, September 13, 2022, https://www.torontomu.ca/the-creative-school/news-events/news/2022/09/journalism-alum-v-t-nayani-s-feature-film-debuts-at-the-toronto/.

25. See Radheyan Simonpillai, "TIFF 2022: This Place Is about Community and Allyship," *NOW Toronto,* September 3, 2022, https://nowtoronto.com/movies/tiff-2022-this-place-is-about-community-and-allyship.

26. For more on the Sri Lankan war and Tamil genocide, see Francis Boyle, *The Tamil Genocide by Sri Lanka: The Global Failure to Protect Tamil Rights under International Law* (Atlanta: Clarity, 2009).

27. The solidarity statement was published in the *BASICS* newsletter, January 24, 2013, http://basicsnews.ca/2013/01/6-nations-tamil-activists-publish-joint-solidarity-statement/.

28. V. T. Nayani qtd. in Simonpillai, "TIFF 2022."

29. LeAnne Howe, "The Chaos of Angels," *Callaloo* 17, no. 1 (1994): 108.

30. Howe, 108.

31. Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xxvii.

32. Joan S. Wang, "Race, Gender, and Laundry Work: The Roles of Chinese Laundrymen and American Women in the United States, 1850–1950," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24, no. 1 (2004): 58–99.

33. Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

34. "90" refers to the military siege of Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawake in 1990.

35. María Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception," *Hypatia* 2, no. 2 (1987): 17.

36. Nayani is riffing off Spike Lee's "A Spike Lee Joint" here.

37. Larry Fried, "*This Place* TIFF 2022 Interview—Director V.T. Nayani Invites Us Into 'A V.T. Nayani World,'" *Geek Vibes Nation,* October 2, 2022, https://geekvibesnation.com/this-place-tiff-2022-interview-director-v-t-nayani-invites-us-into-a-v-t-nayani-world/.

38. Golshan Abdmoulaie quoted in Simonpillai, "TIFF 2022."

39. See https://www.catherinehernandezcreates.com/about.html.

40. Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010)

41. On hiring Nakhai and Williamson to direct, see CBC Books, "Catherine Hernandez Reflects on How Race, Class and Community Inspired Her Canada Reads Novel *Scarborough,*" *Canada Reads,* March 7, 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/books/canadareads/catherine-hernandez-reflects-on-how-race-class-and-community-inspired-her-canada-reads-novel-scarborough-1.6369591. On the film's casting, see Daniel Garber, "Daniel Garber Talks with Filmmaker Shasha Nakhai about *Scarborough,*" *Cultural Mining,* February 2, 2022, https://culturalmining.com/2022/02/02/daniel-garber-talks-with-filmmaker-shasha-nakhai-about-scarborough/.

42. Quoted in S. Bear Bergman, "Growing Up Queer in Suburbia: Catherine Hernandez Gracefully Adapts Her Hit Novel 'Scarborough' for the Big Screen," *Xtra Magazine,* January 27, 2022, https://xtramagazine.com/culture/tv-film/catherine-hernandez-scarborough-216903.

43. Sara Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology," *GLQ* 12, no. 4 (2006): 557.

44. Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009).

45. Hernandez, quoted in Radheyan Simonpillai, "Scarborough Is a New Look for TIFF—and Canadian Film," *NOW Magazine,* September 8, 2021, https://nowtoronto.com/movies/scarborough-is-a-new-look-for-tiff-and-canadian-film.

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(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

49. Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield, eds., *Mapping Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

50. See this interview with Cherish Violet Blood and others on the Marvellous Grounds website, where she reflects on being a queer Native arts practitioner within the cultural political landscape of Toronto: "Round Dance Square: Community. Art. Parties. A Roundtable Discussion with Cherish Violet Blood, Ange Loft, and Jada Reynolds Tabobondung," February 12, 2017, http://marvellousgrounds.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/RoundDanceSquare_community-art-parties.pdf.

51. The book does not announce these identities, either. There is one mention of Sylvie and her family as Mi'kmaq that is buried in a letter written from Marie (Sylvie's mother) to the administrators of the literacy program.

52. On expectation, see Phillip Deloria's *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

53. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.

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

55. Belcourt in Belcourt and Nixon [Morgan].

56. Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor."

57. Sandra Harvey in Chad Infante, Sandra Harvey, Kelly Limes Taylor, and Tiffany King, "Other Intimacies: Black Studies Notes on Native/Indigenous Studies," *Postmodern Culture* 31, no. 1 & 2 (2020/2021): n.p.

58. Karyn Recollet, "Choreographies of the Fall: Futurity Bundles & Land-ing when Future Falls Are Immanent," *Theater* 49, no. 3 (2019): 91.

59. TallBear, "Making Love and Relations," 154.

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1. Edward Buscombe, "Inventing Monument Valley: Nineteenth-Century Landscape Photography and the Western Film," in *The Western Reader,* ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 129.

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3. Joanna Hearne, *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 208.

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5. See a selection of Yoon's works at http://jin-meyoon.com/index.html. See also Ming Tiampo, *Jin-me Yoon: Life and Work* (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2022), https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/jin-me-yoon/.

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8. On sonic dissonance, see Dustin Tahmahkera, "Becoming Sound: Tubitsinakukuru from Mt. Scott to Standing Rock," *Sounding Out!,* October 9, 2017, https://soundstudiesblog.com/2017/10/09/becoming-sound-tubitsinakukuru-from-mt-scott-to-standing-rock/; on colonial cacophony, see Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

9. See https://web.archive.org/web/20230602005535/https://www.mountainstandardtime.org/sp/untunnellingvision.

10. See workshop listing here: https://web.archive.org/web/20240228164903/https://www.mountainstandardtime.org/project/relation-making.

11. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation,* trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 138–39.

12. See https://web.archive.org/web/20240228164903/https://www.mountainstandardtime.org/project/relation-making.

13. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation,* 138–39.

14. Ashley Bedet, "Relaxing into Relation," *Public Parking,* February 12, 2019, https://thisispublicparking.com/posts/relaxing-into-relation.

15. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation,* 140.

16. Manu Vimalassery, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Alyosha Goldstein, "Introduction: On Colonial Unknowing," *Theory and Event* 19, no. 4 (2016): n.p.

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