

AN AMERICAN HAUNTING:
THE HORROR OF COLONISATION AND THE POWER OF
SPIRITS IN EURO-AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS AMERICAN
GOTHIC 1980s – 2000s

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Abstract

This thesis is presented in two sections. The first explores the ideological and material underpinnings of the image of the Indigenous burial ground and the Indigenous spectre in American imperial Gothic works from the 1980s to the 2010s. This section also focuses on what is lost in criticism and how colonial ideology perpetuates itself in the academy when scholars take the erasure of Indigenous peoples in such texts for granted. The second section focuses on how works by Indigenous authors in the same period use the symbol of the Indigenous graveyard and the Indigenous spectre not as a symbol of death, but a symbol of empowerment and transcendence of colonial powers. Vizenor's concept of survivance is crucial to understanding how Indigenous horror confronts the systems of colonialism and capitalism, finding power even in death and ultimately subverting the American imperial Gothic structures of domination.

A Note on Citations and Abbreviations

The bibliography and in-text citations for this thesis have been completed according to the Modern Language Association (MLA) Formatting and Style Guide, 9th Edition. Where a source has no numbered pages, the abbreviation 'np' appears in parentheses after the quote with the author's last name if appropriate. When quoting the key texts in this thesis only page numbers appear in parenthetical citations when it is clear the quoted material comes from the key text being explored. At times, the titles of these key works are shortened as follows:

Meridian for *Blood Meridian*, *Semetary* for *Pet Semetary*, *Hunger* for *The Hunger*, *Almanac* for *Almanac of the Dead: A Novel*, and *Doves* for *The Plague of Doves: A Novel*.

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Introduction: Spectrality and Materiality: Indigenous Ghosts and Haunted

Colonialisms

On 20 January 1981 Ronald Reagan was sworn in as the fortieth president of the United States. A former Hollywood adventure romance B-movie star, turned anti-communist FBI informant, turned fundamentalist Republican wunderkind, Reagan's inauguration marked a symbolic triumph against the social progressivism and economic welfare movements that arose in the 1960s and 70s.¹ By contrast, the image of America Reagan crafted and perpetuated through his sweeping rhetoric and the socio-economic policies of his administration relied upon a sense of rugged individualism. He exemplified a protestant and, implicitly, white triumph that repopularised the mythic dimension of early colonisation and Western Expansion through to the 1890s. Although Reagan cannot be made solely responsible for the resurgence of colonial imagery and values that occur in the mainstream imagination of 1980s America and beyond, the man and his socio-political-economic legacy remains a useful cultural touchstone to describe a particular set of aesthetics combined with economic and social policy that further disenfranchised the already poor and ostracised. As Gil Troy argues: 'Reagan's brand of leadership partially transcended day-to-day politics and helped shape American culture [...] Reagan demonstrated that politics [...] often involved a clash of symbols and a collective search for meaning' (11). This is a cultural atmosphere that pervades mainstream American life and literature even today and provides the moral and aesthetic grounding for the texts I will explore in the following chapters.

In American imperial Gothic fiction, America is a graveyard. The bodies of Indigenous peoples litter the imagination of non-Indigenous creators. Renee Bergland notes

¹ Troy, Gil. *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s*. Princeton University Press, 2005. ; Mackenthun, Gesa. 'Haunted Real Estate: The Occlusion of Colonial Dispossession and Signatures of Survival in U.S. Horror Fiction.' *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol.43, no. 1, (1998), pp.93 – 108. ; *Reagan: Part I and II*, The American Experience. Writers. Adriana Bosch, Austin Hoyt. Perf. David Ogden Stiers. WGBH, 1998. Digital Copy.

in *The National Uncanny* (2000) that ‘American nationalism is sustained by writings that conjure forth spectral Native Americans [...] Native American ghosts function both as representations of national guilt and as triumphant agents of Americanization’ (4). Scholars² have noted how film and literature particularly arising from the Reagan era, feature the Indigenous graveyard as a site of horror. Criticism on films such as *Poltergeist II* (1986) and *The Shining* (1980) adaptation or the novel *Amityville Horror* (1977) highlight the neo-colonial, neoliberal, and gendered anxieties of the 1980s that present in these works and how they reflect a crisis of image torn between the romanticism of US colonial expansion 1980s and the material horrors of colonisation through the image of the “Indian burial ground.” However, it is not just in stories with an Indigenous graveyard that Indigenous peoples are spectralised. Non-Indigenous American imperial Gothic works after the 1980s repeatedly figure the United States as a space where Indigenous peoples have been completely eliminated, erroneously spectralising the entire cultures and lives of Indigenous peoples.

In this study, I wish to look into the heart of this image of horror so closely associated with Indigeneity in the non-Indigenous imagination and ask the question: why a graveyard? Why, after five hundred years of colonisation, does non-Indigenous America continually recycle an image that does not reflect reality? Because, it cannot be overemphasised, Indigenous peoples are very much alive despite the best efforts of the colonial machine. Regardless, the haunting, often monstrous Indigene recurs again and again in literature, film,

² Such as: Blouin, Michael J. *Stephen King and American Politics*. University of Wales Press, 2021. ; Corstophine, Kevin. ““Sour Ground”: Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary* and the Politics of Territory.’ *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, vol. 1, October (2006), pp. 84 – 98. ; Kellner, Douglas. ‘Poltergeists, Gender, and Class in the Age of Reagan and Bush.’ *The Hidden Foundation: Cinema and the Question of Class*, ed. by David E. James and Rick Berg, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pp. 217 – 239. ; Mackenthun, Gesa. ‘Haunted Real Estate: The Occlusion of Colonial Dispossession and Signatures of Survival in U.S. Horror Fiction.’ *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1, (1998), pp. 93 – 108. ; Magistrale, Tony and Michael Blouin. *Stephen King and American History*. Routledge, New York, 2020. ; McAleer, Patrick. ‘I Have the Whole World in My Hands... Now What?: Power, Control, Responsibility and the Baby Boomers in Stephen King’s Fiction.’ *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 44, no. 6, (2011), pp. 1209 – 1227.

television, and video games by non-Indigenous creators.³ The primary texts I have selected for this thesis therefore function partially to expand existing scholarship's understanding of how, where, and why Indigenous peoples are spectralised in American Gothic fiction, and to bring actual Indigenous authors into the discussion of Indigenous spectrality in a more dynamic way. The texts I have chosen range in publication date from 1983 – 2018 in order to provide a more up-to-date analysis of how the Indigenous spectre has acted both as a site of white guilt and white horror, and as a figure of Indigenous survivance in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. All of the texts have received critical success (*Blood Meridian* (1985), *Pet Sematary* (1983), *Almanac of the Dead: A Novel* (1991), *Indian Killer* (1996), and *The Plague of Doves: A Novel* (2008)) and/or commercial success (*Semetary*, *The Hunger* (2018), *Indian Killer* and *Doves*), including the endorsement from commercially successful authors and positive reviews by readers on sites such as Goodreads.com.

The texts written by non-Indigenous authors reflect a trend within American imperial Gothic literature in the late 1970s – present of attempting to grapple with the history of colonisation, but an ultimately failure to do anything further than rehearse and re-package the ideological and physical violence of colonialism. This failure persists even into the 2010s by

³ Beyond the primary texts used in this thesis, see: Ahlborn, Ania. *Seed*. 47North, 2012. ; Ahlborn, Ania. *The Shuddering*. 47North, 2013. ; *Antlers*. Dir by Scott Cooper, Perf by Keri Russell, Jesse Plemons, Jeremy T. Thomas, Searchlight Pictures, 2021. ; Blackwell Felix. *Stolen Tongues*. Self-published, 2017. ; *Bioshock Infinite: The Complete Edition*, 2k, 2016. ; *Bone Tomahawk*. Dir by S Craig Zahler, Perf by Kurt Russell, Patrick Wilson, Matthew Fox, RLJ Entertainment, 2015. ; Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. 2nd ed., Pantheon, 2000. ; *The Darkness*. Dir by Greg McLean, Perf by Kevin Bacon, Radha Mitchell, David Mazouz, High Top Releasing, 2016. ; 'Don't Go in the Woods.' *Supernatural*, created by Eric Kripke, season 14, episode 16, The WB, 2019. ; *The Forever Purge*. Dir by Everardo Valerio Gout, Perf by Ana de la Reguera, Tenoch Huerta, Josh Lucas, Universal Pictures, 2021. ; King, Stephen. *Bag of Bones*. Narrated by Stephen King, Audible, 2006. Audiobook. ; King, Stephen. *Dreamcatcher*. Narrated by Jeffrey DeMunn, Audible, 2008. Audiobook. ; King, Stephen. *IT*. Hodder, 1986. ; Meyer, Stephanie. *Twilight*. Atom, 2005. ; Meyer, Stephanie. *New Moon*. Atom, 2006. ; Meyer, Stephanie. *Eclipse*. Atom, 2007. ; Meyer, Stephanie. *Breaking Dawn*. Atom, 2008. ; Oates, Joyce Carol. *The Accursed*. The Fourth Estate, 2013. ; Oates, Joyce Carol. *My Heart Laid Bare*. Reprint Edition. Ecco Press, 2015. ; *Poltergeist II*. Dir by Brian Gibson, Perf by JoBeth Williams, Craig T Nelson, Heather O'Rourke, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1986. ; Schenkkan, Robert. *The Kentucky Cycle*. Dramatists Play Service Inc, 1993 – 1994. ; Simmons, Dan. *The Terror*. Bantam Books, 2007. ; *Twin Peaks*. Created by Mark Frost and David Lynch, Showtime and American Broadcasting Company, 1990 – 1991, 2017. ; *Until Dawn*, PlayStation 4, Epic Games, 2015. ; 'Wendigo.' *Supernatural*, created by Eric Kripke, season 1, episode 2, The WB, 2005. ; *Westworld*. Created by Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy, HBO, 2016 – 2022. ; *The Wind*. Dir by Emma Tammi, Perf by Caitlin Gerard, Ashley Zuckerman, IFC Midnight, 2018.

non-Indigenous creators, despite textual attempts to address “problematic” gender, racial, and sexual expectations of the 1800s. As I will show in more depth in the first section of this thesis, the attempt to distance oneself from colonial tropes as a non-Indigenous creator while still relying on images of monstrosity, barbarism, and ghostliness of Indigenous figures is a common occurrence in American imperial Gothic works. In the first three chapters, I will analyse texts written by non-Indigenous authors in the 1980s and into the late 2010s. These texts’ interactions with coloniality and Indigeneity reflect and sometimes attempt to subvert the overlap between neoliberal and colonial economic systems with varying degrees of success. Specifically, these texts focus on how coloniality haunts settler colonists in the twenty-first century; haunting that manifests in the form of Indigenous ghosts. However, these texts’ continual return to the *mythic* dimensions of American Expansion hinders most – or sometimes any – meaningful critique of colonialism. I chose *Blood Meridian* for this study for two main reasons: first, because it has never before been examined as a work of American imperial Gothic despite sharing the mode’s fixation with colonial violence and the erasure of the reality that Indigenous people survived colonisation. Second, the standard critical response to *Meridian* is that the aesthetics of the novel override the horrors while also somehow deconstructing colonialism which, as I will show, is not possible. *Pet Semetary*, likewise, has a surprising dearth of scholarship regarding the symbolic and material effect of the Indigenous burial ground and Indigenous monstrosity despite the entire conflict centring around the Micmac burial ground and the appropriated ‘Wendigo’, making it ideal for analysis. *The Hunger*’s role in this thesis is to demonstrate how the trope of the Indigenous burial ground and Indigenous monstrosity persists even in otherwise “progressive” texts, and texts written in the twenty-first century by non-Indigenous writers.

Yet Indigenous peoples have survived the graveyard. All Indigenous texts, by their very existence, resist the colonial narrative of complete annihilation and/or assimilation of

Indigenous peoples. Sometimes the focus of Indigenous texts is to turn the horror back onto colonisers in a way that deconstructs colonial-capitalism, but this is not always the case, as I will outline in the conclusion. For example, the second episode of the cult classic tv show *Supernatural*, first aired in 2005, focused on the hunt for a wendigo who was capturing, torturing, and killing hikers in the Colorado wilderness. The 2021 film *Antlers* turns the wendigo into a metaphor for the corporate greed and socioeconomic ruin that occurs from over-extraction of resources in rural mining towns in the twenty-first century. Likewise, corporate greed and resource extraction combined with a critique of colonialism and how it evolves into capitalism is also a central theme in the Pulitzer award winning play *The Kentucky Cycle* (1993 – 1994). *Cycle* depicts how an area of Appalachia is haunted in part because of the decimation of an Indigenous village on the land that eventually becomes a coal mine. In the video game *Bioshock Infinite* (2016), players control the character Booker DeWitt, an ex-military participant in the Wounded Knee massacre, the Boxer Rebellion and ex-Pinkerton who, through the experiences of the game, comes to understand the horror that he helped perpetuate through his actions. He eventually kills himself to end the cycle of systemic violence. These examples demonstrate just a taste of the extent to which the trope of the Indigenous burial ground and monstrous Indigenous spectre exists in the American mainstream – and non-mainstream – imagination.

Part of the text selection process for this thesis involved necessarily limiting my exploration of these themes to a particular time period and genre for the sake of word count and narrowing the scope of my thesis to a manageable size. Therefore, the scope of this thesis is explicitly literary, though my observations could also be applied to many films, television shows, and video games as I suggest above.⁴ However, for the purposes of comparative

⁴ See: *Blood Quantum*. Dir by Jeff Barnaby, Perf by Michael Greyeyes, Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, Forrest Goodluck, Elevation Pictures, 2019. ; Goingback, Owl. *Crota*. Signet, 1996. ; Jones, Stephen Graham. *Mapping the Interior*. Tor.com Books, Tom Doherty Associates, 2017. ; Jones, Stephen Graham. *The Only Good Indians*. Titan Books, 2020. ; Little Badger, Darcie. 'The Famine King.' *Mythic Delirium*, Feb 2017,

study, the texts by Indigenous authors I have selected for this thesis use the image of the spectral Indigene and America-as-a-graveyard in order to directly confront colonial-capitalism. They also turn the idea of America-as-graveyard on its head, demonstrating the power of Indigenous ghosts as a symbol of survivance and connection to tradition and memory, rather than a symbol of Indigenous destruction. In the last three chapters, I will examine texts written by Indigenous authors from the 1990s and early 2000s in order to demonstrate the ways in which they more effectively undermine the colonial order by directly establishing thematic links between the horrors of colonisation and the horrors of late-twentieth century capitalism. Additionally, these texts use the figure of the Indigenous ghost to demonstrate the power of tribal memory over the colonial-capitalist system. *Almanac* was chosen for the breadth of time, cultures, and characters it depicts which allows for a study into specific aspects of colonialism that are mimicked and/or magnified by capitalism. The type of spectrality, which is undeniably corporeal, in *Indian Killer* is an outstanding example of how monstrous Indigenous spectrality is often visited back upon colonisers in Indigenous horror. Finally, *Doves* offers a critique of colonial-capitalism like the other novels, but with a focus on how mixed-blood individuals are affected by the history and lived realities of these two systems, an increasingly frequent theme in Indigenous fiction.

I. The Colonial Myth of America and Indigenous Resistance

An American ‘rendezvous with destiny’ (‘A Time for Choosing’) and early colonist Reverend John Winthrop’s ‘shining city upon a hill’ (‘Transcript’) were staple images of Reagan’s pro-colonial and therefore implicitly white-supremacist rhetoric. Reagan

<https://mythicdelirium.com/featured-story-%E2%80%A2-february-2017>. ; Little Badger, Darcie. ‘The Whalebone Parrot.’ *The Dark Magazine*. Oct 2017, <https://www.thedarkmagazine.com/the-whalebone-parrot/>. ; Prey. Dir by Dan Trachtenberg, Perf by Amber Midthunder, Dakota Beavers, Dan DiLiegro, Disney+, 2022. ; Roanhorse, Rebecca. *Trail of Lightning*. Saga Press, 2018. ; Roanhorse, Rebecca. *Storm of Locusts*. Hodderscape, 2019. ; Smith, Martin Cruz. *Nightwing*. Pan Books, London, 1977. ; Vizenor, Gerald. *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*. University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

purposefully employed the image of the cowboy in political campaigns from his governorship to the presidency. Robert Dallek states that ‘Reagan loved the hero’s role because he fantasised himself as a heroic figure’ (*Reagan Part I*). Press Secretary Lyn Nofziger recalls facilitating an interview where Reagan would appear on horseback, explicitly conveying the cowboy image, stating ‘I want you [Reagan] to be a cowboy ‘cuz that’s what the people will identify with’ (*Reagan Part I*). Though amiable to the masses, Reagan was unquestionably far-right fundamentalist in his beliefs and acted as a convenient rallying voice and symbol for those who would benefit from the further disenfranchisement of minorities, the poor, the middle classes, and those not adherent to Christian fundamentalist belief. On the campaign trail, Reagan ‘endorse[d] creationism, praised Vietnam as a “noble cause” [...] and suggested that trees generate more air pollution than cars’ (Troy 25). As governor of California, Reagan had parroted the Biblical prophecies and apocalyptic rhetoric of Billy Graham (*Reagan Part I*). As president, Reagan and the movement he embodied attempted to tear down hard-won battles from the 1960s and 1970s. Senate Judiciary Committee leader Strom Thurmond advocated for ‘a repeal of the 1965 Voting Rights Act’ (Troy 65). When ‘asked about the Department of Education’s “future status,” [Reagan] wrote, “I hope it has none”’ (Troy 73). Reagan’s rise to power broadly appealed to ‘White ethnics, nouveau riches businessmen, and America’s petite bourgeoisie of white-gloved, church-going ladies’ (Troy 74). In essence, those who flourished socially, politically, and economically under early American colonialism and Western Expansion flourished also in Reagan’s America.

Reagan’s image of America as a “city upon a hill” was not the only one available, however. Indigenous resistance to colonialism has always occurred, but it gained momentum during the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s thanks in part to intersectional relationships with Black Americans. A forced diaspora following the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 – wherein Indigenous individuals and families were bussed to urban centres – also resulted in strong

intersectional civil rights organisations, leading eventually to many pan-Indian civil rights groups that sprung up from the 1960s – 1970s. Known as the Red Power Movement, the 1970s in particular marked an ‘intense period of protest and activism’ for Indigenous groups that also caught the mainstream settler eye (Dunbar-Ortiz 184). Coincident with Reagan who used the horrific spectre of communism to reinvigorate colonial attitudes of destiny and expansion, Nick Estes notes that ‘During the Cold War, the Indigenous movement began [...] to imagine itself as part of a larger political community of colonized peoples’ (172). In other words, while Reagan was hoping to expand his colonially minded vision of America into supposed communist territories, Indigenous activists were themselves making global connections with other colonised peoples.

No summary of the Red Power Movement would be complete without mentioning the creation of the American Indian Movement (AIM). AIM was founded in Minneapolis in 1968 by members of the Ojibwe nation and rose to media prominence among Indigenous activist groups following the retreat of the Indians of All Tribes from their eighteen-month occupation of Alcatraz in the late 1960s to early 1970s. Initially envisioned as a community patrol, as AIM expanded, they focused ‘on community empowerment and service programs’ as well as protecting Indigenous groups in bars around the city from racial violence (Estes 179). Eventually AIM went national with their efforts, most famously with their siege of Wounded Knee in 1973, which is credited by many Indigenous activists and scholars as marking ‘the beginning of Indigenous decolonization in North America’ (Dunbar-Ortiz 186). The siege by AIM occurred at the request of the Ogalala Sioux Civil Rights Commission, traditional leaders, and several women from the Ogalala Lakota reservation of Pine Ridge, near the site of the Wounded Knee massacre of 29 December 1890, which marked the end of the Ghost Dance movement. According to Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, ‘The people opposed the increasingly authoritarian reign of the elected tribal chairman, Richard Wilson’ who they saw

as a puppet for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (186). Estes writes that the poorly armed AIM members ‘faced off’ against Wilson’s paramilitary GOON (Guardians of the Ogalala Nation) squad ‘and federal marshals armed with fully automatic weapons and armored personnel carriers’ (193). There were daily firefights, and casualties on both sides. By the end of the seventy-one-day siege, however, there was a growing appreciation for the link between ‘the everyday policing, surveillance, and criminalization of Indigenous peoples [...] to the global anti-colonial struggle’ (Estes 194). That the Wounded Knee occupation occurred shortly after the publication of bestseller *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970) only furthered attention to and interest in the plight of AIM and other Indigenous organisations. It is from this cultural clash that the texts I will focus on arise.

II. 20th and 21st Century Hauntings: The Spectre of Colonialism in the “Post-Colonial”

Age

What the following novels thematically share is a horrific depiction of the haunting nature of colonisation; therefore, I consider each work by a non-Indigenous author to be an American imperial Gothic text. These mid-twentieth and early-twenty-first century works are all situated within a tradition of Indigenous spectralisation that appears in Early American Gothic texts such as those written by Charles Brockden Brown, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and so many others. Jacques Derrida argues in *Spectres of Marx* (1994) that ‘the specter is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather some “thing” that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other’ (6). According to Derrida, the spectre is a powerful tool of learning because ‘learning to live [...] can happen only between life and death’ (xxviii). The spectral, he argues, is ‘a *politics* of memory, of inheritance, and of generations’ (xix), one that demonstrates that the spectral is anything *but* spectral. With this framework in mind,

the Indigenous ghost becomes a significant figure in which to discuss settler-colonial relations and Indigenous histories in the United States. However, strikingly, the figure of the Indigenous ghost is often relegated to the side-lines in American imperial Gothic criticism, analysed almost exclusively in texts from the sixteen- to eighteen- hundreds by white authors. Furthermore, Indigenous authors' depictions of Indigenous ghosts have yet to be the centre of any work in American Gothic scholarship. As the resurgence of colonial rhetoric post-Reagan era shows, however, the Indigenous ghost is far from an irrelevant figure in twentieth- and twenty-first century Pan-American imaginations.

The aim of this thesis is to identify and begin to fill two major gaps that exist within the field of American Gothic Studies. The first gap I identify and hope to begin to rectify is that current criticism of Euro-American Gothic literature from 1980s to present does not adequately examine the extent to which white-supremacy-rooted colonial epistemologies influence the use of Indigenous ghost or spectral monsters to depict what is horrific in a text or how that horror functions in a text written by a non-Indigenous author. Although much work has been done on the ways in which America's history of slavery haunts American subjects – white and Black⁵ –far less critical work exists examining and interrogating the role of horror in regard to the colonisation of the original, Indigenous population of the Americas. This is especially true for texts written in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. In a similar vein, the second argument of this thesis is that works by Indigenous authors which clearly interact with the issue of colonisation – and its close cousin capitalism – in ways that use horror to explore the material effects of colonisation and white supremacy belong in the discourse of American imperial Gothic.

⁵ See: Crow, Charles L. *History of the Gothic: American Gothic*. University of Wales Press, 2009. ; Edwards, Justin D. *Gothic Passages: Racial Ambiguity and the American Gothic*. University of Iowa Press, 2002. ; Fiedler, Leslie. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Dalkey Archive Press, 1966. ; Goddu, Teresa A. *Gothic America; Narrative, History, and Nation*. Columbia University Press, 1997.

There is a clear critique of global capitalism and colonialism that Indigenous authors use horror to invoke, which Gothic scholars indicate as a feature of the mode as a whole.

Botting, Hogle, Shapiro, and Duncan have all argued that economic anxieties and the Gothic go hand-in-hand.⁶ In fact, Duncan goes so far as to call the Gothic mode:

one [...] historical example of the mediation through narrative of transformations in the system of capital [...] [I]f (proto)gothic fiction negotiated the experience of (re)induction into capitalist relations in Europe, then supernatural responses to the arrival or intensification of these same relations in the (post)colonies can be read in similar terms. ('Decolonial' 313 – 314)

Drawing upon this definition of the Gothic as inherently connected to coloniality, and building on the work of Duncan, this thesis will examine the different iterations of the spectral – and sometimes monstrous – Indigenous person in order to confront the myth of America as a shining “city upon a hill” and to undermine or uphold the white supremacist, colonial order.

Johan Höglund states in *American Imperial Gothic* (2014) that the use of Gothic modes often perpetuates rather than critiques colonial structures:

[T]he [Euro-]American imperial gothic is concerned with the maintenance of the racial, sexual, cultural, political and territorial borders that have helped this form of culture to explain and even justify colonial expansion and the maintenance of empire. At the same time it has given and gives expression to the many anxieties that accompany moments of perceived imperial decline. (3)

Here, Höglund highlights a strain of American Gothic that emerges from the dominating Euro-American culture: the imperial Gothic mode. Höglund's work on American imperial Gothic is very sensitive to the material consequences of colonialism in its historical and present-day form and is an excellent jumping off point for examining the construction of horror by Euro-Americans. However, it is still missing an Indigenous perspective. This is not

⁶ See: Botting, Fred. 'In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture.' *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed by David Punter, Blackwell, 2012, pp. 13 – 24. ; Hogle, Jerrold E. Introduction: The Gothic in Western Culture. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed by Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 1–20. ; Shapiro, Stephen. 'Transvaal, Transylvania: Dracula's World-System and Gothic Periodicity.' *Gothic Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2008), pp. 29-47.

to say that ‘Gothic’ is a term all Indigenous authors would or should use to describe all their works, but, as Glennis Byron notes, ‘there is much evidence to suggest that “Gothic” is a term which is increasingly being claimed [by non-European authors] rather than imposed’ (‘Global Gothic’ 370). Therefore, as the concept of globalgothic becomes increasingly popular in Western scholarship,⁷ it behoves Gothic scholars to critically reflect on how the term “Gothic” is deployed and what terms or traditions may already exist in Indigenous spaces to describe texts; terms whose definitions broadly overlap with definitions of “Gothic” or common Gothic lenses such as hauntology. In general, however, it is safe to say that many Indigenous works use horror in a way that overlaps with what is considered traditionally ‘Gothic’: to invoke anxieties of a particular time period in a way that either subverts or reinforces the dominating ideologies and expectations of a given time period. In order to expand the work of Duncan, Höglund, and Byron, I will turn to the figure of the spectral Indian in order to interrogate the ways in which American imperial Gothic fiction from the 1980s to the 2010s interact with the material structure of American empire in the continental United States and how the empire is deconstructed by Indigenous horror works.

III. Part One: The Spectre of Colonialism: Empire and the Indigenous Ghost

This thesis will be arranged in two parts, separated by a transitional interlude. Each section will have three chapters, each building on or complicating a “Gothic” understanding of spectrality. Key to understanding the cultural underpinnings of colonialism and capitalism is

⁷ See, for example, the University of Wales Press series ‘Gothic Literary Studies’, which includes titles such as *South Asian Gothic: Haunted cultures, histories and media* (2021); *South African Gothic: Anxiety and Creative Dissent in the Post-apartheid Imagination and Beyond* (2018); *Canadian Gothic: Literature, History, and the Spectre of Self-Invention* (2014); *Postcolonial Gothic Fictions from the Caribbean, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (2010). For more on the intricacies and ethics of using the term ‘Gothic’ in non-European spaces, see: Byron, Glennis. Introduction. *Globalgothic*. ed by Glennis Byron, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 1 – 10. ; Byron, Glennis. ‘Global Gothic.’ *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed by David Punter, Blackwell, 2012, pp. 369 – 378. ; Duncan, Rebecca. ‘Introduction: Decolonial Gothic.’ *Decolonising Gothic*, special issue of *Gothic Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, (2022), pp. 219 – 227. ; Duncan, Rebecca. ‘Decolonial Gothic: Beyond the Postcolonial in Gothic Studies.’ *Decolonising Gothic*, special issue of *Gothic Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, (2022), pp. 304 – 322.

Ramón Grosfoguel's concept of the 'Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric Modern/Colonial World-System' ('Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy' np). With this combination of ideologies, Grosfoguel demonstrates the interconnectedness of capitalism and colonialism and patriarchy. The perpetuation of all these ideologies is central to all of the texts in the first section. The first section will analyse texts by non-Indigenous authors: Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* in chapter one, Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* in chapter two, and Alma Katsu's *The Hunger* in chapter three. All of these texts share a conception of subjecthood shaped by Cartesian thinking which, as decolonial scholars Aníbal Quijano, Gurminder Bhambra, Duncan, and many others, have identified as being crucial to colonial epistemology. I will also use theories from earlier, Marxist theorists, namely Althusser, and postcolonial scholars in order to examine these works.

What unites these various theoretical approaches is their focus on the material consequences of ideology and how deconstructing the State is a revolutionary act. As Jaques Bidet states in his introduction to *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* (2014), Althusser 'significantly subverts the traditional Marxist problematic by inviting his readers to reconsider the classic way of talking about ideology alongside other elements of the superstructure, and by integrating ideology of the state as the State Ideology' (xxvi). Additionally, Althusser's argument regarding ideology and the state 'confers a status of materialist realism and social ontology onto ideology' (Bidet xxvi). Althusser is clearly interested in the revolutionary potential of Marxist-Leninist thought, stating that the working classes must 'arm themselves with Marxist-Leninist theory' (6) and that imperialism 'will not survive' 'its contradictions and its victims' (5). However, while Althusser's theories of ideology and the role of interpellation in the perpetuation of State Ideology, terms which I

will shortly describe, are excellent for deconstructing the material powers of ideology, they do not actually deconstruct from outside the mindset of Western thought.

In order to fill this gap, I turn to postcolonial and postcolonial Gothic scholars such as Michel Fanon, Homi K Bhabha and Andrew Smith and William Hughes. Smith and Hughes argue that Cartesian subjecthood – named after Descartes after his line of (in)famous logic that states, “I think, therefore I am” – is the bedrock of Gothic binaries such as civilised/barbaric, human/monstrous, past/present (1). Furthermore, much in line with Bhabha’s theory of hybridity, which will be explored in more detail in chapter five, ‘the Cartesian subject is dependent on excluding the Other in order to determine its own position’ (2). In other words, unlike the hybrid individual who embraces all aspects of the cultures in which it exists, the Cartesian subject as I will examine particularly in Gothic works creates its own monstrous other by participating in interpellation in Althusser’s definition and making horrific anything not-itself. Yet the term ‘post’-colonial and the framing of post-colonial thinking as arising *out of* colonisation remains problematic from my perspective, which is why I also integrate the works of decolonial scholars.

Much of the work of post-colonial scholars is echoed by decolonial scholars such as Quijano and Walter D Mignolo. For example, like post-colonial scholars, Quijano also cites Descartes and the Cartesian subject as the root of colonial subjecthood, arguing that under colonial thought the body is ‘an object of knowledge, outside the environment of subject/reason [...] certain races are condemned as being inferior for not being rational subjects. They are objects of study, consequently closer to nature’ (‘Coloniality of Power’ 555). What makes their contributions and the contributions of Indigenous scholars significant in my analysis is how they, unlike the previous theories mentioned, can speak from what Mignolo terms as the colonial difference. Mignolo argues, ‘The limit of Western philosophy is the border where the colonial difference emerges, making visible the variety of local

histories [and I would add cultures, epistemologies, and ontologies] that Western thought [...] hid and suppressed' (66). As Mignolo puts it, then, Quijano's significant contribution to conceptualising the material effects of State Ideology is that he 'make[s] it possible not only to conceive of the modern/colonial world-system as a sociohistorical structure coincident with the expansion of capitalism but also to conceive of coloniality and the colonial difference as loci of enunciation' (61). In essence, Quijano, Mignolo, and other decolonial theorists remove Euro-centrism from the throne of philosophical prominence, more thoroughly deconstructing the ways in which colonial ideology, epistemologies, and economies create and perpetuate the colonial State.

In order to see how these Marxist-Leninist, postcolonial, and decolonial theories combine to create an analysis, consider the following connective thought process. Though Quijano identifies imperial thought in this quote separate from the Gothic mode, his observations are easily mapped onto conventions in imperial Gothic works. In the imperial Gothic, the separation between the 'knowing' Cartesian body and the 'object of study' non-Cartesian monster most frequently occurs between the white heroes and the horrific Other. Defending the empire against these Others – an act that all of the protagonists in the Euro-American works I will explore take – is an act of order maintenance: the perpetuation of the State through physical or ideological means for the benefit of those already in power, and a concept put forth by Marxist-Leninist theorist Zygmunt Bauman.

Control over epistemology and "proper" ways of thinking is the first element of what Quijano describes as the coloniality of power. Colonial epistemology, Quijano argues, structures the biopolitics of colonialism, creating a cycle built to disenfranchise the colonised or anyone else deemed unacceptable by the colonial State. Biopolitics, as Duncan notes, 'designates the "calculated management of life", a propagation effected through a set of "regulatory controls" enacted through state institutions' (*South African* quoting Foucault

155). These institutions, or State Apparatuses as Althusser calls them, include the colonial entities of the judicial and carceral systems – Repressive State Apparatuses – and colonial academy, church, and family –examples of Ideological State Apparatus. The biopolitical power these State Apparatuses wield is the ‘power “to make live and let die,” which seizes on the life of the population as its means and its end, its object and objective’ (Murray ‘Thanatopolitics’ 718). Combining the lens offered by these Marxist and decolonial terms, it follows that the material effect of Cartesian/colonial rationality upon human subjects in the Americas is biopolitics in action: the furtherance of these values in a systemic, self-replicating practice. At the personal level, Althusser coins the term interpellation to describe how individuals reproduce the ideology of a State. Interpellation is when an individual recognizes themselves and is recognised by the State as a *subject* in that they are subject *to* a state. They act within the parameters of the ideals of an Ideological State Apparatus and are therefore subjected to the wills of the State. Essentially, interpellation causes individuals to see themselves as a part of a larger, ideological system (Althusser 196 – 197). For the purposes of a literary analysis of how colonialism works in a text, interpellation is helps determine the subject-position of characters and therefore how the ideology of the colonial State is reproduced or subverted. All of the works I will explore in coming chapters interact with the colonality of power, the imperial Gothic binaries that arise from it, and the biopolitical structures that reinforce colonial structures in unique ways.

Although *Blood Meridian* is considered a work of Western or even literary American fiction,⁸ I argue that the ways in which McCarthy depicts colonisation as an act with haunting

⁸ See: Bloom, Harold. ‘Harold Bloom on Cormac McCarthy, True Heir to Melville and Faulkner On Violence, the Sublime, and *Blood Meridian*’s Place in the American Canon.’ LitHub, 16 October 2019, <https://lithub.com/harold-bloom-on-cormac-mccarthy-true-heir-to-melville-and-faulkner/>. Accessed 27 January 2021. ; Cavender, Kurt. ‘Our Knowing Compelled to Go Back: Speculative Misreading and the Identity of *Blood Meridian*.’ *College Literature*, vol. 43, no. 4, (2016), pp. 693 – 716. ; Frye, Steven. *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*. University of South Carolina Press, 2009. ; Kruse, Zack. ““You Were a Witness Against Yourself”: McCarthy’s Judge as Chamberlain’s Interlocutor in *Blood Meridian*.” *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 60, no. 1, (2018), pp. 98 – 110. ; Philips, Dana. ‘History and the Ugly Facts of *Blood Meridian*.’ *Cormac McCarthy: New Directions*, ed. by James D Lilley, University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Ebook. ;

consequences, combined with his spectralisation and Othering of Indigenous peoples, situates the novel within a Euro-American imperial Gothic tradition as described by Höglund. Effectively, though not seen as part of the “traditional” and arguably limited American Gothic canon, McCarthy nonetheless uses storytelling elements found within the imperial Gothic mode to interact with the figure of the Indigene and their ghosts in a way that mirrors other “established” imperial Gothic texts such as the hyper-analysed *Edgar Huntly* (1799), *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), and the Leatherstocking series (1823 – 1841). In particular, *Meridian* homogenises the colonial violence of the frontier, erasing boundaries between coloniser and colonised. Though this partially serves to make the coloniser horrific, such a framing of horror relies upon seeing the colonised as horrific in the first place. This tactic also erases the material effects of colonisation that only effect Indigenous groups – i.e., physical and cultural genocide – and serves to obfuscate how colonial violence is a militaristic arm of white supremacy that serves a material governmental structure. In short, while the violence in *Meridian* is undeniably horrific, it does not undermine the core colonial myth of Western Expansion as an inevitable, destructive end to an uncivilised Indigenous population. I will also show that the ways in which McCarthy employs an epic style, as explained by Erich Auerbach, Harold Bloom, and countless other critics, further conceals the realities of colonial violence in *Meridian* from the biopolitical structure of colonial-capitalism, instead situating the conflicts in the novel as a battle for capital-Truth regarding the mythic nature of man and therefore turning all colonial violence into metaphor.

Spurgeon, Sara. ‘The Sacred Hunter and the Eucharist of the Wilderness: Mythic Reconstructions in *Blood Meridian*.’ *Cormac McCarthy: New Directions*, ed. by James D Lilley, University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Ebook. ; Walonen, Michael K. ‘Violence, Imperialism and Male Socialization in Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian* and Marlon James’ *A Brief History of Seven Killings*.’ *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 26, no. 2, (2018), pp. 66 – 79.

Höglund explains the connection between Gothic metaphor and empire, stating: ‘The imperial gothic’s predilection for metaphor becomes a way for US citizens to talk about the nature and challenges of colonialism through myth and symbol. Thus, US empire exists in the imperial gothic as a displaced discourse, always there but rarely recognized for what it is’ (55). *Meridian* accomplishes this mythologising through homogenising colonial violence and turning such violence into a stylistically “epic” metaphor for humanity, but these elements are enhanced also by the historical frontier setting. In addition to mythologising the material space of the Western frontier, McCarthy erases Indigenous voices and depicts *all* Indigenous people in the text as bestial Others. This erasure is a form of spectralising the Indigenous person, but also spectralising any counter-narrative to Western frontier violence as somehow inevitable. Bergland critiques such erasure, stating: ‘First and foremost, the ghosting of Indians is a technique of removal. By writing about Indians as ghosts, white writers effectively remove them from American lands, and place them, instead, within the American imagination’ (4). Following Bergland and Höglund’s points, the spectralisation and/or erasure of the material effects of colonisation on Indigenous people in literature is itself a manifestation of colonial epistemology. In other words, demonstrating that frontier violence happened, as *Meridian* does, is not enough to critique said violence: this is just stating fact. The manner in which the violence is portrayed, who is made horrific, and who triumphs in the end are all factors that determine if the colonialism is undermined or upheld by a text.

The Othering and spectralising of Indigenous peoples are also present in *Pet Sematary*, though this is accomplished in a very different means from *Meridian*. Instead of a historical setting that directly depicts colonial atrocities, *Semetary* enacts neo-colonial spectralisation of Indigenous people via the erasure of Indigenous voices. It also appropriates the Anishinaabeg monster called the wendigo and Indigenous histories, because all aspects of “Indigeneity” in the text are filtered through the voices of Louis Creed and Jud Crandall, two

white men who desecrate an Indigenous burial ground and reap the bloody rewards. The eventual annihilation of Creed, Crandall, and their families by the supposed spirit of the wendigo exemplifies the duality of what it means for the coloniser to be haunted by the colonised. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the Indigenous burial ground re-emerges as a site of colonial horror.⁹ Gesa Mackenthun argues that many of these texts which feature both an Indigenous burial ground and a nuclear family ‘address a crisis of masculinity within the American family – a central theme of the Reagan era. In a less obvious way, the crisis of the father is also that of the “White Father” who is troubled by the return of his outcast “children” and fears the erosion of his cultural authority’ (98 – 99). Reagan’s paternalistic rhetoric regarding the roles of American values and Western Expansion are then Gothicised by texts with Indigenous burial grounds, wherein, uncannily, the colonised dead refuse to stay buried. Unlike *Meridian*, then, which reinforces a supposed inevitability of Indigenous death, *Semetary*’s repeated interaction with Indigenous ghosts and Indigenous burial grounds shows that, while the Indigenous spectre can be used to invoke horror and thus perpetuate colonial stereotypes, the very presence of an Indigenous figure undermines the narrative of total white/colonial supremacy, especially when the Indigenous spectre has arguably more power than the colonial male.

Like *Meridian*, the Indigenous spectres in *Semetary* can represent horror. However, King’s approach is slightly more nuanced than McCarthy’s. Figuring Indigenous ghosts as symptomatic of ‘unsuccessful repression’ of the Indigene within the white American imagination, Bergland sees Indigenous ghosts as ‘powerful figures beyond American control’ (5). With this methodological approach, Bergland articulates how Indigenous spectres written by Euro-American Gothic authors are symbols rather than real characters. Thus, the wendigo

⁹ For more information on the critical overlap between the Reagan era and the re-emergence of the Indian burial ground in popular horror, see: Magistrale, Tony and Michael Blouin. *Stephen King and American History*. Routledge, New York, 2020.

in *Semetary* is also a symbol that represents the coloniser's horrific *idea* of the vengeful Indigenous person, rather than any actual Indigenous folklore or culture. Speaking to how King's works in general interact with the myth of America, Magistrale and Blouin argue, 'America (writ large) fails to recognize, much less learn from, its own mistakes – to break the circle of its own repeated failings. The archaic past requires an active connection to the present in order to reanimate itself' (45). A potential strength of *Semetary* is that it exposes 'the supposed border between past events and their aesthetic renderings, thereby providing an opportunity for us to reconsider the manner in which we tend to make (or unmake) a shared history' (Magistrale and Blouin 3). Furthermore, the 1980s setting of the novel does not give the same temporal distance to the neo-colonial act of grave desecration that is achieved in *Meridian* or, as I will show in chapter three, *The Hunger*. However, because King appropriates Indigenous mythology and erases Indigenous voices, using Jud Crandall as an explicit stand-in for Indigeneity, the deconstruction of colonial triumph in *Semetary* is incomplete.

Finally, as I will show in chapter three, *The Hunger* relies heavily on the imperial Gothic trope of a monstrous-yet-fictional Indigenous group to invoke horror. Yet this group, while ostensibly physically within the world of the novel, remains spectralised, thus increasing their horrific Otherness. In *Hunger*, the fictional Anawai are the never-seen yet omnipresent bogeymen who wander the untamed wilderness of the Sierra Nevada mountains in the 1840s. When the California-bound Donner wagon party, an actual historical group like the Glanton gang of *Meridian*, are stranded in the Sierra Nevada over winter and a horrible disease that turns people into cannibals descends on their camp, the Anawai are shown to be the foot soldiers of the white cannibals. Set during colonial expansion, the characterisation, and the root of the horror in *Hunger* has surprisingly contemporary overtones that, like *Semetary*, demonstrate a continuation between colonial and neoliberal capitalist values.

Drawing on the work of Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger* (1966), Jennifer Brown notes in relation to eating rituals, 'taboos are not about health regulations or tests of faith but rather involve a system of maintaining symbolic boundaries,' and that 'in the same way that the cannibal of colonial times was located in the darkness of Africa, 'the cannibal [...] of mid- to late twentieth century culture are located in the regional darkness of dysfunctional families or inbred farmsteads in the countryside' (3, 12). This re-situation of the cannibal-as-white-trash in twentieth century, and in the case of *Hunger* twenty-first century, fiction offers a similar escape as adventure romance fiction offers readers: one that 'offer[s] a welcome change to the urban domestic novels, the plight of the poor, and grey industrialized cities' (Brown *Cannibalism* 18). Additionally, Brown identifies the resurgence of the poor, hillbilly cannibal in the post-George W Bush presidency era as 'a kind of backlash against [...] the "red state" Americans believed to be his natural constituency' (*Cannibalism* 12). Put succinctly, by tying the disease in the novel to poor white settlers, Katsu's novel reveals an ideology often seen in US mainstream liberal and conservative circles alike that, far from acknowledging the ties between capitalism and colonialism and the need to abolish both together, prefers scapegoating some of the white individuals most negatively impacted by neoliberal societies. What is innovative about Katsu's approach is that her novel explicitly connects poor whites to a barbaric Indigenous group instead of inferencing this connection. This is a similarity that Katsu shares partly with Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, as I will show in chapter four. However, where Silko focuses on how intersectional unions between disempowered and disenfranchised groups can help unmake colonial-capitalism, Katsu is rather focused on validating how these unions are horrific from the perspective of the ruling classes.

IV. Part Two: Indigenous Gothic

The second section will analyse Indigenous text that, while not perceived as “Gothic,” nevertheless fit into this literary tradition: Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead: A Novel* in chapter four, Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer* in chapter five, and Louise Erdrich’s *The Plague of Doves: A Novel* in chapter six. This section also demonstrates the continuum of spectralisation from completely erased to present but monstrous that was established in the previous section, but from an Indigenous perspective that sees death as a different expression of the self, rather than an annihilation of the subject. Unlike the biopolitical structure of colonialism, Indigenous cultures within North America do not see death or even ghostliness as a relinquishing of power, personhood, or anything else. Instead, death within Indigenous cultures is more like a different state of existence that is similar to life. Silko explains the Laguna Pueblo concept of the afterlife, which is a place called Cliff House, as it connects to their understanding of time, which is non-linear in nature. Rather than being on a progressive line from beginning to end, Silko writes that the Laguna Pueblo imagine time as

round – like a tortilla; time had specific moments and specific locations, so that the beloved ancestors who had passed on were not annihilated by death, but only relocated to the place called Cliff House. At Cliff House, people continued as they had always been, although only spirits and not living humans can travel freely over this tortilla of time. All times go on existing side by side for all eternity. No moment is lost or destroyed. There are no future times or past times; there are always all the times, which differ slightly, as the locations on the tortilla differ slightly. The past and future are the same because they exist only in the present of our imaginations. (Silko *Yellow Woman* 136 – 137)

From a Laguna Pueblo perspective, death is a liberation and a re-connection to the flow of *all* times, rather than something destructive that *ends* time and subjecthood. This is not to say that the Laguna Pueblo idealise death, but that it has a far less negative connotation within their cultural imagination. The Laguna Pueblo are not alone in their thinking. Indigenous peoples from the West coast of North America have very different connotations of corporeality and the afterlife from that of colonising epistemology. Colleen E Boyd remarks how, ‘In the 1930s a Coast Salish elder named Frank Allen told the young anthropologist

William Elmendorf that an Indian doctor had revealed to him how ghosts dwelling in the land of the dead have “automobiles now, stores now, just like we have here” (“We Are Standing” 185). This means that, unlike the image of the dead Indian in imperial Gothic, Indigenous ghosts can be as “modern” as their living counterparts. The inherent corporeality of Indigenous ghosts and how they are tied to memory is therefore a key difference and innovation of Indigenous Gothic from Euro-American Gothic forms.

As I will show in chapter four, *Almanac* depicts the thanatopolitical power of Indigenous ghosts and their allies against the biopolitical structures of colonial-capitalism. In *Almanac*, by existing outside the biopolitical structure as dead things, ghosts actually exceed colonial power structures. Distinguishing thanatopolitics from the biopolitics, S J Murray writes, ‘Thanatopolitics asks: how might those [biopolitical] deaths [...] productively disaffirm the regime of a neoliberal biopolitics that condemns to death? How might those deaths rise up, and haunt, the spaces of biopolitical production’ (718). With this in mind, thanatopolitics seems a natural counter to the biopower and ideology of colonial-capitalism. Indigenous spirits of the dead, a traditionally horrific symbol in settler Gothic literature, are a symbol of power and connection to the Earth, itself a living and powerful character, in Indigenous literature. In *Almanac*, spirits often interact with the living through dreams, a traditionally horrific element in Gothic literature that extends into twentieth-century American horror as exemplified by Louis Creed’s midnight visitations from the ghost of a dead university student Pascow. Further differentiating Silko’s iteration of Indigenous Gothic from Euro-American Gothic, in *Almanac*, dreams become a symbol of collective empowerment and a means of remembering the spirits of the Americas. The acts of colonisation remain a horrific element; however, contrary to Euro-American interactions with the material evidence of colonial acts, death and disenfranchisement also have an empowering anti-imperial effect on those who can remember colonial atrocities. While there

are elements of horror tied to colonial violence's ability to deconstruct identity within the text, the *memory* of horrific acts in *Almanac* has just as potent an effect upon reality and upon identity construction.

Indian Killer's approach to memory is different from *Almanac* in that it focuses solely on a much more violent remembrance of colonialism. Similarly, the spectrality of Indigenous ghosts is more directly tied to creating fear and uncanniness in the eyes of colonisers. Although there are brief glimpses of Indigenous ghosts such as Chief Seattle, by far the most spectral figure in the texts is the eponymous killer themselves. The killer is both corporeal and incorporeal, timeless and very much of its time in 1990s Seattle: a city and settler population still bitter from the fishing treaty rights won by the National Indian Youth Council with their 1964 'fish-in' events (Dunbar-Ortiz 181). The collapse of colonial boundaries that determine what is human and what is animal or spirit, combined with a rejection of the Enlightenment concept of progressive time, serve to make the killer a figure of horrific revenge to some or righteous justice to others. *Indian Killer*, unlike *Almanac*, does not find comfort in a thanatopolitical anti-colonial project. Rather, it sees the excessive violence of the coloniser turned back upon the original aggressors as indiscriminately as it was first meted out, not relying on the power of spirits alone to undo colonialism. The killer's ambiguous subjectivity mirrors the unstable identities of the named, living characters in the novel who continually struggle with wanting to be or appear as a "real Indian." Thus, in *Indian Killer*, horror is centred on unknowability and the cycles of violence that haunt coloniser and colonised alike. This horror arises from a prescriptive idea from both settlers *and* Indigenous cultures to perform identity in a certain way.

The originator of the term 'terminal creeds,' Anishinaabeg scholar Gerald Vizenor, states that they are 'stereotypical structures which confine and deform those who embrace them, "beliefs which seek to fix, to impose static definitions on the world"' (Stafford quoting

Vizenor 155). Additionally, as Louis Owens notes, terminal creeds ‘are destructive, suicidal, even when the definitions appear to arise out of revered tradition’ (Afterward 249). This notion that even an adherence to – supposed – Indigenous tradition can be harmful to the point of death is linked to another Vizenor term: survivance. This term is used

to describe the cultural techniques used by American Indians to authentically document their presence (traditionally in oral form): ‘Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry. Survivance means the right of succession or reversion of an estate, and in that sense, the estate of native survivancy.’ (Brandt quoting Vizenor 38 – 39)

Put simply, survivance is the refutation of terminal creeds by authentically being oneself *as native*. Stories of survivance can – and often do – depict horrible violence which Indigenous people suffered, but at the same time, survivance rejects suffering and death as the “natural” or inevitable outcome of Indigenous people. By denying a prescriptive, antiquated, *dead* image of Indian-ness, Vizenor advocates for a *living* image, determined by Indians themselves and extremely individual. *Indian Killer* demonstrates the harmful expectation of Indigeneity without nuance that Vizenor advocates against.

The Plague of Doves is different still in its depiction of Indigenous ghosts and includes explicit connections to the wendigo. While *Almanac* and *Indian Killer* give anti-colonial power to the Indigenous ghost, *Doves* is more interested in the material meaning of what it means to be haunted by one’s ancestry as a mixedblood Indigenous person, post-1890s. *Doves*’ focus on mixedblood identity and the intricacies of living in a colonised space as a descendant of both coloniser and colonised completely undermines the terminal creed of race essentialism that is thematically present in *Almanac* and *Indian Killer*. Additionally, Erdrich’s depiction of spectrality is quite different to Silko and Alexie’s. Haunting in *Doves* is similarly tied to memory, but not to individual spirits that act as a conglomerate of atrocities. Instead, haunting in *Doves* is tied to a specific horrific event in which four innocent Indigenous men were lynched for murders they did not commit. One of these men survived

the hanging and the memory of the event leaves him continually haunted by the spectres of colonisation and his fallen comrades. When others in the community learn of the lynching, they are also haunted by it.

Yet, unlike the cycle of vengeance and hatred in *Indian Killer*, the lynching in *Doves* does not necessarily produce a cycle of violence. *Doves* is thematically interested not in manifesting an Other who exists naturally as a coloniser, but in demonstrating that there is no Other who can be so easily separated from the concept of an “Indian.” Moreover, unlike *Almanac* and *Indian Killer*, the focus on mixedblood experiences of colonisation demonstrate that there is not enough anti-colonial justice simply in Indigenous land being reclaimed. There are wounds from settler colonialism that cannot be healed with the return of tribal land because within nearly every character in *Doves* the memory of colonial violence exists in their very veins. Thus, while the two other novels in this section quite explicitly call for the return of tribal lands as the most important way to exorcise the colonial haunting of America, *Doves* shows a much more individual approach, one focused on history and memory and the fallibility of a return to a pre-colonial “truth.” This is, of course, not to say that *Doves* does not depict colonial atrocities or does not label them as such. The infamous lynching, the spectre of Indian boarding schools, and the injustice of allotment are all very clearly depicted as the atrocities they historically were and are. However, the answer to these atrocities comes not from exorcising an Other, but through, as Kurup notes ‘restorative justice’ (101). Through its focus on mixedblood identity and depicting survivance, *Doves* strikes a balance that Vizenor argues is the true difference between coloniser and Indigenous sensibilities.

V. Indigenous Removal: Reviewing American Gothic Criticism and the Need for Decolonial Perspectives

The vast majority of existing scholarship on Indigenous people in American Gothic literature focuses on historical texts such as *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs Mary Rowlandson* (1682), *Edgar Huntly*, *Pym* and the Leatherstocking tales, which directly depict colonisation pre- “closing of the frontier” in the 1890s.¹⁰ In contrast, the colonial order maintenance and ideologies in twentieth- and twenty-first century Euro-American imperial Gothic works which are often masked by metaphor and symbolism are rarely analysed. Nevertheless, this myth of America that exists in the 1980s and 2000s is as old as the country’s first colonial outpost but is perhaps best crystalised by Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 ‘Frontier Thesis.’ Positing Western Expansion as a positive enactment of colonialism/modernity, Turner encouraged settler colonialism as an act of civilization overcoming barbarism, ‘essentially sanctifying the extermination and displacement of the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent by correlating these actions with patriotism and democratic freedom’ (Alber 7). Catherine Alber goes on to note that Turner’s Frontier Thesis is an example of ‘Richard Slotkin’s definition of “mythology [as] a complex of narratives that dramatizes the world vision and historical sense of a people or culture, reducing centuries of experience into a constellation of compelling metaphors”’ (7). This is a rhetorical turn American imperial Gothic literature shares with the colonial rhetoric repopularised by Ronald Reagan. These opposing ideas of the “spirit” or myth of America, crystalised by Reagan rhetoric and the Red Power Movement, continue to shape perceptions of America today.

¹⁰ See: Edwards, Justin D. *Gothic Passages: Racial Ambiguity and the American Gothic*. University of Iowa Press, 2002. ; Goddu, Teresa A. *Gothic America; Narrative, History, and Nation*. Columbia University Press, 1997. ; Hinds, Elizabeth Jane Wall. ‘American Frontier Gothic.’ *The Cambridge Companion to the American Gothic*, ed by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, University of Cambridge Press, 2017, pp. 128 – 140. ; Höglund, Johan. *The American Imperial Gothic: Popular Culture, Empire, Violence*. Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014. ; Ringel, Faye. ‘Early American Gothic (Puritan and New Republic).’ *The Cambridge Companion to the American Gothic*, ed by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, University of Cambridge Press, 2017, pp. 15 – 30. ; Weinauer, Ellen. ‘Race and the American Gothic.’ *The Cambridge Companion to the American Gothic*, ed by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, University of Cambridge Press, 2017, pp. 85 – 98. ; Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew. Introduction: The American Gothic. *The Cambridge Companion to American Gothic*. Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 1 – 12. ; Wester, Maisha L. ‘The Gothic and the politics of race.’ *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, ed by Jerrold E Hogle, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 157 – 173.

More importantly, they continue to influence the stories America tells itself. They are the socio-historical bedrock from which the Gothic of the 1980s arises, and their echoes can be found in Gothic works by Native and non-Native individuals into today. If, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen puts it, 'Every monster is in this way a double narrative, two living stories: one that describes how the monster came to be and another, its testimony, detailing what cultural use the monster serves', then the function of the Indigenous ghost in Euro-American Gothic horror *must* have differing cultural connotation between coloniser and colonised ('Monster Culture' 13).

One of the few Gothic critics working extensively with Indigenous writing in a manner that foregrounds Indigenous thought and tradition is Michelle Burnham. Further articulating Duncan's point regarding the need to expand beyond a Euro-centric idea of the Gothic mode, Burnham argues:

[I]ndigenous cultures and histories of storytelling in the Americas were *already* populated by Gothic elements, representing a literary and cultural history that not only predates the importation of the European Gothic into the Americas, but predates the arrival of Europeans in the Americas all together. In other words, it may be the case that we imagine the Gothic as a product of eighteenth-century Europe largely because we have always looked only to European and eighteenth-century sources to define it. ('Is There...' 226)

Burnham's argument, like this thesis, is a specific thread of decolonial Gothic scholarship. Duncan refers to decolonial gothic as 'Gothic that decolonises' alongside a 'renewed reflection on the relationship between Gothic and coloniality, but also on the theoretical and historical assumptions and frameworks that have shaped Gothic studies as a critical field' ('Introduction' 222). Speaking to the post-millennial turn in Gothic Studies towards an increasing focus on subaltern voices that use the Gothic mode, Byron writes that the Gothic mode in colonial spaces 'frequently functions to contest the more optimistic foundational narratives of new worlds, and, in a more contemporary context, often continues to give expression to lingering traumas produced by colonial life, with buried pasts resurfacing in

horrific form to disturb the present' ('Global Gothic' 369). However, contrary to the popular definition of the Gothic that it exposes that which is repressed, I contest that coloniality is not repressed at all in the United States: rather, at least in non-Indigenous texts, it is sanitised, valorised, and mythologised as Höglund states. Depictions of Indigenous people and monsters in the novels of the first section of this thesis are a manifestation of what Vizenor calls 'manifest manners': 'the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as "authentic" representations of indian cultures' (*Manifest Manners* vii).

If they are not examining early Euro-American Gothic texts for Indigenous Othering, most explorations of race in American Gothic texts focus solely on Blackness and the legacy of slavery. In some instances, such as the collection *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative* (1998), edited by Eric Savoy and Robert K Martin, Indigeneity is completely absent as a part of racial politics in American Gothic. The exclusion of Indigenous voices and artists continues in Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock's recent *The Cambridge Companion to the American Gothic* (2017). Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds' chapter on frontier Gothic in this collection is the sole work that even attempts to explore Indigeneity. Yet, while Hinds gestures towards the Othering and violence associated with Indigenous people in Early American Gothic texts, she uses these observations to foreground *settler's* reactions to the return of the repressed (i.e., the Indigene) and the horrors of transgressed boundaries (i.e., frontiers) of space, time, progress, and civilisation.

Other works make nods to Indigeneity and racial politics in Euro-American Gothic but are superficial in their arguments. Teresa A Goddu's *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (1997) explores race and politics in the American Gothic with an emphasis on depictions of Blackness and majority Euro-American texts. Goddu turns to *Logan: A Family History* (1822) as the sole foray into examining Indigeneity in American Gothic.

Unfortunately, Goddu does not deeply analyse how the subjecthood of the white author, John Neal, influences his writing and therefore his appropriated depiction of Indigeneity, stating only that '[i]n his rawness and his excess, identified with the Indian whose cultural identity he appropriated, Neal serves as a savage origin of America's literary nationalism' (71).

Carlos Gallego's contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic* (2014) acknowledges that texts written by Indigenous authors like N Scott Momaday and Silko can contain elements of the Gothic (in the form of ghosts and murders) in order to discuss racial tensions, but continually refers to Indigenous culture itself in spectral terms. Gallego states that *House Made of Dawn* (1968) depicts 'a dying Native American culture desperate for a place in the modern world,' a claim which is rooted in the assumption that Indigenous culture cannot or does not exist in a modern world (181). It is crucial to emphasise that, in contrast to most existing Euro-American Gothic and Indigenous horror criticism, my argument does not assume that the existence of an Indigenous ghost within a text means Indigenous peoples and cultures are automatically dead or dying. Indigenous peoples and cultures are, in fact, very much alive despite the best efforts of the colonial State.

I will take a decolonial approach to these texts, established by the works of Quijano, Höglund, Duncan, Walter Mignolo, Bhabra, and Grosfeugel, to centre the colonised perspective to the horrors of colonisation. There are many Indigenous texts that use horror elements that would not be as effective when structuring this argument. This is not because such texts are not or could not be explored as Gothic. Rather, in my choice of texts and methodology, it is important to foreground the limitations that my subject-position as a Euro-American puts upon my critical work. *Almanac*, *Indian Killer*, and *Doves* are all more accessible to me as a Euro-American critic because their prose does not demand inherent knowledge of some Indigenous traditions, memories, etc. Undoubtedly, Indigenous people who have access and a communal connection to this knowledge base would likely have a

more nuanced understanding of these novels. Nonetheless, as I will show, *Almanac*, *Indian Killer*, and *Doves* are meant to be engaged with by non-Indigenous readers in order to illustrate the depth of colonial horrors and the ways in which Indigenous hauntings can be powerful reminders of survivance.

Ngũgĩ wa' Thiong'o argues in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986):

Language carries culture, and culture carries [...] the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world [...] Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human being with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (16)

As a Euro-American, my connection to the colonial history of the United States is far more colonial than Indigenous persons. To better understand and represent the critical questions and issues at the heart of decolonisation in American literature, I turn to Indigenous authors like Vine Deloria Jr., Linda Hogan, N Scott Momaday, Arnold Krupat, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko, Nick Estes, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Louis Owens, and Gerald Vizenor. Works by these authors are particularly central to my personal understanding of Indigenous identity on/in Indigenous terms. This list, of course, is necessarily limited out of time and resources. However, as part of my argument is to show how much critical work is not being done – and *should* be done – to expand definitions and understandings of “Gothic” to include Indigenous epistemologies and stories, these limits in subject-position should not be surprising. It is my hope that my work will show the exciting new avenues for exploration that an Indigenous understanding of spectrality can present to readers and to the field of Gothic Studies as a whole.

**Chapter 1: ‘Screeching and Yammering and Clothed in Smoke’: Mythologising the
Material in *Blood Meridian***

Based on the memoir *My Confession: Recollections of a Rogue* (1956), Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian* follows the journey of the unnamed ‘kid’ as he moves Westward in the late 1800s, joining two mercenary bands that further the agendas of American expansion. The first group of mercenaries, led by General White, is determined to continue the Mexican American War to claim Mexico for the United States; this crusade ends almost as soon as it begins. For the majority of the novel, the kid travels with the Glanton gang, indiscriminately hunting Indigenous people and Mexicans across Central and North America in order to get bounties from the US government for their scalps. Within this violent setting, the reader is treated to many a manifesto from Judge Holden, a larger-than-life, hairless zealot and paedophile obsessed with violence and enacting a colonial ethos both physically through participating in genocide and epistemologically through his desire to completely eradicate all traces of Indigenous and Spanish settler history. In the wasteland of McCarthy’s imagined West, all colonial violence blends together, homogenising the actions of coloniser and colonised as an endless bloodbath without cause or effect.

Meridian gained popularity thanks largely to Harold Bloom, who advocated for *Meridian* as a Western epic in the tradition of Homer, Dante, and Herman Melville: a categorisation that is accurate in theory, but that also has, I believe, dangerous consequences. The analysis of epics like the Homeric epic and the Bible, as outlined in Auerbach’s *Mimesis* (2003), have been repeatedly applied to analyses of *Blood Meridian*. Specifically, the qualities of ‘sublimity’ of prose from the Homeric epic and the authoritative ‘externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else left in obscurity’ from the Bible are qualities that *Meridian* also uses and that critics focus upon (11). However, when critics praise *Meridian*’s “epic” qualities, they intrinsically displace the

material actions of genocidal colonialism that the novel depicts from history and reality onto a metaphysical battlefield. Specifically, many critics have praised the blunt portrayal of frontier violence and the sublimity of the depictions of Indigenous people. Speaking of the aesthetics of the novel, Philipp Meyer writes: ‘That is what Great Art does. It becomes more real than the real, more truth than the truth. It is the mechanism by which our mythologies form’ (xiii). The perception of colonial violence as emblematic of an artistic ideal is rooted in white supremacy and conquest, even to the point that vividly depicted acts of genocide can be considered high “art.”

From a decolonial perspective, however, divorcing depictions of genocide from their political and material consequences in order to elevate their status to canonically classic “art” is a function of imperial aesthetics. Höglund explains the connection between metaphor and empire, stating: ‘The imperial gothic’s predilection for metaphor becomes a way for US citizens to talk about the nature and challenges of colonialism through myth and symbol. Thus, US empire exists in the imperial gothic as a displaced discourse, always there but rarely recognized for what it is’ (55). In addition to mythologising the material space of the Western frontier, McCarthy erases Indigenous voices and depicts all Indigenous people in the text as bestial Others. This erasure is a form of spectralising the Indigenous person, but also spectralising any counter-narrative to Western frontier violence as uncompleted genocide. Instead, critical responses to *Meridian* centre on the supremacy of the super-colonist Judge Holden. Critics repeatedly argue that the judge functions in the story as a godlike figure whose entire being is consumed by destroying Indigenous people. However, what these arguments fail to explicitly address is how the narrative voice – purposefully or not – often echoes the judge’s evaluations of humanity and “civilization,” linking McCarthy’s use of the Biblical epic mode to imperialism. Like the judge’s all-encompassing colonial worldview, Auerbach notes that ‘The world of the Scripture stories [...] insists that it is the only real

world, is destined for autocracy. All other scenes, issues, and ordinances have no right to appear independently of it, and it is promised that all of them, the history of mankind, will be given their due place within its frame, subordinated to it' (14 – 15). Therefore, while McCarthy's prose appears hyper-realistic in its depiction of violence, the displacement of the violence into the metaphysical realm of "the nature of mankind" via the epic framing of the judge is also a spectralisation of the material reality and pain inflicted by colonisation, which allows for an uncoupling of colonial violence from the system of colonialism itself. In essence, regardless of authorial purpose, McCarthy's narrative voice inflicts colonial violence itself by homogenising frontier violence, spectralising the materiality of colonial violence for Indigenous peoples, and reinforcing harmful stereotypes of Indigeneity while further denying Indigenous peoples a fully articulate voice.

I. The Material Turned Spectral: Revisionism, Romanticism, and Frontier Mythology

In this way, McCarthy stages the acts colonial violence in *Meridian* not as a specific kind of violence that has social and economic implications for the victor (colonialism) but as proof of the supposedly universal depravity of mankind. As Steven Frye puts it, 'McCarthy's revisionism takes aim not just at late-nineteenth century American progressivism, but at the natives themselves, *who manifest the same depravity as their eventual conquerors. The primary target of the author's hard visionary indictment is human nature*' (76 – 77 emphasis mine). Therefore, *Meridian*, while seeming to present a critique of colonial violence, actually homogenises all the violence which occurred within the space of the American frontier, positioning itself to make sweeping metaphysical generalisations about all humankind while never addressing the subject-position of its own narrative voice. The critical response to *Meridian*, then, is a case study in how decolonising the canon is unachievable when approached from an epistemology still rooted in white supremacy. By examining the

underlying colonial epistemology that *Meridian* interacts with from a decolonial perspective, critics can evaluate just how successful the text is at critiquing the violence of colonisation and the material consequences that arise from such violence.

The overlap between imperialism, mythology, romanticism, and frontier literature is widely recognised. Höglund and Monnet state that, regardless of form or period of publication, adventure romances have ‘both widely archetypal/mythical and specific historical/ideological underpinnings’ (1302). Amy Kaplan explains how early American adventure romances such as *Edgar Huntly* and the Leatherstocking series created an ideological foundation for the idyllic frontier adventure which Westerns have since developed in complex ways, stating, ‘If the historical romance starts with a nostalgic lament for the closed frontier, the revival of the genre collectively reopens that space of the West’ and that the genre injected ‘life into the modern Western’ (684). One relationship between the historical adventure romance and the modern Western that is especially relevant to *Meridian* is how both rely on depictions of monstrosity and Otherness that can be related to imperial values and therefore the imperial Gothic.

Referring to the connection between physical and epistemological violence inherent in the colonial State, Grosfoguel refers to the US imperial system as the ‘Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric Modern/Colonial World- System’ (‘Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy’ np). Both Höglund in *American Imperial Gothic* and Grosfoguel in the above quote therefore make clear that epistemological imperial violence is inextricable from the rest of the American imperial system. It then follows that demonstrating that frontier violence happened is not enough to *critique* said violence: rather, doing so is just stating fact. Furthermore, when colonial violence is explicitly pictured alongside the ‘Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric/Modern/Colonial World-System’ (Grosfoguel np) and when neither colonial violence

nor that system receives meaningful critique, the violence loses all critical power it might have had to subvert the imperial system. I argue that the epic style that McCarthy draws upon – a style established almost entirely by white male European subjects and certainly critically acclaimed by white male European subjects¹¹ – serves only to reinforce frontier settler colonial mythology. Because of *Meridian*'s reliance on Othering imperial stereotypes alongside the narrative voice's aesthetic and ideological similarities to the character Judge Holden, an agent of the American imperial system and all the socio-political-economic injustice it stands for, the novel is ineffective in any critique of Western Expansion. In fact, it adheres to Höglund's criteria of American imperial Gothic texts in the ways it relies upon monstrosity and Otherness to demonstrate Euro-American supremacy.

II. Native Slaughter: Myth and Monsters

Just as ancient epic modes are closely linked to mythologies of Greek and Christian cultures, *Meridian* is closely linked to the mythologised fictional Euro-American frontier, specifically Fredrick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis and its importance in the colonial imagination. McCarthy interacts with this mythology of Western Expansion by plumbing the depths of the violence that Turner encouraged. Yet, because McCarthy uses the linguistic values of the West, specifically the privileging of epic aesthetics, this de-emphasises any exploration of the material consequences of colonialism in favour of aestheticism. In other words, *Meridian* is emblematic of how romance and the Western novel can contribute 'to a broader cultural dynamic that simultaneously represents and renders invisible the politics of empire building'

¹¹ In his introduction to *Mimesis*, Edward Said notes the miraculous staying power of Auerbach's observations of the 'epic'. For how *Meridian* relates to other epics and modern classics such as the works of Hawthorne and Dostoyevsky, see: Frye, Steven. *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*. University of South Carolina Press, 2009. ; Kruse, Zack. "'You Were a Witness Against Yourself': McCarthy's Judge as Chamberlain's Interlocutor in *Blood Meridian*." *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 60, no. 1, (2018), pp.98 – 110. ; Philips, Dana. 'History and the Ugly Facts of *Blood Meridian*.' *Cormac McCarthy: New Directions*, ed. by James D Lilley, University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Ebook.

(Kaplan 660). *Meridian* achieves this by making it seem like violence is all individual choice, rather than systemic. This is partly due to McCarthy's adherence to imperial Gothic tropes, particularly that of the violent confrontation between coloniser and Othered colonised subjects.

An overwhelming number of scholars argue that McCarthy's depiction of the West is an attempt to counteract the romantic idealisation of Western Expansion through an emphasis on monstrosity. Written in 1985, the mainstream American cultural idea of Western Expansion that *Meridian* was born into and out of was highly romantic. For many Americans both in the 1980s and beyond, Reagan 'would come to embody the great myth of the American West: the independent cowboy standing tall' (*Reagan Part I* np). In his first term, while Reagan continually spouted ideology of American exceptionalism and America's Puritan creation myth as a "shining city on the hill", he also famously demonised communism in his 'Evil Empire' speech. Given in March 1983 to the National Association of Evangelicals, the 'Evil Empire' speech tied the supposed evils of communism to the evils of secular life in general, namely abortion. Partially in justification of his ballooning defence budget, Reagan also argued in this speech that it was unethical to 'simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil' ('Regan "The Evil Empire"'). The black-and-white romantic and imperial dimensions of Reagan's rhetoric regarding the role of America on the world stage and its divine mission are, at this point in scholarly discourse on Reaganism, beyond debate. The demonisation of the 'Other' – in this case communists and secularists – is also indisputable. However, while the monstrosity and violence depicted in *Meridian* does undercut the romantic notions of Western Expansion that Reagan embodied in 1980s mainstream American culture, its reliance on Othering and monstrosity – in this case, of

Indigenous peoples – to invoke horror and disgust in the reader reinforces colonial images and ideologies.

As Höglund argues in the *Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature*, ‘Imperial Horror [...] is concerned with [...] the immediate and harrowing confrontation with the massive and wide-ranging destruction of both the physical and political body’ (332). Both McCarthy and the critics who continue to praise *Meridian* for its depictions of violence, then, should be scrutinised for ignoring or dismissing the material effects of such colonial violence upon the Indigenous populations who are rendered monstrous by the text. Central to many scholarly works on *Meridian* is the sublimity of the aesthetics; acts of violence combined with the monstrosity of both coloniser and colonised in the violent setting is a source of interest and artistic triumph. In fact, Frye argues that McCarthy ‘must be approached aesthetically, always with an eye toward the themes implied in literary form’ explicitly creating an exclusionary attitude toward criticism, such as mine, that seeks to de-privilege colonial aesthetics (4). Exemplifying Frye’s position, Alber writes: ‘McCarthy offers sumptuous and splendid depictions of violence for a specific and principled reason. He populates *Blood Meridian* with monsters because, by associating his characters with almost otherworldly freakishness, he is able to plumb the depths of the traumatic events depicted’ (8). Making characters monstrous or ‘freakish’ in order to provoke certain social and political associations of past trauma has long been a tradition of Euro-American Gothic and can also be seen in the Romantic Imperial texts from which the Western was born such as the Leatherstocking series. That monstrosity and violence exist within a given text is not enough, in and of itself, to determine if a given text is anti-colonial or pro-colonial. The subject position of the narrative voice and *who* or *what* is made monstrous, in what ways, and to what frequency, are also useful variables when evaluating how a text like *Meridian* engages with the material effect of colonisation.

According to Alber, ‘the monstrous figure in literature is what Levi-Strauss would deem a floating signifier; the culture that spawns the monster imbues it with whatever significance is relevant for that era. In this way, as [Jeffrey] Cohen claims [in his essay “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)”] the monster “function[s] as a dialectical Other”’ (9). While not an incorrect assessment of the way that society and monstrosity in literature interact, Levi-Strauss and Cohen’s arguments cannot be separated from the fact that subject position is key to determining what or how something is monstrous. In other words, while the monster may be ‘a dialectical Other’, the subject that is *not* the Other is equally important in the equation: in the case of *Meridian*, the genocidal coloniser. Furthermore, Othering allows for the homogenising of entire Indigenous cultures into simply “non-white Indigenes,” regardless of the existing complex socio-political-economic structures that were in place pre-colonisation. This is also an aspect of depictions of monstrosity in imperial Gothic texts: they uphold these categories of civilised virtuous coloniser and barbarous monstrous colonised by creating a monolithic bogeyman out of the colonial *idea of* the Indian. Admittedly, the colonisers in *Meridian* are not painted as civilised or virtuous as, for example, the romanticised character of Charles Stanton in *The Hunger*, whose characterisation I will explore in chapter three. However, as I will show, the monstrosity and spectrality of the Indigenous people in *Meridian* is specifically written to be as threatening to the Glanton gang as Katsu’s fictional Indigenous cannibals are to the Donner Party in *The Hunger*.

Meridian participates in this homogenising of Indigenous groups and erasure of Indigenous voices throughout its entirety. With only one line of dialogue spoken by an Indigenous person – a Chiricahua gang leader who asks Glanton for alcohol – the lack of Indigenous voices contributes to depicting the colonised as one, unorganised, menacing horde. In fact, the most prevalent “voice” given to Indigenous people is the shriek of a war-whoop: that sound incomprehensible to coloniser ears and inextricable from images of the

mythological, bloody frontier. One of the most oft-quoted passages in *Meridian* is the kid's first encounter with a group of Comanche warriors while working with General White. The passage is consistently cited as an indicator of McCarthy's aesthetically pleasing prose and, as Bloom puts it, his ability to 'aesthetically distance' his characters from violence (np).

McCarthy writes:

[T]here rose a fabled horde of mounted lancers and archers bearing shields bedight with bits of broken mirrorglass that cast a thousand unpieced suns against the eyes of their enemies. A legion of horrors hundreds in number, half naked or clad in costumes attic or biblical or wardrobed out of a fevered dream with the skins of animals and silk finery and pieces of uniform still tracked with the blood of prior owners, coats of slain dragoons, frogged and braided cavalry jackets, one in a stovepipe hat and one with an umbrella and one in white stockings and a bloodstained weddingveil and some in headgear of crane feathers or rawhide helmets that bore the horns of bull or buffalo and one in a pigeontailed coat worn backwards and otherwise naked and one in the armor of a Spanish conquistador, the breastplate and pauldrons deeply dented with old blows of mace or sabre done in another country by men whose very bones were dust and many with their braids spliced up with the hair of other beasts until they trailed upon the ground and their horse's ears and tails worked with bits of brightly colored cloth and one whose horse's whole head was painted crimson red and all the horsemen's faces gaudy and grotesque with daubing like a company of mounted clowns, death hilarious, all howling in a barbarous tongue, and riding down upon them like a horde from a hell more horrible yet than the brimstone land of christian reckoning, screeching and yammering and clothed in smoke like those vaporous beings in regions beyond right knowing where the eye wanders and the lip jerks and drools. (55)

Massive as this quote is, it is worth reprinting in its entirety; doing so demonstrates the 'aesthetics' that critics are praising – the imagery – while also demonstrating that these aesthetics/images have deeply Gothic roots. The extensive list of outfits that McCarthy describes the Comanche – or 'legion of horrors' – wearing is uncanny to the coloniser spectators. The Indigenous people, rather than being individuals within their own right, are reduced to a spectacle of violent colonial confrontation through their clothing. Essentially, despite the appearance of the "horde" being a pastiche of various items from different colonial time periods, the images of these Comanche can be categorised fairly easily into "coloniser" aesthetics and "Indian" aesthetics, the latter of which are still as alien and menacing to the colonisers as anything in *Edgar Huntly* or *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826).

The “coloniser” aesthetics are most prevalent in the beginning and middle sections: the ‘silk finery and pieces of uniform still tracked with the blood of prior owners, coats of slain dragoons, frogged and braided cavalry jackets, one in a stovepipe hat and one with an umbrella and one in white stockings and a bloodstained weddingveil’ all are garments of the coloniser (55). Many of these garments are also associated with colonial violence – such as the uniforms, dragoon coats, and cavalry jackets – and their presence therefore heightens the horror for White’s gang as it foreshadows the fate that awaits them as soon as they see these visions.

That this horror of colonial violence is being visited back upon coloniser by the colonised might seem like it is condemning colonial violence. However, because the Comanche in this passage are reduced to mere images without apparent thought or value outside their meaning *to colonisers* like White’s gang, any potential comment on the horrors of colonialism remain centred on the white perspective. This is because the uncanniness rises partly out of their presumably grotesque acquisition of the garments of their colonisers, acquired as they are through violent means. Yet the other element of uncanniness pervades even when the imagery/aesthetics of the coloniser are removed from the passage. Doing so significantly minimised the word count yet does *not* significantly minimise the horrific nature of this image for the White’s gang. With the descriptions of colonial clothing removed, the passage reads as follows:

[T]here rose a fabled horde of mounted lancers and archers bearing shields [...] A legion of horrors, hundreds in number, half naked or clad in costumes [...] out of a fevered dream [...] all the horse-men’s faces gaudy and grotesque with daubings like a company of mounted clowns, death hilarious, all howling in a barbarous tongue, and riding down upon them like a horde from a hell [...] screeching and yammering and clothed in smoke. (55)

From this edited version, it becomes clear that the horror of the Indigenous warriors is merely *compounded* by the colonial clothing. Even without it, they remain horrific Others. Most significant, however, is that they are horrific Others from a longstanding tradition of colonial

epistemology. There is nothing original in McCarthy's representation of this group of Indigenous people. They are 'half-naked' savages, whose 'gaudy and grotesque [...] daubings' of face paint are without significance outside their meaning to White's gang: a meaning which spells death and destruction for the colonisers but does not acknowledge in any way the cultural meanings of these same images to the Comanche. Their voices, too, lack all comprehension. Through their 'howling', 'screeching' and 'yammering', the Comanche are reduced to animalistic phantoms. Their function in the text is not significantly different from the function of the Indian in the colonial imagination – that function being to provide a monstrous Other which unifies colonial subjects in opposition and allows for the true profiteers of the colonial/modern machine to continue exploiting both land and people.

Scholars repeatedly praise the narrative voice for using aesthetics to *distance* colonial violence from its real historical moments and impact. Tying *Meridian* to a Biblical mode, Frye states:

[McCarthy's] extended description is modern and explicitly surreal. The nightmarish quality of the passage lifts the event out of local history, and the bloody conflict echoes the apocalyptic imagery of the book of Revelation. The attack appears as more than a single incident, evoking former battles in other places and times, and the event as a whole becomes a sweeping metaphorical rendering of the violence that has defined not only human history but the history of the physical universe itself. (75)

Frye's interest in the passage on its aesthetics renders the Indigenous people *rightfully* spectral. Their spectrality is not questioned and therefore their status as spectres and objects within the text is not even considered *as a perspective*. By concentrating on the "epic" dimensions of McCarthy's prose rather than the actual material scenes and violence they depict, the subjectivity of the narrative voice is ignored. Also ignored is the underlying, colonially-rooted assumption that the ghostly Indigene is a figure tied to reality rather than mythology. In short, Frye misses the system of colonialism and the ways in which McCarthy reinforces this system by making the Comanche horrific, thereby removing the scene from the reality of its historical origins – wherein the Euro-American colonisers are the aggressors

– to transplant it to the realm of American imperial myth. This becomes even more problematic when one recalls Auerbach's assertions that the Biblical narrator writes 'truth', something also ascribed to McCarthy by Frye, who writes 'one must understand that the author seeks truth and value' (6). Therefore, because the Indigenous warriors remain Other, and othered according to the strictures of colonialism, McCarthy cannot provide meaningful critique of the colonial system. The privileging of aesthetics over material reality by critics further obfuscates the imperial foundations in McCarthy's prose.

Thus, although the Indigenous people in *Meridian* are very physical, they are also very spectral. In fact, the end of the above passage emphasizes the Comanche's ghostliness. McCarthy writes that they are 'clothed in smoke like those vaporous beings in regions beyond right knowing where the eye wanders and the lip jerks and drools', associating their very beings with an incomprehensibility so beyond Cartesian rationality that it drives the observer insane (55). Their spectrality, combined with their pastiche of both coloniser and colonised clothing, adds to their uncanniness. The Comanche are, therefore, made into *signs* rather than subjects. As Bergland argues, reducing Indigenous people to signs and spectres rather than real subjects is 'a technique of removal. By writing about Indians as ghosts, white writers effectively remove them from American lands, and place them, instead, within the American imagination' (4). Removing Indigenous people from the original cultural context in which they live also make it easier to homogenize disparate groups into one, monstrous horde, to use McCarthy's own language. However, turning the Indigenous people into monstrous Others also makes it easier for to erase or obscure the workings of the imperial system, purposefully or not. The members of White's imperial gang are made smaller than the colonial programme to which they belong to by being placed opposite this 'grotesque' and 'screeching [...] horde from hell' (55). In this scene, the entire destructive power is with the Indigenous people. Left out of such a reading, however, is that the novel takes place

around 1849 – 1850, when the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny was in full swing and settler colonialism rampant with the California Gold Rush, the Oregon and California Trails, and the recent victory over Mexico in the Mexican American War. Thus, the Comanche in this scene may have the upper hand over White and his gang at that moment, but the colonial machine has already, purposefully, meticulously and without mercy, committed violence against these people that retributive violence cannot touch. In misrepresenting the power dynamics at play in order to produce aesthetically sublime prose, McCarthy creates a false equivalency between genocidal violence against the colonised, which aims to wipe entire civilizations off the earth, and self-defensive violence against the coloniser.

The text's sympathy with colonisers reinforces homogenizing of Indigenous people and Mexican citizens as babbling, savage Others. Even the lone group of friendly Indigenous warriors the Glanton gang encounters – a group of Chiricahua – are described similarly to terms used to describe the Comanche. McCarthy writes:

Even with the sun up it was not above freezing and yet they sat on their horses half naked, naught but boots and breechclouts and the plumed hide helmets they wore, stoneage savages daubed with clay paints in obscure charges, greasy, stinking, the paint on the horses pale under the dust and the horses prancing and blowing cold. They carried lances and bows and a few had muskets and they had long black hair and dead black eyes that cut among the riders studying their arms, the sclera bloodshot and opaque. (240)

Like the Comanche, the Chiricahua are a cultural mishmash of coloniser and colonised weapons, though unlike the Comanche they appear to be wearing only fairly innocuous garb. Here also the reader is treated to an up-close encounter with Indigenous people: one that highlights their filthiness and, in turn, their Otherness. By first giving the Chiricahua the moniker of 'stoneage savages,' the descriptors that follow this moniker are associated both with their supposed primitivity and their savagery. Like Cartesian expectations of modernity dictate, these primitive barbarians are 'greasy' and 'stinking,' and their eyes are 'dead,'

demonstrating no intelligence or personality. Furthermore, their eyes are ‘bloodshot,’ lending both monstrosity and disease to the atmospheric image of these Indigenous people.

It is worth mentioning that barbarity and is also often used to describe the Glanton gang. However, this again leads to false equivalencies between coloniser and colonised.

When the kid and Toadvine first see the Glanton gang from their spot in a Chihuahua prison yard, McCarthy describes them as:

viciouslooking humans [...] barbarous, clad in the skins of animals [...] and armed with weapons of every description [...] and the trappings of their horses fashioned out of human skin and their bridles woven up from human hair and decorated with human teeth and the riders wearing scapulars or necklaces of dried and blackened human ears and the horses rawlooking and wild in the eye and their teeth bared like feral dogs. (83 – 84)

The image of the colonising Glanton gang – the vast majority of whom are white – are ‘clad in the skins of animals’ just as the Comanche and Chiricahua. In fact, though the Comanche wear the bloodstained clothing of their slain enemies, this image of Glanton’s gang carrying trophies of human teeth, hair, and ears, is arguably more horrifying and barbaric than the ghostly sartorial pastiches of the Comanche. These riders are not, as Bloom states, ‘aesthetically distanced’ from their violent colonial actions at all (np). Yet, as the passage continues, the Western aesthetics once again override any subversive power the image of the barbarous Glanton gang might hold. The passage continues ‘and riding also in the company a number of half-naked savages reeling in the saddle, dangerous, filthy, brutal, the whole like a visitation from some heathen land where they and others like them fed on human flesh’ (84). The description of the ‘half-naked savages’ – a handful of Delaware that act as guides to the Glanton gang – is the final image readers get of the gang. Unlike the Glanton gang who appear horrible because they are wearing human trophies, the Delaware are ‘dangerous, filthy, brutal’ and potentially cannibalistic simply by their existence *as Indians* who are spectralised as ‘visitations.’ The Delaware are also further spectralised via the erasure of their voices and individual characters. Despite being the most visible Indigenous people in the

novel they never speak. They are never described as having thoughts or emotions outside of the gang. Yet in this passage they are still outsiders to the rest of the gang: separate but still ‘horrible’ not because of the genocidal violence with which they are associated, but because of their own identities.

By thus painting all colonial violence with the same brush, even self-defensive violence against genocidal fanatics like the Glanton and White gangs, McCarthy presents a very juvenile and unnuanced understanding of frontier policies and the economic, social, and political imperial system that drove individuals such as the Glanton and White gangs to commit genocide. In an attempt to defend and explain the merit of this false equivalency, Alber writes, ‘while McCarthy calls attention to the pernicious characterization of Native Americans as monsters, he also subverts it by associating (white) historical figures complicit in the genocide of the Native population with monstrosity throughout the novel’ (10). Such a reading, however, ignores the very material effects that anti-Indigenous language has, and the way that such language also reinforces colonial stereotypes. In other words, it is not enough to demonstrate that ‘(white) historical figures’ are ‘complicit in the genocide of the Native population’; this statement is fact. That McCarthy centres self-defensive anti-imperial violence as directly equivalent to colonial genocide, and that critics largely find this to be acceptable, speaks to the enduring colonial mindset within in the academy.

Daniel Francis argues in *Imaginary Indians* (1992) that the image of the Indian in Euro-American popular culture is a symbolic one: ‘Europeans have tended to imagine the Indian rather than to know Native people, thereby to project onto Native people all the fears and hopes they have for the New World [...] If America was an alien place, then Indians must be seen to be frightful and bloodthirsty’ (8). Though McCarthy wrote *Meridian* over three-hundred years after the first European colony settled in New England, he still relies on the colonial association between horrific people and a horrific land in the imagery of the

novel and any social commentary he may, indeed, be trying to make. Alber describes the land *Meridian* as ‘nightmarish, sprinkled with nouns of the typical fantasist: this Southwest is populated by phantoms, avatars, and chimeras. It is a heterotopian space, both of this world and outside it’ (15). The land therefore echoes the aesthetics of the Indians to be similarly ineffable, ghostly, and hostile. By making the land itself like something out of a dream – something, in other words, not real – McCarthy further distances the acts of colonial violence he depicts from reality, despite their vividness.

The connotation of the Western landscape as hellish and violent continues from other white coloniser perspectives in the novel. Tobin the expriest recounts the Glanton gang’s first interaction with the judge to the kid. Glanton’s gang was pursued by ‘savages’ who they had not managed to murder and scalp when they came upon the judge sitting on a rock in the wilderness (132). The judge then led the gang to a volcano and helped them to make saltpeter which they then used to massacre the Indigenous people chasing them. Tobin states that the area was ‘a maze [...] for aught any man knows lies the locality of hell [...] there’s men in this company besides myself seen little cloven hoofprints in the stone clever as a little doe in her going but what little doe ever trod melted rock?’ (137 – 138). McCarthy explicitly links the Indigenous land in this text with hell, implicitly answering Tobin’s question – ‘what little doe ever trod melted rock’ – by suggesting it was not a doe at all but a demon that would naturally belong to such a landscape. Nowhere in the text is this image of the land as a Christian and therefore colonial hellscape challenged. There is an explicit colonial association with the land that, similarly to the depiction of the Indigenous people, is not original to McCarthy.¹² On the contrary, it is a staple of pro-imperial texts dating back even to Indian

¹² For more on the ways that Euro-American Gothic texts figure the wilderness as a hellscape inhabited by demonic Indigenous groups, see: Corstophine, Kevin. ““Sour Ground”: Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary* and the Politics of Territory.” *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Stories*, vol. 1, October (2006), pp. 84 – 98. ; Magistrale, Tony. ‘Hawthorne’s Woods Revisited: Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary*.’ *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, (Spring 1988), pp. 9 – 13.

captivity narratives. Höglund defines the captivity narrative thus: ‘captivity here means the removal of a defenceless person by the gothic Other from a modern context to a primitive one’ (171). Tobin’s narration of the gang’s first meeting with the judge is consistent with this imperial narrative tradition. Glanton’s gang are repeatedly figured as defenceless, despite the fact that they are the colonial aggressors and the heralds of a US empire that seeks to erase Indigeneity entirely. In addition to being made monstrous by their natural association with a hellish landscape, the Indigenous people in this passage are further removed from the material reality of historical colonial power structures by being made into signs rather than subjects. What this serves to do, ultimately, is further remove Indigenous people as the central victims of a colonial system that endures into the 1980s when the novel was written and beyond.

Ironically, reinforcing colonialism is likely not the intent of McCarthy’s novel overall. However, regardless, of intent, McCarthy’s prose demonstrates the pitfalls of attempting to deconstruct colonialism while privileging colonial aesthetics and relying heavily on colonial imagery. This incomplete almost-critique is further reinforced as adequate when scholars repeatedly focus on the effect of Indigenous pain and violence upon colonisers like the kid. By reading *Meridian* as a Western epic and not a Euro-American imperial Gothic texts critics praise the same sorts of images of Indigenous people and unconquered land that literally aided in the genocide of native peoples. I have argued for scepticism toward criticism of *Meridian* by de-privileging aesthetics of how McCarthy depicts Indigenous peoples and colonial violence and instead, to more critically examine how these images uphold a colonial subject position that further erases the material realities of colonisation and Indigenous peoples themselves. But what is equally colonial is the aesthetics of how McCarthy figures the kid and the judge and their “cosmic” ideological/epistemological battle over the nature of mankind. Though the judge is depicted as horrific – just as frontier violence is painted as

horrific regardless of who is the aggressor – *Meridian* ultimately fails at a meaningful critique of the judge’s imperial ideology because the narrative voice often echoes it, apparently without irony. In short, *Meridian* is either the most tongue-in-cheek decolonial novel and has been misunderstood by the vast majority of published scholars to date which do not find it to be ironic at all, or McCarthy’s prose falls into the very trap it tries to expose by relying too heavily on colonial imagery and epistemology.

IV. Judge Holden’s Triumph: Centring Cartesian Masculinity and the ‘Inevitability’ of Indigenous Death

Because both American imperial Gothic and the epic are both invested in mythic figures whose exploits have consequences on a cosmic level, McCarthy’s construction of the judge, with his lack of interiority and authoritative voice, is exemplary of the way in which these two modes meet and complement one another. Sara Spurgeon explains the outcome of this aesthetic move, stating that:

like any mythic story, we already know the outcome. The characters are not explored [...] because, as actors in a myth, their individualities are less important than the roles they are playing [...] What is meaningful are the actions the characters take and the power of their story to shape the world of those who hear it. (np)

As Höglund notes, however, the imperial Gothic mode – and particularly Euro-American imperial Gothic – also relies heavily on a *nationalistic* myth, one built on colonial values and epistemologies, in order to provoke horror from readers. As with the imperial aesthetics of the novel regarding Indigenous peoples, critics also praise McCarthy’s construction of the judge and, in doing so, reinforce colonial values in literary canon and scholarship. Specifically, while seeming to be shocked on a moral level by the judge’s explicit ‘intention to expunge [the existence of Indigenous cultures] from the memory of man’, critics do not seem to question that the judge is capable of this (148). Nor, indeed, does McCarthy’s

narrative voice. The result is that the judge's genocidal ambitions, while often horrific, are not questioned as a specific worldview or even as the actual outcome of Western expansion. In short, the figure of the judge with his "epic," cosmic framing within the narrative further removes the colonial acts in the novel from the space of material reality. His framing, instead, reinforces a mythic concept of colonialism, which in turn displaces the discourse of coloniality from the material outcomes of colonial violence to a mythical realm in which colonialism is simply an idea; abhorrent as the idea may be, it is easier to dismiss because it is made to be less "real."

Speaking of the judge, Bloom argues he 'seems to have come from some other world [...] [he] never sleeps, dances and fiddles with extraordinary art and energy, rapes and murders little children of both sexes, and says that he will never die. By the book's close, I have come to believe that the Judge is immortal' (np). From Bloom's perspective, and the perspective of many others,¹³ the judge – the enforcer of violent colonial conquest, whose sole purpose in the novel appears to be the complete destruction of Indigenous people and their potential sympathisers – is immortal. Although he is horrible, he is therefore also infinite. Furthermore, his life and therefore his victory are inevitable according to the text and to the belief that the text is reliable in regard to the judge. Therefore, to the many scholars that see the judge as being godlike, the judge's immortality is inevitable just as the

¹³ See: Bloom, Harold. 'Harold Bloom on Cormac McCarthy, True Heir to Melville and Faulkner On Violence, the Sublime, and *Blood Meridian's* Place in the American Canon.' LitHub, 16 October 2019, <https://lithub.com/harold-bloom-on-cormac-mccarthy-true-heir-to-melville-and-faulkner/>. Accessed 27 January 2021. ; Cavender, Kurt. 'Our Knowing Compelled to Go Back: Speculative Misreading and the Identity of *Blood Meridian*.' *College Literature*, vol. 43, no. 4, (2016), pp. 693 – 716. ; Frye, Steven. *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*. University of South Carolina Press, 2009. ; Kruse, Zack. "'You Were a Witness Against Yourself': McCarthy's Judge as Chamberlain's Interlocutor in *Blood Meridian*.' *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 60, no. 1, (2018), pp. 98 – 110. ; Philips, Dana. 'History and the Ugly Facts of *Blood Meridian*.' *Cormac McCarthy: New Directions*, ed. by James D Lilley, University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Ebook. ; Spurgeon, Sara. 'The Sacred Hunter and the Eucharist of the Wilderness: Mythic Reconstructions in *Blood Meridian*.' *Cormac McCarthy: New Directions*, ed. by James D Lilley, University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Ebook. ; Walonen, Michael K. 'Violence, Imperialism and Male Socialization in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* and Marlon James' *A Brief History of Seven Killings*.' *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 26, no. 2, (2018), pp. 66 – 79.

destruction of the Indigenous people is inevitable. However, I want to be clear that text does not discourage this kind of reading, largely because of McCarthy's choice to adhere to the aesthetics and conventions of the epic. According to the logic of the epic and its critical framework, if the judge is a god, the kid is his foil. Hüseyin Altındış argues, that, while the judge believes 'war lacks morality', the kid 'frequently responds to the Judge's grandiose speeches by saying "*You're crazy*" – that questions and thus undermines the authority the judge practices over others' (93).¹⁴ What this perspective assumes is that objection equals meaningful critique. Calling the judge crazy does not actually offer an alternative epistemology to the judge, it is simply an interjection. However, because of the epic framing which sees the two characters as god and foil, the kid's response to the judge's monstrosity often gets as credited for being as all-encompassing as the judge's ideology, even though, as I will show, nowhere does *Meridian* reinforce the kid's ideology over that of the judge. For example, Frye also argues that the kid's choice to not kill the judge despite repeated opportunities to do so 'is surface evidence of other actions that distinguish the kid from the rest of the gang' (89). However, failure to kill the judge is hardly a mark of benevolence since the judge is repeatedly figured as godlike and unkillable by McCarthy to begin with.

Most significant for the text's lack of actual critique of colonialism, however, is that, nowhere in the text does the kid demonstrate real remorse for his participation in genocide. Throughout the novel the kid is – at his worst – an eager participant in colonial violence and

¹⁴ Echoing this evaluation, see: Bloom, Harold. 'Harold Bloom on Cormac McCarthy, True Heir to Melville and Faulkner On Violence, the Sublime, and *Blood Meridian's* Place in the American Canon.' LitHub, 16 October 2019, <https://lithub.com/harold-bloom-on-cormac-mccarthy-true-heir-to-melville-and-faulkner/>. Accessed 27 January 2021. ; Cavender, Kurt. 'Our Knowing Compelled to Go Back: Speculative Misreading and the Identity of *Blood Meridian*.' *College Literature*, vol. 43, no. 4, (2016), pp. 693 – 716. ; Frye, Steven. *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*. University of South Carolina Press, 2009. ; Kruse, Zack. "'You Were a Witness Against Yourself': McCarthy's Judge as Chamberlain's Interlocutor in *Blood Meridian*." *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 60, no. 1, (2018), pp. 98 – 110. ; Philips, Dana. 'History and the Ugly Facts of *Blood Meridian*.' *Cormac McCarthy: New Directions*, ed. by James D Lilley, University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Ebook. ; Walonen, Michael K. 'Violence, Imperialism and Male Socialization in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* and Marlon James' *A Brief History of Seven Killings*.' *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 26, no. 2, (2018), pp. 66 – 79.

– at his best – a semi-reluctant bystander who, nevertheless, still participates in or helps those who participate in colonial violence. Because of this, no one appears to have a cohesive set of values or an understanding of larger consequences for actions besides the judge. The lack of counter-perspective to the judge’s totalising colonial control and the narrative voice’s reinforcement of the judge’s philosophy almost to the exclusion of all other philosophies therefore only emphasises *Meridian*’s ultimate reliance on colonial values systems and epistemologies. What becomes clear when the kid and the judge’s supposed disagreement is taken at face-value for its cosmic, “epic” dimensions, however, is that the Indigenous lives taken by both the ‘hero’ and ‘antihero’ of the novel are merely tools with which McCarthy can explore the cosmic and philosophical dimension of good and evil. In this way, like other imperial Gothic texts, the Indigenous figures are mere objects against which the white male colonisers can test their masculinity. Additionally, because McCarthy’s epic style attempts to efface the interiority of all its characters and the larger consequences of genocidal actions of the Glanton gang, it gives the appearance the horrors of colonialism were merely individual acts of violence without meaning rather than a systemic elimination of Indigenous people and their culture. It obfuscates how the rhetoric of colonialism relies heavily upon white male colonial power fantasies of violence and “appropriate” masculine performance.

Kaplan notes the insidiousness of this displacement of colonial violence from the national body to the individual male body when she states, ‘The discourse of American imperialism is therefore double, because it simultaneously delineates national power that is disembodied from territorial boundaries and reembodied in the power of the male body’ (663). The way that McCarthy deploys violence is consistent with this sort of disembodiment from the national to the individual male body. In *Meridian*, violence is both an individual choice and an indisputable part of human nature, without deeper meaning and universal to all groups. There is no nuance to the violence in *Meridian* and no ultimate reason for violence

other than the darkness in human – and specifically *men's* – hearts. This is an interpretation of violence that the judge explicitly represents in a colonial dimension. One of the judge's pass-times during the evenings is to sketch artefacts he finds in a little book, 'citing the dimensions in his neat script, making marginal notes' (147). After the detailed sketch is finished, the judge destroys the artefacts with his bare hands and by tossing them in the fire because 'it was his intention to expunge them from the memory of man', an action that makes him appear 'much satisfied with the world, as if his counsel had been sought at its creation' (148). Through such incidents as these, as Zack Kruse puts it, 'it is difficult to say that McCarthy's judge excuses violence; rather, he encourages the members of the gang to embrace it as an immutable part of each of their identities' (104). However, what Kruse fails to note in this passage is that this perspective of the role of violence in human nature, just like the perspective of Indigenous disappearance, comes from a specifically colonial epistemology. The "inevitability" of Indigenous genocide is inseparable from masculine colonial violence and the performativity of frontier masculinity in *Meridian*.

Similar to the previous examination of critical responses to the text's depictions of Indigeneity, critical reception of the role of violence in the novel is distressingly colonial. Bloom calls Judge Holden's 'gladsome prophecy of eternal war' '*authentically universal*' (np emphasis mine). The assumption that *any* subject position can be 'authentically universal' is demonstrably false both within the ethos of the novel – the Glanton gang slaughters peaceful and hostile people alike – and without the novel. The claim is, in fact, so fabulously incorrect one wonders how critics come to such a conclusion in the first place. What is clear from this statement, however, is that a critical outlook rooted in colonial epistemology is needed to make the literary critic see the judge's colonial worldview as universal. Somewhat in opposition to this perspective, Lauren Brown argues that the judge's conception of violence is a *construction* based on his role in the colonial regime, stating, 'translated to his role as law,

the judge holds the power to sanction and validate the frameworks they [the gang] already possess, or to set different terms of obedience and *modus operandi*' (78). What is missing from Brown's reading, however, is the explicit connection between colonial epistemology and values and the judge's 'role as law'. Reading Brown's analysis alongside Althusser's concept of the subject and Kaplan's analysis of masculinity in frontier texts, however, proves useful for exploring the character of the judge from a decolonial perspective.

In *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, Althusser explains the construction of individual subject position:

We shall therefore say, considering only a single subject [...] that the existence of the ideas in which he believes is material in that his ideas are material acts inserted into material practices regulated by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which (hardly by accident!) his ideas derive. (186)

Central to the core of subjectivity is the 'ideological apparatus' which, in the case of *Meridian*, is the colonial State which pursues a goal of Western Expansion via, among other tactics, genocide of Indigenous people. The 'material rituals' that the judge enacts, as partially described above, point to his complete investment in the ideology and power of the colonial State: his destruction of Indigenous and Spanish artifacts, his destruction of Indigenous people, his belief that all that exists without his 'dispensation' should be destroyed. In this way, the ideology of the colonial State is very much present throughout the novel even if the US government is materially remote. As Brown puts it, 'Judge Holden is not an original figure of violence in American history, but a participant who wholly adopts the traditions he has inherited and consolidates them through the authority of law' ('Existing' 82). What is concerning about the figure of the judge is not that he enacts colonial violence or colonial ideology, but that his *subjecthood* is deemphasised by the text and often by critics, making it appear as though his subject position is not – as Althusser argues – socially constructed, but rather natural. His godlike status in the text reinforces this perspective as

well; in other words, those who read the text without questioning the authority of the judge are likely reading the text as McCarthy most closely intended, but they are not reading it with a critical and decolonial eye.

The authority of the judge is upheld through mythical symbolism and aesthetically epic prose. By examining the violence that the judge commits without the assumption that he is a godlike figure whose meaning is both transcendent and universal, however, it becomes clear that the narrative voice relies upon an entirely colonial epistemology to depict violence and its meaning. One of the scenes that most starkly demonstrates the meaning of violence to the judge is one in which he murders an Apache boy who he kidnapped after the Glanton gang massacred his village. The judge briefly cares for the child before murdering and scalping him. While this murder does have a horrific effect – indeed, his murder is supposed to be horrible – that does not change the fact way that the text denies subjecthood to the Apache boy, or that his death is framed by the text as anything other than further proof of man's violent tendencies, divorced from any colonial framing. McCarthy writes:

The judge sat with the Apache boy before the fire [...] some of the men played with it and made it laugh [...] They covered it with a blanket and in the morning the judge was dandling it on one knee [...] Toadvine saw him with the child as he passed with his saddle but when he came back ten minutes later [...] the child was dead and the judge had scalped it. (173)

This violence is an act of colonial genocide motivated by material economic reward and a sense of epistemological superiority. The Apache boy is merely an object of profit to the judge with whom he likes to toy, caring for him before murdering him for the money that his scalp will bring. Additionally, however, this violence is detached from the materiality of its genocidal aim by McCarthy's word choice and depiction of the boy. The narrative voice refers to the boy as 'it' rather than 'he', turning the boy into an object syntactically, which is exactly what the judge does to him materially. This dissociates the boy from any personal material consequences of genocide, consequently making it easier for those already

predisposed to viewing the boy as object to see his death not as something connected to larger system of violence but as something disconnected to material reality. In this way, the murder of the child is similar to the figure of the judge and the ‘imbecile’ wandering in the wilderness after the massacre of the Glanton gang at the river crossing: it holds both excessive and no meaning (297).

This is just a small example of how the narrative voice echoes, rather than questions, the judge’s colonial ideology and his godlike status. Overwhelmingly, the underlying colonial ideologies of the judge are reinforced by *Meridian* despite how the text also attempts to frame them as horrific. Because of this, colonial violence itself becomes spectral in *Meridian*. Deaths like the Apache child and the villages of Indigenous people throughout the novel are little more than narrative tools with which to demonstrate the depravity of the white settler colonists. In addition to silencing potential voices of anti-imperial opposition, this choice by McCarthy also serves to underscore the idea that the “inevitable” death of the Indigenous people is “proof” of man’s violence, thus reinforcing the judge’s epistemological view of humankind. The colonial concept that the erasure of Indigenous people is both inevitable and total is stated as fact throughout the novel, both by characters such as the judge and by the narrative voice. In the same passage where the judge sketches and destroys the different conquistador and possibly Indigenous artefacts, the narrative voice exoticises and underlines the primitivity of the space where the Glanton gang is camping. The gang is in the ‘ruins of an older culture’, home to only broken memories of a colonial past and ‘ruinous kivas’ where tools ‘of bone’ litter the ground (146 – 147). The death of this ‘older culture’ is stated as fact by the narrative voice and further echoed by the judge, who acts as a voice of authority on the space where they have camped. In a passage where Indigenous people are spectralised and removed from their own ancestral lands, the judge states:

The people who once lived here are called the Anasazi. The old ones [...] They are rumors and ghosts in this land [...] The old ones are gone like phantoms and the

savages wander these canyons to the sound of ancient laughter. In their crude huts they crouch in darkness and listen to the fear seeping out of the rock. All progressions from a higher to a lower order are marked by ruins and mystery and a residue of nameless rage. (153)

Of course, the judge's language here is purposefully indicative of a colonial mindset that sees civilisation as being on a spectrum that proves some kind of 'progress.' However, the narrative voice's presentation of this space as a ruin filled with bones only serves to foreshadow or uphold the judge's assessment of the area as haunted and barbarous.

The text is filled with such spectralisation and exoticisation from the narrative voice. Soon after the Glanton gang massacres an Indigenous village, the narrative voice reflects on the destruction, stating, '[I]n the circuit of a few suns all trace of the destruction of these people would be erased. The desert wind would salt their ruins and there would be nothing, nor ghost nor scribe, to tell to any pilgrim in his passing how it was that people had lived in this place and in this place died' (184). The utter destruction and erasure from time of the Indigenous people is underscored by the narrator. Tragic though the tone of this passage is, it does not refute the colonial idea that Indigenous people were successfully wiped from the earth by settler colonialism. Very much to the contrary, it reinforces imagery and colonial ideology of the dead Indian. Furthermore, the passage's statement that 'there would be nothing, nor ghost nor scribe' to tell of the Indigenous people who lived in the village and how they were slaughtered is confusing, as just before this, McCarthy states that '[a]n old woman knelt at the blackened stones before her door and poked brush into the coals and blew back a flame from the ashes and began to right the overturned pots' (184). In reading the complete image together, it becomes clear that either the Indigenous woman who is still in the village does not count as a person to whoever is narrating the scene, or that her voice and ability to articulate does not matter. In either case, the outcome is the same: the settler colonial perspective of the scene overrides an existing potential Indigenous perspective, one

that could show the survivance of Indigenous people despite the best attempts of the colonial state to eradicate them. This hearkens back to Bergland's observation that:

First and foremost, the ghosting of Indians is a technique of removal [...] [W]hite writers effectively remove them from American lands, and place them, instead, within the American imagination [...] American individuals who "contain" Indians thereby constitute themselves as representative Americans. (4)

By figuring the burned village as a ghost-town in which even the living old woman is a ghost, McCarthy's narrative voice further spectralises Indigeneity and raises the image of the dead Indian to a symbolic and mythological symbol, rather than addressing the material reality that Indigenous people survived colonialism and still suffer under it.

The thoroughness of the obfuscation of the imperial system and spectralisation of Indigenous voices in *Meridian* is reflected in the lack of critical response to this absence in the text. Instead of identifying the homogeneity of the violence and the groups involved as a failing of the text, critics tend to praise the homogeneity as an aesthetic and critical strength. Kurt Cavender argues, 'By pointing to an unresolvable conflict between our moral reason and our aesthetic judgements, the novel [...] asks if there is no abomination so horrifying that to narrate it neutrally, without voicing our collective revulsion, is already a capitulation of moral responsibility' (696). Cavender goes on to argue that the violence in *Meridian* is 'mindless' and that its mindlessness 'appears to be raised by the text's aesthetic composition to a kind of obscene poetic ideal' (696). While Cavender is correct to point out that the aesthetic of the violence within *Meridian* is obscene, his statement also parrots imperial values. By stating that, when examining the violence in the novel, critics face a 'conflict between our moral reason and our aesthetic judgements' and that this conflict is 'unresolvable', Cavender places "pleasing" aesthetic prose and the materiality reality and history of genocide on equal footing. Put bluntly, this attitude values aesthetic prose above the material reality of human life. Cavender continues: 'The sublime violence that constitutes the novel's ontology is sublime only to the extent that it exceeds moral, political, or psychological explanation'

(700). Such a claim or reading of violence the novel, however, is one that ignores the material facts of the novel. There is a very clear moral and political explanation for the Glanton gang and the judge's violence towards Indigenous and Latinx people when their subject position as settler colonists is acknowledged. Their acts of genocide are the very material rituals that allow Grosfoguel's Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric Modern/Colonial World-System to thrive in the now-United States. The violence in *Meridian* does not 'exceed' meaning, it is the meaning of violence to the colonial State. Yet because of the epic mode in which McCarthy constructs his colonial West, this specifically settler colonial meaning is hidden behind a facade of aesthetics and grand metaphysical dissertations on the excessive meaninglessness of violence.

Critical attempts to justify the level of violence portrayed against Indigenous people as being a statement about the universality of human violence abound. Some have tried to argue that *Meridian* is actually sympathetic to marginalized voices. Brown argues, 'While the judge dismisses such lives – would have them not just destroyed, but entirely expunged from any account – the text pays attention to these victims in each case and thereby beckons the reader to do the same' ('Existing' 83). Yet the occasional cursory glance at a ruined life – which, notably, often *does not* occur after acts of violence – is not a condemnation of the violence itself. Rather, as evidenced by McCarthy's treatment of the old woman at the burned village, it is at best an almost guilty re-iteration of a settler colonial worldview: one in which the death of Indigenous people is tragic, but ultimately inevitable. Significantly, the supposed inevitable death of the Indigenous person is not only reinforced through scenes of violence like the burning of the village or the murder of the Apache boy, but also through supposed scenes of repentance from "heroic" characters. Long after his time with the Glanton gang ends, the kid comes across a sight in the desert that he believes is a recent massacre. The kid

approaches a woman who he believes to be a survivor and – apparently – attempts to comfort her at the same time that he admits to being a colonising agent. McCarthy writes:

He spoke to her in a low voice. He told her that he was an American and that he was a long way from the country of his birth and that he had no family and that he had travelled much and seen many things and had been at war and endured hardships. He told her that he would convey her to a safe place [...] he could not leave her in this place or she would surely die [...] She was just a dried shell and she had been dead in that place for years. (332)

Critics point to this passage as a moment of growth for the kid.¹⁵ However, it is important to note that the kid only admits to having seen ‘many things’, having ‘been at war’ and ‘endur[ing] hardships.’ This is not an admittance of wrongdoing or repentance; in fact, according to the text, he only notes his own ‘hardships’ rather than any of the many atrocities he had a direct hand in committing. That the kid offers the woman protection is the only evidence of his having reached an understanding that his previous colonial deeds had materially negative consequences. However, this realisation also comes at the monumental cost of Indigenous and Latinx human life. The descendants of Indigenous and Latinx people the kid helped to murder for profit do not receive any sort of justice because of the kid’s realisation, and because the old woman is – inevitably, according to the narrative voice – dead, she receives no benefit either. Of course, a novel about Western expansion does not need to be about restitution and justice for Indigenous and Latinx people. However, from a decolonial perspective, it is significant that critics of *Blood Meridian* seem to take the kid’s supposed growth at face value and as evidence of decolonial thinking. This, combined with the lack of critical attention to the narrative voice’s adherence to the exact same colonial

¹⁵ See: Altındış, Hüseyin. ‘Grotesque and Southern Gothic in Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian*.’ *Selçuk University Journal of Faculty of Letters*, no. 41, (2019), pp. 89 – 102. ; Cavender, Kurt. ‘Our Knowing Compelled to Go Back: Speculative Misreading and the Identity of *Blood Meridian*.’ *College Literature*, vol. 43, no. 4, (2016), pp. 693 – 716. ; Frye, Steven. *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*. University of South Carolina Press, 2009. ; Kruse, Zack. “‘You Were a Witness Against Yourself’: McCarthy’s Judge as Chamberlain’s Interlocutor in *Blood Meridian*.’ *Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 60, no. 1, (2018), pp. 98 – 110. ; Philips, Dana. ‘History and the Ugly Facts of *Blood Meridian*.’ *Cormac McCarthy: New Directions*, ed. by James D Lilley, University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Ebook. ; Walonen, Michael K. ‘Violence, Imperialism and Male Socialization in Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian* and Marlon James’ *A Brief History of Seven Killings*.’ *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 26, no. 2, (2018), pp. 66 – 79.

imagery and ideology as the judge's is concerning. These two aspects of the text combined makes calling the novel decolonial a step too far. The incorrectness of critic's willingness to heighten the non-apologies of the kid to decolonial deconstruction is especially important to note when critics point to the novel's adherence to the conventions of the epic mode in order to derive meaning from the text: namely, when arguing that the kid is an effective heroic foil against the violent colonial worldview of the anti-hero judge.

V. Conclusion

Immediately following Tobin's tale about how the Glanton gang came across the judge in the wilderness, McCarthy poses a question to the reader that the kid and the expriest ponder throughout the text: 'What's he a judge of?' (142). The expriest is not able to answer, but for readers who have already been treated to many monologues from the judge about his hatred of anything outside his own worldview and his lack of caring for humanity, and that that 'war is the truest form of divination. It is the testing of one's will and the will of another within that larger will which because it binds them is therefore forced to select [...] War is god' (263), the obvious answer is the judge is a judge of mankind. This, then, is the cosmic arena in which the kid and the judge do – alleged – metaphysical battle: "alleged" because the kid's monosyllabic objections against the judge are cursory at best. This is because, for McCarthy who has tied the narrative stylistically to the framework of the epic, any material consequences of their colonial rituals are not as important as their theoretical roots.

Few places are the metaphysical dimensions of McCarthy's commentary on human violence more prevalent than at the end of the novel. The kid and the judge have a – random? – meeting at a bar years after their initial separation just after the Glanton gang was annihilated. For many, this moment is the theoretical crux of the novel, wherein '[k]nowing he is no match for the Judge, the Kid nevertheless defies Holden, with laconic replies playing

against the Judge's rolling grandiloquence [...] To have known Judge Holden, to have seen him in full operation, and to tell him that he is nothing is heroic' (Bloom np). Regardless of whether the kid is a hero or not, regardless of whether his protests against the judge's belief that 'War is god' (263) are coherent and meaningful, the material outcome of this scene is that the kid is promptly murdered by the judge. While the epic hero lies lifeless in an outhouse, the narrative's true hero dances a jig with partygoers just a stone's throw away. The last image of the judge that readers are left with is one of him triumphant and, of course, eternal: 'His feet are light and nimble. He never sleeps. He says that he will never die. He dances in light and in shadow and he is a great favorite. He never sleeps, the judge. He is dancing, dancing. He says that he will never die' (353). *Blood Meridian*, therefore, ends with the colonial epistemology of the judge's violence triumph over the kid and all else in his path. Unlike the Indigenous and Latinx people, the judge is undying because his supremacy was always inevitable. The judge sees and understands far more than anyone else in the novel: he cannot be outwitted or killed. Thus, his colonial ideology is triumphant, and any decolonial commentary McCarthy may have been trying to make with the aesthetically charged scenes of violence or the minor protests from the kid regarding the judge's worldview are just as useless and "forgotten" as the Indigenous people whose bones pepper the land the judge dances upon.

I opened with my exploration of the spectralisation and erasure of Indigenous peoples with McCarthy's text because I believe it best outlines one extreme end of the colonial spectrum of epistemology in Euro-American imperial Gothic. The judge's and the narrative voice's insistence throughout *Blood Meridian* on the inevitability of the death of Indigenous peoples, paired with the ways in which McCarthy deploys the epic mode in order to displace the material realities of colonialism in favour of mythologising the "nature of man" from a purely colonial standpoint, serve to reinforce the – incorrect – colonial ideology that Indian

removal was/is complete. In this way, McCarthy's work produces 'political amnesia and a nationalist imaginary that locates all Native people within the white American self, and authorizes the theft of native land' (Bergland 169). No meaningful critique of colonisation can arise from this subject position. Critical works that praise the supposed merits of McCarthy's prose while ignoring the way it reinforces colonial ideology likewise ring hollow in the face of works like *Almanac*, *Indian Killer*, and *Doves* that explicitly illuminate the continuing traumas of colonisation. As I will show in the next chapter, even *Pet Sematary* with its appropriated Indigenous monsters and history better demonstrates the survivance of Indigenous peoples and, simultaneously, the guilt of colonisers in committing genocide against them. In short, critics cannot eat their cake and have it too in regard to *Blood Meridian*'s prose: it cannot present an anti-colonial sentiment while spectralising Indigenous people and mythologising the entire colonial programme as emblematic of the "violence of mankind."

The image of the victorious judge or the posthole maker of the epilogue continuing their trek Westward into infinity¹⁶ are not the truth of colonial violence. Despite the best efforts of real colonists like the judge, Indigenous people continue to survive into present day. That McCarthy leaves readers with the image of the judge triumphant is testament not to the judge's infallibility, but to McCarthy's own subject position. McCarthy's choices to silence Indigenous voices throughout the text, to rely upon historically colonial images of Indigenous people as savages, to homogenize all acts of violence as evidence of man's evil rather than material outcomes of colonial ideology, and to have the final ideology battle in the text be won by the unsympathetic super-coloniser should be indicators to critics that *Meridian* is not

¹⁶ For more on the significance of the epilogue see chapter six of Frye, Steven. *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*. University of South Carolina Press, 2009. ; Philips, Dana. 'History and the Ugly Facts of *Blood Meridian*.' *Cormac McCarthy: New Directions*, ed. by James D Lilley, University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Ebook.

an anticolonial work. Therefore, it is imperative that *Blood Meridian* – like so many other revered classics – be read as an imperial Gothic text.

Chapter 2: ‘What You Buy is What You Own’: Colonial Masculinity, Manifest Manners, and the Self-Made Boomerang in *Pet Sematary*

The epic dimensions of the colonial myth of America that are present in *Meridian* also appear in Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary*. John Sears refers to the ‘relentlessly mythic progression’ of *Sematary*, as the novel charts the descent of family man Louis Creed into madness – a madness that tears his family apart and turns his wife and toddler son into zombies (198). King’s novel is told from the perspective of the patriarch of the Creed family: Louis, a doctor and devoted father. In an arc shared with many other imperial Euro-American Gothic tales, the Creed’s idyllic home life is uncannily invaded by a spectral Indigenous Other that methodically and maliciously deconstructs the family unit so that it is turned from a pure manifestation of the American Dream to a fragmented and tainted shadow. From the framework of the epic, Louis’ tragic flaw is that he believes his profession as a doctor raises him above the laws of life and death, leading him to appropriate and desecrate a pre-colonial Micmac burial ground, inadvertently linking himself to that ‘sour’ ground and the monstrous wendigo that guards it (135). In fact, none of the action in the novel would exist if not for Louis Creed and Jud Crandall’s purposeful desecration of Indigenous graves. Creed’s downfall and descent into madness occurs not because of an outside Other, but because of his direct involvement in neo-colonialism, as well as his inability to separate his colonial epistemology from the reality of his actions. In this way, a clear line can be drawn in the novel from the toxicity of the imagined community of the macho-imperialist and their violent downfall. The masculine imperialist *haunts itself* eventually to its death.

Similar to McCarthy’s interactions with the epic, King’s works draw upon the literary bedrock of such celebrated Euro-American Gothic authors as Hawthorne, Lovecraft, and

Poe,¹⁷ while Slavoj Žižek sees *Pet Semetary* ‘as “a perverted *Antigone*”’ wherein Louis “‘is willing to risk eternal damnation, to have his son return as a murderous monster, just to have him back’” (quoted in Sears 205). In this way, like *Meridian*, ‘we already know the outcome’ of *Semetary*, and the characters are ‘as actors in a myth’ (Spurgeon np). However, while both *Meridian* and *Semetary* use the spectral figure of the Indigenous person and the Indigenous monster in order to invoke horror, the interiority that King provides for Louis and his neighbour Jud change the dimensions of how the myth associated with these spectral images is presented and critiqued. Because of its mythic engagement with colonial issues such as land ownership/appropriation and Indigenous monstrosity, *Pet Semetary* also falls into the category of imperial Gothic as defined by Höglund with its emphasis on ‘myth and symbol’ (55). However, unlike *Meridian*, it is not necessarily correct to say that the novel ultimately reinforces colonial ideology; rather, *Semetary* presents a surprisingly more nuanced interaction with the myth of American masculinity and Western Expansion and how it manifests in the 20th century via performances of masculinity.

The mythic downfall of the Creed family in *Semetary* shows that imperialism is unsustainable, yet King still appropriates and mythologises Indigenous voices, culture, and history in order to explore the topic of white guilt. Because it haunts Louis and Jud following their desecration of the Micmac burial ground, King’s wendigo – a common stand-in for Indigenous monstrosity in pro-imperial texts¹⁸ – critiques and deconstructs neo-colonial

¹⁷ See: Blouin, Michael J. *Stephen King and American Politics*. University of Wales Press, 2021. ; Corstophine, Kevin. ““Sour Ground”: Stephen King’s *Pet Semetary* and the Politics of Territory.’ *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Stories*, vol. 1, October (2006), pp. 84 – 98. ; Mackenthun, Gesa. ‘Haunted Real Estate: The Occlusion of Colonial Dispossession and Signatures of Survival in U.S. Horror Fiction.’ *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1, (1998), pp. 93 – 108. ; Magistrale, Tony. ‘Hawthorne’s Woods Revisited: Stephen King’s *Pet Semetary*.’ *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, (Spring 1988), pp. 9 – 13. ; Magistrale, Tony and Michael Blouin. *Stephen King and American History*. Routledge, New York, 2020. ; Sears, John. *Stephen King’s Gothic*. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2011.

¹⁸ See: Colombo, John Robert. Introduction. *Windigo: An Anthology of Fact and Fantastic Fiction*. ed by John Robert Colombo, Prairie Books, Saskatchewan, 1982, pp. 1 – 6. ; Corstophine, Kevin. ““Sour Ground”: Stephen King’s *Pet Semetary* and the Politics of Territory.’ *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Stories*, vol. 1, (October 2006), pp. 84 – 98. ; Madsen, Deborah L. ‘Discontinuous Narrative, Ojibwe Sovereignty, and the Wiindigoo Logic of Settler Colonialism: Louise Erdrich’s *Marne Wolde*.’ *Studies in*

masculinity and the myth of Manifest Destiny – a function of anti-imperial texts. However, the very appropriation and Anglicisation of the wendigo is an epistemologically colonial act. The novel demonstrates an odd sensitivity to the system of colonialism and the burden of guilt that must be placed upon colonisers for their participation in this system via the figure of the spectral Indigene, avoiding the “inevitability” of Indigenous death put forth by the spectralisation of Indigenous people in *Meridian*. At the same time, King erases Indigenous voices by using white colonising men as mouthpieces for Indigeneity, therefore enacting a similar kind of erasure/spectralisation carried out in *Blood Meridian*.

In order to account for all these complexities, it is essential to apply a decolonial methodology focused on manifestations of the colonality of power within the novel and informed by Mignolo’s geopolitics of knowledge to interrogate the spectralisation of Indigenous people and the wendigo. Focusing on the epistemologies and knowledge productions of the main male characters in the novel – Louis Creed and Jud Crandall – and how these knowledge productions relate to colonialism and capitalism, it becomes clear that *Semetary*’s spectralisation of Indigenous peoples is shown to both undermine and reinforce colonial epistemology and ideology. King’s novel still relies upon colonial imagery to invoke horror through the Indigenous spectre. Yet, simultaneously, colonial epistemology and Cartesian binaries that come with it are consistently shown by King to be constructs, the adherence to which offers no reward. In short, the epistemology in the novel *and* what the novel understands as transgression of that epistemology is entirely colonial. It then follows that the wendigo is also a creation of the white imagination. Consequently, it is not the fault of a supernatural Indigenous Other that the Creed family is so destroyed: it is the doing of a phantom created and perpetuated by the colonial imagination.

American Indian Literatures, vol. 28, no. 3, (Fall 2016), pp. 23 – 51. ; Magistrale, Tony. ‘Hawthorne’s Woods Revisited: Stephen King’s *Pet Semetary*.’ *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, (Spring 1988), pp. 9 – 13. ; Magistrale, Tony and Michael Blouin. *Stephen King and American History*. Routledge, New York, 2020.

I. Signs within Signs: Colonial Masculinity, the Wendigo, and the Ideological

Boomerang

In the Euro-American imagination, the Indigenous burial ground is a symbol ripe with mystical meaning and Gothic uncanniness that often demonstrates a continuance of the spectralisation and Othering of Indigenous people more broadly in Euro-American Gothic literature. In the 1980s, Reagan repopularised the idea of America as a ‘shining city upon a hill’ (‘Transcript’). Reagan himself and many of his acolytes celebrated America as a beacon of hope to the world, and Reagan explicitly tapped into the aesthetics of Western expansion – i.e., cowboy imagery – in order to craft his own popular image. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz explains the colonial origins of this image, writing: ‘The Indian-fighting frontiersmen and the “valiant” settlers in their circled covered wagons are the iconic images of that identity’ (94). As Gesa Mackenthun argues, many texts from the 1980s which feature both an Indigenous burial ground and a nuclear family ‘address a crisis of masculinity within the American family – a central theme of the Reagan era. In a less obvious way, the crisis of the father is also that of the “White Father” who is troubled by the return of his outcast “children” and fears the erosion of his cultural authority’ (98 – 99). These anxieties reflect the difficulties in maintaining Reagan’s own status as presidential paterfamilias during the early 1980s. Despite a general social popularity, the Reagan administration’s economic policies were negatively affecting his image as a leader. The budget cuts to federal spending – except for the military, whose budget ballooned – in the first two years of Reagan’s presidency combined with what was termed the ‘Reagan recession’ led to a congressional Democratic win during the November 1982 election.

One solution to the issue of declining popularity that proved extremely effective was Reagan’s participation in a national memorial for Vietnam Veterans which occurred at the end of 1982. Troy writes:

The president and the First Lady lit a memorial candle at the National Cathedral, while hearing some of the 57,962 names intoned. “The names that are being read are of men who died for freedom just as surely as any men who ever fought for this country,” the president said, choking up. And seeking to unify the nation around his vision, Reagan said, “We’re beginning to appreciate that they were fighting for a just cause.” Throughout the decade, Reagan’s once controversial celebration of Vietnam as a “noble cause” would become increasingly mainstreamed in the American collective memory. (111)

As Troy notes, part of the power of Reagan’s image was that he began to change the narrative of the once-controversial Vietnam war into a battle of good against evil. In characteristic fashion that is also on display in his Evil Empire speech, Reagan invokes the idea of divine authority (good) to destroy evil (communism in Vietnam), a staple of the imperialist’s ideological framework. Coincidentally, Indigenous activists also see the Vietnam War as a beacon of American imperialist values, but of course, in opposition to these values (Dunbar-Ortiz 192 – 193). Reagan’s paternalistic rhetoric regarding the roles of American values and western expansion are then Gothicised by texts with Indigenous burial grounds, wherein, uncannily, the colonised dead refuse to stay buried. Unlike *Meridian*, then, which reinforces an ‘inevitability’ of Indigenous death, *Semetary*’s repeated interaction with Indigenous ghosts and Indigenous burial grounds shows that, while the Indigenous spectre can be used to invoke horror and thus perpetuate colonial stereotypes, the very presence of an Indigenous figure undermines the narrative of total white/colonial supremacy, especially when the Indigenous spectre has arguably more power than the colonial male, as is the case in *Semetary*.

Mackenthun argues that there was a ‘cult of masculinity within certain sections of U.S. culture in the 1980s (think [...] of Reagan’s self-fashioning as an American president *qua* Western hero’ (99 footnote 23). This recalls, also, a version of American history steeped in blood and myth that, Slotkin notes, can be traced to Teddy Roosevelt. Quoting Slotkin, Magistrale and Blouin write, ‘Roosevelt discovered in the (disappearing) American wilderness a sacred space in which to recover a lost vitality, a “dark, raging, and howling”

landscape where “the white man’s purification [is] bought with Indian blood” (41). *Semetary* fits this pattern. Magistrale and Blouin argue, colonially-constructed history in *Semetary* links American mythology to white masculinity thus: ‘America (writ large) fails to recognize, much less learn from, its own mistakes – to break the circle of its own repeated failings. The archaic past requires an active connection to the present in order to reanimate itself’ (45). As Mignolo has argued, this connection is an epistemological one. Central to colonial epistemology, the colonial family, and the colonial man is the adherence to the myth of white supremacy and colonial order maintenance. A decolonial strength of *Semetary* is that it exposes ‘the supposed border between past events and their aesthetic renderings, thereby providing an opportunity for us to reconsider the manner in which we tend to make (or unmake) a shared history’ (Magistrale and Blouin 3). However, because King appropriates Indigenous mythology and erases Indigenous voices, using Jud Crandall as an explicit stand-in for Indigeneity, the deconstruction of colonial history in *Semetary* is incomplete. As Mackenthun points out the issue of erasing Indigenous voices, stating that in their supposedly vanished-yet-wild state, ‘Indians function less as dispossessed peoples than as representatives of a vengeful Nature in late capitalist society’ (105). Like *Meridian*, Indigenous people and the wendigo in *Semetary* become signs within signs: an obfuscation of real, material consequences of the colonial paradigm.

Thus, what Louis and Jud both purchase with their desecration of the Micmac burial ground is a form of retributive violent justice from the coloniser to the coloniser. Sartre states that violence that is visited upon colonisers by oppressed people is ‘the moment of the boomerang [...] it comes back on us [colonisers], it strikes us, and we do not realize any more than we did the other times that it’s we who launched it’ (20). The death – and resurrection, and violent re-death – of the Creed family, then, is a sort of colonial boomerang. As a construct of the colonial imagination, the wendigo polices “appropriate” manifestations

of coloniality, tempting colonisers and then punishing them for their own temptation. Therefore, in King's novel, the cyclical violence of colonial epistemology is illuminated but never quite broken. As Castricano puts it, the colonial men of *Semetary*, along with their families, are 'consumed by forces which [they are] not equipped to understand' (60). This lack of understanding arises from the mythologising of America which King both exposes and reinforces.

II. Portrait of a Family Man: Neo-colonial Masculinity, Anxiety, and Control

Many critics of *Semetary* focus their research on family.¹⁹ Despite this, criticism of *Semetary* often ignores that the organization of the family has long been a template for the organisation of the colonial system. Anne McClintock argues in *Imperial Leather* (1995) that anxieties surrounding economic uncertainty, changing gender roles, and racial miscegenation underpin the works of imperialist authors such like H Rider Haggard.²⁰ McClintock writes, 'The colony became the last opportunity for restoring the political authority of fatherhood, and it is therefore not surprising that one finds its most intense expressions in the colonial administration' (240). Drawing on the work of Donna Haraway, McClintock illustrates that this colonial 'family of man' consists entirely of men, all of which are divided and organized

¹⁹ See: Castricano, Jodey. *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 2001. ; Corstophine, Kevin. "'Sour Ground': Stephen King's *Pet Semetary* and the Politics of Territory." *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Stories*, vol. 1, (October 2006), pp. 84 – 98. ; Kirby, Kathleen M. 'Resurrection and Murder: An Analysis of Mourning (in memory of my father.)' *American Imago*, vol. 50, no. 1, (Spring 1993), pp. 55 – 68. ; Mackenthun, Gesa. 'Haunted Real Estate: The Occlusion of Colonial Dispossession and Signatures of Survival in U.S. Horror Fiction.'

Amerikastudien/American Studies, vol. 43, no. 1, (1998), pp. 93 – 108. ; Magistrale, Tony and Michael Blouin. *Stephen King and American History*. Routledge, New York, 2020. ; Nash, Jesse W. 'Postmodern Gothic: Stephen King's *Pet Semetary*.' *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 30, no. 4, (Spring 1997), pp. 151 – 160.

²⁰ These anxieties are also prevalent in the Reagan era. See: Kellner, Douglas. 'Poltergeists, Gender, and Class in the Age of Reagan and Bush.' *The Hidden Foundation: Cinema and the Question of Class*, ed. by David E. James and Rick Berg, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pp. 217 – 239. ; Mackenthun, Gesa. 'Haunted Real Estate: The Occlusion of Colonial Dispossession and Signatures of Survival in U.S. Horror Fiction.'

Amerikastudien/American Studies, vol. 43, no. 1, (1998), pp. 93 – 108. ; Magistrale, Tony and Michael Blouin. *Stephen King and American History*. Routledge, New York, 2020. ; McAleer, Patrick. 'I Have the Whole World in My Hands... Now What?: Power, Control, Responsibility and the Baby Boomers in Stephen King's Fiction.' *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 44, no. 6, (2011), pp. 1209 – 1227.

according to ‘class and race’ (242). At the head of the colonial family sits the white colonising male, followed by the recognised male authority of colour (who is sympathetic to the white coloniser) in the role of the ‘mother’ and actively colonises themselves. The authority of colour is followed by the partially colonised in the role of the ‘children’. Finally, the family is rounded out with any ‘inferior’ unassimilated Indigenes (McClintock 241 – 242). By virtue of his rationality, race, and gender expression, Louis is seated at the head of the colonial and nuclear families. He is therefore imbued with double authority. As head of the colonial and nuclear family, it is also Louis’ responsibility to reinforce the values of the colonial state: most specifically in *Semetary*, to reinforce the epistemology and the Cartesian-based logic of coloniality. As Magistrale and Blouin argue, Louis and his father-figure Jud are ‘[l]ate Anglo-militants’ that see clear and hierarchical divides between themselves and Others (41). Louis’ treatment of women throughout the novel is just one such manifestation of colonial epistemologies within the nuclear family.

Throughout the text, Louis enacts a supposedly objective rationality, which is tied to stability, certainty, and masculinity. Jud shows the Creeds the pet cemetery, triggering Rachel’s anxiety around death and, later, an argument between her and Louis breaks out. King writes, ‘as a doctor, [Louis] knew that death was [...] the most natural thing in the world [...] “Zelda,” he said aloud. “Christ, that must have been bad for her.” *The question was should he just let it ride or should he try to do something about it?*’ (42 emphasis mine). Like to the colonial/Cartesian binary between thinking and feeling, Louis devaluations Rachel’s emotional reaction to death, seeing it as irrational and a problem to be fixed. His status as both male and doctor, which are both connected to Cartesian rationality in Louis’ Western mind, trumps her lived experience as a woman, which is emotional and therefore less-than. Reflecting the colonial creed of masculinity, Louis sees Rachel as an object over which he has power: a bodily subject upon which Louis needs to exercise his rational mind.

Furthermore, Rachel has little to no effect on Louis' feelings or thought process; she later even apologises for being 'a bitch' (50) while Louis does not apologise for triggering her anxiety. Just like the colonial family of man, then, the feminine Rachel is superfluous to the actual power structure of the 1980s Creed family. Her domestic role is even overshadowed by Louis, who chose the house without Rachel's viewing it (4) and Missy Dandridge, who carries out many of the domestic tasks that keep the house running.

Since Louis' job as a doctor is closely tied to a Cartesian-colonial epistemology in that the codification and quantification of bodies-as-objects is integral to his work, he is financially and economically recognised for the kind of colonially-charged "objectivity" demonstrated above. Doctoral authority is something Louis clings to when the world does not make sense, particularly in his first encounter with the supernatural. After a horrible accident on campus leaves him mortally wounded, Victor Pascow warns Louis about what lies beyond the pet cemetery before dying. Louis is deeply disturbed by the event until he reaches:

for that part of himself that had caused the administration to give him this job over the other fifty-three applicants for the position. There was no one in command here, no forward motion [...] "Steve, go give that girl a trunk," he said, and just saying the words made him feel better. (61)

Louis' anxiety only lessens when he is able to assume control of the situation – control he had momentarily lost with Pascow's dying words. Louis' need for control is tied to the rational/irrational binary of coloniality. King writes, 'It was as if he were in a rocketship under power now, pulling away from a tiny moonlet. Said moonlet being, of course, the *irrational* moment when Pascow had spoken. Louis had been hired to take charge; he was going to do it' (61 emphasis mine). Furthermore, Louis resumes the authority – and his own self-confidence – by focusing on what he perceives as an issue he needs to fix in a 'girl' subordinate. The 'girl' in question is a college student, who, like Louis, has just witnessed a violent and gruesome injury. Her feminised reaction reflects a horror also that resides within Louis: one he ultimately must reject in order to maintain his expected rationality and

therefore his masculinity. Additionally, Louis' managerial position is a position he has metaphorically won by beating competitors – the fifty-three other applicants – styling Louis as a kind of working-man's champion wherein his economic value is directly tied to his ability to dominate others intellectually. In this short space, from Pascow's death, Louis' initial horror, and his ultimate control over the situation, King reflects the link between 'the reawakening of the occult and mystical phenomena [...] and the weakening of the "masculine [colonial] spirit"' (Magistrale and Blouin 41). This, far more than Pascow's injury and death, is the true horror Louis must overcome in the scene.

Ramón Grosfoguel states that:

By delinking ethnic/racial/gender/sexual epistemic location from the subject that speaks, Western philosophy and sciences are able to produce a myth about a Truthful universal knowledge that covers up, that is, conceals who is speaking as well as the geo-political and body-political epistemic location in the structures of colonial power/knowledge from which the subject speaks. (np)

At the beginning of the novel, Louis embodies this obfuscation of the geopolitics of knowledge, as is the goal of coloniality. What threatens Louis' worldview the most in the bulk of the novel, then, are attacks on his masculinity, which in turn are attacks on his authority and on his entire knowledge system. The three central elements of Louis' character – masculinity, control, and Cartesian/colonial epistemology – cannot be separated. I emphasise the connection between coloniality and masculinity in *Semetary* so strongly because it demonstrates an important difference from historical novels like *Meridian* and *The Hunger*, which I will explore in the next chapter. While texts set during Western Expansion appear to directly confront a colonial past, their temporal distance with the present displaces the discourse of coloniality into a historical period. Essentially, it is easier to dismiss the atrocities depicted as long-past and therefore materially unimportant to life now. Explicitly tying Louis Creed's worldview and performance of masculinity to coloniality demonstrates how King – purposefully or not – links the epistemologies, values, and power-structures of

colonial white supremacy with 1980s Reaganomics and Reagan-era nationalism. Unlike *Meridian* and *The Hunger*, the discourse of coloniality cannot be displaced to the 1800s. Thus, the spectralisation of Indigenous peoples and the figure of the wendigo in the latter half of the novel open an avenue for a critique of modern-day coloniality, and the power structures and gender politics that maintain the colonial order, in its twentieth-century iteration. Consequently, while King's novel still brings in similar of epic or mythic elements as McCarthy, his interaction with imperialism is much less black-and-white and, therefore, more subversive.

While Louis is able to control the women in his life handily, the Indigenous burial ground and those associated with it, namely the undead cat Church, exceed Louis' control. It is therefore the association of Church with the Micmac burial ground that first begins to deconstruct Louis' understanding of his own subjecthood. At the beginning of the novel, Louis sees Church as an avatar for his own masculinity. In Louis' mind, even the completely routine veterinary procedure of neutering is steeped in the gender politics and expectations of coloniality:

In fact there had been some trouble over that [...] Rachel had wanted to get Church spayed, had even made the appointment with the vet. Louis cancelled it. Even now he wasn't really sure why. It wasn't anything as simple or as stupid as equating his masculinity with that of his daughter's tom, nor even his resentment at the idea that Church would have to be castrated so that the fat housewife next door wouldn't need to be troubled with twisting down the lids of her plastic garbage cans – those things had been part of it, but most of it had been a vague but strong feeling that it would destroy something in Church that he himself valued – that it would put out the go-to-hell look in the cat's green eyes. (16)

Although Louis begins by denying that his own anxieties about his masculinity have anything to do with the issue of neutering Church, stating his objections to the neutering are not 'anything as simple or stupid as equating his masculinity with that of his daughter's tom cat', by the end of the sentence it is clear that Louis does in fact project a sense of masculinity onto Church, that Louis feels 'a vague but strong feeling that [the neutering] would destroy

something in Church that he himself valued – that it would put out the go-to-hell look in the cat’s green eyes’ (16). The passage in part shows the unreliability of Louis’ own self-analysis, but also shows his reliance on Reagan-era gender roles based in imperial expectations. What Louis values in Church’s projected masculinity, then, is a sense of rugged individualism that is also expected by the values of colonial masculinity. As Magistrale and Blouin argue, ‘The cat’s “masculinity,” his “go-to-hell” stare, signals something that Louis has been conditioned by American culture to treasure. When the family spays [sic] the cat, the [veterinarian] surgically alters his presumed masculine spirit’ (42). Louis’ sense that animal neutering is similar to human castration is compounded by his assertion that taking away his cat’s sex organs is somehow submitting to a ‘fat housewife’ neighbour, as if the neutering would be a personal, feminising defeat by someone lower than Louis on the gendered colonial hierarchy (16).

The preoccupation with genitalia as a signifier of masculinity is interesting, given that the Cartesian subject supposedly sees the body as separate from the mind: as Quijano notes, ‘in Eurocentric rationality the body was fixed as an object of knowledge, outside the environment of subject/reason [...] certain races are condemned as being inferior for not being rational subjects. They are objects of study, consequently closer to nature’ (555). In part, Louis’ objection to Church’s neutering can therefore be seen as an objection to him becoming a ‘object of knowledge’ upon which Cartesian rationality can be enacted. However, as Mignolo argues, Cartesian rationality is not inherently objective, but instead is a rhetorical method of upholding the coloniality of power; the universalism of Eurocentric thought and racism are created and sustained by each other in order to justify the continuation of capitalism and coloniality (78 – 79). It is therefore not necessary that colonial thought make actual rational sense. Its only function is to uphold white supremacy and the socio-political-economic structures with which it is associated. With this in mind, the double standard of the

male body being both erased – absent from being an object – and essential – the lens through which the outside world is filtered in Cartesian thinking – is not so surprising. The male body of cat or human only becomes necessary when its deconstruction threatens the colonial order or the colonial epistemology. Therefore, as an unreliable narrator, Louis creates in Church an avatar or double upon which he can project his own anxieties surrounding masculine performativity and the castrating presence of irrational women.

Central to Louis' projected image of masculinity is the violence he associates with a non-neutered, intact Church. When Church is found dead on the Crandall's front lawn after Thanksgiving dinner, Louis reflects: 'Now, in death, he looked to Louis like the old Church. The mouth so small and bloody, filled with needle-sharp cat's teeth, was frozen in a shooter's snarl. The dead eyes seemed furious. It was as if after the short and placid stupidity of his life as a neuter, Church had rediscovered his real nature in dying' (104). The 'real nature' Louis refers to is once of violence. He associates his dead cat's internal being with fury, blood, and, unaccountably, guns: an artifact of human rather than non-human violence. The image Louis appears to have of his own cat is a kind of furry John Wayne, yet another connection between Louis' projected masculinity onto his cat and the expectations he has of himself as a colonial masculine performer and, indeed, Reagan himself with his film background. Louis reinforces the imagery of the colonial male with its mythic dimensions when he associates the violence of Church with the violence of an independent, rugged individual. However, this re-association of Church with rugged masculinity does not last long after his death. Once Church becomes metaphorically infected by the spectre of the Indigene via the graveyard the nature of his violence is changed. It is not just that he becomes something Louis cannot control or understand as similar to himself. The horror of the resurrected Church is uncanny *because* it is tied to a colonial act that cannot be displaced: the desecration of the Micmac burial ground which does not occur in a distant, colonial past, but in Louis' present.

Previously, Church's tendency to toy with prey was a symbol of his masculinity for Louis. After his resurrection, Church's violence is suddenly a reminder of his uncanny Otherness. Mere days after Church's return, Louis notices a gruesome sight in their garage: a disembowelled mouse, whose 'innards glowed pink and raw in the garage's gloom' (151). The apparent violence with which this mouse met its end is a visceral reminder of Church's association with something outside of Louis' colonial epistemology and control. He compares this incident with Church's previous attacks on mice and finds this new Church to be irreparably changed: 'He could remember Church killing only a single rat before his queer resurrection; he sometimes cornered mice and played with them in that deadly cat way that ultimately ended in destruction, but he or Ellie or Rachel had always intervened before the end' (151). Although Louis attributes Church's Otherness to his undead status, what is actually different is that previously Louis felt Church was under his control and the control of his family. Now, Church has become violently excessive as a result of his association with the Micmac burial ground. This is not to say that Louis understands this significant difference himself: he does not. However, the fact remains that Church's violence towards prey animals was previously seen as normal or potentially even cute. Now, his violence is an uncontrollable factor. As Magistrale and Blouin put it, 'This "restored" Churchill, janky and unpleasantly aggressive, highlights a jingoism wrapped in pure machismo' (42). At the same time, Church has become a manifestation of Louis' transgression against Cartesian binaries and logical boundaries, a bogeyman reminder of Louis' interaction with the irrational space of the Micmac burial ground.

The undead/reborn Church's affiliation with the Micmac burial ground instead of Louis' own masculinity also recalls the colonial family of man. Because Louis initially imagines Church as an avatar for his own masculinity, he initially sits close to Louis in the secondary "mother" position of the colonial family. This is not to say that Church is depicted

as a mother, but rather as a character with nearly equal status to the head of the colonial family because of his capacity for violence and rugged independence. When Church loses his perceived masculinity via neutering, he becomes an ‘it’, essentially losing his place in the family, and this status is cemented and becomes horrific when Church becomes associated with the Micmac burial ground. From this association, Church becomes the lowest rung on the colonial hierarchical family: the unassimilated Indigene. Thus, Church’s association with the spectre of Indigeneity is the foundation of horror in the novel; it follows, then, that coloniality is the locus of horror of the novel. From Louis’ neo-colonial perspective, Church’s violence is as somehow different from his own because of its connection to the Micmac burial ground. Church’s removal from the family structure is a kind of spectralisation in and of itself: to be removed from the family, yet still present within the home, is a sort of haunting, and certainly it is framed as such by Louis (132). The threat that Louis imagines Church poses to the family is a threat to the entire structure of both the colonial and the nuclear family. If it is possible for a beloved subordinate like Church to become fluid within the structure of the family system, it is theoretically possible for anyone – including Louis – to become fluid as well. Furthermore, fluidity is linked to spectrality because the fluidity arises from being undead. Therefore, the spectralisation of Church points to an enduring, horrific existence of the vengeful Indigene: one who is ultimately more powerful than the living colonial man. Although the horror arises from coloniality and stereotypes as old as the thirteen colonies themselves, the power structure that leads to the downfall of the Creed family indicates a more active sense of spectrality than McCarthy’s *Meridian* or, as I will later show, *The Hunger*.

The unravelling of Louis’ worldview is begun when his best friend and neighbour, Jud, explicitly introduces the idea that Louis’ Cartesian, scientific epistemology is not always entirely useful and that colonising the cosmology of the Other is a beneficial tool. In fact,

King intends for Crandall to be a corrupted and corrupting force in the novel. When interviewing King just after the release of *Pet Semetary*, Magistrale recalls asking about Jud's role in the novel and states: 'King's reaction was almost immediate, labelling Jud "polluted," a term that implies that the old man had been morally tainted or poisoned because of direct contact with the Micmac burial site' (Magistrale and Blouin 57). When the two return from burying Church in the Micmac graveyard, Jud immediately and insistently shuts down any questions. Instead, in a move totally contrary to Cartesian rationality, Jud recommends that Louis gives in to his sense of feeling in regard to the graveyard: 'Sometimes people have to do things that just seem right. That seem right in their hearts, I mean. [...] And the things that are in a man's heart – it don't do him much good to talk about those things, does it?' (120). Jud explicitly instructs Louis in this passage to purposefully repress all questions about the morality or rationality of desecrating the Micmac burial ground. As a patriarch of the "Greatest Generation," which bridges the gap between the end of Western Expansion in 1890 and the reinscribing of the frontier onto non-North American spaces following World Wars I and II, Jud instils in Louis an acceptance for what happens at the burial ground, and an acceptance for desecrating Micmac sacred land.

However, Magistrale and Blouin lay out an excellent and compelling argument that as 'Anglo-militants' who commit neo-colonial acts, Louis and Jud demonstrate 'how American society romanticizes military conflict as an expression of lost masculinity to be mourned' (42). This is the same sort of call-to-arms attributed to Roosevelt by Slotkin and to Reagan earlier in this chapter. Living as he does across both of these presidencies, Jud acts as a bridge from this old history of the romantic frontier to the new one under Reagan. Additionally, Jud ties the repression of questioning an act of colonialism as inherently tied to masculinity. In this way, King exposes – purposefully or not – a duality required of colonial masculinity: to rationalize one's own barbarism and, if that does not work, focus on any

positive *feelings* achieved by an act of colonisation. Ultimately, Jud's advice here is an illustration of the type of imagined community he believes he shares with Louis. As Benedict Anderson notes, the shared sense of community is so strong it is linked, in the mind, with life-or-death importance: 'it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly die for such limited imaginings' (7). That Louis takes this convoluted advice from Jud is testament to the bond created between two characters who both value colonial masculinity and see it as integral to their identity.

Initially and unsurprisingly, Louis' relationship with the graveyard is also one of attempted control. Following a common analysis of *Semetary*, Patrick McAleer states, 'Creed becomes obsessed with the power he believes that he carries within himself and can hardly contain his desire to exercise what he views as his power' (1218). Gage's death starkly illuminates how Louis' sense of control is a thin façade, and therefore his need to re-assert power via the desecration of the Micmac graveyard. On the day of Gage's funeral, Louis finally allows himself to cry at the loss of his son in a moment suffused with gendered terminology. King writes that Louis' grief 'came and dissolved him, unmanned him, took away whatever defenses remained, and he put his face in his hands and cried, rocking back and forth on his bed, thinking he would do anything to have a second chance, anything at all' (250). Just as Louis only let himself show tenderness to his son when they were alone on the day they flew a kite together (199), he can only show his grief while alone. Louis is 'unmanned' because as a masculine colonial subject, even death is not a good enough excuse to show emotion. Where previously Louis was able to shrug off the question of life and death with an "objective" i.e., colonial, scientific eye, when that death is brought home, literally,²¹

²¹ For more on the significance of the word 'home' in *Pet Semetary*, see: Corstophine, Kevin. "'Sour Ground': Stephen King's *Pet Semetary* and the Politics of Territory." *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Stories*, vol. 1, (October 2006), pp. 86.

the weight of its significance is incomprehensible and irrational. Try as Louis might to retain control, especially via Rachel during and directly after Gage's funeral (251 – 253), the unravelling has already begun and can no longer be fixed by asserting his own domination over feminine subjects. Louis certainly repeatedly thinks of the resurrection of his son as a form of justice, remarking at Gage's unearthed grave, 'This was the safety-deposit box in which he was supposed to bury all his hopes for his son. Fury, clean and white hot [...] rose up in him. Idiotic! The answer was no!' (304). This can be seen as a sort of last-ditch effort to adhere to the promises of appropriately performed coloniality. As seen post-Pascow's death scene, in the American colonial imagination and in Louis' 1980s neo-colonial imagination, hard work, rationality, and the rigid performance of colonial masculinity rewards individuals with prosperity and status. Gage's death has shattered this illusion, yet somehow Louis thinks by re-establishing the nuclear family, he will be able to recover the rewards he has been given by his adherence to societal expectations. However, it should also be noted that Louis' actions are tinged with a noticeable patina of madness. Speaking to this theme, Magistrale and Blouin state: 'By alienating readers from the draw to jingoism and machismo that destroys Creed, King hopes to disenchant Americans of their incessant self-sabotage' (46). Although this observation is a bit didactic, it is certainly true that machismo and jingoism within the text are not rewarded.

Blinded by an understanding of power rooted in a colonial epistemology that always tips every interaction in his favour, Louis cannot initially understand his own hand in his almost mythic downfall. Despite being given many warnings from Pascow, Jud, and his own subconscious, Louis continues to desecrate the burial ground and reap the brutal rewards for his colonial work. However, as the novel continues, Louis begins to wrestle with his own guilt and culpability in relationship to the graveyard. This happens at the same time that his concept of his own masculinity begins to shatter because of Gage's death – something he

cannot control however hard he tries. In this way, the illusion of “pure” neo-colonial masculinity that Louis represents, the illusion of a neutral colonial past, and the illusion of non-involvement in neo-colonialism are all tied together. In effect, as the power of the Indigenous spectral monster rises, Louis’ own, colonial power becomes ephemeral in itself. Thus, although spectral, the wendigo is more real to Louis and Jud than the colonial gendered power structures to which Louis clings for sanity, because it effects material change to the point that it destroys the Creed family from within.

III. ‘What You Buy is What You Own’: Spectralisation, Appropriation, and Guilt

Kevin Coleman states in *Masculine Migrations* (1998) that, as social constructs, ‘[m]asculine ideologies [...] are refracted when they encounter the medium of a new cultural context’ (7). While the figure of the wendigo in this text is not, as previously stated, authentically from Indigenous imagination, it nonetheless functions in the text as the ultimate Other against which Louis’ own hegemonic colonial masculine ideology is pitted. Initially, this Otherness is realized through the Gothic trope of wilderness versus civilization.²² However, it is important to note that the very root of the concept of wilderness versus civilization comes from a colonial worldview. What the novel depicts in its use of the wendigo, then, is not the Indigenous Other wreaking havoc upon the colonial avatar, but rather the colonial avatar’s imaginary construction of the Indigenous Other wreaking havoc upon the colonial avatar. Hoisted by its own petard, colonial hegemonic masculinity haunts *itself* with its abject fear of an imaginary Other. Coleman’s assertion that masculinities ‘are refracted when they encounter the medium of a new cultural context’ (7) may be tweaked for the purposes of

²² See: Corstophine, Kevin. ““Sour Ground”: Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary* and the Politics of Territory.” *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Stories*, vol. 1, (October 2006), pp. 84 – 98.

examining Euro-American imperial Gothic literature such as *Semetary* to say that masculinities are refracted when they encounter the dark Other of the masculine imagination.

All of the Indigenous figures within *Semetary* are born from the Euro-American colonial imagination via Jud, who acts as a mouthpiece for the otherwise completely absent Micmac and Penobscot. Frantz Fanon argues in *Black Faces, White Masks* (1967) that ‘[a] man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power’ (9). Similar to Anderson’s exploration of language in *Imagined Communities* (1983), Fanon argues that the dominant and domineering language – the language of politics, courts, and mainstream media – instils the speakers of that particular language with a power not afforded to others. Fanon writes, ‘Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation’ (9). Inversely, as a narrative that centres around Indigenous monsters and Indigenous land rights while simultaneously having a complete absence of Indigenous voices, *Pet Semetary* is therefore haunted not by *Indigenous* ghosts, but by *colonial* bogeyman that manifests in an Indigenous mask.

It is Jud who explains to Louis the origin of the Micmac burial ground a few nights after they bury Church there. In his usual meandering way that presents the issue as largely unproblematic, Jud weaves the Indigenous history of the land in with the colonial history of the land. He states:

‘The Micmacs believed this hill was a magic place [...] believed this whole forest, from the swamp on north and east, was magic. They made this place, and they buried their dead here, away from everything else. Other tribes steered clear of it – the Penobscots said these woods were full of ghosts. Later on, the fur trappers started saying pretty much the same thing [...] Later on, not even the Micmacs themselves would come here. One of them claimed he saw a Wendigo here and that the ground had gone sour.’ (117)

Like the narrative voice of *Meridian* which spectralises the Indigenous people by removing them from the memory and the future of the land even when they are still physically present on it, Jud spectralises the Micmac and Penobscot by removing their voices and epistemologies from their own history. For example, Jud states that the Micmac associated the hill with ‘magic’, but he does not understand what that magic is or what it means to the Micmac. There is the vague notion that the Micmac also knew the woods to be haunted because other Indigenous groups like the Penobscot say this is true, although what cultural associations Penobscot have with the figure of the ghost remains ultimately undefined. Finally, there is the assertion that ‘the ground had gone sour’ which plays into the stereotype of the savage Indian who is connected invariable and ineffably to the land itself. As Mackenthun notes, ‘the Micmacs of *Pet Semetary* have no history worth mentioning; their presence is inscribed on the land merely through their potentially devilish rituals and their graves’ (102). All of this so-called knowledge Jud has is second-hand, mostly from Stanny B, whose grandfather was a fur trapper and who himself was supposedly crazy: yet another manifestation of Cartesian binaries (134). In this passage, when Jud appropriates the histories and cultural imaginations of Indigenous people with complete confidence in his own authority, he is enacting the very power structures Fanon and Anderson refer to within their critical works. Jud owns the language – a language of the coloniser. His subjectivity is formed by it and in turn, he reproduces the ideology of the colonising language.

Also similar to the issues of the lack of criticism of the narrative voice with *Meridian* is that, while critics increasingly note that the desecration of the Micmac burial ground is a colonial act, they do not question Jud’s authority in recounting supposed Indigenous legends and spirituality, or what this might mean for the text as a whole. Magistrale and Blouin’s otherwise extremely thorough and convincing argument also falls prey to this misstep when they state: ‘When the warrior men of Ludlow chose to transgress the barrier and re-entered

this place, they forged their own nexus with the sin that was born when the land originally belonged to the Micmacs' (46). However, as Jud is the only source through which this 'sin' is explained, it should be looked at with a critical eye, as Jud is not a reliable narrator, having no access to this history himself. Moreover, as Mackenthun notes, Jud hints that the Micmac ground is sour because of something the Micmac themselves did, stating that readers 'are offered the explanation that the "cannibalistic properties" which the place radiates may actually have been caused by the Micmacs themselves, and that they then used the Wendigo myth as an ideological mystification their horrible and atrocious practice' (102). Mackenthun argues that the result of the appropriation and displacement of Indigenous voices 'subtly translates the horrors of colonial guilt into the horrors of native savagery' (102). While a compelling reading, this does not take into account how extensively the text works to deconstruct the colonial epistemology and power structures that incite Louis and Jud to desecrate the burial ground in the first place, nor does it satisfactorily address how the text explicitly ties the act of grave desecration to ownership in the sense that Louis and Jud repeatedly understand their own culpability in their fates.

Entering the woods with Gage's body, Louis encounters the wendigo face-to-face for the first time. King writes:

Then there *was* a sound, and he remembered this from the last time as well: a high, gobbling laugh that became a sob. There was silence for a moment and then the laugh came again, this time rising to a maniacal shriek that froze Louis' blood [...] Suddenly the mist lost its light and Louis realized that a face was hanging in the air ahead of him, leering and gibbering. Its eyes, tilted up like the eyes in a classical Chinese painting, were a rich yellowish-gray, sunken, gleaming. The mouth was drawn down in a rictus; the lower lip was turned inside out, revealing teeth stained blackish-brown and worn down almost to nubs. But what stuck Louis were the ears, which were not ears at all but curving horns ... they were not like devil's horns; they were ram's horns. This grisly, floating head seemed to be speaking – laughing. Its mouth moved, although that turned-down lower lip never came back to its natural shape and place. Veins in there pulsed black. Its nostrils flared, as if with breath and life, and blew out white vapors. As Louis drew closer, the floating head's tongue lolled out. It was long and pointed, dirty yellow in color. It was coated with peeling scales and as Louis watched, one of these flipped up and over like a manhole cover

and a white worm oozed out. The tongue's tip skittered lazily on the air somewhere below where its adam's apple should have been... it was laughing. (326 – 327).

King's wendigo is a grotesque carnival of colonial imagery that stands in supposed complete opposition to the coloniser. Before the wendigo is even seen Louis hears its terrible, incomprehensible voice. The voice nearly simultaneously laughs, cries, and shrieks: a symphony of high emotion so discouraged by colonial masculinity. The actual visage of King's wendigo is even more horrible than its voice: so horrible, in fact, that Louis cannot actually comprehend or describe its features accurately. The appendages which he calls 'ears' are immediately seen to be 'not ears at all but curving horns' and the horns are 'not like devil's horns; they were ram's horns' (327). For Louis, the wendigo's features are more readily describable by what they are not than by what they are. This sort of inverted description serves to underline the Otherness of King's wendigo. However, this wendigo reinforces the power structures of language and coloniality that Fanon explores in *Black Faces, White Masks*. Louis may have temporarily lost mastery over language while attempting to describe it but this wendigo, in his imagination, is an orgy of colonial tropes. Furthermore, despite the complete lack of gender performance of this massive floating head, Louis tellingly assumes a masculine gender when he states that the wendigo 'should have' had an Adam's apple. While the wendigo remains largely indescribable to Louis, Louis still retains an impulse to project colonial power structures onto it. The wendigo must be masculine in Louis' eyes because, as evidenced by its power over other colonial males and the undead Church, it must in some way be on equal-yet-opposite footing with the masculine coloniser; it must, in effect, still be somewhere on the hierarchy of the colonial family of man. Consequently, the wendigo is just another iteration of this colonial value system.

The spectrality of the wendigo and its ontological complexities, alongside the continued references to the mystery of the graveyard, point back to an unwieldy, feature of the imperial Gothic: the reliance on myth and metaphor. Höglund deconstructs the effect of

mythologizing real-life atrocities of colonialism via the Gothic stating, ‘metaphors and narrative trajectories of this form of writing are capable of housing the same kind of anti-Enlightenment or anti-imperial discourse as the early gothic. In the imperial gothic, British empire appears at the necessary bulwark but also, at times, as an unsustainable system’ (*American Imperial Gothic* 7). Höglund’s analysis is just as readily applicable to American imperial Gothic. As King’s descriptions of the wendigo and Louis and Jud’s reactions to the imagined Other demonstrate, trying to place *Semetary* on a definite pro- or anti-imperial spectrum is difficult. The performance of mainstream colonial masculinity by Louis protects him to a certain extent from giving into the alleged power of the burial ground earlier. Conversely, it is also what empowers him to desecrate the burial ground multiple times. Throughout the final part of the novel, Louis’ descent into madness is depicted as giving into an Othered force outside of himself, something dangerous that he does not understand. But, as I have shown, this Other is not truly Other, but a reflection of the Other from the colonial mind, one that further connects Indigeneity to a spectral kind of monstrosity.

King’s wendigo appears to Louis most predominantly as an Indigenous cannibal. The mouth, which smiles in a ‘rictus’ grin of death reveals ‘teeth stained blackish-brown and worn down almost to nubs’ (327). The entire mouth, then, is associated with death and an excessive appetite of the Other. The scaled tongue which ‘skitters’ like an animal and reveals a worm actually living inside of it reinforces this oral/grave symbolism and makes even more monstrous the implied act of eating. Even as this mouth eats, it is itself eaten by the worm inside it. When Louis looks at the face of King’s wendigo – a monster with the name of an Indigenous cultural artifact but no epistemological connection to Indigenous legend – he sees a mishmash of the horrific creation of the Other. He sees a bogeyman from the colonial imagination set upon him by his own mindless devotion to colonial masculinity. Yet, at the same time that King’s wendigo is a ghostly fabrication of colonial epistemology, its

unrivalled power over the psyches of supposedly rational colonial men like Louis and Jud is clear. Unlike the spectral Indigenes of *Meridian*, the spectral wendigo in *Semetary* cannot be made into a displaced sign, ultimately separate from the endings of the “heroes” Louis and Jud, if one is to follow Sears and Žižek’s identification of the text as fitting the epic mode. The complete power of this faux-Indigenous monster in the mind of the Euro-American reader and writer thus undermines Bergland argument regarding *Semetary* in *The National Uncanny*. Bergland argues that the mainstream popularity of *Semetary* indicates a ‘contemporary popular fascination with phantom Indians. The story evokes current white anxieties about Indian possession and repossession of land [...] By creating fantastic Native American demons, *Pet Semetary* makes its readers and viewers forget about Native American people and politics’ (166 – 167). Certainly, uncritical mainstream Euro-American readings of *Semetary*, have the potential to act only as catharsis for Euro-American readers. Fictionalized Euro-American representations of Indigenous people also are highly problematic and serve to displace discourse regarding real Indigenous issues. However, it would be extremely puzzling if the utter destruction of the Creed family at the end of the novel made any Euro-American reader feel safe and satisfied.

In fact, one of the alleged powers of the Micmac graveyard includes the ability to reverse-colonise the mind. During the burial march for Church, Louis remarks, ‘Jud looked at him, and for a moment Louis thought he saw something bright and not completely pleasant in the old man’s eyes’ (111). The sense of eeriness remains even the next night, when Louis becomes convinced that Jud was somehow not himself in the lead up to and during the burial. King writes, ‘Louis thought of what he had seen – or thought he had seen – in Jud’s eyes the night before. That capering, gleeful thing. He remembered thinking that Jud’s decision to take Louis and Ellie’s cat on that particular night journey had not been entirely Jud’s own’ (139). The description of the other presence as being ‘capering’ and ‘gleeful’ foreshadows the

malevolence of the wendigo when it is eventually seen in the flesh by Louis. Quite clearly, King demonises and appropriates Indigenous culture at the same time that he gives the Micmac burial ground power over the lives of the white protagonists. However, the burial ground's power and mystery is significant in that it points to – at least a partial understanding – of white guilt over colonialism. This is because, even if the text assigns a kind of malevolent agency to the burial ground and the “Indigenous” spirit within, it is Jud and Louis' choice to appropriate the graveyard in the first place that leads to their downfalls.

Semetary depicts a brand of colonialism and the masculinity that is unsustainable, though it remains unclear if this is a conscious choice by King. Colonialism is so unsustainable, in fact, that *Semetary* cannot reinforce the necessity of this system: after all, everyone in the immediate vicinity of Louis dies. Bergland goes on to argue ‘the spectacular popularity of *Pet Semetary* happened because the novel fulfills the deepest wishes and counterwishes of an ambivalent modern American subject, both reminding Americans of the ongoing conquest of Native Americans, and calming their fears, allowing them to forget’ (166 – 167). This reading of *Semetary* erases Louis' character arc in the final part of the novel. It erases his final revelation that only he is in control of himself. On the edge of Gage's grave before lifting the lining, Louis throws away what he sees as his final chance at stopping his own madness: ‘He got out of the grave again, spread out the tarpaulin, lay down on it, and grasped the ends of the rope. *Louis, I think this is it. Your last chance. You're right. It's my last chance and I'm damned well taking it*’ (303). This is not, as Bergland argues, the thought process of a triumphant colonising subject. Louis' inability to accept that Gage has died and his inability to process that massive well of emotion that comes with that knowledge is an act of denying reality. In fact, Louis understands that reanimating Gage is an act of denying reality. *Semetary* does create a fictional bogeyman in the wendigo, but that bogeyman ultimately triumphs over the psyches and bodies of the Cartesian subjects like Louis and Jud

who create and perpetuate it. Therefore, only Louis is to blame for the destruction around him. The recurring motif that “What you buy is what you own, and what you own comes back to you” is indicative that Louis has bought something bad through his actions, and it is his fault that the family collapses.

Analysing the multiple meanings of ‘buy’ in the text, Castricano notes: ‘A similar ambivalence is suggested in the use of the word “buy” since it not only means to purchase, but also in its “slang” usage, “to accept, believe, be deceived by, suffer and receive as punishment”’ (61). Castricano’s analysis of the buy/believe double meaning is especially relevant when considering how Louis “buys into” colonial epistemology and what he “owns” as a consequence. In the third act of the novel, Louis visits the modern graveyard in which his son is buried, armed with the tools to dig up the grave and ‘break [Gage] out’ (304). Having climbed the fence, Louis waits for a safe moment to begin moving his tools from the spot where they fell next to the fence into the graveyard proper, and, as he waits, he is met with a sight that becomes uncanny. A couple walks down the street towards an apartment and shares an embrace under the streetlamp, and the juxtaposition of their situation with Louis’ prompts a sudden revelation: ‘Watching them, Louis felt a kind of sick wonder and self-loathing. *Is the line so thin, then?* he wondered, and that thought also had a ring of familiarity. *So thin that you can simply step over it with this little fuss, muss, and bother?*’ (301). The line Louis refers to here is the one in the Cartesian imagination between civilised and savage, between sanity and insanity. In this moment, when Louis recognizes a “safe” performance of affection, he realizes just how far that performance is from his current one. Most importantly, he also begins to realize that there is no inherent difference between himself, a colonial hegemonically masculine man, and the Other. The ‘line’ is so thin that it is barely there at all: to cross it and become the Other is easy and often actually appears rational to the Cartesian subject’s mind. However, rather than being comforting, this realisation makes Louis lose his

tether to reality even more. King writes: ‘He crammed his fist against his mouth to stop some sound from coming out and felt for that interior coldness, that sense of disconnection. It was there and Louis drew it gratefully around him’ (301). Rather than giving into this realisation and letting it colour his understanding of his own subjectivity, Louis retreats into a cold Cartesian “objectivity” that he finds protective.

Once set in motion, however, this realisation cannot be undone. The unravelling of masculinity and civilised/savage leads to a growing understanding that, in fact, Jud and Louis both have earned their downfalls through their actions. The colonial understanding of ownership is the medium through which both Louis and Jud process and question their guilt. Of the burial ground, Jud states, ‘*Mostly you [are compelled to return] because once you’ve been up there, it’s your place*’ (228), paradoxically expressing the power of the Micmac graveyard over those who colonise it and the responsibility of the colonisers regarding the consequences of the burial ground. The ownership Jud refers to here is of a psychic variety, where ownership is equal to fixation. Framing the physical geographic space of the Micmac burial ground as a psychically owned space does mythologise the act of colonisation. Additionally, this framework does detract from the land disputes in the novel and in real life.²³ However, this framing of psychic land ownership and fixation also invites the concept of responsibility because, for the colonial man, ownership is akin to stewardship. This is again evident in both Jud and Louis’ treatment of the women in their lives – the control that they exert over them supposedly for their own good. Bad stewardship, however, is frowned upon. If a colonial man cannot protect his charges – something both Louis and Jud fail to do – he is inept which is nearly as emasculating as belonging to the Other.

²³ For more on the politics of land in *Semetary* see: Corstophine, Kevin. “‘Sour Ground’: Stephen King’s *Pet Semetary* and the Politics of Territory.” *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Stories*, vol. 1, (October 2006), pp. 84 – 98. ; Mackenthun, Gesa. ‘Haunted Real Estate: The Occlusion of Colonial Dispossession and Signatures of Survival in U.S. Horror Fiction.’ *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1, (1998), pp. 93 – 108. ; Nazare, Joe. ‘The Horror! The Horror?: The Appropriation, and Reclamation, of Native American Mythology.’ *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 11, no. 1, (2000), pp. 24 – 51.

The depth of Louis and Jud's culpability is, however, shaky. Even as they both begin to take responsibility for their actions, there remains the impetus to, at least partially, blame the mystical power of the Micmac graveyard. Suspecting that Louis has gone to exhume Gage, Jud waits for him to return home, but becomes – according to him – supernaturally sleepy. Jud admonishes himself: *'No sleeping on sentry duty, old man. You let it get hold of you; you bought something, and now you have to pay for it'* (320). What Louis and Jud both purchase with their desecration of the Micmac burial ground is a form of retributive justice. This is Sartre's 'the moment of the boomerang' modified: rather than violence being enacted against colonisers by the colonised, it is the colonial imagination launched back at the coloniser (20). Sartre's observation that the colonisers 'do not realize any more than we did the other times that it's we who launched it', however, is subverted (20). Initially, it is true that neither Louis nor Jud understands their own hand in the violence visited upon them. However, at the moment of death, Jud does reach a sort of enlightenment. As the undead Gage furiously stabs Jud with his father's scalpel, King writes, *"I'm gonna fuck with you, old man!"* the Gage-thing chortled, blowing its poisoned breath in his face. *"I'm gonna fuck with you! I'm gonna fuck with you all... I... want!"* (346). King's emphasis on 'you' expresses that the undead Gage feels he himself has been fucked with; Jud fucked with him, now he is fucking with Jud. The agency of this dead thing cannot be denied, nor can it be denied that Jud and Louis' actions are indeed what brought about this end. Louis *has* 'fucked' with powers he ought not to: not just through the resurrection, but through the medium of the resurrection. The ground is sour not because of some mystical and unknowable Indigenous transgression, but because of the actions of colonisers and neo-colonisers like Louis himself. Therefore, when Louis and Jud both purchase with their desecration of the Micmac burial ground is a form of retributive justice. Church, Gage, and all the other wendigo-possessed

characters are the colonial imagination run amok, set back on the novel's fiercest colonial advocates.

Like Jud, death is the only way that Louis can understand his own guilt. The morning after resurrecting Gage, the phone in his kitchen rings, and Louis is struck with a terrible premonition that something awful has happened to Rachel, which makes him feel 'slow and stupid, a sucker in some game which he was only now realizing he did not understand in the least' (354). Compared to the bravado Louis felt when resurrecting his son, Louis' dawning understanding underscores the importance of the revelation that follows. Before the worst is confirmed, Louis feels like somehow he has been cheated – 'a sucker in some game' – indicating that he indeed feels guilt, but a displaced sort of guilt that places him as the victim rather than the perpetrator. The final blow comes when he speaks to his father-in-law and it is confirmed that Rachel returned in the night – and, as Louis knows, she returned to an undead Gage armed with a scalpel. Louis imagines his guilt as a leash, binding him to the transgression of desecrating the graveyard. King writes, 'He understood everything. The leash... the leash going into the darkness... he was moving fast along it now, hand over hand. Ah, if he could drop it before he saw what was at the end! But it was his leash. He had bought it' (355). At long last the illusion of being controlled, of being a 'sucker' slip away. Louis is literally tied to his previous misdeeds and misinterpretations of his own power and epistemology. What awaits him at the end of the leash is the total deconstruction of himself: the comfort of his home and wife, the belief that he is a good and thoughtful person, his belief in rationality, his belief that he will be saved by his own worldview. While the spectralisation might, in theory, point to the removal of the Indigene from the narrative, Louis' end makes clear that, when the Indigenous spectral monster is not adequately addressed, it can turn even the colonial masculine subject into a spectre itself.

IV. Conclusion

The novel does not end with Louis' understanding of the wendigo and the Micmac burial ground, however. The final view offered to readers is through the new perspective of Steve Masterton, Louis' colleague from the university. Although Louis has personally completed his realization that what he "bought" was the destruction of his life and world view, Steve has completed no similar journey. He watches Louis carry Rachel's body over the deadfall and hears the laugh of the wendigo: 'Then, from the deep woods behind the deadfall, woods so deep that the light looked green and tarnished even on the brightest days, a low, chuckling laugh arose. The sound was huge' (372). That King decides to leave readers with this last glimpse of the wendigo as a controlling force can feel like a step backwards. As Blouin notes in *Stephen King and American Politics* (2021), King's works strip 'democracy of its core antagonisms to espouse in their place a purportedly reasonable non-politics' (10): therefore, leaving readers with the image of the Indigene as spectral and monstrous can appear to have less impact as an anti-colonial sentiment. In essence, while Louis understands his own appropriation of the graveyard and the consequences of that appropriation, it is puzzling that King feels the need to return to an image of the wendigo as Other. At the same time, while Steve may see Louis as possessed, it is also clear in the value system of the novel that he is at least partially responsible and therefore not entirely out of his own control. Thus, King's novel does not neatly fall into an anti-imperial or pro-imperial category of Euro-American imperial Gothic. Instead, it remains haunted by its own subjectivity, unable to completely shake the Indigenous bogeyman King has himself created.

In 'The Horror! The Horror?', Joseph Nazare charts the evolution of the Indigenous spirit in what he identifies as three waves of American horror fiction. Similar to Högländ's and Bergland's observations of the role of Indigenous spirits in Euro-American literature, he states, 'The struggle by which present, living [Euro-American land] owners fend off dead,

former owners is not only a leitmotif of the horror genre but, according to Clover [in *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*], a chance for white America to wrestle with (exercise/exorcise?) its own demons of guilt' (Nazare 34). I previously explored how McCarthy's monstrous, spectral depictions of Indigeneity displace the discourse of the material effects of coloniality, essentially spectralising history itself. Certainly, King's novel, which cannot entirely exorcise the fictional wendigo, falls into the pattern as well. However, I cannot help but return to the utter destruction of the Creed family as an indication that *Pet Semetary* more effectively confronts white guilt similar to than its contemporary *Blood Meridian*. Unlike the kid and all other characters subjected to the judge who are stuck on a wheel manipulated by forces supposedly outside of their control, Louis does repeatedly demonstrate his own agency in his own actions. The entire world of *Semetary* exists in a colonial myth. It is not surprising, then, that King finds such difficulty leaving the myth in tatters, as he could have done by not giving readers Steve's perspective in the final pages. However, readers are not obliged to oscillate between placing blame on a fiction wendigo or on the actions of Louis as the novel does. Nor are readers bound by the perspectives of unreliable narrators like Louis and Jud. What *can* be settled on, however, is that the central action of the novel occurs solely because of colonial relations. Without the initial colonisation of the land, without the establishment of the United States government, without the hegemonic power of colonial masculinity, without the need for colonial courts to decide who owns Indigenous land, *Pet Semetary* simply would not exist.

In the following chapter, I will combine the threads of colonial epistemology and spectralisation that I have outlined in *Meridian* and *Semetary* to analyse a text written in over twenty years later. Similar to *Meridian*, *The Hunger* is a historical romance that, like *Semetary*, appropriates and spectralises Indigenous people specifically in connection to cannibalism and monstrosity. In my analysis of this text so, I hope to illuminate the enduring

pattern of displacement and appropriation that began in early American Gothic literature, was revitalised in the Reagan era, and continues decades past Reagan's death. I have shown how McCarthy spectralises Indigenous people by removing them from history/memory even when they are physically present in a scene and by erasing their voices, thereby reinforcing the colonial narrative that the death of Indigenous peoples was/is 'inevitable': a narrative also reinforced by the judge. I have demonstrated how King participates in the same manner of Indigenous erasure by making Jud Crandall a mouthpiece for Indigeneity, but also how King's interaction with the myth of colonial dominance is more nuanced than McCarthy's, because the spectrality of the Indigene is the source of ultimate power in the narrative while also being completely figured by colonial epistemology. *The Hunger* falls into this spectrum because it appropriates Indigenous voices in order to create a monstrous, spectral Indigenous Other upon which the virtues of 'appropriately' colonial men can be contrasted. In short, it combines McCarthy's myth with King's method of spectralisation.

**Chapter 3: ‘Inexplicable Prejudices’: Colonial Romance, Cannibalism, and the White-
Trash/Indigenous Alliance in *The Hunger***

In the past two chapters, I have examined novels from the 1980s that perpetuate white supremacy via their interactions with the mythologising of the American frontier space, and their depictions of masculinity which are tied to violence and the Indigenous burial ground. Written in 2018, Alma Katsu’s historical horror-romance novel *The Hunger* is a continuation of such themes through a reimagining of the real events of the Donner Party. The Donner Party was a group of settlers, led first by George Donner and second by James Reed, who travelled along the Oregon/California trail in 1846 in the hopes of settling in California. However, they took an untried route towards the end of the journey and became stranded in the Sierra Nevada Mountains for around four months from late 1846 to February 1847. Because of their lack of supplies, many members of the party resorted to survival cannibalism. Only forty-eight of the original eighty-seven members of the Donner Party survived. To this day, the Donner Party remains one of the most gruesome artefacts of American colonial hubris: a historical moment that is much sensationalised in the popular imagination.²⁴ In Katsu’s novel, the cannibalism occurs not out of necessity, but because of a bloodborne disease combined with a fictional Indigenous horrific spirituality that haunts the wagon party. The disease – carried by an underprivileged immigrant settler named Louis Keseberg and referred to occasionally as ‘the hunger’ – spreads easily among other underprivileged party members, catching speed when the party becomes stranded in the wilderness. It is then revealed that an uncle of Keseberg brought the disease to the Sierra Nevada area nearly a decade prior while working as a prospector, and that the disease manifested in his prospecting party as well, turning them all into monstrous cannibals. A

²⁴ For excellent nonfiction accounts of the Donner Party, see: Brown, Daniel James. *The Indifferent Stars Above: The Harrowing Saga of the Donner Party*. Harper Perennial, 2009. ; Wallis, Michael. *The Best Land Under Heaven: The Donner Party in the Age of Manifest Destiny*. Liveright, 2017.

fictional Indigenous group created by Katsu, the Anawai, then began to worship the cannibals as demons, offering them human sacrifices.

It must be stated at the outset of this analysis that despite a generally warm reception from audiences – the cover of the paperback edition even boasts a Stephen King endorsement: ‘Deeply, deeply disturbing’ – Katsu’s novel is extremely poorly written. Katsu’s writing is not sophisticated enough to be able to mount a critique of colonialism. On top of a general poor grasp of characterisation, pacing, suspense, and many other stylistic issues, undergirding the entire novel is a sense of performative progressiveness. In fact, the displacement of the horror from the real Indigenous groups in the area – such as Washoe – onto a fictionalised monstrous group – the Anawai – is a late twentieth and twenty-first century technique by some Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers that frequently accompanies attempts to critique colonialism.²⁵ This shift from placing the horror on real to fictional Indigenous groups reflects how the work of Indigenous activists in the 70s and 80s led to political reform and increased awareness of Indigenous concerns in the mainstream. For example, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which requires that federally funded agencies and institutions receiving federal funding return remains and burial goods of Indigenous peoples to their rightful people, became law in November 1990. More recently, contemporary to the writing of *Hunger*, in 2016, the Water Protector protests began in an attempt to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline from building on ‘unceded territory of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty [...] immediately upstream from Standing Rock, threatening the reservation’s water supply’ (Estes 2). In the same year, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, an initiative that, while limited to the territory of Canada,

²⁵ See: Blackwell Felix. *Stolen Tongues*. Self-published, 2017. ; *Bone Tomahawk*. Dir by S Craig Zahler, Perf by Kurt Russell, Patrick Wilson, Matthew Fox, RLJ Entertainment, 2015. ; Goingback, Owl. *Crota*. Signet, 1996.

nevertheless brought significant global attention to the astronomical rates of gendered violence against Indigenous women across colonial borders between the US and Canada.

Outside of Indigenous people, however, *The Hunger* is also notably anachronistic and performatively progressive regarding such topics as gender dynamics and homosexuality that Katsu uses as opportunities to differentiate her socioeconomically privileged narrators from the common, “unwashed masses.” Thus, while the cannibals in this colonial narrative are white colonisers, rather than Indigenous peoples, this distinction is hardly anti-colonial because the Anawai are still affiliated with the cannibal monsters. In contrast, socio-economically privileged Donner party members such as the romantic hero Charles Stanton, the femme fatale with a heart of gold Tamsen Donner, the anti-hero James Reed, and the fictional Indigenous guide Thomas and his secret lover Elitha Donner,²⁶ stand apart from the other members of the party and the Anawai by seeing the cannibalism as horrific and disgusting. With this binary in play, instead of drawing any obvious parallels between colonialism and cannibalism as other texts do as I will show in part two of this thesis, Katsu tightens borders between privileged and underprivileged economic groups in order to distinguish between “good” and “bad” colonisers, respectively. Class, as it exists in the United States context as the level of capital one is able to create, maintain, and grow, is therefore integral to “goodness” or “evil” in the novel. The more established and larger the capital base, the higher the class; the higher the class, the more refined or respectable the individual. Differences in class are reinforced by the colonality of power, wherein a character’s virtue as a human being is equated to their ability to create and retain capital.

Like the 1980s romanticisation of the frontier as a mythic space for whites to find themselves through the erasure and spectralisation of Indigenous groups, as I have shown

²⁶ Another technique of twenty-first century writers that leads to the glossing-over of the complexities of Indigenous life post-colonisation perhaps best exemplified by the character Jacob Black in Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* saga (2005 – 2008).

with my analysis of *Meridian* and *Semetary*, *Hunger* exhibits ‘optimism and [...] confidence in the glory of imperialism’ (Brown *Cannibalism* 17). In Katsu’s novel, settler colonialism is not inherently bad: a few bad apples spoil the bunch. Additionally, the fictional Anawai are made into spectral boogeymen not unlike King’s wendigo. The Anawai’s entire socio-religious cosmology is reliant upon colonisers, which, in addition to removing actual peoples indigenous to the area and displacing the discourse of colonisation, is a direct example of manifest manners. Vizenor states that manifest manners are ‘the course of dominance, the racist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as “authentic” representations of indian cultures’ (*Manifest Manners* vii). As a result of Katsu’s literal demonisation of both underprivileged white settlers and Indigenous peoples – non-fictional and fictional – *Hunger* enacts a pro-colonial aesthetic that determines anyone who is not socioeconomically privileged and undermines colonial authority to be a threat to “civilised” settler society.

I. Romantic Desire and the Colonial Paradigm

With its construction of cannibalism-as-disease, *Hunger* participates in an epoch Jennifer Brown identifies in *Cannibalism in Literature and Film* (2013) that ties the poor Euro-American cannibal to Indigenous peoples in the United States. Brown argues, ‘the cannibal was used as a label for the poor whites of America in the mid- to late twentieth century in much the same way it had been used to dehumanize the subjects of colonialism’ (*Cannibalism* 11 – 12). Depictions of white-trash cannibals in twentieth century and twenty-first century fiction offers a similar escape as adventure romance fiction offers readers. This is particularly true of the proliferation of poor, hillbilly cannibals in the post-George W Bush presidency. Brown identifies the hillbilly cannibal as ‘a kind of backlash against [...] the “red state” Americans believed to be his [George W Bush’s] natural constituency’ (*Cannibalism*

12). From the ways in which Katsu ties lower socioeconomic classes to disease, *Hunger* follows in the trend Brown identifies. What is particularly interesting about Katsu's approach, however, is that her novel explicitly connects poor whites to a barbaric Indigenous group, highlighting this as a site of horror for the main characters and, in turn, validating how these unions are horrific from the perspective of the ruling classes.

Underprivileged white citizens are also frequently associated with disease and miscegenation by the ruling class, which makes it easier for privileged classes to find them abject.²⁷ Louis H Palmer III notes that the setting of Appalachia in the Gothic mode acts 'as a repository for our dreams and nightmares [...] Mountaineers [...] represent a rebellious individuality coupled with bare-bones poverty' (168). Furthermore, characters who come from or thrive in these nightmarish environs are placed in a social and mythic location 'as an outcast' (Palmer 169). This echoes Brown's observation that 'the city is usually perceived as the place of normality in opposition to the exotic or economically backward countryside [...]' This division results in various horror novels and films coding the victim as urban and both the setting and villain as rural' (86). Although Katsu's novel does not take place in Appalachia, her depiction of underprivileged white colonisers as undesirable "white trash" monsters in order to articulate horror makes it possible to draw parallels between Palmer's analysis of class in Appalachia Gothic and Katsu's colonial fiction. Brown notes:

The stereotypes of the hillbilly position him as socially and economically backward, drunken, promiscuous, dirty, and inbred [...] In the same way that the cannibal of colonial times was located in the darkness of Africa, the cannibal serial killers of contemporary culture are located in the darkness of dysfunctional families or inbred farmsteads. (*Cannibalism* 108 – 109)

²⁷ For more information on the historicity of upper-class European and Euro-American's demonisation of underprivileged classes see: Lindenbaum, Shirley. 'Thinking about Cannibalism.' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 33, (2004), pp. 475 – 498. ; Isenberg, Nancy. *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*. Atlantic Books, 2016. ; Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*. Harper Perennial, 2005.

The monstrous underclass depicted by Katsu, then, reflects a key issue I have attempted to illuminate throughout this first section: that despite the supposed closing of the American frontier, American imperial Gothic fiction still depends on colonial epistemology and pro-colonial tropes to incite horror in readers, even into what many think of as ‘post-colonial’ eras of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Stephen Shapiro observes that the Gothic mode appears ‘particularly to sediment during the passage between two phases of long-wave capitalist accumulation. Gothic representational devices become recalled and revitalized in the synapses that both link and distinguish the dendrites of two time-spaces of capitalist development’ (41). This perspective at least partially explains how late twentieth and early twenty-first century works of American imperial Gothic draw upon the colonial past and the figure of the monstrous, spectral Indigene in order to incite horror. By displacing the discourse to a colonial past, *Hunger* relies upon a mythological idea of America that never really existed, but nevertheless, allows Katsu to articulate the socio-economic uncertainties of a neoliberal present.

Because of the novel’s contradictory reliance upon an imaginary, mythologised frontier space and its simultaneous interest in appealing to twenty-first century audiences by including trendy issues, *Hunger* is interestingly both antiquated and modern in its colonial sensibilities. This duality is addressed by Brown, who argues that the 1980s marked a decline in the depictions of natives-as-cannibal in media. Brown writes, ‘Not only was the colonial cannibal not a viable target, he was not a politically correct one. With growing sensitivity to racism in the West at this time the colonial cannibal was too sensitive and too dangerous a figure to address’ (81). In this way, Katsu’s ‘white trash’ cannibal is connected to a performative anxiety that shows horror creators as wanting to participate in the language of colonisation without being racist. Speaking to this anxiety, Bergland states, ‘[E]veryone [...] who tries to imagine himself or herself as an American subject, must internalize both the

colonization of Native Americans and the American stance against colonialism. He or she must simultaneously acknowledge the American horror and celebrate the American triumph' (16). By delineating between "good" and "bad" qualities a coloniser can have, Katsu's narrative interacts tangentially with the horrors of colonisation without ultimately advocating for dismantling of the colonial system.

In *Gothic Romanced* (2008), Botting states that 'Romance, as it frames gothic, seems to clean up its darker counterpart, sanitising its depravations; it tries to transform, even ennoble, violent gothic energies as a quest for love in the face of death; it recuperates gothic excesses in the name of the heterosexual couple' (1). Botting is referring to works such as *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), wherein the monster itself is a romantic figure. This is not the case in *Hunger*: the cannibals in the novel are objects of terror and revulsion. However, Botting's observation is still useful in that it can be applied to the way desire functions in the novel. Botting's assertion that the function of Romance within Gothic works is to 'sanitise', 'ennoble' and 'recuperate' violent Gothic excesses 'in the name of the heterosexual couple' is applicable to *Hunger* because that is the exact function of the "good" settler colonists within the novel. Romantic desire for both the settler colonist and the stolen land on which the settler colonist resides, is never depicted as monstrous by Katsu. Rather, the "good" settler colonist is seen as a redeemable, heroic, underdog character, despite the text also qualifying their goodness as being associated with extreme social and economic privilege. In this way, despite attempts to interact with anti-colonial or anti-Cartesian discourses, Katsu's novel is ultimately a study in how the romanticisation of the West and the settler-colonist can never be decolonial.²⁸

²⁸ As Walter Dignolo states, 'It is no longer possible, or at least it is not unproblematic, to "think" from the canon of Western philosophy, even when part of the canon is critical of modernity. To do so means to reproduce the blind epistemic ethnocentrism that makes difficult, if not impossible, any political philosophy of inclusion' (66).

II. Romance and Miscegenation: Settler Masculinity in the Twenty-First Century

Romantic Imperial Imagination

The construction of horror in *The Hunger* relies on an understanding of Western Expansion that romanticises colonisers, thereby erasing the realities of colonialism. As Dunbar-Ortiz writes, the warfare that accompanies colonial institutions such as the wagon party, ‘becomes the very basis for US American identity. The Indian-fighting frontiersmen and the “valiant” settlers in their circled covered wagons are the iconic images of that identity’ (94). That this image, repopularised by Reagan in the 1980s, is still present in the late 2010s points to a link in ‘the dendrites of two time-spaces of capitalist development’ via neoliberalism and the rise of the far-right following the election and presidency of Donald Trump (Shapiro 41). Trump’s political rallying cry ‘Make America Great Again’, echoes Reagan’s ‘shining city upon a hill’ in its nationalist overtones. Also like Reagan, Trump’s foreign policy relied on xenophobic, uber-capitalist rhetoric that demonised anyone considered ‘un-American’ because of race, class, or political background.

Katsu’s novel directly invests in this valorising colonial imagery from the very beginning. Coming across letters that other wagon parties have left at a common resting spot, Stanton reflects that he is ‘strangely comforted by the sight of all those letters. They had seemed a testament to the travelers’ love of freedom and desire for greater opportunity, no matter the risk’ (11 – 12). That Stanton finds comfort in these letters and what they represent – the Westward expansion of settler colonial immigrants – positions Stanton as a pro-colonial figure. The establishment of a main romantic hero’s perspective as pro-colonial is therefore an instance of the text’s manifest manners. Yet another party member, William Bryant, has a different reaction: ‘Look at all these letters [...] *We’re among the last to head out this season and you know what that means, don’t you? [...] We might be too late. The mountain passes will be closed off by snow come winter*’ (12). With these two contrasting points, the novel

opens with an appeal that the readers engage with the discourse of colonialism but with the horrific effects of colonisation upon Indigenous people removed. Instead, by contrasting Stanton's positive outlook with Bryant's observation about the precarity of the Donner party's timing, the central conflict that opens the novel is one that has already set the *white settlers* up as potential victims. The entire central issue of the horrors of coloniality is not even alluded to as the novel opens, nor does it appear later in the novel. In other words, Stanton's romantic and comforting relationship to the core act of colonialism does not change during the events of the novel. It is never the act of colonisation that is seen as horrific: much to the contrary, it is romanticised.

Contributing to the colonial framing of Katsu's novel, is the fact that both main romantic leads – Charles Stanton and James Reed – participated in colonial wars. Explaining the mythic space of the frontier in *Semetary* Magistrle and Blouin draw upon Slotkin's analysis of Roosevelt's presidential rhetoric. According to Roosevelt the colonial soldier finds 'a sacred space in which to recover a lost vitality, a "dark, raging, and howling" landscape where "the white man's purification [is] bought with Indian blood"' (Magistrle and Blouin 41). McCarthy's *Meridian* works to undo the idea of war as pure by focusing on the visceral aesthetics of violence, yet *Semetary* and *Hunger* are linked by this affinity for colonial war despite their supposed temporal divide both with each other and with the mythic frontier space. Their veteran status is used to elevate Stanton and Reed physically, morally, and intellectually above other, underprivileged party members who did not participate in colonial wars. As a result, Stanton and Reed exemplify this category of 'Indian-fighting frontiersmen and [...] "valiant" settlers' that Dunbar-Ortiz articulates as being central figures of the romantic colonial imagination (94). In narration from Bryant, it is revealed that Stanton fought 'in the battle of San Jacinto. Seeing that he fought in the war for Texas independence even though he has no ties to that territory, he might be either *a romantic or idealist*' (59

emphasis mine). Besides adding to the colonial framework of the novel, it is significant that in this passage Bryant – probably the novel’s closest thing to an anti-colonial perspective – does not overtly *or* covertly negatively comment on Stanton’s soldiering ways. Bryant is described as ‘softer than most of the men on the journey’ and ‘probably the smartest man in the party’ because of his career as a journalist and his time spent as a doctor’s apprentice (10). This establishes Bryant as an Enlightenment voice of reason and therefore a Cartesian subject. The text’s privileging of Bryant’s perspective on Stanton as being accurate therefore relies on colonial epistemology.

In addition to being an idealist and romantic in the political sense of the word, Stanton embodies the role of rugged frontiersman from the adventure romance genre. He is self-reliant almost to the point of parody, at one point even abstaining from clean, warm shelter because he ‘was still too much of a Yankee to spend good money when he had a sturdy tent at hand’ (107). More importantly, he is both sexually and romantically attractive. A major source of tension in Stanton’s character arc is his romantic attraction to Mary Graves, his sexual attraction to Tamsen Donner (with whom he has an affair), and his unwillingness to enter into a relationship with either woman because of a traumatic experience when he was a teenager in which his first love, Lydia, killed herself out of shame for being pregnant with her father’s child. Valiantly shouldering the blame for her death so the scandal would not be known, Stanton has spent the majority of his adult life running from this ghost of his past. As a result of this history, Stanton is highly protective: something the text relies upon to show his virtue, demonstrating Höglund and Monnet’s assertion that adventure romances have ‘both widely archetypal/mythical and specific historical/ideological underpinnings’ that reinforce colonial violence (1302). Before the party is trapped in the mountains and the mysterious ‘hunger’ truly begins to set in, Stanton considers leaving the group in order to search for Bryant, who he believes is lost in the wilderness. Ultimately, however, his

romantic attraction to Mary and his masculine sensibilities leads him to determine that he must stay to protect the party as a whole. Katsu writes:

He thought of Mary Graves scrambling backwards in the dirt, the buck of his revolver as he shot her attacker, what would've happened if he hadn't been there. He thought of Tamsen – the fine line of her mouth. He thought of [...] petite Doris Wolfinger, with her pale, delicate hands. He thought of the countless children whose names he still didn't have straight in his head, even after all this time. He couldn't head after Bryant, he saw that now. He couldn't risk what might happen to the others if he didn't return. (116)

Notably, the only people Stanton deems in need of protection are the women and children of the party. All the women are also reduced to their physical delicacy: Mary's inability to fight off her own attacker, 'the fine line' of Tamsen's mouth and the 'pale, delicate hands' of Doris Wolfinger. The individual personalities of all the people in his mental list are not as important to Stanton as what they represent: a flock of helpless sheep who need someone to guard and guide them. Connecting this line of logic to the colonial/Cartesian subject, Stanton thus sees himself as fulfilling the archetypal Father role of protector and benevolent overseer. Like Louis Creed, Stanton stands at the head of the settler-colonial family *and* the colonial family of man as put forth by Haraway and McClintock because he is Katsu's capable romantic hero. Romance in the physical and emotional sense, therefore, is explicitly tied to colonial masculinity in the novel despite attempts to otherwise present a progressive, twenty-first century approach to issues like gendered and racial violence.

Katsu's other hero, James Reed, has more complex ties to the history of the frontier romance novel, but nonetheless still embodies the problematic figure of the settler-colonial hero. Reed is a veteran of the Blackhawk War, which is a point of major pride with him (153). Reed also demonstrates his ability to rise to prominence in established colonial territories by building a furniture business 'from nothing' (153). Such a value system is rooted in colonial thinking from as early as the 1500s, as Isenberg notes in *White Trash*. In early colonisation, purity of blood was tied to the size and geographical reach of one's bank

account, and ideally both humans and the earth could be cultivated to create a profit. Isenberg writes, ‘Good breeding practices tamed otherwise unmanageable waste, whether it was wasteland or waste people [...] Only proper stewards of the fertile ground deserved rights’ (34). Again, this feeds into the antiquated value system upon which the novel relies. Contrasted with the working-class members of the party as I will later show in depth, Reed is a settler-colonist who would cultivate the land rather than use it to sink further into degeneracy. Moreover, the language here also reflects a twentieth and twenty-first century valorisation of neoliberal attitudes. As David Harvey notes about the neoliberal framework, ‘Individual success or failure [is] interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings [...] rather than being attributed to any systemic property’ (65 – 66). Compounding these colonial-neoliberal sensibilities within the text, leadership by privileged party members like James Reed is made out to be natural. Reed is described as a capable outdoorsman and ambitious leader whose rationality sets him above other men. Katsu writes, ‘He’d taken over as leader, had gotten them through the worst trial of the journey, but did anyone think to thank *him*? Of course not. Instead, many found ways to blame him. The group’s loyalties, he’d come to realize, had little to do with fact and all to do with feeling’ (225). In Reed’s mind, his leadership is the sole reason why the rest of the wagon party are alive: not any endurance or careful planning on the part of anyone else. Furthermore, Reed’s assertion that the others in the wagon party dislike him because of ‘feeling’ rather than ‘fact’ demonstrates that he believes them to be less rational than himself and is also linked to their inability to lead or govern themselves.

Unlike Stanton, however, Reed has an additional complication to his romantic arc: in Katsu’s dramatization, he is a gay man struggling with internalised homophobia. While this narrative choice might otherwise allow for an exploration of the toxicity of rigid structures of masculinity, any complication is undone by the end of the novel as, essentially, Reed decides

to be a family man. Juxtaposing the love of his family with the love he believed he felt from an affair with another man, Reed reflects ‘Perhaps he sensed that the love they [his family] bore him was different – more enduring, more forgiving – than the kind he’d find in Edward McGee [...] Reed once thought that love was akin to passion, but he saw now that it was something different entirely’ (471). Once again, the narrative reinforces the power structure of the colonial family, and the head of the family as a Cartesian male who must eschew any sign of Otherness. Compounding Reed’s own above realisation and its reinforcement of the colonial family of man, the last image in the novel is one in which Reed’s emaciated but alive daughter recognises him as ‘Father’ just before her rescue from the nightmarish camp in the mountains where all the cannibalism takes place. Katsu writes, “‘Father?’” It was Virginia. His daughter [...] then it was as if a bright light lit him from within, and he felt certain – more certain than he’d ever been in his life – that he *did* understand what love was. He fell to his knees and reached out a hand’ (472). This rapturous, almost religious return to traditional gender roles and expectations closes the novel. Speaking of the overlap between interpellation and ideology, Althusser states, ‘the structure of all ideology, interpellating individuals as subjects in the name of a Unique and Absolute Subject [...] is constitutive of ideology and ensures its functioning’ (196 – 197). In being named ‘Father’, Virginia interpellates Reed *as* Father, thus assigning him a particular place in the Ideological State Apparatus of the colonial family. In turn, her interpellation of his subjecthood as ‘Father’ allows Reed himself to “come home,” as it were, into this role. Any alternative family structure is eschewed entirely by this exchange and by Reed’s ability to see himself *as* ‘Father’: one of his main struggles throughout the novel.

Beyond this re-assertion of the apparatus of the settler-colonial heterosexual family, however, Katsu actually manages to use Reed’s homosexuality as an avenue to assign monstrosity to his socioeconomic inferiors. Throughout the text, Reed is identified as a

victim of the appetite – or ‘hunger’ – of John Snyder. A ‘twenty-five-year-old drifter’, according to Reed, and hired hand to the Graves family, Snyder is an impertinent tyrant ‘who’d never done anything more difficult than bully and whip livestock’ (153). Though Snyder never expresses a marked physical interest in Reed, it is revealed by an internal monologue from Reed that they have begun an affair, yet Reed refers to himself as the victim of Snyder’s advances. Katsu writes, ‘He felt sick – how could he have let himself fall prey to a man like Snyder? How could he have wanted him so badly? How was it possible Reed wanted him still? The strong bulk of his shoulders. The moments of hard, rough, frantic forgetting’ (259). Reed’s distaste for Snyder’s roughness with the cattle he drives is ironically subverted here. Snyder’s perceived brutishness is the very quality that attracts Reed. Desire for the socioeconomic inferior, however, is grounds for Reed to make himself into a victim. Reed sees himself as active in every other aspect of life on the trail and off. He is a leader in the group and was a stalwart community member in his town. In contrast, teamsters like Snyder are referred to as ‘Unsavoury men all, but all brutal in a common, regular way’ by Stanton (48). Again, the rest of the narrators reinforce this assessment. When Reed stabs Snyder, killing him so that Snyder will not be able to tell the rest of the wagon party about their illicit affair, the party is split on how to deal with the situation. Though he worked for her family, Mary Graves states, ‘She didn’t like Snyder [...] No one did. There were some people in the party you could probably kill and there was a chance you’d get away with it [...] [U]naccountably, she found that she felt sorry for Reed’ (270). The apparently universal dislike for Snyder is seen as justification for his murder. Because Snyder is an agent of chaos in the eyes of the ruling socioeconomic class – the class which the narrators all belong to without exception – his death is a step towards normalcy. The social system in the novel therefore reinforces the power structures that have existed since the beginning of colonisation

wherein privileged settlers purposefully demonise the lower classes to keep them Othered and under foot.

This victimisation of upper-class settler-colonist by another working-class member of the party is crystalised in Louis Keseberg, whose wrath does not attach itself so completely to one “hero” – Reed, Stanton, or Tamsen or Elitha Donner – but is shared equally among all members of the wagon party. With Keseberg as the leader, the working-class men share the characterisation of being physical, moral, and systemic threats to the lives and values of the “good” settler-colonial narrators. Early on in the novel, remarking on the hardships of the trail, Tamsen reflects: ‘she hadn’t imagined [...] that she would be surrounded by so many other people, unable to escape their strange, inexplicable prejudices and their sudden, violent changes of mood’ (165). These observations, however, are reserved for those socioeconomically inferior to the Donners, not their social peers. Tamsen’s remark therefore acts at best as a weak nod to the issues of colonial epistemology and at worst a completely unself-aware endorsement of them. Eventually, any desire of these underprivileged men is referred to by the heroes as the ‘hunger’ (208), cementing that their roughness has evolved into something monstrous.

The image of the ravenous, cannibalistic poor settler-colonist is as old as colonisation itself. Isenberg notes that during early colonisation:

the bulk of the labor force was to come from the swelling numbers of poor and homeless. They were, in [Richard] Hakluyt’s disturbing allusion, “ready to eat up one another,” already cannibalizing the British economy. Idle and unused, they were waiting to be transplanted to the American land to be better (albeit no more humanely) put to use. (20)

Katsu’s ‘hunger’ therefore does treble hermeneutic work throughout the text. ‘Hunger’ acts as an identifier of the supposedly supernatural and unknowable motives of the monstrous Other. Additionally, because the subject of the novel is the infamous Donner Party, it also immediately alludes to cannibalistic hunger – a hunger that, as Isenberg notes, is an essential

part of the colonial-capitalist power structure that uses poor, white, monstrous settlers to lay colonial foundations that ultimately benefit the upper classes. Throughout the text, ‘The hunger’ becomes is a mysterious and amorphous signifier that ultimately erases the social and material underpinnings of the colonial project. ‘The hunger’ is hunger for flesh, hunger for power, hunger for land, hunger for sexual gratification: but most importantly, it is the supposed underclass’s monstrous and insatiable desire for these things. Desire of the rich white coloniser is never monstrous. As the novel progresses, the lack of introspection or understanding from Stanton, Reed, and Tamsen as to how their actions contribute to the horrors in the novel is never addressed. Simultaneously, the Otherness and monstrosity of the under-classes is tied not just to bad morals, but to bad blood and Indigeneity. The combination of all these factors points to a non-existent understanding of colonisation and its effects by the text and, rather, a focus on morality rooted in colonial epistemology.

III. Indigeneity and Cannibalism: The Triumph of the Cartesian Coloniser

The association in the colonial imagination of the poor with disease is far from original. Isenberg notes how Civil War era discourse ‘reconfigured the democratic language of class identity’ (29). According to Isenberg, this era marks when lower classes

acquired the most enduring insult of all: “poor white trash.” [...] [T]hey were odd specimens in a collector’s cabinet of curiosities, *a diseased breed*, and *the degenerate spawn of a “notorious race.”* A new nomenclature placed the lowly where they would become familiar object of ridicule in the modern age. (29 emphasis mine)

This association with poverty and degeneracy of morals/blood also exists in Gothic literature and film, even more particularly in media that features white cannibalism. Brown employs the work of Michael Hector in order to articulate the biopolitical dimension of the creation of the white-trash cannibal: ‘Similar to colonialism’ the Othering of poor whites by ruling socioeconomic classes ‘is reinforced by juridical, military, and political measures, yet there is also national discrimination of language, religion, and other cultural practices’ that

particularly Other poor and especially Southern whites (*Cannibalism* 87). In *Hunger*, by positioning the working-class men like Keseberg and Snyder as violent threats to the heroic, romantic settler-colonist, Katsu reinforces the mythical and ideological dimensions of a colonial biopolitical system.

Even before they set out on the trail, Keseberg is seen in an unfavourable light by others in the party. This unfavorability is tied directly to his class and the broken-down house he and his family inhabit. One of the well-off party members, Lavinah Murphy, muses on his unsavoury character: ‘She spied a farmhouse just beyond a rise, weathered gray and sagging [...] Lavinah had met the husband once or twice. A disagreeable man, only recently married. Funny name [...] Keseberg, that was it. She shivered beneath her shawl, remembering the perpetually angry scowl, eyes that could make your blood stand in your veins’ (196). Katsu uses the house as an explicit corollary for Keseberg’s identity. Its derelict and unappealing appearance mirrors its owner’s equally distasteful physical presence, situating *Hunger* in a Gothic tradition that began in the 1960s and was popularised by films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977). In this vein of American Gothic, the derelict home is an immediately recognisable symbol that re-situates the frontier from the colonial outpost to the fringes of so-called “polite” society: ‘the haunted house [is] transformed into abandoned farmhouses, and the forest journey transformed into the road trip beyond the city limits’ (Brown 108). Katsu’s reliance upon post-1960s horror tropes regarding social class and cannibalism, placed in a romanticised and mythologised frontier past, speak to similar socioeconomic anxieties between these two eras but also to the gravity of the displacement of colonial discourse and how the colonality of power effects twenty-first century social and economic life through a continuation of colonial socio-economic value structures. Because of his poverty and his inability to keep a nice home, Keseberg is identifiable as the kind of settler that initial proponents of American colonisation, such as

Richard Hakluyt, called ‘waste people’: ‘the corps of laborers needed to’ do the hard physical labour that keeps a society running (Isenberg 20). For Hakluyt, the colonies were to be ‘one giant workhouse [...] As the “waste firm of America” was settled, it would become a place where the surplus poor, the waste people of England, could be converted into economic assets. The land and the poor could be harvested together, to add to – rather than continue to subtract from – the nation’s wealth’ (Isenberg 21). The derelict status of Keseberg’s house, then, is not just a symbol of his degenerate morality, but also a sign of his inability to contribute to colonial society beyond being ‘waste’ from which his socioeconomic betters can rise up.

All of this Othering would remain largely symbolic, however, were it not Keseberg’s infection: the eponymous ‘hunger’, a bloodborne disease so strong that it can even infect Katsu’s heroes. Isenberg writes, ‘Many northerners, even those who opposed slavery, saw poor white trash southerners as a dangerous breed [...] *The unloved class conjured a special fear, that they would spread their unique contagion into the vast domain of the West*’ (137 emphasis mine). Isenberg is being metaphorical here with her use of the word ‘contagion,’ but Katsu is not. Katsu writes: ‘[Keseberg] first tasted human flesh back in Illinois [...] He’d developed a taste for it. A hunger for it, really’ (463). This disease is referred to by Keseberg’s uncle Reiner – the prospector who, it is revealed, first brought the disease to the Sierra Nevada area – in a flashback as ‘The family curse’, and, interestingly, Keseberg at first attempts to overcome its dark siren song (405). In fact, the familial Keseberg hunger is the *only* place in the text where Katsu appears to draw parallels between the settler-colonists’ hunger for land and cannibalism: “‘I got a sickness no tonic can fix. Gold fever, I think they call it.’ [Reiner] winked. [Keseberg] felt ill. *More like blood fever*’ (407). In the most cursory of ways, Katsu interacts with a concept popularised by novels such as *Heart of Darkness* (1899) that ‘[w]hile colonialism is cannibalizing in its desires, it also cannibalizes the

colonizers' (Brown *Cannibalism* 45). This is, however, the only instance of this theme being explored in the text: it is never returned to in this same capacity by Katsu and, as demonstrated by the ending of the novel with Reed and his daughter Virginia previously quoted, ultimately undercut by 'good' colonial desires. Furthermore, because 'the hunger' acts as a stand-in for any socially abhorrent practice as dictated by privileged colonial values and epistemology the root causes of most of the "immoral" behaviours like social inequality, prejudice, and social revolution are not just ignored: they are mythologised into a nameless, widespread disease. In effect, the myth of the frontier and the brave, Indian-fighting settler colonist gives birth to another myth in *Hunger* that marks "bad" colonisation as a disease.

Cohen argues that monsters are 'expedient representations of other cultures, generalized and demonised to enforce a strict notion of group sameness' (15). In the case of *Hunger*, Katsu goes one step further and combines multiple Othered groups in order to form a Frankenstein-esque super-Other. Underprivileged cannibalistic whites pair with Indigenous fanatics in order to create a racialised and classist monster that must be overcome in order for the colonial programme to be successful. Keseberg, as the main agent of chaos in the colonial paradigm, must therefore be violently overcome in order to preserve the social order. Katsu's ab-human cannibals like Keseberg are, as Cohen notes, 'transgressive, too sexual, perversely erotic, a lawbreaker', but perhaps their most alarming element is that they are able to pervert the bodies and minds of "good" colonial subjects (16). Therefore, if any of the privileged wagon party members are infected with 'the hunger' the only rational reaction is to end their lives rather than spread the contagion. This is, in fact, how Stanton meets his end in the text. While on a rescue mission with several other party members – including his (unconsummated) love Mary Graves – Stanton goes off into the woods to find firewood and is attacked by one of the monstrous cannibals that lives in the mountains who is afflicted with the same disease that runs in Keseberg's blood. The passage in which Stanton describes the

attack and his following suicide is lengthy, but worth recounting in full to demonstrate the extent to which cannibalism is made monstrous in the text:

Stanton gaped in terror as he saw human eyes, a human nose... Whatever it was, it had been a human once. And yet it was not human now, this creature [...] It smelled like a corpse left too long in the heat. But its fingers were cold, and slimy, and wet – rotten [...] Its mouth seemed to double, its jaw unhinging like that of a snake. He saw teeth sharpened like iron nails, and too many of them, far too many – a long slick of throat, like a dark tunnel, and that horrible tongue slapping like a blind animal feeling for its prey [...] Stanton could *feel* the disease as it entered him, the shiver of something dark and slick and alien in his veins, so cold that it burned [...] His mouth began to sting and water. His vision began to glaze and sparkle. Mary's pale face loomed so close. He wanted so badly to kiss her. But he didn't trust himself. Who knew what the taste of her lips might do to him? Who knew what the sudden hunger ringing in his veins might do to *her*? (Katsu 421 – 424).

The figure of the cannibal here transcends the stereotypical ravenous mad human, becoming a literal monster with no humanity left. This monster transcends boundaries between life and death: smelling like decay but still being undoubtably alive and able to inflict its evil will on 'good' colonisers like Stanton. Rather than being human, the cannibals in *The Hunger* are reduced to a fragmentary state wherein their bodies are, in addition to being both alive and dead, equally animal and machine. In fact, as evidenced by the image of the cannibal's tongue 'slapping like a blind animal', they are not just *one* animal thing, but a multitude of animals. Like the gibbering, spectral horde of *Meridian* and King's wendigo, Katsu's cannibals are a chimera of death descending on the novel's hero.

The threat the cannibal's bite conveys, then, is not just, as Sugg puts it, the boundary-defying act of 'two individuals [who] are collapsed together by the act of consumption' (177). Even worse: the implication is that Stanton will become something *inhuman*, *un*-individual, a conglomeration of nightmarish images like the cannibal who infects him. This recalls the colonial-neoliberal formulation of the poor as insects: 'a mass, not merely degraded and threatening but also not fully alive' (Brown *Cannibalism* 18). Underprivileged peoples as insects is, interestingly, an image used by Indigenous writers to demonstrate the empowering effect of multitudes against a powerful few: it is an image that is used by Silko,

Alexie, and Erdrich in turn, as I will show in the following section. For Katsu's colonially charged novel, however, the insect-like horde with the power to infect others is horrific. To be infected is to be like Keseberg: out of control, monstrous, hungry for power, sex, and blood. Rather than suffer this fate – and have his beloved Mary suffer as well – Stanton takes his own life. Yet, in addition to giving Stanton a tragically heroic ending, Stanton's suicide also serves to demonise the fictional Anawai who choose to align themselves with the cannibalistic monsters rather than sacrificing themselves.

Although the Anawai serve as major antagonists and enhancers of the horror atmosphere, they are never seen, let alone spoken to in the novel. Similar to how Jud functions as the memory and mouthpiece for the Micmac and Penobscot in *Semetary*, all the information on the Anawai and their motivations is filtered through the Enlightenment mindset of Bryant, who is fascinated with Indigenous cosmology. Unlike Jud, however, Bryant's supposed insight into Indigenous culture is held up as a marker of his decoloniality by the narrative voice. Stanton notes that, 'Bryant fancied himself to be a bit of an amateur anthropologist and was supposedly writing a book about the various tribes' spiritual beliefs. He could talk for hours about Indian legends – talking animals, trickster gods' (14). This description of Bryant establishes his reliability as a rational and potentially even progressive character. The fact that Katsu elevates Bryant's voice as an Indigenous authority is critical to understanding the novel's reliance on the coloniality of power. Brown writes that, following the supposed closing of the frontier, 'There was no longer a dark continent filled with savage cannibals, but rather a space of vital economic interests where imperial subjects had a crucial role to play. They became named, categorized and controlled peoples' (*Cannibalism* 63). This echoes Quijano's observations regarding the importance of categorisation in enacting power over colonised subjects who were 'fixed as an object of knowledge, outside the environment of subject/reason' (555) as well as Fanon's assertion that '[a] man who has a

language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power' (9). When the coloniser observes the colonised and attempts to draw Indigenous beliefs into a colonial framework, the coloniser is exerting power, erasing Indigenous knowledge as they incorporate it into the language and epistemological framing of the coloniser. In the text, Bryant's fascination with Indigenous mythology differentiates him from the other, more stereotypically close-minded settlers, who Stanton remarks could see Indigenous stories as 'terrifying to Christians raised solely on Bible stories' (14). This difference, then, is supposed to make Bryant appear more progressive than other members of the wagon party. However, with Quijano and Fanon's analysis of colonial power in mind, Bryant is not a progressive voice of decoloniality, but rather another arm of the colonial power structure: one that seeks to draw Indigenous cosmology into the colonial fold.

Because all interactions with Indigeneity are filtered through Bryant's colonial epistemological framework, any information on the Anawai is at least second-hand – sometimes third hand. In this way, not only are the Anawai fictional they are also spectrally removed from the only space in which they reside: the text itself. After leaving the wagon party early on, Bryant travels into the mountains near where the rest of the party will eventually be stranded, hoping to encounter Indigenous groups from whom he can get stories for his upcoming book. To this end, he hires a young Paiute man, Thomas, who 'was converted by missionaries [...] six years ago, and has been living with whites ever since': effectively a man in the feminised, assimilated Indigene role of the colonial family of man (93). Bryant and Thomas encounter a group of Paiute and interrogate them about the mysterious group of Indigenous people in the mountains. Katsu writes:

As best [Bryant] could tell from Thomas's interpretation, the Anawai had turned away from their traditional gods and now worshiped a wolf spirit indigenous to the valley in which they lived. The Paiute claimed that the Anawai could suddenly turn quite ferocious and be filled with an unquenchable bloodlust. (94)

Of course, it is later revealed that the Anawai are infected with the very bloodborne disease that Keseberg also carries. However, unlike Stanton who kills himself rather than turning into such a monstrous being, the Anawai embrace the features of the cannibalistic monster. In fact, for whatever reason, they work this monster into their spiritual worldview and in doing so – at least according to Bryant’s third hand understanding – become monstrous themselves.

The Anawai are a twenty-first century iteration of a staple of imperial fiction: the fictionalised monstrous Indigene popularised by works such as *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *She* (1887), and *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914), to name a few. For Indigenous Americans in particular, Gretchen M Bataille notes, ‘Travel narratives as early as the 1500s depicted the Native American as a fierce, cannibalistic creatures, and the woodcuts accompanying the stories portrayed the Indian as less than human – naked, violent, warlike, and, frequently, more animalistic than human’ (2). This tradition has never been fully eschewed from the American colonial imagination. As a result, even if the bloodborne disease in *Hunger* originates in the settler-colonist, this does not present a critique to colonialism. To illustrate this point, Mignolo states, ‘epistemic colonial difference divides one from the other. Of course, this does not place one against the other but underlines the limit of assumed totality of Western epistemology’ (85). Despite also belonging to a marginalised group in America as an Asian American, Katsu cannot speak from the colonial difference with the voice of an Indigenous person’s experience. As a result, the Othering in *Hunger* is entirely within an epistemologically colonial mindset. Indigeneity cannot be accurately depicted or dissected in the way Bryant assumes, or in the way that Katsu reinforces with the supposed closing of the mystery of how the disease came to the area. Furthermore, the phrasing of the origin of the ‘wolf spirit’ the Anawai supposedly revere is highly problematic, raising questions of origin and Indigenous claim to land often used to support Manifest Destiny. Katsu writes that the wolf spirit is ‘indigenous to the valley in which they [the Anawai] lived’ (94). This positions

the *spirit* as indigenous and the *Anawai* as settlers. As Vine Deloria Jr argues, the settler-Indigene has often been used to discredit the idea that Indigenous people have a right to their own land.²⁹ In addition to this, however, the supposed indigeneity of the wolf spirit is a re-assertion of settler-colonial right to land because the infected cannibalistic whites “are” the wolf spirit. In other words, the white cannibals, horrific as they are, are the true Indigenous inhabitants to the wilderness, while the *Anawai* are merely their horrific enablers.

A slight modification to Thomas’ translation of the wolf spirit occurs when Bryant ‘discovers’ the name of the wolf spirit from a group of Washoe: ‘*na’it*’. By being described as literal demon worshippers, the *Anawai* are depicted not just as malicious, but too stupid and primitive to understand that the cannibalism is a disease and not a godlike power. Katsu writes, ‘But could the *na’it*-worshipping *Anawai* have mistaken a white-skinned stranger with a ravening hunger as the sufferer of a punishment by an ancient evil spirit? Perhaps if they truly had no other context to explain the white man’s sickening behavior’ (324). Unlike the “good” settler-colonists who can recognise Keseberg’s disease *as* a disease, the *Anawai* are unscientific, superstitious, and barbaric. Though not cannibals themselves, they enable the cannibals by providing them what everyone in the novel implies are offerings. Therefore, like the colonial romances of the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries, the *Anawai* are ‘in need of education, civilization, and salvation from their barbarous ways’ (Brown *Cannibalism* 22). Later in the novel, Stanton has a similar realisation to Bryant, despite not even being in communication with any Washoe or *Anawai*. Stanton realises that Keseberg’s uncle’s arrival in the mountains spawned ‘an out outbreak that had not only resulted in the death of the rest of his group but *subsequently rocked the local tribes, amplifying some of their ancient belief systems* and driving fear throughout the inhabitants of the mountains’ (383 emphasis mine).

²⁹ For more on how Indigenous people have been framed as the first colonisers to the US, see: Deloria, Vine Jr. *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*. Fulcrum Publishing, 1997.

This “scientific” explanation exemplifies Quijano’s observation that the colonial Cartesian subject sees the Other as an object of study that, importantly, is less developed than the coloniser. Moreover, because Katsu never offers an alternative to Bryant and Stanton’s explanation of the Anawai’s socio-cosmological belief structure, the novel depicts it as valid. Once again, the actual ethics of coloniality and the socioeconomic structures of the coloniality of power are obfuscated by a focus on Indigenous monstrosity that is, curiously, also spectralised by the text. In other words, the discourse of coloniality is displaced.

Because the only appearances of the Anawai are in relation to the cannibalistic monsters, the horrific acts committed by this group of Indigenous inhuman slaves to the cannibals is also just as barbaric – if not more so – than the act of cannibalism itself. Additionally, their monstrosity is tied to their spectrality, much like the ‘legion of horrors’ that cuts down the White gang in *Meridian* (McCarthy 55). Reed and Stanton find a witness to the barbarity of the Anawai, who recalls, ‘They took a boy, no more than twelve, I swear, and left him tied to a tree out in the woods back over the ridge. They just rode off and left him there. Left him for whatever’s out there, feeding. I can still hear him screaming’ (148). Thus, even without the presence of the na’it, the Anawai are monstrous: almost demons themselves. In fact, the Anawai are even more spectralised than McCarthy’s legion, as the kidnap and offering of the boy was done apparently totally silently and with no weapons. Like a ghost, they can move where and when they please, taking whatever they want. The Anawai are horrific because of their own ineffable ‘hunger’, which is made monstrous in contrast to the settler-colonist heroes’ protective nature. Stanton would die for those he deems too weak to defend themselves, even though they are a faceless group of dependents. The Anawai prey on these very same faceless dependents. They are the wolves that Stanton must protect his flock from.

Furthermore, in the end it is not just the fictional Anawai who are tied to evil cosmology, but also the very real Washoe and Shoshone. All these groups are in some way controlled by their – irrational – fear of the ‘spirits’ who are, in actuality, diseased individuals, and both practice what is depicted as abhorrent burial or sacrificial practices in order to combat this disease. The wagon party comes across a grave site they find uncanny. Katsu writes that the bodies ‘had been burned. All that were left were charred remains. Patches of cooked flesh still clung to blackened bone. The skulls were papered with bits of scorched flesh; empty eye sockets seemed to stare at them reproachfully. Several of the men quickly backed away’ (228). Reed identifies this burial as belonging to the Shoshone and indeed, because the Anawai happily sacrifice to the na’it enabling their hunger and further perpetuating the disease, Reed is implied by the text to be correct (227). This inference is strengthened by the non-specific language Katsu uses when Bryant speculates that it is not just the Anawai who are irrationally affected by the na’it, but all the Indigenous groups in the area since they seem to share a cosmology centred on demonic hauntings. Bryant states that the disease frightens ‘the Indians enough to kill anyone with the symptoms’: ‘the Indians’ here meaning the Washoe and Shoshone since the Anawai help the cannibalistic whites (325). Bryant’s observation regarding the abject burial rituals of the Washoe underlines the roles outlined in the colonial family of man. With all the representations of Indigenous groups – fictional or not – provided by the novel, assimilation into the colonial machine is still the top signifier of morality and goodness. Cartesian colonisers like Bryant, Stanton, and Reed sit at the head of the family of man; Thomas, the guide who has been assimilated into colonial culture by Catholics resides in the feminised but still masculine “mother” role, aiding people like Bryant in their quest westward. Although the Washoe also aid Bryant in the wilderness, they are not as assimilated as Thomas as evidenced by their “exotic,” non-Christian names Tiyeli Taba and Tanau Mogop, so they embody the child. Meanwhile, subservient, barbaric,

and Othered, the Anawai are little more than beasts, outside of the colonial family of man and therefore, free for extermination.

In addition to being gruesome to the point that ‘several men quickly [back] away’, the Shoshone burial is symbolically tied to cannibalism despite no cannibalism taking place. The use of ‘cooked’ to describe the flesh of the bodies implies that what happened to them is similarly transgressive and horrific to actually being eaten. Countless critics argue that root of the horror of the cannibal is that they defy boundaries of Self and Other: the two ‘are collapsed together by the act of consumption’ (Sugg 177).³⁰ Because in order to maintain Cartesian subjecthood it is crucial to separate Self and Other, the combining of these two into one is one of the worst fates possible in the colonial imagination. Katsu takes this horror one step further by with the image of cooked flesh. Cooking flesh turns an individual from a human to a piece of meat, something without any subjecthood, Cartesian or Other. Pure objectification is horrific to the coloniser because it is colonial epistemology turned back on itself: becoming something totally subject-less, ‘fixed as an object of knowledge, outside the environment of subject/reason’ (Quijano 555). This is not quite the same horror as becoming part of the monstrous Other because the Other, at least, is still a subject with autonomy and the ability to act, irrational though Cartesian epistemology depicts them. To be cooked, to become a meal of the Other, is to lose all semblance of power: to become an object.

IV. Conclusion

The fictionalised cannibal of *Hunger* is a twenty-first century manifestation of class and racial Othering that has a history as long and as richly violent as colonialism itself. Brown

³⁰ See also: Bataille, Gretchen M. Introduction. *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*, ed by Gretchen M. Bataille, University of Nebraska Press, 2001, pp. 1 – 7. ; Brown, Jennifer. *Cannibalism in Literature and Film*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013, pp. 6 – 9. ; King, C. Richard. ‘The (Mis)uses of Cannibalism in Contemporary Cultural Critique.’ *Diacritics*, vol. 30, no. 1, (Spring 2000), pp. 106 – 123. ; Lindenbaum, Shirley. ‘Thinking about Cannibalism.’ *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 33, (2004), pp. 475 – 498.

notes that part of the allure of the cannibal is that ‘while the cannibal enforces the boundaries between us and them, it is also paradoxically a symbol of the permeability of those boundaries’ (*Cannibalism* 9). This, however, is not the case in *The Hunger*. What sets *Hunger* apart from other colonial adventure-romance novels – and, in my opinion, makes it a truly pro-imperial work – is that rather than blurring boundaries between the Cartesian coloniser and the Other, Katsu’s “white-trash” cannibals only further entrench the monstrosity of those who do not already hold tremendous power in the colonial programme. Furthermore, by maintaining the romantic mythos of Western Expansion with characters like Stanton and Reed, Katsu closes off any interaction with a potential theme of colonisation-as-cannibalism, or ‘neocannibalism’ as it is termed by C Richard King. King writes, ‘As the logic of late capitalism, neocannibalism fosters [...] power relations, relations of domination and exploitation. In neocannibalism, individuals and institutions absorb difference, feeding off alterity like phantasmagoric parasites to create identities, experiences, and communities’ (113). In this way, Katsu’s novel can be seen as arguably the most pro-imperial novel of this section. There is no pathetic recounting of potential wrongdoings by the settler-colonists, like the kid’s monologue to the mummified woman at the end of *Blood Meridian*. There is no realisation that what happens to the settlers in the Donner Party is a direct cause of their transgression of Indigenous land, like Louis in *Pet Sematary*. There is only the metaphorical hunger, defanged by the end of the text with the re-assertion of the family through Reed’s reunion with his daughter.

Höglund argues that imperial violence in American imperial Gothic fiction ‘becomes seemingly more rhetorical and less literal’ in the twenty-first century, and that ‘as this connection blurs, it is important to remember that rhetorical violence has its literal counterpart [...] the violence that is perpetrated in the American imperial gothic is premised on actual deeds of violence’ (*American Imperial Gothic* 35). *The Hunger* is evidence of this

both this turn to a rhetorical violence and the physical violence that underpins it. Fanon argues that 'To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture' (25). In this same vein, to create a fictionalised, colonised culture is to step into a world that, as a non-Indigene, Katsu has no aesthetic reason to create other than to perpetuate colonialism, intentionally or not. By using fictionalised, barbaric Indigenous people as the backbone for much of the horror in the novel, Katsu uses rhetorical violence. The Anawai and the Washoe are instances of 'the racist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as "authentic" representations of indian cultures' (Vizenor *Manifest Manners* vii). Furthermore, this rhetorical violence is, as Höglund notes, tied to real material violence. It is not news to state that Indigenous people in the US are still subjected to colonial rule and therefore still suffer from institutional and socioeconomic violence associated with the colonial State. The kind of colonial work done by Katsu in *Hunger*, therefore, is not without real world consequences when it perpetuates the ideology of this same, violent State.

Interlude

I close out this first section of the thesis with *The Hunger* largely because it demonstrates so aptly the extent to which colonial values that exist in the 1980s imperial Gothic imagination still permeate mainstream American culture. Additionally, Katsu's demonisation of 'white-trash' settlers and her alignment of these socioeconomic Others with racialised Others clearly ties together the agendas of the neoliberal and colonial State. As I will show in the following three chapters that comprise the Indigenous Gothic section, the continuation of the horrors of colonisation through into the modern day is a staple of Indigenous Gothic fiction. Indigenous works of horror fiction like *Almanac of the Dead*, *Indian Killer*, and *The Plague of Doves* deserve a seat at the Gothic Studies critical table not just because they feature monsters and ghosts like the Euro-American Gothic novels explored in section one; they belong in the American imperial Gothic canon because they interact with horror through the explicit medium of colonial-capitalism as it exists in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries. They are, in other words, examples of the globalgothic. Byron defines globalgothic as 'Gothic fictions that address the issue of globalization' including texts that 'represent globalization as neo-imperialism' and in doing so 'tend to expose the darker side of' globalisation 'most notably in the ways they register disturbances to traditional identities and cultures. Globalization itself becomes a Gothic manifestation, a material and psychic invasion, a force of contamination and dominance' (372).

Thus, while the previous section has explored the extent to which manifest manners and the myth of the frontier/Western Expansion has endured in Gothic texts that spectralise Indigenous peoples, the next section will focus on how Indigenous spectres in Indigenous horror fiction confront colonialism in the past *and* present. Rather than the 'displaced discourse' of American imperial Gothic which often obfuscates the real social and economic connections between colonialism and capitalism, Indigenous Gothic as it manifests in

Almanac, *Indian Killer*, and *Doves* makes explicit these connections (Höglund *American Imperial Gothic* 55). These Indigenous Gothic novels deconstruct colonial epistemology more thoroughly than anything written by a non-Indigenous author because they depict colonialism as it truly is, not the myth it tries to be. To turn to an Indigenous explanation of the type of cyclical colonial-capitalist violence examined in the first section, those types of manifest manners are an example of what Vizenor calls ‘terminal creeds’, which are ‘stereotypical structures which confine and deform those who embrace them, “beliefs which seek to fix, to impose static definitions on the world”’ (Stafford quoting Vizenor 155). Owens goes on to add that terminal creeds ‘are destructive, suicidal, even when the definitions appear to arise out of revered tradition’, which further deconstructs the colonial concept of a “pure” Indigeneity (Afterward 249). By contrast, the following Indigenous works are able to escape the displacement of colonial discourse because they speak from the voice of the subaltern in what Mignolo calls the ‘colonial difference’: ‘the difference between center and periphery, between the Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism and knowledge production by those who participated in building the modern/colonial world and those who have been left out of the discussion’ (63). In specific, while Indigenous spectres in American imperial Gothic texts emphasise the “ending” of Indigenous peoples and cultures and therefore the triumph of colonisation, Indigenous connotations of spectres do not have the same epistemological root. Instead, Indigenous ghosts in Indigenous works are the memory of colonialism embodied – sometimes literally, as I will show that Indigenous ghosts have far more physical power than Euro-American texts give them credit for.

Because of this, Indigenous Gothic texts such as the ones I will examine in the following three chapters are capable of charting ways forward out of colonialism and the cyclical, horrific violence it reaps. In order to explain the ways in which colonialism does not

always equal destruction of Indigenous memory and personhood, Vizenor uses the term ‘survivance.’ This term is used:

to describe the cultural techniques used by American Indians to authentically document their presence (traditionally in oral form): ‘Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry. Survivance means the right of succession or reversion of an estate, and in that sense, the estate of native survivancy.’ (Brandt quoting Vizenor 38 – 39)

Put simply, survivance is the refutation of terminal creeds by authentically being oneself *as* native. Stories of survivance can – and often, as I will show, do – depict horrible violence which Indigenous people suffered, but at the same time, survivance rejects suffering and death as the ‘natural’ outcome of Indigenous people. Survivance, in short, states that Indigenous people have sustained horrific atrocities, but this does not make them powerless. The enduring nature of the Indigenous ghost as an expression of survivance, then, is a potent counter to the Indigenous spectre in American imperial Gothic fiction and one whose contributions to understandings of globalgothic traditions is almost entirely uncharted.

In particular, survivance through trickster narrative storytelling has significant overlaps with the Gothic mode, as I will show particularly in chapters five and six. Trickster storytelling as a genre or mode can be found around the world. Loki in Norse mythology, Anansi from West Africa, and Māui from the Polynesian islands are all trickster figures whose stories have penetrated mainstream American imagination in the twenty-first century. Thanks to intellectual property powerhouses such as Marvel, Amazon, and Disney rewriting their myths for American audiences, the figure of the trickster is often difficult to define as it exists in the mainstream American imagination. For the purposes of this argument, however, I will be relying heavily on Vizenor’s definition of trickster storytelling in order to relate *Almanac*, *Indian Killer*, and *Doves* to a history of subversion of colonial horrors and to a history of survivance.

There are a plethora of Indigenous trickster gods and heroes in Indigenous mythologies of the United States, including coyote and Kokopelli in the Southwest, Naanabozho in Anishinaabeg territories, and Iktómi in Lakota tradition. Vizenor asserts that the trickster in Indigenous imagination ‘is a character in stories, an animal, or person, even a tree at times, who pretends the world can be stopped with words, and he frees the world in stories’ (*Shadow Distance* 116). For Vizenor, this means leaning heavily into stylistic techniques such as double meanings and irony, particularly in order to destabilise manifest manners and/or terminal creeds. Tricksterism and trickster storytelling is active and is also therefore a part of enacting survivance. He writes, ‘The peripatetic trickster is [...] a noun derived from a verb’ (*Manifest Manners* 170). Vizenor refers to trickster writing as being part of a movement of ‘liberation’ because it uses words to subvert and twist the ontologies and epistemologies of coloniser language (*Manifest Manners* 66). In essence, trickster writing undoes the narrative of the coloniser and highlights survivance because it insists on the destabilisation of rigid knowledge structures based on colonial expectations.

Chapter 4: The Weight of the Dead: Thanatopolitics and the Corporeal Ghost in

Almanac of the Dead

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* boasts over seventy characters and spans over five-hundred years to tell the story of Indigenous peoples pre- and post-colonisation, and their struggles against colonial powers to return the land to tribal people. The plethora of storylines in *Almanac* allows for Silko to write from narrative perspectives of both underprivileged people like Sterling, Seese, La Escapía, Tacho, and El Feo, as well as those more aligned with colonial-capitalist Destroyers like Serlo, Menardo, and Trigg. *Almanac* therefore suggests that, more than identity politics, what unites the oppressed against their oppressors are two things: the ability to remember and/or communicate with the spirits of the dead, and the insistence on returning Indigenous land to Indigenous people. Thus, while the myriad storylines in *Almanac* often interact only tangentially, they are all preoccupied in exposing the enduring connection between colonialism and capitalism and how Indigenous ghosts subvert these colonial-capitalist socio-economic power structures.

In January 1989, Reagan's Vice President, George H W Bush, took office. Reagan's farewell address left white, middle-class Americans once more with the feel-good image of America as 'shining city upon a hill' (Reagan 'Farewell' np). Importantly, however, Reagan took the opportunity to clarify this image for the American people. He continues:

I've spoken of the shining city all my political life, but I don't know if I ever quite communicated what I saw [...] in my mind it was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity. (Reagan 'Farewell' np)

This romantic, sanitised version of the colonial State of America has significant nods to multiculturalism that reflect Reagan's ambition of America being a world-leader in social, political, and economic life. The 'free ports' Reagan refers to are undoubtedly neoliberal in nature. They are emblematic of a "perfect" free market that Reagan idealised with trickle-

down Reaganomics, an economic strategy that, of course, only led to increased income inequality and economic disparity. The idea of ‘all kinds’ of people ‘living in harmony and peace’ likewise sanitises the very real issues of complex race relations that a colonial State is built upon and perpetuates with such policies as Reaganomics and the mobilisation of far-right groups.

However, the idea of Americans as *global* citizens is important here. It reflects a desire for the colonial State to remain relevant but sanitised in the national narrative of America. George H W Bush’s campaign slogan, ‘A Thousand Points of Light’, emphasises the potential of individual American citizens to create change, without actually changing the fundamental essence of the colonial State. In his inaugural address, Bush states, ‘I have spoken of a thousand points of light, of all the community organizations that are spread like stars throughout the Nation, doing good [...] The old ideas are new again because they are not old, they are timeless: duty, sacrifice, commitment, and [...] patriotism’ (np). Perhaps unsurprisingly, as Bush was Reagan’s Vice President, the positive change these ‘points of light’ are creating for citizens is not made explicit. In fact, many of Bush’s political manoeuvres made life worse explicitly for the working class, racial minorities, and women. Bush appointed Justice Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, a man who was an outspoken critic of affirmative action, against class-action lawsuits that would bring about change for multiple people in the workplace in favour of smaller individual cases, and who sexually assaulted his staffer Anita Hill (Johnson np). Additionally, Bush continued Reagan’s tradition of bringing American neoliberalism to the forefront of world economics. As Johnson states, ‘His role as a chief architect of U.S. neoliberal trade policy through ushering in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) helped to exacerbate global inequality’ (np). In the US, the Bush administration continued Reagan’s economic model when they ‘bailed out the heavily deregulated Savings and Loan industry, to the tune of about \$124.6 billion in

taxpayer funded money. The *New York Times* later published a report detailing how Bush's son Jeb had personally benefited from the bailout' (np). In short, Reagan's ideological, political, and economic legacy was only furthered in the 1990s during Bush's presidency from 1989 – 1992.

By tying the logic and history of colonialism to 1990s capitalism, *Almanac* interacts directly with the biopolitics of the colonial State. Simultaneously, Silko demonstrates the haunting counterpart of biopolitics, thanatopolitics, by foregrounding the power of Indigenous memory. S J Murray writes, 'Thanatopolitics asks: how might those [biopolitical] deaths [...] productively disaffirm the regime of a neoliberal biopolitics that condemns to death? How might those deaths rise up, and haunt, the spaces of biopolitical production' (718). Therefore, in *Almanac*, while Indigenous ghosts are partly a haunting reminder of the horrors of colonisation, they also harness a material power in that, when remembered and honoured, can bring about real-world change. Often, spirits in *Almanac* visit individuals in dreams, which become a site of collective empowerment rather than a horrific portent as they often are in British and Euro-American Gothic. Therefore, while colonial violence is still clearly horrific in the text, the *memory* of these horrors has an equally potent an effect upon reality and upon identity construction.

In *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence* (2008), Adriana Cavarero makes a critical distinction between terrorism and what she calls 'horrorism', the latter of which is 'characterized by a particular form of violence that exceeds death itself' (np). While terrorism seeks to shock and awe often for ideological gain, horrorism confronts the very nature of what it means to be human by exceeding the limits of what is perceived as humanity. Cavarero provides the Nazi death camps and the Armenian march as examples of horrorism, where civilians were 'exposed to an offense that went beyond simple dying [and] came to an atrocious end through hunger and exhaustion' (np). Cavarero's distinction between terrorism

and horrorism here and the former's reliance on shock and awe is also interesting when considering texts such as *Meridian*, *Semetary*, and *Hunger* which foreground the spectacle and aesthetics of colonialism over the material effects of colonialism. The acts of colonial genocide are examples of horrorism in *Almanac*, as they transcend mere death, but they simultaneously demonstrate thanatopolitical power via memory and dreams. Thus, *Almanac* critiques colonial-capitalism's violent biopolitical methods of categorisation and control similarly to other decolonial Gothic works but with an Indigenous understanding of horror that deconstructs colonialism with thanatopolitics.

I. Time is a Tortilla: Corporeality, Thanatopolitics and The Fluid Existence of History

Xavier Aldana Reyes posits in *Body Gothic* (2014) that 'Gothic bodies produce fear through their interstitiality: they are scary because they either refuse absolute human taxonomies or destabilise received notions of what constitutes a "normal" or socially intelligible body' (5). For an examination of *Almanac*, however, this statement must be slightly modified. Combining Cavarero's definition of horrorism with Reyes' argument on body gothic, when the act of torture, murder, or other physical violation is centred on the victim's reaction to the violence, their body is not something to be quantified or debated. The horror comes not from the subversion of a "normal" body, but from the purposeful violation of *a* body. The Indigenous victim's body may be the subject for the coloniser torturer or the coloniser critic, but in Indigenous Gothic it is the torturer who is the horrific subject. It is the torturer who exceeds 'what constitutes a "normal" or socially intelligible body' (Reyes 5). Through the violation of another's flesh and psyche, the violator has revealed their disconnect with society and, in turn, their lack of humanity.

Reyes goes on to state 'Corporeality, its transgression, limits and the horror of embodiment, as well as concomitant notions of materialism and transcendence, lie at the

heart of subgenres [of the Gothic] such as body horror' (17). Corporeality and the transgression of corporeality is key to understanding part of the horror of *Almanac*. However, the power of the spirit beyond corporeality – the power of a whole, non-corporeal body that still exceeds the Cartesian definition of “normal” – is equally important in Indigenous Gothic. In effect, memory is nearly corporeal, yet it has power beyond the body that is not horrific (as one might consider ghosts, for example), but rather materially effective. Put simply, dreams, which are thought to be separate from corporeality by Cartesian reasoning, are *as* real and corporeal as the human body in Indigenous thinking. This ties into the Laguna Pueblo concept of time which Silko describes as being ‘like a tortilla; time had specific moments and specific locations’ but overall, time is malleable and existence in time is not limited to one specific place (*Yellow Woman* 136 – 137). This difference also partly accounts for the ontological difference between Indigenous ghosts like Silko’s and the spectralising of Indigenous peoples in *Meridian*, *Semetary*, and *Hunger*: the other difference being, of course, that Silko offers an Indigenous perspective that can speak from the colonial difference.

The intersection of corporeality, Cartesian logic, and the non-corporeal in Silko’s work is directly related to how she critiques the biopolitics of colonialism. Colonial biopolitics is concerned with promoting the lives of specific members of society that further colonial-capitalist accumulation through the designation of ‘immunised’ and ‘non-immunised’ socioeconomic groups. Breu writes that in an attempt to achieve immunity ‘communities and nation-states underwrite murderous violence toward those internal or external enemies who are defined as threats to those who are immunized’ (154). In this way, as Breu puts it, ‘biopolitics—the politics of the direct production and management of subjectivity and life—are always bound up with thanatopolitics, or a politics of death waged in the name of life’ (154). This distinction between biopolitics and thanatopolitics, when applied to Silko’s work, once again focuses the action in *Almanac* on the material effects of

colonialism by demonstrating the traumatic effect colonial-capitalist mentality has on both those who align with Destroyer values and those who Destroyer values exploit. As Breu points out, *Almanac* shows that ‘dynamics that were originally applied to racialized populations or expropriated to the global South are returning with a vengeance to the formerly immunized populations of the global North’, motivating these supposedly socioeconomically unsimilar peoples to unite against Destroyers in order to assert their personhood (156).

II. Death-Eye Dog: The Subversion of the Spirit and the Undoing of the Body

Similar to Grosfoguel’s critique of the US imperial system as the ‘Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric Modern/Colonial World- System’ (‘Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy’ np), Silko refers to people who accept and promote the biopolitics of Cartesian/colonial/capitalist beliefs with Indigenous terms: the Destroyers, Gunadeeyahs, or followers of Death-Eye Dog. According to the almanac left to Lecha and Zeta, ‘the epoch of Death-Eye Dog’³¹ marks a time when ‘human beings, especially the alien invaders, would become obsessed with hungers and impulses commonly seen in wild dogs’ (251). These hungers and impulses include rape, incest, murder, and endless consumption of human and other animal flesh and of resources such as water and land. In essence, the horror of *Almanac* is similar to the horror of transgressed boundaries in Gothic fiction. The horror also interacts with a neocannibal ‘mode of consumption’ which focuses on ‘desire and domination’ of the coloniser and ‘in which the incorporation of others becomes purely metaphoric’ (King ‘The (Mis)uses of Cannibalism’ 113). Therefore, Silko’s critique of colonial biopolitics and its evolution into 1990s neoliberal capitalism illuminates

³¹ This epoch is also referred to in places as ‘Fire Eye Macaw’, but as that name is never explained fully and because the use of Death-Eye Dog is more prevalent in the novel, I will refer to this epoch as Death-Eye Dog.

how the objectification/commodification of everything, including the human body, specifically for the purposes of destruction is a natural progression from colonialism to capitalism. The continued commodification and objectification of Indigenous and otherwise disenfranchised bodies is the locus of horror – and horrorism. Breu notes that ‘Silko represents San Diego, Tucson, and other urban centers of the global North as locations in which industrial production has receded and what emerges in its stead are legal and illegal forms of biopolitical production’ (154). However, horrorism as a result of biopolitical Destroyer production is also present outside the US in Central and South America. In Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, *Almanac* follows the story of Menardo, a man with both Indigenous and coloniser ancestry who is paranoid about the elite of his city finding out about his Indigenous roots and disavowing him for his ancestry and for his “new-money” status.

Menardo’s anxieties also reflect Vizenor’s concept of manifest manners, despite his Indigenous roots (Tillett 23). As a child, Menardo was close to his Indigenous grandfather, but as he grows and realises the social and economic price of Indigeneity in Mexican society, Menardo shuns Indigenous culture and identity, establishing that the values of Death-Eye Dog corrupt individuals regardless of ancestry. Menardo’s shame at his Indigeneity begins with a derogatory nickname: ‘Flat Nose. A slang name the Indians were called. “Flat noses that even dogs don’t have”’ (258). Menardo has inherited this feature from his grandfather, and once his grandfather dies, Menardo feels relief, seeing his grandfather’s death as an opportunity for him to climb the socioeconomic ladder: ‘once the evidence the flat nose was inherited had been buried, Menardo knew exactly what to do’ (259). From a biopolitical perspective, the death of his grandfather offers Menardo an opportunity to immunize himself from violence of the colonial State which in turn allows him to climb the socioeconomic ladder of Tuxtla Gutiérrez. However, in order stay immune, Menardo must then enact both physical and metaphysical violence upon the ‘internal [...] enemy’ of the Indigenous

population (Breu 154). Furthermore, when paired with colonial order maintenance, Menardo's callous and selfish reaction to the death of his grandfather is an instance of horrorism: he effectively kills his grandfather a second, symbolically charged time by rejecting his teachings, love, and memory in favour of manifest manners. This is a more metaphysical reading of horrorism, yet Menardo's racially charged hatred of his grandfather and relief at his death points to an excess of inhumanity that only deepens as Menardo's story continues.

Menardo's colonial attitude toward Indigenous people is expressed in socioeconomic terms. Thinking of his chauffeur, Tacho, Menardo reflects: 'He hated the way Indians tried to please you, telling you whatever they thought you wanted to hear so you would be tricked and believe their stupid superstitions, or at least be manipulated to give them a bonus on payday' (276). Menardo's distaste for Tacho's "superstitions" is ironic in two ways, however. Firstly, because Menardo is constantly trying to ingratiate himself to those he sees as his social superiors in Tuxtla Gutiérrez; secondly, because he himself later relies on Tacho's ability to interpret dreams when he suffers crippling nightmares. In this way, Silko demonstrates the reliance of the immunised upon the existence of the non-immunised in the biopolitical context of colonialism, a reliance which disrupts the racist hierarchy that colonialism is built upon, as well as the thanatological element inherent in biopolitics. In other words, though Menardo uses the biopower of the colonial economy as a weapon to determine Indigenous people as inferior, Menardo is actually the spiritual and intellectual inferior of Tacho because he is unable to interpret the spirits who speak to him in dreams. Breu argues that in *Almanac* 'the production of thanatopolitics is an economic process as much as it is a political one' (154). This is because in the Death-Eye Dog world of colonial-capitalism, the biopower of economics and violence are inextricably linked: as Menardo well knows, one's race determines their ability to participate in the economy which in turn

determines what type of colonial violence they experience or enact on others. Furthermore, Silko shows that manifest manners are a set of sociopolitical values, rather than default pieces of a person's identity. In other words, aligning oneself with the manifest manners of colonialism/Death-Eye Dog is a *choice*, especially when one is freely given alternative Indigenous worldviews like Menardo was given by his grandfather. Menardo freely and voraciously ascribes to Death-Eye Dog strictures, ultimately corrupting his spirit which leads to his death.

As Menardo's insurance empire continues to expand, Indigenous anti-colonial movements expand as well, leading Menardo to violently disassociate himself from Indigenous people and culture. Crucially for Silko, this is also reflected in a selective memory that eschews any Indigenous heritage. Menardo states that his 'ancestors had adopted European dress – brocades and silks as befit royalty. They had worn the old feather capes on ceremonial occasions, and to satisfy the rabble when they paid their taxes once a year [...] Indians such as Tacho stayed poor because they feared progress and modern technology' (499 – 500). In a particularly insidious example of the colonial project, Menardo's selective memory is paired with a selective history of what is taught by the coloniser about their own people: another arm of colonial biopower in the form of the educational system. Over a lunch meeting, General J tells Menardo about the psychology behind a sexual arousal response to blood as theorised by French doctors, who believe that it is a response ingrained from centuries of domination. Menardo interrupts, 'surely the general was referring to savage tribes – Indians and Africans – and not to civilized Europeans? [...] Menardo did not recall the nuns and the priests or even the high school teachers ever mentioning that the early ancestors of the French had lived in caves eating raw meat' (337). Menardo's selective memory indicates the dilution of his spirit. As Tillet notes, Silko herself has stated that this is the meaning of Menardo's character arc in *Almanac*: 'Menardo dies not just because he

denies his origins and identity, but because he embraces and emulates the “death culture” of Euro-America that considers itself “invincible with the magic of high technology” (36). According to Silko’s narrative voice, the memory of the coloniser is false; therefore, the history is false, therefore Death-Eye Dog cannot endure just as Menardo does not. This is a prescriptive approach to what constitutes “true” Indigenous identity: one that does not allow for those with Indigenous ancestry to invest socially or economically in colonial-capitalism. While prescriptivist attitudes towards identity are, according to Vizenor as I will show in chapter six, terminal creeds, Silko uses them as a method of critiquing colonisation through opposition. It is not in the scope of this argument to determine whether this method is aesthetically or morally “correct,” nor is it my place as a Euro-American individual. Silko’s approach to identity and horror is, however, significant to horror in the novel and therefore worth highlighting here.

In fact, the acceptance of Death-Eye Dog values and false history corrupts Menardo to the extent that Cavarero’s definition of horrorism defines almost all of his interpersonal interactions. Horrorism as defined by Cavarero is inseparable from a Death-Eye Dog worldview. As Tillet puts it, ‘The more Menardo mixes with the oppressive cultures that are traced in the Euro-American worlds of the text, the more he becomes involved with, and thus implicated in, state programs of abduction, torture, and murder’ (36). This means that, once Menardo has started down the path of violently eschewing his grandfather’s teachings in order to align himself with the colonial State, his spirit is so defiled that there is no real hope of recovery or life for him in a non-Death-Eye Dog world. The biopolitical project of Death-Eye Dog is all Menardo can ultimately relate to, seeing humans as either acceptable or unacceptable units of capitalistic opportunity: ‘the best policy was to kill [refugees] as you found them. Otherwise, you ran into all the logistical problems the Germans had encountered with disposing of the Jews [...] Indians were a waste of time and money’ (495). If horrorism

is violence that ‘exceeds death itself’, then the murder of refugees simply because they are not good cogs in the machinery of capitalism certainly exceeds a traditional death (Cavarero np). The death of refugees, for Menardo, becomes symbolic of the superiority of colonists and capitalists. Wealth becomes inseparable in Menardo’s mind from the death of the non-immunised; therefore, profit and death go hand-in-hand. Menardo comes to physically feel this dissolution of his spirit and disassociation with life within himself, a fact which fascinates him. He attends the funeral of a business partner’s daughter and becomes obsessed with experiencing what her dead flesh feels like. However, once he touches her, he is not ‘able to distinguish her flesh from his own [...] He could see he was touching the dead girl, but the arm felt as if it were an extension of himself, a strange growth on the ends of his thumb and his fingers’ (304 – 305). In the Indigenous mindset that Silko illustrates, this sameness between the actually dead girl and Menardo reinforces his adherence to Death-Eye Dog biopolitics. Sterling notes later in the novel, ‘Those who touched the dead were easily seduced by the Gunadeeyahs [Death-Eye Dog followers], who craved more death and more dead bodies to open and consume’ (760). Menardo’s fascination with death is then both a precursor to his eventual attitude toward all non-immunised life, and a product of it.

The fascination and obsession with death can also be seen in all of Menardo’s business partners and, indeed, in all other Death-Eye Dog colonial-capitalists throughout the novel. One of the Euro-American characters that closely mirrors Menardo’s obsession with death-as-biopolitical-tool is Trigg. The owner of many blood-plasma centres that purposefully target the Tucson houseless population, Trigg’s small business empire is built from literally profiting off the lifeblood of those who are not immunised by the colonial-capitalist system of Death-Eye Dog, a purposeful play on Marx’s definition of capitalism as vampiric (McNally 13, 115). As Stanford puts it, Trigg’s blood-plasma centres, which graduate into full-blown organ harvesting centres as the novel progresses, create:

a closed loop containing both of what Bauman terms *the anthropoemic and anthropophagic elements of "order maintenance"* for it is not all bodies that are rendered fodder for scientific and medical gain, but, predictably, those that are deemed worthless (and Other) by the dominant society. (32 emphasis mine)

Because of its anthropophagic quality, the economic biopolitics of colonial order maintenance is a source of both existential horror, as Menardo's dissolution of spirit demonstrates, but also physical horror. From the Indigenous perspective that Silko's narrative voice often utilises as a counterpoint to Death-Eye Dog, order maintenance is a manifestation of 'evil in its radical form, not the traditional negative passions of ethics and politics, much less crime and punishment' (Cavarero np). In other words, the psychological and physical horrors within *Almanac* transcend mere political stances. The extent to which Menardo, Trigg, and others dehumanise non-immunised individuals and cultures is seen by the narrative voice as not only horrific, but as a fundamental lack of humanity.

Trigg keeps an extensive collection of notebooks dating back to his hospitalisation in college for a spinal cord injury which has left him partially paralysed. His writing expresses the progression of hatred towards non-immunised people to actual horrific slaughter of these people as a direct line. Reflecting on the houseless population who he himself purposefully seeks out as donors, Trigg writes: 'These alleged human beings, the filth and scum who pass through the plasma donor center, get paid good money for lying with a needle in their arms [...] I could do the world a favor each week and connect a few of the stinking ones up in the back room and drain them dry. They will not be missed' (386). According to Trigg's philosophy – the philosophy of Death-Eye Dog – a fundamental quality of the non-immunised is their inhumanity in the sense that they are not-human. In contrast, Trigg, an immunised individual and propagator of Death-Eye Dog values, *is* human. Non-humanity and non-immunisation are the same quality. Therefore, both the immunity and humanity of individuals is directly correlated, by Trigg, to their contribution to the economic system. Trigg drains the non-immunised blood as part of an economic exchange he has set up: blood

for cash. However, paying these “non-human” houseless people is seen as a burden despite their blood being a main source of income for Trigg. In this way, despite their contribution to the capitalist system, the non-immunised houseless population are completely removed from the system as beings. There is no possible way for them to exist within the order of Death-Eye Dog capitalism; they are only literal meat for the grinder. This is, in essence, the literalisation of Marx’s vampire capitalist. Furthermore, the philosophy of Death-Eye Dog blames the non-immunised for the lack of humanity the system has assigned to them. Silko writes, ‘Trigg blames the homeless men. Trigg blames them for being easy prey [...] They were human debris. Human refuse. Only a few had organs of sufficient quality for transplant use’ (444). Not only is the houseless population non-human and a drain on the system, but they are also only salvageable for parts. The biopolitics of Death-Eye Dog reduces them to fragments of objects, not even whole objects themselves. The process of turning these fragments into useful capital, a process of order maintenance, becomes a practice that Death-Eye Dog participants like Trigg relish.

Turning non-useful, non-human, non-immunised “waste” into useful pieces of capital not only grows businesses like Trigg’s, it also furthers the status of those who do this process as immunised subjects. The immunised subject is thus doubly encouraged to do violence against the non-immunised to further their own social and economic position. Eventually, in the world of *Almanac*, this leads to a boom in the trade of snuff and torture films which provide immunised subjects who cannot physically get their hands on non-immunised people a second-hand relish/release from viewing their deaths on-screen. Cavarero also touches on the psychological effect of horrorism upon the aggressor, particularly torturers. Cavarero writes, ‘The special form of horrorism of which the torturer is the featured protagonist actually prefers to [...] prolong the suffering inscribed in the *vulnus*, bringing the vulnerable to the limit of bearability of pain and offense’ (np). Although no named characters directly

experience torture, many characters experience it second-hand or deal in it economically. The police chief of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, one of Menardo's golf-and-business partners, sees torture films as an opportunity to reinforce the power of the police over subversives (i.e., Indigenous activists and other non-immunised people), a power that comes with the benefit of extra income for the department. Silko writes, 'The prisoners were covered with welts, bruises, and burns. "The videos sell for more money that way"' (342). The act of violence is therefore directly tied to the spectacle of violence: in other words, the torturers know they are being watched, therefore they need to make the torture cinematic in addition to didactic. Once again, for Silko, the biopolitical dimensions at the centre of the colonial project of Death-Eye Dog are both economic and socio-political.

As with Menardo, for the police chief, the death of Indigenous radicals is symbolic of the superiority of the established colonial-capitalist government of Tuxtla Gutiérrez and their power to maintain order. This is, in fact, more important to the police chief than the money that the torture and snuff videos bring to the department. Yet, for others who deal in these videos such as Beaufrey, death has become so all-consuming that it is the only way that they can experience human interaction. Beaufrey sees the spectacle of torture as fundamental to human enjoyment and interaction, but, crucially, he also does not see those *being* tortured as humans. Essentially, Beaufrey's spirit is so diluted by the violence of Death-Eye Dog that he is no longer human according to the narrative voice. Whereas Menardo's descent into total Death-Eye Dog depravity can be seen as tragic, because despite warning from spirits and ancestors he consistently *chooses* to embrace manifest manners out of fear, Beaufrey is nothing *but* evil incarnate. His entire social, economic, political, and epistemological world revolves around horror that 'exceeds death itself' (Cavarero np). Since he is independently wealthy, Beaufrey is free to spend time however he chooses. One of his favourite pastimes is watching torture, snuff, and surgical films with others in an explicit attempt to prove that they

– and by extension all of humanity – are fascinated by violence: a quality Beaufrey shares with Judge Holden. Beaufrey often invites his lover David to his room to watch ‘videos of police torture, autopsies, or other new acquisitions [...] Beaufrey had enjoyed watching the expressions on David’s face as the torture had progressed conveniently into the “autopsy” of the victim. David had enjoyed watching torture and killing videos before; most men did’ (538). Beaufrey’s introduction into the text establishes the terminal stage of Death-Eye Dog and the biopolitics that perpetuates it. In opposition to Menardo who sees anti-Indigenous violence as a way to further his own economic and social gain, and to the police chief who sees pro-imperial violence as a way to maintain the colonial order, Beaufrey sees violence as something to foster in others *for the sake of violence*.

This is the logic of Death-Eye Dog at its heart: violence for the sake of violence in the sole pursuit of perpetuating death. It is this quality that Sterling’s ancestors ascribed to the Gunadeeyahs and that Menardo feels when he cannot distinguish his own flesh from the flesh of the dead girl. Beaufrey is evidence of what happens when one rejects the humanity of others entirely. All becomes violence for spectacle, and violence is no longer symbolic or economic: no longer explicitly connected to order maintenance of the colonial/capitalist system, but an essential function of *life*. Remembering how Beaufrey had told her of his snuff film business, Seese recalls, ‘For videotapes of sodomy rapes and strangulations, teenage “actors” from a local male-escort service had “acted” the victim’s roles’ (102). The scare quotes Silko places around “actors” and “acted” demonstrate that the male escorts in these films were actually raped and murdered. Though the snuff films are pretending to be a simulacrum of violence, they are *actual* acts of violence with all pretence eliminated. Moreover, these acts of violence are practiced upon the non-immunised: namely underaged male sex workers. Their pain, which is beyond the endurance of life, is commoditised. In this way, horrorism is commoditised.

Though Beaufrey projects this fascination with death upon all other immunised people, the narrative voice makes it clear from the proliferation of alternative viewpoints that Beaufrey is wrong to do so. Calabazas' association with violence, for example, is weighted with the memory of colonialism. From the stories of his relatives, Calabazas learns of Yaqui ghosts who still wander the earth, 'Mexican soldiers slaughtered all of them. Babies, little children, old women... Yaquis who refused to acknowledge the Mexican government or to pay taxes on their land were rounded up and shot' (190). Although the power of ghosts is still present, as I will explore shortly, their suffering and murder is still horrific and unnecessary. It was not, as Beaufrey's perspective suggests, an essential part of humanity. In fact, according to Yoeme, torture and murder is 'the only way the white man knew how to deal with the world' and is therefore a problem within the spirit and psyche of *white* individuals, though this essentialism towards white people is undermined elsewhere in the text (581). What Silko makes clear in the character of Beaufrey, though, is that extreme excess of colonial biopolitics leads to the complete degeneration of the soul.

However, even the horror spread by Beaufrey is not as powerful as the Indigenous alternative to Death-Eye Dog's extreme violence and consumption: the will of spirits and strength of dreams. Because time is a tortilla, spirits are eternal. Death-Eye Dog can never be as infinite as people like Beaufrey, the police chief, and Menardo think it is. Counter to the way that Death-Eye Dog dilutes the spirit to the extent that – in the case of Menardo and Trigg – it leads to the death of the body, Indigenous memory empowers the living with the strength of the dead. In doing so, spirits and Indigenous memory create alliances 'between subjects (including those who used to be perceived as partially or fully outside of the circuits of labor, such as the homeless, the underclass, and various fourth-world populations) of the global North that were only possible with much more difficulty before' (Breu 157). Just as Death-Eye Dog violence can be perpetuated by anyone regardless of the racial identity, the

reclamation of Indigenous land for Indigenous people can be pursued by anyone who is moved by Indigenous memory and spirits, even white individuals. What links these “rememberers” is, as Breu points out, that they are already targeted by the biopolitical project of Death-Eye Dog, a project which sees their death and exploitation as part of order maintenance. Indigenous memory in *Almanac*, then, is an act of anti-imperial, anti-Death-Eye Dog rebellion.

III. Dreamers and Warriors: The Undoing of the Body and the Empowerment of the Spirit

Tillett notes that, in contrast to the anthropophagic order maintenance of Death-Eye Dog which cannibalises subjects in order to perpetuate itself, the very act of ‘re-memering’ can be materially anti-imperial. To ‘re-member’ is also, then, a way to re-affirm the humanity of an individual who has been objectified by colonial-capitalism. Tillett writes:

Silko’s characters re-member the past, physically piecing together individual recollections to produce a more rounded and complete ‘history’ that recognizes all those who have been denied and excluded. In the context of the dead, especially of the Native dead who have often been dismembered through genocidal national acts and whose body parts have been appropriated for display in national museums, the very physicality of this process of re-memering is particularly pertinent. (29)

By “re-memering,” the immaterial memory and pain of past injustices becomes material. The eponymous almanac itself is a manifestation of this process of non-corporeal memory becoming corporeal. Few pages remain of the original almanac, but there is still much to transcribe and translate because many of the almanac’s keeps have added pieces of their own stories to the growing collection. Silko writes, that the almanac now contains ‘old notebooks and scraps of newspaper clippings [...] Whole sections had been stolen from other books and from the proliferation of “farmer’s almanacs”’ (569 – 570). The almanac, then, like Silko’s *Almanac*, is a Frankenstein’s monster-like collection of stories and ideas, lists of atrocities, lists of anti-colonial rebellions, and ‘histories’ like the one Menardo creates for himself after

his grandfather's death and the stories Sterling reads in magazines about the old west. In both the almanac and *Almanac*, memory is made manifest by the physical book in one's hands.

Additionally, at the heart of all these supposedly disconnected tales is the undeniable power of the non-corporal turned material: the Indigenous ghosts and memory causing the return of land to living Indigenous people. In this way, Indigenous memory and thanatopolitics provide a counter to the anthropophagic biopolitics of Death-Eye Dog. Unlike biopolitics, in a thanatopolitical framework, 'what is intolerable to the state is less the living, who can be administrated, but the dead, whose posthumous claim threaten to disrupt the system' (Murray 'Thanatopolitics' 719). In an ironic turn, the regime of Death-Eye Dog therefore creates its own undoing by its obsession with violence and death, since the dead are more powerful than the living. This is because, as Cavarero posits, the dead have experienced beyond the limit of human suffering. Turning to the work of Primo Levi and his autobiography about his experiences at Monowitz-Auschwitz, Cavarero demonstrates the power of moving beyond the human. She writes, 'Primo Levi declares that, as a survivor, "saved," he cannot be the true witness of the reality of the *Lager*, because he did not touch its depths. The only real witness, whom Levi calls the integral witness, is he who has gone to the heart of the horror' (Cavarero np). In *Almanac*, the integral witnesses to colonialism are the source of anti-imperial movements' greatest strength. This seeming contradiction is explained by Calabazas' relatives, who tell the story of a man whose donkey becomes exhausted after pulling a wagon through a haunted area late at night: 'The ghosts pile into the wagon. They weigh twice or three times what they weighed in life. The body carries the weight of the soul all the life, but with the body gone, there's nothing to hold the weight anymore' (191). Because the soul exists beyond the confines of the body, the thanatopolitical dimension of Indigenous memory actually becomes *more* powerful when confronted with the violence of Death-Eye Dog.

Furthermore, the anti-imperial power of the body is re-inscribed by Indigenous thought. To the dreamers and warriors in *Almanac*, the body is a tool with inherent power – in this case, the power to bring about the end of colonial oppression – which is a quality denied by the biopolitics of Death-Eye Dog. In other words, Death-Eye Dog ascribes power to the body by the State's assessment of whether that body can acceptably perpetuate the colonial goal of the state – whether the body is immunised or non-immunised. The thanatopolitics of Indigenous memory acknowledges an inherent power in the existence of the body that is continued and exacerbated by the ending of a body. The power of memory, for Silko, is also an inherent part of uncontaminated Marxism. By collecting the stories of poor factory workers who might otherwise have been forgotten, Marx arguably 'fulfills critical theory's obligation to give voice to suffering' (McNally 115). This is, indeed, Marx's major draw for the revolutionary La Escapía: 'Marx had understood stories are alive with the energy words generate [...] The words of the stories filled rooms with an immense energy that aroused the living with fierce passion and determination for justice [...] He had sensed the great power these stories had – power to move millions of people' (521). Under the thanatopolitics of Indigenous memory, no body and no soul is without a dimension of power, but those who understand this fact are more powerful than the Destroyers who see bodies as only something to be consumed or made into symbols of colonial superiority. In this way, non-immunised bodies have more power than Death-Eye Dog because they are integral witnesses to the excesses of violence of that regime. Their stories, once shared with others, have the most potent memory. Thus, Silko's representation of Indigenous memory and empowerment stands in stark contrast to works like *Meridian*, where Indigenous death always signals an ending and where Indigenous voices and memory are completely erased.

The suicidal eco-warriors who blow up Glen Canyon Dam are one such example of the non-immunised body and spirit surpassing the power of Death-Eye Dog's biopolitics.

Silko writes, '[O]ne of the eco-warriors who had died blowing up Glen Canyon Dam had been a gay rights activist ill with AIDS. No wonder government authorities had denied all reports of sabotage or loss of human life' (729). This non-immunised eco-warrior weaponizes his own non-immunisation against the Death-Eye Dog system that has denied him power, and in doing so reclaims his own humanity. Notably, the colonial government's denial of the activist's death only reinforces the power Indigenous memory and thanatopolitics holds over Death-Eye Dog biopolitics. The eco-warrior does not even need a name or status within the order of Death-Eye Dog to assert his humanity and influence, something Destroyers like Menardo and Trigg especially prize. His power lies within his assertion of his agency as a non-immunised person against the system that has assigned him no personhood and in his choice to turn his experience of being an integral witness of the horrors of Death-Eye Dog into ammunition against that very system. Awa Gee recalls the eco-warrior's call to arms: 'Dear lovers, brothers, mothers, and sisters! Go out in glory! Go out with dignity! Go out while you're still feeling good and *looking* good! Avenge gay genocide by the U.S. government! Die to save the earth' (730). In addition to being an explicit and knowing act of thanatopolitical power, the eco-warrior's call to arms and Awa Gee's remembrance of it demonstrates the emotional and physical impact of such a thanatopolitical act of rebellion. Similarly to Calabazas' relatives stories of the ghosts in the wagon, the eco-warrior's spirit has gained a "weight" of significance as he becomes not only the integral witness to Death-Eye Dog's biopolitical ravages, but the *transcendence* of biopolitics.³²

Elsewhere, Silko explicitly addresses the material way that spirits have power beyond Death-Eye Dog biopolitics. Lecha recalls Yoeme's explanation of the power of spirits and Death-Eye Dog's almost paranoid aversion to acknowledging this power. Silko writes, 'The

³² This is not to say that Silko advocates death as the only way to counter Death-Eye Dog values; Indigenous memory, unlike Death-Eye Dog, is not a death cult. Rather, Silko simply reinstates the power that Death-Eye Dog biopolitical systems attempt to erase from the death of the non-immunised. This is one of the kinds of inversions of Gothic affect that Burnham refers to in 'Is There an Indigenous Gothic?'.

white man hated to hear anything about spirits because spirits were already dead and could not be tortured and butchered or shot, the only way the white man knew how to deal with the world. Spirits were immune to the white man's threats and to his bribes of money and food' (581). Spirits exist entirely outside the epistemology of colonial biopolitics which requires subjects to be *alive* in order to be categorized into immune and non-immune and therefore subjugated to the will and systems of the State. Because of this, the material ways in which biopolitics manipulates subjects in order to 'make live and let die' do not apply to spirits who *cannot* live (Murray quoting Foucault 'Thanatopolitics' 718). Spirits are materially incapable of participating in biopolitics but *can* subvert biopolitics through thanatopolitics because death is an integral part of biopolitical thinking. Having become integral witnesses, spirits cannot then help but further the thanatopolitical agenda of Indigenous memory. Calabazas' relatives tell him that, after being murdered by colonial soldiers, Yaqui 'ghosts can't rest. Not even now' (190). In this way, simply the existence of ghosts and memory is thanatopolitical and therefore contributes to real, material change.

Tacho, Menardo's chauffeur and unintended murderer, is one of the few characters in *Almanac* that can actually speak with spirits outside of dreams. As such, he, and his twin brother El Feo, become the face of a peaceful anti-colonial/anti-imperial movement beginning in South and Central America and determined, simply, to walk North until Indigenous land is returned. Tacho speaks to the spirits via a third party of macaws, who call him Wacah and are able to give him insight into the thanatopolitical dimension of rebellion. Silko writes, 'Wacah did say the pilgrims would be protected by natural forces set loose, forces raised by the spirits. Among these forces there would be human beings, warriors to defend the religious pilgrims' (712). Here, the way in which the spirits affect the material world is made explicit: the macaws are representatives of Indigenous spirit, and they speak to and – eventually – through Wacah. With this viewpoint in mind, the sacrifice of the eco-

warrior becomes even more explicitly tied to *Indigenous* memory, regardless of his actual socio-political identity. As a physical resister of Death-Eye Dog systems, the eco-warrior qualifies as one of these ‘warriors’ to which Wacah refers. More of these warriors are explicitly referred to in Part Five of *Almanac* ‘The Fifth World’, which is divided into three books: The Foes, The Warriors, and The Struggle. The Warriors partially follows Calabazas who demonstrates differing ways of physically combating Death-Eye Dog from the revolutionary La Escapía, who is also prevalent in the chapter.

Calabazas reflects ‘he had been born during the lull in the great war, [meaning the anti-imperial war against the coloniser] and had bought himself a safe perch. But now the war was spreading, and in a few years there would be no safe perch for anyone [...] The war would go on until the people took back the land’ (631). Calabazas’ approach to the war against colonialism is far less direct than the eco-warrior or La Escapía. In fact, Calabazas is very sceptical about revolution being successful because he does not believe non-immunised people cannot fight amongst themselves. However, the Barefoot Hopi manages to demonstrate that even slow change is change. Silko writes:

The Hopi had talked about peaceful and gradual changes as if he believed voting would become the solution as soon as millions more Indians became U.S. citizens [...] Calabazas took the words of the Hopi to heart. He believed the change was in motion and was a process that had never stopped; it would all continue with or without him. (739)

This attitude towards revolution is perhaps unsurprising, as Calabazas’ relatives’ stories about the weight of spirits are a clear influence upon his life. By taking a slower, more sustained approach to peaceful change, Calabazas reflects the Laguna sensibility that time is a tortilla. The reign of Death-Eye Dog shall pass because, from the Laguna Pueblo perspective, nothing is ever permanent; the tortilla is malleable; therefore time, systems, and people are all equally malleable. La Escapía has a far more direct approach to revolution. La Escapía states that, similarly to Wacah, ‘[she] heard from spirits too – only her spirits were furious and they told

her to defend the people from attack' (712). El Feo and Wacah trust La Escapía with their lives, and in turn, La Escapía sees the material reality of needing to protect their literal movement, something that, just like the Hopi and Calabazas' approach, is endorsed or set in motion by spirits. What is crucial to note is that La Escapía's approach to rebellion is not seen as misguided or "incorrect" by the narrative voice, nor is Calabazas' far more tempered approach. This is because despite their differences, Calabazas, La Escapía, Tacho, El Feo, and indeed all the other warriors share the same respect for Indigenous memory and drive to return tribal land to Indigenous people. In addition to being warriors, they are also the dreamers that Indigenous memory requires in order to instil material change.

Dreamers in the logic of *Almanac* are, simply, those who have been influenced by the horrors suffered by Indigenous spirits and sometimes the spirits of enslaved Africans. Tacho/Wacah is told by the spirit macaws that 'the battle [to reclaim Indigenous land] would be won or lost in the realms of dreams, not with airplanes or weapons' (475). This is because, as *Almanac* demonstrates repeatedly, Indigenous cosmology and the memory of what has been suffered by integral witnesses to colonial horror are the most powerful forces for change. Despite the attempts of colonial biopolitics to deny agency to the dead, thanatopolitics will always assert power and therefore will always be able to undermine the authority that denies it power. In fact, Clinton asserts that colonialism's horrors and their denial of personhood to non-immunised people has made those people's spirits more potent. Silko writes, 'In Africa, the spirits had been predictable and generous [...] The slave-hunting and the death on the ocean's crossing had changed everything' (417). By becoming integral witnesses to the excesses of colonialism and its biopolitics, the spirits of enslaved peoples actually become the biggest threat to the very system that committed horrors against them. La Escapía further explains the influence of ghosts upon the material world:

The stories of the people or their "history" had always been sacred, the source of their entire existence. If the people had not retold the stories, or if the stories had somehow

been lost, then the people were lost; the ancestor's spirits were summoned by the stories [...] within "history" reside relentless forces, powerful spirits, revengeful, relentlessly seeking justice. (315 – 316)

Because they listen to and remember these integral witnesses, the dreamers are the *active* memory of the horrorism of colonial conquest in the Americas. Without people to remember the stories, as La Escapía states, there is no change. Therefore, dreaming and memory of the dead are an *essential* part of counter-imperial revolution. Whereas the biopolitics of Death-Eye Dog colonialism are obsessed with bodies as proof of the material and legitimization of certain types of bodies as a way to control the population, the thanatopolitics of Indigenous revolution recognize that the non-material has farther-reaching power that leads to material change. From what he learns from the spirit macaws, Tacho/Wacah and El Feo explain the dreamers thus:

Their faith lay in the spirits of the earth and the mountains that casually destroyed entire cities. Their faith lay in the spirits outraged by the Europeans who had burned alive the sacred macaws and parrots of Tenochtitlán; for those crimes and all the killing and destruction, now the Europeans would suffocate in their burning cities without rain or water any longer. (711)

Tacho/Wacah and El Feo connect dreamers to an explicit thanatopolitical project: groups of non-immunised peoples listening to the stories of integral witnesses and taking action to return stolen land to Indigenous peoples. Additionally, from this perspective, humans become a force as powerful as the earth itself. Infused with the righteous anger of spirits, human that listen to the spirits and demand justice have the same power to change the physical world as a volcano, a drought, a wildfire.

In fact, the dreamers and the walkers that join Tacho/Wacah and El Feo on the trek from South America to the north are often likened to a swarm of insects, an association that also appears in *Hunger* and in many other tales from the colonial imagination. Summarising John Carey, Brown notes 'Colonial subjects came to be seen as a mass, not merely degraded and threatening but also not fully alive' (*Cannibalism* 18). Following this logic, Destroyers

use this image in a pejorative way. Tacho/Wacah overhears Menardo's business partners '[whine] to Menardo about expenses, and costs. The Indians were worse than insects; it cost the squatters nothing to breed and to swarm over the land, while a unit of five security specialists with weapons and one vehicle cost hundreds per day' (474 – 475). For the Destroyers, being compared to insects is an insult, because it demonstrates that one is not human – aka, non-immune to the biopolitics of the colonial State. However, to the dreamers and warriors of Indigenous memory, insects are natural things. To be compared to a force of nature like a swarm of insects is to demonstrate power beyond the confines of Death-Eye Dog logic. El Feo notes that the idea of a swarm is more menacing to colonial governments because a swarm is without leaders, and without leaders, a group or groups of like-minded individuals are harder to control. El Feo reflects:

People had begun to gather spontaneously and moved as a mob or swarm follows instinct, then suddenly disperses. The masses of people [...] no longer believed in so-called "elected" leaders; they were listening to strange [...] voices out of the past, voices of their earliest memories, voices of nightmares and voices of sweet dreams, voices of the ancestors. (513)

This is a prophecy that is echoed by other anti-Death Eye Dog dreamers, walkers, and revolutionaries, regardless of background.

In *Yellow Woman*, Silko writes, '[T]he ancient Pueblo people depended upon collective memory through successive generations to maintain and transmit an entire culture, a worldview complete with proven strategies for survival' (30). This does not mean, however, that dreaming comes naturally to all the characters. Perhaps the best example of a non-dreamer's journey to becoming a dreamer is Sterling. As Reed notes, this is partly because 'Sterling's story frames the novel. His banishment leads him back into the nontribal world where his role as a gardener suggests a diminished land stewardship. His reappearance at the end of the novel offers a simple, unheroic witness to a revolution that seems to bring the story full circle' (30). Further to Reed's point, Sterling is initially invested in the ideas of law and

justice as they are applied by the coloniser, as evidenced by his interest in the outlaw stories of Tucson. However, it is inaccurate to call Sterling an ‘unheroic witness’ to revolution. His very transformation from semi-complacent cog in the biopolitical machine of colonialism to dreamer reinforces that witnessing the true history of the past is an *essential* element of reclaiming Indigenous land. Crucially, unlike Menardo who is unable to dream of an Indigenous future, Sterling does not entirely forget or eschew his family’s teachings and history. Their influence is also stamped on his opinions of justice and outlawry and his attempts to grapple with historical figures like Geronimo. Silko writes:

Somehow, Sterling had never quite imagined old Geronimo in the same class with Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. Geronimo had turned to crime only as a last resort, after Mexican army troops had slaughtered his wife and three children on U.S. territory in southern Arizona [...] Of course Sterling knew there was no excuse for crime. But for Geronimo it had been war in defense of the homelands [...] Still, it was clear that the law did not accept any excuses. (40)

Even as he asserts that crime does not pay, the non-dreamer Sterling seems to understand there is *some* fundamental difference between the outlaw status of Bonnie and Clyde and Geronimo. What Sterling is unable to voice – and, in fact, never voices, even after he transforms into a dreamer – is that Geronimo was a non-immunised individual targeted by the repressive biopolitics of Death-Eye Dog colonialism. He was a symbol of Indigenous resistance that needed to be removed in order for colonialism to maintain its supposed supremacy. This differs from the outlawry of Bonnie and Clyde, as they were targeted by the colonial system because of their defiance of laws, rather than their innate identity.

By the novel’s end, however, even though he is unable to voice the specific differences between the immunised and non-immunised, Sterling becomes a witness to the power of Indigenous memory and spirits. Previously, Sterling’s attitude toward the stone snake at the Laguna reservation is dismissive at best. While many at Laguna see it as holy, Sterling does not have any particular association with the stone snake until it becomes the reason he is banished from Laguna. Upon his return to Laguna territory at the end of the

novel, however, Sterling is drawn to the snake by a power he cannot explain: ‘Without realizing what he was doing, Sterling had been walking in the exact direction of the mine road where the shrine of the giant snake was. Sterling knew the visit to the giant snake was what he must do, before anything else, even before he went to buy food’ (758). Sterling’s calling echoes Tacho/Wacha and the Barefoot Hopi’s assertion that dreamers will begin to walk north (the direction of the stone snake relative to where Tacho/Wacah and El Feo’s pilgrimage begins) spontaneously and almost without conscious thought. By witnessing Sterling’s change of attitude toward the stone snake, readers witness the internal change from non-dreamer to dreamer. Furthermore, there is nothing particularly profound about this change: Sterling is simply listening more closely to the memories of his ancestors, memories he himself cannot quite understand. Yet, as Silko asserts time and time again in *Almanac*, this is all that is required for revolution.

IV. Conclusion

Some scholars, such as Bergland, have argued that Silko’s assertion of the power of spirits points to a fatalistic view of Indigenous life. Bergland writes ‘Silko’s *Almanac* focuses on the dead rather than the living. Rather than affirming life, it affirms death’ (167 – 168). However, this is only true if one’s perspective aligns with the Destroyers. The Destroyer’s desire for consumption and destruction is very clearly countered by an Indigenous perspective throughout the text. Bergland’s claim only demonstrates the dire need for non-Indigenous scholars of horror and the Gothic to understand and listen to Indigenous perspectives before analysing a novel. A Gothic perspective of the false binary of past/present and the Laguna Pueblo understanding of time as a tortilla are both valid ways to analyse *Almanac* that complement each other.

Furthermore, the huge temporal scope of Silko's novel is a unique contribution to Indigenous Gothic that allows Silko to directly demonstrate the endurance of Indigenous memory and power of Laguna concepts of time. Whereas the non-Indigenous texts I have previously explored all interacted with the concept of colonialism as if it was an inevitability, the expansive timeframe Silko uses in *Almanac* shows the malleability or "tortilla-ness" of time and therefore the fleeting power of oppressive biopolitical systems like colonialism. The arrival of the Destroyers in *Almanac* signals a beginning of the colonial system, and if there is a beginning, there must be an end. The idea of colonialism as a passing phase is antithetical to American imperial Gothic works that reinforce the narrative of American expansion as a mythic, inevitable progression. By de-mythologising American history, Silko depicts 'the ways in which Native histories are denied and "forgotten" in order to privilege the national narrative' while also showing the endurance – and survivance – of Indigenous people *despite* colonisation's attempted erasure (Tillet 28).

This creates some significant differences from those decolonial novels with horror elements written by Euro-Americans that are worth expanding upon for the sake of broadening out "Gothic" categories. In the main, because nothing that is dead is ever quite gone and the past and the present exist simultaneously, it is the continued material act of colonial actions upon Indigenous people in Indigenous gothic that is horrific rather than just the suppressed memory of colonial genocide, as it is in Euro-American texts. In this way, the horrific elements in *Almanac* that could be categorised as Gothic are not about uncovering a forgotten past: the past is as present as the present. Therefore, it is not the realisation that colonial acts are horrific that is the source of horror, as it is in *Meridian* or *Semetary*. It is the structure of Death-Eye Dog colonial-capitalism – which will use up all individuals, exploit their pain, and even turn them into spare parts – that exceeds what can be considered human. Under the Death-Eye Dog regime that Menardo, Trigg, the police chief, and Beaufrey all

enact, death is the end result for everything that is alive, including non-human animals and the global ecosystem. Yet, by remembering and empowering the dead, and emphasising the malleability of time, *Almanac* insists on the temporary nature of colonial-capitalism, especially in the face of thanatopolitical revolution.

Chapter 5: “Real Indians”: Terminal Creeds, Identity, and Violence in *Indian Killer*

Like *Almanac*, Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer* complicates the Euro-American connotation of Indigenous ghosts. Unlike *Almanac*, however, Alexie’s focus on spectrality is much less consistently empowering than Silko’s thanatopolitics. Set in 1990s Seattle, Washington, the novel follows a cast of Indigenous characters separated from their traditional cultures struggling to find their place in a colonised world as well as “Wannabe Indians”: Euro-Americans who adopt what they perceive as “authentic” Indian customs and ideas in order to separate themselves from a capitalist white culture. Extremely controversial at its first publication, *Indian Killer* continues to challenge readers – Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike – with its extremely dark portrayal of Indigenous life post-colonisation and the deep hatred this can foster in Indigenous people.³³ Many readers and critics have found the violence of *Indian Killer* to be particularly shocking since most of Alexie’s works are far lighter and more playful in tone. James R Giles sees the violence in the novel as excessive (3 – 5). Krupat calls the politics of *Indian Killer* ‘Anarchistic, individualistic, and terrorist’ (*Red Matters* 112) and warns against the ‘Red Nationalist *rougetude*’ of the novel, a play on *négritude* from the Black Nationalism movement in the 1940s, that he believes contains ‘intrinsic racism’ because – according to him – the novel advocates violence against whites (*Red Matters* 119). Thus, the critical focus on *Indian Killer*’s violence often smacks of defensive tone-policing. As Michelle Burnham argues in ‘Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer* as Indigenous Gothic’: ‘These critics assume or imply that good literature cannot also be angry; that assumption in turn betrays these reviewers’ consistent discomfort with and defensive avoidance of the political and historical conditions of such anger’ (7).

³³ See: Burnham, Michelle. ‘Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer* as Indigenous Gothic.’ *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture & History*, edited by Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush, University of Nebraska Press, 2011, pp. 6 – 7. ; Giles, James R. *The Spaces of Violence*. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2006. ; Krupat, Arnold. *Red Matters: Native American Studies*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Much more than *Almanac* or *Doves*, as I will later explore, *Indian Killer* plays with the form and function of a Gothic murder mystery. Extremely similar to *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), its depiction of urban spaces as violent labyrinths full of human and non-human dangers combined with the mystery of who the eponymous killer may be are directly related to the Gothic mode. The many hints and red herrings Alexie gives the reader as supposed “clues” for which of the characters is the killer are all dependent on the idea of a dual-identity, and do little to discourage a reading of the text as a murder mystery – something that also affects critical analyses of the novel and minimises critical interaction with the themes of the text in favour of arguing who the killer really could be.³⁴ The lack of clear resolution – in fact, an outright refusal to give answers – serves to compound the novel’s violence in many readers’ and critics’ minds: there is no easy target to blame or to overcome, therefore the violence is unknowable, uncategorisable, unstable, abject. Though the loss of self and the struggle of identity creation for Indigenous people in a colonial space is clearly central to the novel as Burnham points out,³⁵ what critics have largely failed to articulate – or perhaps understand – is that the many crises of identity do not necessarily indicate that Indigenous identity is somehow inaccessible. While identity is made spectral in the text, this is because, unlike *Almanac*, all of the anxieties regarding identity or the “correct” performance of Indigeneity are rooted in terminal creeds that are produced as a cause of colonisation. In this way, Alexie’s novel deconstructs colonial identity and

³⁴ See: Giles, James R. *The Spaces of Violence*. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2006. ; Krupat, Arnold. *Red Matters: Native American Studies*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

³⁵ See Bak, Hans. ‘The City as a Site of Trauma and Transformation: Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer* and Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen*.’ *Caliban: French Journal of English Studies*, 25, (2009), pp. 397 – 408.; Brandt, Stefan L. ‘The American Revolution and Its Other: Indigenous Resistance Writing from William Apsen to Sherman Alexie.’ *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, vol. 42, no. 1, (2017), pp. 35 – 56 ; Burnham, Michelle. ‘Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer* as Indigenous Gothic.’ *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture & History*, edited by Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush, University of Nebraska Press, 2011, pp. 3 – 25. ; Carpenter, Cari M. ‘Fancydancing Through the Minefield: Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer*, Racism, and Anger.’ *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy*, vol. 22, no. 2, (Fall 2011 – Winter 2012), pp. 132 – 143. ; Giles, James R. *The Spaces of Violence*. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2006. ; Krupat, Arnold. *Red Matters: Native American Studies*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

expectations as they are expressed by the colonisers *and* by the colonised themselves. The Indigenous characters John, Marie, and Reggie are all burdened by other Indigenous peoples' expectations of them that they feel they cannot properly fulfil. This, as much as hatred of whites, is what fuels their violent fantasies and acts. In this way, Alexie goes beyond pointing out the obvious – that colonisation is harmful and can lead to a cycle of violence between coloniser and colonised – and offers a far deeper critique of the extent to which manifest manners infects the lives and minds even of unwilling colonised subjects.

However, there is another virtually unexplored aspect of Alexie's text that further deconstructs colonial epistemology: the eponymous Indian Killer. Both corporeal and incorporeal, human and animal, magical and mundane, the killer exceeds even the binary of biopolitics versus thanatopolitics put forth by Silko's ghosts in *Almanac*. These combinations of seemingly opposite traits expose the inability to create a "complete" identity post-colonisation out of the terminal creeds of Euro-American expectations. In effect, unlike *Almanac* with its focus on the return of tribal land through multiple means, *Indian Killer* explores a much more direct approach through violence. However, this approach, too, is not wholly effective. Rather than a prescriptive answer to the traumas of colonisation, *Indian Killer*'s horror is centred on unknowability and the cycles of violence that haunt coloniser and colonised alike.

I. Tricksters and Ghosts: Centring Indigenous Cosmologies to Deconstruct the Uncanny

Set in what is often called the 'roaring 90s', *Indian Killer*'s focus on the houseless population of Seattle undercuts the prosperity narrative during the time in which it was written. Former Clinton administration chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, Joseph Stiglitz, reflects that the period of general economic prosperity in the US in the 1990s was not necessarily due to Clinton's leadership or policy. Rather, Stiglitz writes, 'We in the Clinton

Administration took office at the right time' ('The Roaring' np). Some of the prosperity of the 1990s was due to increased technological power which led to increased productivity, the groundwork for which was laid pre-Clinton. Some prosperity was due to what Stiglitz refers to as 'a change in the "education premium" (the difference in income between those with and those without a college education), which in turn was due to ordinary market forces of supply and demand' ('The Roaring' np). At the same time, with the benefit of hindsight, Stiglitz admits that he and others in the Clinton administration implemented policies that further entrenched neoliberalism as the reigning economic default at home. Stiglitz writes, 'Accounting standards slipped; deregulation was taken further than it should have been; and corporate greed was pandered to' ('The Roaring' np). For global economic interactions, the Clinton administration applied a kind of neoliberal imperialism in many cases. For example, in 1996 – 1997, the Clinton administration placed 'prohibitive tariffs on Mexican tomatoes, at a cost of something close to a billion dollars a year for Mexican producers. [...] The official reason is that Mexican tomatoes are cheaper than Florida grown tomatoes and American consumers prefer them [...] the free market was working, but with the wrong outcome' (Chomsky *Neoliberalism and the Global Order*). The legacy of Reagan's colonial, imperialist rhetoric and his economic systems, then, was arguably unchanged – at least in any fundamental way – in the 1990s. *Indian Killer*'s focus on the houseless population in 1990s Seattle therefore undercuts the prosperity narrative of the Clinton administration, exposing it as the lie it was for many underprivileged people. In effect, by undermining this prosperity narrative, 1990s itself is exposed as a kind of terminal creed.

Terminal creeds are 'stereotypical structures which confine and deform those who embrace them, "beliefs which seek to fix, to impose static definitions on the world"' (Stafford quoting Vizenor 155). Counter to *Almanac* with its focus on tradition and memory, Owens notes that terminal creeds 'are destructive, suicidal, even when the definitions appear to arise

out of revered tradition' (Afterward 249). By demonstrating the harmful expectations of Indigeneity without nuance, Alexie focuses on how terminal creeds affect even Indigenous peoples and their ideas of themselves, especially when they are simply a reaction against colonialism without any substance beyond being not-colonial. The effect of manifest manners upon John is most evident in the text, as he is an adopted Indigenous man with no connection at all to his ancestry and therefore an outsider to both settler and Indigenous cultures.

However, John is far from the only character who, as Krupat puts it 'is not "successfully integrated": he is a cultural hybrid who finds his hybridity intolerable' (*Red Matters* 109). All the Indigenous characters are cultural hybrids who are haunted by and reject this hybridity because their entire concept of Indigeneity is constructed by whiteness or by a reaction to/against whiteness. Alexie, in stark contrast to Silko, does not offer a "correct" performance of Indigeneity for readers; instead, Indigenous identity itself is spectralised throughout the text. In this way, Alexie also participates in the Indigenous tradition of trickster writing. Owens describes the trickster as 'that universal figure so necessary to Native American and world mythology and literature whose duty it is to amuse, surprise, shock, outrage, and generally trick us into self-knowledge' (Afterward 248). According to critics themselves, much of the shock arises from Indigenous characters' refusal to perform in ways that are comfortably within the status quo. For all of the Indigenous characters in *Indian Killer*, there is no true escape from colonial expectations – there is only the fight which is more constricting than liberating because it still exists within the sphere of colonial expectation.

The exception to this is the killer. While all the other Indigenous characters are deeply negatively impacted by the colonial toll of a "pure" Indian identity, the complete inability for white and Indigenous people to categorise the killer is a source of power. With the killer, Alexie demonstrates the lack of dominance the colonising culture holds over the instruments of cultural production because, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the killer is both

corporeal and incorporeal, human and animal, memory and future. Some of these qualities are, as I noted in the introduction to this thesis, completely within the bounds of Indigenous cosmologies of the Seattle area. Boyd states, ‘In the 1930s a Coast Salish elder named Frank Allen told the young anthropologist William Elmendorf that an Indian doctor had revealed to him how ghosts dwelling in the land of the dead have “automobiles now, stores now, just like we have here”’ (‘We Are Standing’ 185). To the Coast Salish, ghosts can be as “modern” as their living counterparts. Additionally, while the Indigenous ghosts in *Almanac* tend to help in the reclamation of native land only when called upon or recognised by dreamers, the ghosts of *Indian Killer* – including not just the potentially spectral killer but also the spirit of Chief Seattle – have an agency of their own regardless of calls for help from the living. Thus, the ghosts of *Indian Killer* are perhaps uncanny to readers unfamiliar with this cultural connotation of more active, “modern” spirits. Those more familiar with Indigenous connotations of the ghost, however, would not find them as uncanny.

Because the killer exists outside the bounds of colonial reality as a part of Indigenous imagination, and because it cannot be interpellated by anyone including Indigenous characters, the killer’s presence offers a more nuanced approach to survivance: one that sees reaction as futurity as long as it is connected to memory. In this way, the unknowable, ‘interstitial’ quality of the ghost invokes horror in a way that, as Reyes argues, ‘refuse[s] absolute human taxonomies or destabilise[s] received notions of what constitutes a “normal” or socially intelligible body’ (5). However, it is the interstitiality connected with the very real corporeal violence the killer is capable of inflicting that is truly horrific to scholars and to colonisers in the novel. Critiquing existing criticism on Indigenous ghosts in literature, Boyd and Thrush argue ‘All too often, analyses of colonialism emphasize only the symbolic or discursive aspects of settler societies – for example, tales of Indian ghosts – while spending relatively little time exploring the [...] surviving Indigenous bodies and minds’ (x). Alexie’s

killer with its *physical* as well as spiritual attributes, resists the sort of symbolic discourse settler epistemology puts onto Indigenous ghosts, and instead re-focuses the thematic thrust of the novel onto the material effects of colonisation upon Indigenous people and the cycles of violence colonialism perpetuates.

II. Terminal Creeds and the Construction of Identity: *Unknowability* or *Ephemerality*?

Althusser coins the term interpellation to describe how individuals reproduce the ideology of a State, even unconsciously or against their own will. Interpellation is when an individual recognizes themselves and is recognised by the State as a *subject*: i.e., an individual who acts within the parameters of the ideals of an Ideological State Apparatus and are therefore subjected to the wills of the State. Essentially, interpellation causes individuals to see themselves as a part of a larger, ideological system. According to *Indian Killer*, the ideological system in colonial mainstream America is filled with terminal creeds: absolutes and strictures in which an individual invests their subjecthood. This explanation partly accounts for Indigenous characters being unable to create stable or comfortable identities: they are unable to self-interpellate or interpellate others outside of a colonial epistemology because even their subjecthood as Indigenous people is reactionary against colonialism, rather than existing entirely outside it. In this way, they are constantly torn between two (and more) sometimes overlapping, often conflicting ideologies and expectations for how Indians “should” or “do” behave. These expectations are put forward by the dominating colonial culture but also from the Indigenous culture as a reaction to the colonising culture.

Echoing the analyses of many other scholars, Cari M. Carpenter states that throughout *Indian Killer* John and Marie ‘measure themselves according to a painful registry of expectations’ that are ultimately unreachable (135). This registry is continuously highlighted by Alexie. Upon John and Marie’s first meeting, Marie notes that John does not act or react

in a way she expects of fellow Indians. She reflects, ‘Indians were always placing one another on an identity spectrum, with the more traditional to the left and the less traditional Indians to the right. Marie knew she belonged somewhere in the middle of that spectrum and that her happiness depended on placing more Indians to her right’ (39). Marie’s internal thought process is Althusser’s theory of interpellation in action. She states that other Indigenous people recognise each other as subjects, and in doing so, place certain performative expectations on each other: in Marie’s thinking, more or less traditional. Even more significantly, however, Marie expresses a need to appear more traditional than other Indians, even though she sees her own identity performance as somewhere in the middle of a spectrum of “Indianness.” With this desire, Alexie exposes the extent to which performativity validates identity in both colonial and Indigenous spaces, and the ephemerality of both these colonial-based and Indigenous-based identity constructions. If Marie considers herself a middle-of-the-road Indian in terms of adhering to traditionalism, but also believes that she must act more traditionally Indian than her peers in order to be happy, Marie’s identity construction centres around performance of an ideal rather than personal empowerment and survivance. In other words, Marie’s personality revolves around *reaction* to colonialism rather than ‘the right of succession or reversion of an estate’ beyond or apart from colonialism (Brandt quoting Vizenor 39).

As previously explored in the chapter on *Blood Meridian*, Althusser explains the connection between interpellation and action thus: ‘his [the subject’s] ideas are material acts inserted into material practices regulated by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which (hardly by accident!) his ideas derive’ (186). Further to this point, Immanuel Wallerstein writes that subjects are ‘the products of a process. They are not primordial atomic elements, but part of a systemic mix out of which they emerged and upon which they act. They act freely, but their freedom is constrained by their

biographies and the social prisons of which they are a part' (21). In the chapter on *Blood Meridian*, I argued that the judge's material rituals of destroying Indigenous artefacts connect him to a specific colonial epistemology that is an embodiment of the otherwise obfuscated colonial US government. Conversely to *Meridian*, Alexie's depiction of Indigenous interpellation combined with the material ritual of socialisation are not made mythical or inevitable by Alexie. Through the lens of interpellation, it is clear that Indigenous characters in *Indian Killer* have two "prisons": the prison of Indigenous expectations and the prison of coloniser stereotypes. Both, however, are based on manifest manners. In this way, an "authentic" Indigenous identity is spectralised because mere contrary reaction against colonisers is not, by default, enacting survivance.

Coloniser expectations of Indigenous identity are best described by a Jack Wilson's literary agent from New York, who states, 'Indians are big right now [...] Publishers are looking for that shaman thing, you know? The New Age stuff, after-death experiences, the healing arts, talking to animals, sacred vortexes, that kind of thing' (162 – 163). According to the agent Indians are magical figures who, rather than being real, are fantasies made to sell books to white consumers. As I have shown in the previous section, settler culture needs to repeatedly manufacture the image of Indian as Other in order to perpetuate itself, or, to combine the terminology of Wallerstein and Höglund's analysis of imperial Gothic, to keep constructing and re-constructing the social prison built from the American myth of white settler domination. In the novel, John constructs his own identity around this fantasy of Indian-ness. At work, John, imagines how "real" Indian powers would help him lash out at his boss who he does not trust and believes might be a loup-garou: 'John knew if he were a real Indian, he could have called [...] a crosscutting wind that would've sliced through the fortieth floor, pulled the foreman out of the elevator, and sent him over the edge of the building' (24). To John and the literary agent, Indians are mystic, with unknowable powers

related to nature. But it is not just from colonial-corporate depictions of Indigeneity that demand harmful standards of performance that are unachievable. Because John and Marie's ideal of Indigeneity is based partly on the complete refutation of whiteness or colonial values, its absolute strictures demonstrate it to also be a terminal creed.

Since their first meeting takes place at a powwow, John knows that Marie is waiting for him to perform a certain kind of social interaction: namely, 'the usual Indian banter [...]' When he remained silent, she accepted that silence as being just as Indian as the banter' (35). What appears to be key – for both John and Marie – is that John is not just physically identifiable as "Indian" but that he performs Indian-ness in certain ways. In other words, both John and Marie buy into the terminal creed that there is a way to be "authentically" Indian, especially around other Indians. John remarks that 'Indians quizzed Indians about all the Indian friends, family, lovers, and acquaintances they might have in common' and that Indian men give each other 'that indigenous head nod, which confirmed a connection he did not feel' (35). John's discomfort with being unable to "correctly" perform Indian identity comes from just a place just as harmful as the expectations of white colonising culture. Both rely on 'the racist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as "authentic" representations of indian cultures' (Vizenor *Manifest Manners* vii). For example, John knows that handsome stoicism and silence are an acceptable performance of Indian-ness, but this is also, as Owens points out, an expectation perpetuated by 'film version[s] of Hollywoodian Indians' (Afterward 248) and rooted in colonial rhetoric as old as the concept of the noble savage. Thus, because John and Marie both believe that Indians should act in some way – or a set of acceptable ways – they are beholden to terminal creeds regarding "correct" Indigeneity as colonial epistemology is beholden. Put another way, John, Marie, and all the Indigenous characters in *Indian Killer* 'are deeply entrenched in a net of self-fulfilling prophecies and media-created images that *produce* a reality they purport to merely *depict*'

(Brandt 51). Identity, because it is based on terminal creeds, is therefore spectral. The spectrality of Indigenous identity further separates Alexie's novel from Silko's. While Silko argues for a type of essential Indigenous identity through the power of dreams and remembrance – an identity that can also be accessed by non-Indigenes – Alexie is far more preoccupied with the horror of an inaccessible identity arising from coloniality rather than existing outside of it.

In fact, Marie also knows John is an outsider based on his performance of Indian-ness and his lack of relationship to the existing community. Alexie writes, '[S]he felt his confusion and loss. He didn't know how to dance, didn't seem to recognize anybody at the powwow. Nobody shouted out his name in an effort to embarrass him as he danced. He was a stranger here, and Marie understood that isolation' (38). From Marie's analysis of the situation, it is clear that, although she has interpellated John as Indigenous – not an *incorrect* interpellation – she has also interpellated him as alien to Indigenous culture. He does not know how to perform the material actions of dancing, teasing, and bantering according to Marie's knowledge of these rituals, having grown up in the culture of the Spokane reservation. Thus, it is inaccurate to say, as Krupat does, that 'Indians in *Indian Killer* [...] know each other as Indians without any special attention to racial mix, hybridity, blood quanta, enrollment cards, or even culture' (*Red Matters* 116). There is a very intricate cultural expectation placed upon the Indigenous characters by society and, crucially, by each other. These 'rituals' of performance, as Althusser terms them, are so powerful that they cause the majority of the inner anguish for Indigenous characters throughout the novel when they feel they are not living up to a "true" Indigenous ideal. Marie's observation that John is an outsider echoes John's own anxiety. Surrounded by other Indigenous people at the all-Indian bar Big Hearts, John states, 'Though he knew he wasn't a real Indian, John knew he looked like one. His face was his mask. John knew all of this to be true' (276). Rather than taking John's anxieties at

face value, however, it is essential to note that the confusion and anger that John lives with is an essential element of trickster writing. In essence, it is not just that John has a *lack* of knowledge about how to be Indian: it is that *there is nothing to know*. There is no meaning because there is no essential Indian identity. Having no essential identity is also distinct from the idea of “unknowability” of identity put forth by critics. It is not that Indian identity is a mystery, but that any identity based on a totalising epistemology is a flawed one.

One of the most overtly trickster ways in which Alexie critiques the idea of racial identity is with his use of naming conventions. As Vizenor argues, trickster writing, ‘is the interpretation of simulations in the literature of survivance, the ironies of descent and racialism’ (*Manifest Manners* 15). In trickster fashion, Alexie subverts naming conventions also rooted in terminal creeds by giving many Indigenous characters “white” names and many white characters “Indigenous” names. The obvious major example of this is the protagonist John Smith, whose name, as Giles and many others note ‘is symbolically important; he has the same white name as a legendary exploiter of Native American culture’ (132). Yet less has been said about other characters, such as Reggie Polatkin’s white father who is named Bird while his Spokane mother is named Martha (90). It is also, ironically, from Bird’s abusive lessons that Reggie learned Indigenous history and, by extension, a kind of “Indigenous identity.” Bird, an ex-Bureau of Indian Affairs employee, is overtly preoccupied with preventing Reggie from joining such anti-colonial organisations as AIM. Alexie writes, ‘Bird had been the area director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which was under siege by the American Indian Movement. All over the country, hostile AIM members had been attacking peaceful BIA Indians and non-Indians’ (92). Bird’s lessons are overtly harmful physically and emotionally to Reggie because they feature beatings, berating language, and the perpetual “lesson” that Indians are ‘dirty’: ‘I don’t want you to end up like all the other Indians. I want you to be special. I don’t want you to be running around with a

gun. I want you to love your country. I want you to know your history' (94). What is equally important, however, is that Bird's lessons were harmful because they shut Reggie off from an understanding of Indigenous identity that is separate from colonial atrocities. In other words, Reggie is unable to find peace by the end of the novel because he does not have an epistemology outside of coloniality: there is only blood, death, and white men. Therefore, while it is technically true to say that *Indian Killer* 'erases rather than produces certainty' and 'empties out rather than accumulates knowledge', this is only true because the characters who cannot find certainty regarding identity are building from a foundation of manifest manners (Burnham 'Sherman' 16). Though Alexie's trickster writing in this area is more likely to shock and outrage rather than amuse, it is nevertheless trickster writing.

In addition to destabilising expectations through naming conventions, Alexie employs trickster doubling in order to further muddy the waters of interpellation-based-on-manifest-manners. Although there are a few instances of doubling throughout the text, the most explicit doubling is between John Smith and Jack Wilson.³⁶ As Burnham notes, 'Literary doubles typically reflect what is repressed in each other, and these two characters are revealed to be selves equally founded on nothing, on stories invented to take the place of a devastating lack of knowledge' ('Sherman' 13). Both John and Wilson are products of the adoptee/foster care system, which severed John from any Indigenous culture and made Wilson idealise the comparatively communal and comforting notion of a tribal family. The trickster subversion of naming conventions further reflects this doubling. While John Smith shares a name with an (in)famous colonial explorer, Wilson's name is the same as the adopted Euro-American name of Wovoka, the Norther Paiute spiritual leader and originator of the Ghost Dance. A white ex-detective, Wilson now writes mystery novels starring

³⁶ For more on the doubling of John and Wilson and its ties to Gothic literature, see Burnham, Michelle. 'Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* as Indigenous Gothic.' *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture & History*, edited by Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush, University of Nebraska Press, 2011, pp. 6 – 7.

‘Aristotle Little Hawk, the very last Shilshomish Indian, who was a practicing medicine man and private detective in Seattle’ (162). Wilson creates Aristotle as a fictional double, claiming Shilshomish heritage despite being removed from any Indigenous communities. As a “Wannabe Indian,” Wilson has no connection to Indigeneity and therefore no place of authority to write or speak from. In attempt to advocate for Indigenous people, Wilson therefore dons an identity that he cannot actually inhabit. Again, crucially, this is an identity built on manifest manners and terminal creeds of what an Indian “can” be. Wilson reflects that ‘monsters are real [...] most of the monsters were white men’ and that the murder of an Indigenous woman could not be done by a fellow Indigenous person because ‘They’re my people. They wouldn’t hurt each other. We’re not like that’ (161, 160). Wilson’s assessment of Indigeneity therefore expresses the same stereotypes of manifest manners. Unable to acknowledge that Indians are ‘capable of cowardice as well as courage, of greed and lust as well as generosity and stoicism’ Wilson’s idea of Indian-ness is as trapped within a web of expectations as Marie, John, and Reggie’s (Owens Afterward 247 – 248).

In *Locations of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha argues:

The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moment of historical transformation. (2)

In other words, hybridity is the opposite of fixed tradition. Since culture is ever-changing, the clash or connection between multiple cultures – violent or otherwise – will inevitably have lasting consequences on all involved parties. A return to a “pure”, pre-contact time is an impossibility. What modern postcolonial subjects must do, Bhabha states, is to live “‘in the beyond” [...] to be a part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; *to touch the future on its hither side*’ (7). Hybridity arises from the articulation of cultural difference ‘without an

assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha 4). When read in conjunction with Bhabha's theory of hybridity John's ultimate death at the end of the novel suggests the complete impossibility to move forward or indeed to live when one ascribes to hierarchies that are imposed by the coloniser. John feels he must be either Indigenous *or* from a white family. This pressure that John puts on himself arises from his inability to see himself – from Bhabha's definition – as hybrid. Krupat argues that 'The identities the mixedblood protagonists of Indian fiction of the past thirty years achieved or failed to achieve are "hybrid" identities, to be sure, but most of them [...] must nonetheless be called "Indian" identities' (*Red Matters* 109). For Krupat the absolutism of a "real" Indian identity that characters like John, Reggie, and Wilson search for throughout the novel, and the repeated insistence that there *is* an essential Indian-ness, one diametrically opposed to whiteness – is a form of harmful identity politics advocated for by Alexie. What Krupat's reading does not account for, however, is that John, Reggie, Wilson, and all those characters who eschew hybridity in favour of this mythical "pure" identity are either dead – in the case of John – or left searching by the end of the novel. In short, manifest manners haunts the process of identity creation throughout the novel. The characters who attempt to find a "pure" Indigenous identity based on manifest manners make themselves into ghosts, haunting themselves with an impossible expectation and with the hollowness of their own subjecthood.

III. Corporeal Ghosts, the Ghost Dance, and Survivance

There is only one character who is truly successful at bridging the gaps between Indigenous spaces and colonised spaces and finding power and agency in both; one character whose identity is uncategorisable because it so uncannily eludes manifest manners. This is Alexie's Indian Killer. The killer's duality most fully demonstrates Alexie's trickster storytelling ability, and the theme present throughout *Indian Killer* that there is no such thing as a stable

identity – that there is only reaction and memory and that this in and of itself is a kind of survivance. Part of what makes the killer so elusive is their ability to exist in both corporeal and non-corporeal forms. As such, they do not have a gender or race from which to be interpellated. The killer therefore personifies an uncanny ability to permeate hitherto uncontested borders of existence even beyond thanatopolitics. Höglund states that Euro-American subjecthood is most in peril when Gothic subjects transgress borders: ‘constant crossings between different states are disturbing and encourage consideration both of the act of transgression and the nature of the border itself. When the gothic is at its most effective, it directs its audience’s attention to such issues’ (*American Imperial Gothic* 173). John, Reggie, and Wilson’s struggles with identity show in a realistic way the struggles many modern Indigenous people have, and reviewers and scholars alike seem to be comfortable tackling the anti-colonial message their respective stories illustrate. The lack of scholarship on the killer specifically, however, in addition to the anathema many readers have had towards them, demonstrates Höglund’s above point. The killer is disturbing not solely – or perhaps not even mostly – because they are a murderer. Violence in the Gothic is, after all, as often titillating as it is abhorrent. Burnham writes, ‘Readers’ sensations of delightful terror have of course been central to the tradition of the gothic, but’ that *Indian Killer* demonstrates

another kind of gothic [...] Whereas traditional American gothic serves a colonialist politics of mourning that pleasurably reinforces the very self that its frightening narratives appear to put at risk, Sherman Alexie’s Indigenous gothic refuses such absolution and produces in readers instead a disorienting loss of self that serves an anti-liberal politics and, ultimately, an anticolonialist ethics. (‘Sherman’ 6)

What makes the killer so terrifying to the fictional residents of Seattle as well as to contemporary readers is their complete power *because of* their complete transgression of all categorical boundaries, which makes them unable to be interpellated from colonial expectations.

Krupat argues ‘*Indian Killer* is the first Native American novel I know to take a very particular sort of Indian rage, murderous rage, as its central subject—and, it would seem, to encourage its expression’ (*Red Matters* 103). Krupat reads *Indian Killer* as a sort of racialised manifesto from Alexie, rather than an exploration of the continued epistemological and physical harm of colonialism. When one assumes that Indigenous writing regarding colonialism must be in some way evangelical about overcoming colonisation, as Krupat appears to state here, the violence toward whites becomes personal. However, the inability to identify the killer as Indigenous, white, human, animal, alive, or ghost, disrupts the cycles of interpellation based on manifest manners. In other words, when analysing a novel so preoccupied with exposing the instability, ephemerality, and epistemological violence of manifest manners, one should not be surprised that the originators of such violence – settlers and their living kin – receive violence in return. In essence, despite having elements of realism, the novel is a ghost story rather than a crime narrative because it takes place in a haunted space – the colonised United States – and is concerned with the memory and acknowledgement of genocide and the continued colonisation of Indigenous people by a monstrous, colonial behemoth. Rather than being spectralised, the Indigenous characters make material the consequences of such colonisation.

As I demonstrated in the previous section, scholarship that focuses particularly on postcolonial ghosts tends to argue, as Bergland exemplifies, that Indigenous ghosts are ‘representations of national guilt and as triumphant agents of Americanization’ (4). However, Alexie’s killer cannot be read according to the same standards because, unlike the Euro-American definition of the Indigenous ghost, the killer cannot be categorized as alive or dead, human or myth, let alone settler or Indigenous. Boyd and Thrush argue that ‘most scholars writing on ghosts and the supernatural generally dismiss specters as little more than anti-colonial metaphors and psychological manifestations of the repressed’ (xxxix). Alexie’s killer,

however, completely repels any attempt to deny their reality. By combining corporeal aspects with super-corporeal aspects, Alexie makes it impossible to dismiss or psychoanalyse the killer's direct impact on the world around them. To return to the concept of interpellation, the killer is *un-interpellateable*. While John, Wilson, Marie, and all the other characters in *Indian Killer* are in some way caught in prisons of colonial and Indigenous societies makings, the killer is completely free because they are completely unknowable. The killer's power comes from their ability to exist outside of the dominant colonising definition of what constitutes a living person: a fact that makes the killer appear supernatural.

At the beginning of *Indian Killer*, there is no doubt of the killer's corporeality. Alexie introduces the killer as they prepare for their first kill. Similar to John, the killer is obsessed with the idea of killing a white person and has a knife that they will use to do the deed. Alexie writes, 'For hours, the killer practiced pulling the knife from its sheath, then slashing, cutting, and thrusting the blade into imaginary enemies. Faster and faster. The killer practiced, as hands blistered and arms ached with pain, until exhaustion. Only then did the killer fall asleep' (50). Alexie insists on the killer's corporeality which is also different from Silko's spectres. The killer has hands that are able to blister and arms that are able to ache from the work of practicing with the knife. Furthermore, their corporeality is not compromised by later spectral powers. The killer's corporeality and non-corporeality exist in tandem, and neither aspect can be discussed without the other. As the novel continues and Alexie begins to complicate the figure of the killer and expose more fully their magical ability to transgress boundaries, the killer's corporeality does not diminish – their non-corporeality only grows apparent. Even as late as the killer's final murder they still remain at least semi-human. After following a man, Edward, as he enters and leaves a porn shop one evening, the killer stabs him in his car: 'The killer stabbed again and again. Paused briefly to stare at the white man's body. Then stabbed until arms and back ached from the stabbing.

Stabbed and cut, sliced and hacked [...] The killer learned over close to Edward's chest and feasted on his heart' (328). Similar to when the killer was merely practicing, the actual act of stabbing and hacking at the victim's body makes the killer tire, yet again confirming their corporeality.

Like so many other characters, the killer's identity is in flux. However, unlike John or Marie, who readers and other characters can at least assign with certainty gender and racial categories, the killer remains absolutely undefinable. Alexie writes that 'hands blistered and arms ached with pain', not that *his/her* hands blistered or *their* arms ached with pain (50). Pronouns are also missing from the description of Edward's murder and the killer's physical reaction to the exertion, when Alexie writes a sentence followed by two sentence fragments without a subject: 'The killer stabbed again and again. Paused briefly to stare at the white man's body. Then stabbed until arms and back ached from the stabbing' (328). Neither the dominant settler culture nor the Indigenous culture preoccupied with Indigenous identity that stems from manifest manners can interpellate the killer, which means that neither can turn them into a subject, which means that the killer cannot be controlled. Without the killer's "real" human corporeal aspect, they would be unable to do meaningful, motivated violence against white people, but their corporeality also makes them able to be caught and eventually have their transgressive power taken away – another difference between Silko's thanatopolitical ghosts and Alexie's killer. Therefore, the killer's spiritual abilities not only make them less categorizable in terms of identity; they also allow the killer to unleash the violence they unleash against white Seattle residents. Paradoxically, it is the spectral nature of the killer that allows them to become a true, material monster.

Yet it is not just the killer who sees their abilities as super-natural, but also the white eyewitnesses to their crimes. One white eyewitness who saw the first murder being committed and actually spoke to the killer as they carried away the victim's body gives the

following testimony to Seattle police: ‘Well, you see, there was this fog that night. Not like a real fog. But something else was happening, you know? It’s like when you get real drunk and nothing seems real [...] And I know this sounds crazy. But you know what I think? I think I don’t remember anything about that night because somebody wants me not to remember’ (72). One might make the argument that this witness reinforces existing stereotypes associated with the colonial image of the Indian because he equates the killer’s powers with nature by calling them a ‘fog’. However, Alexie includes the important qualifier that the fog was ‘not like a real fog’: ‘real’ here meaning, aligning with what the white witness expects a fog to be or do. Even the witness admits that his metaphor falls apart because his experience with the killer was actually inarticulable. In addition to being indicative of a type of trickster experience that bends the meaning of reality, the witness’ experience of his interaction with the killer is steeped in uncanniness: he does not perceive it as having been “real” but something beyond real, similar to reality, but twisted. Bhabha describes this kind of interaction as the “‘unhomeliness” inherent in that rite of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiation’ (9).

As Alexie begins to weave the supernatural into *Indian Killer*, the literal shape that this magic takes becomes uncanny specifically to non-Indigenous readers: in other words, uncanny to colonial ontology and epistemology. European and Euro-American ghosts may occasionally do more than simply haunt, just as the killer does. Where Alexie’s *Indian Killer* truly demonstrates its *Indigenous* Gothic ethos is the killer’s ability to transform into an owl: the symbol of death for many Indigenous peoples. In a demonstration of perhaps the ultimate transgression of Enlightenment boundaries, Alexie shows the killer as being truly human *plus* animal – as having transcended, through magic and acts of violence against modern colonisers. He accomplishes this, significantly, by having a white character confirm the killer’s transcendence of human form and the white character’s inability to fully articulate the

uncanny image of the killer they were exposed to. Mark Jones is the killer's second victim: a child who is not murdered, but instead kidnapped, held prisoner for an undisclosed amount of time, and returned to his family having lost nothing but a cutting of his pyjamas. On his miraculous return, the police interrogate Mark, asking him in particular if he saw any of the killer's trademark calling cards: owl feathers. Their conversation continues when Mark responds:

‘Yes, feathers [...] Lots of feathers [...] On the wings.’ ‘What wings? Was there an owl there? Did the kidnapper have a bird?’ ‘No, it was a bird.’ ‘I don’t understand, Mark. What was a bird?’ ‘It [...] It was the bird that was there.’ ‘And where was the man who kidnapped you?’ ‘It could fly I bet [...] I think it could fly because it had wings.’ (324)

Perhaps because he is a child, and as the killer themselves notes not yet fully developed into full settler masculinity,³⁷ Mark is the only person able to articulate any identity for the killer. Despite the police officer's confusion, Mark remains firm and consistent in stating that the killer was a bird, although what kind he is not exactly sure. Since some aspect of the killer always is able to remain uncategorizable, it is no surprise that Mark does not know the species of bird the killer may be, and in fact, the killer may not be any real type of bird at all. More importantly, however, this is another manifestation of Bhabha's concept the “unhomeliness” inherent in that rite of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiation’ (9). The unhomeliness of a human-bird hybrid killer, paired with their violence, is also an element of trickster storytelling as it ‘shock[s], outrage[s], and generally trick[s]’ both the fictional characters and readers into a space that is both unfamiliar and hostile: a space not unlike the settler urban landscape towards Indigenous peoples (Owens Afterward 248).

Lack of concrete identity notwithstanding, owl imagery remains the most consistent imagery with which the killer is associated. It is, in fact, the final image Alexie utilises. He writes:

³⁷ See pp. 151.

The killer spins in circles and, with each revolution, another owl floats in from the darkness and takes its place in the tree [in the graveyard]. Dark blossom after dark blossom [...] With this mask, with this mystery, the killer can dance forever. The killer plans on dancing forever. The killer never falls. The moon never falls. The tree grows heavy with owls. (420)

In this final image of the novel, real owls and the mystical killer – still unidentified – are linked inextricably. As emblems of death, owls are attracted by the semi-spectral killer's dance. In a (likely unintentional) juxtaposition to the judge's dance at the end of *Blood Meridian* specifically, the killer's dance invokes the inevitability of Indigenous triumph against settlers. The fact that the killer and the owls meet as the killer performs a kind of Ghost Dance also speaks to the directness of the novel in displacing the settler connotations of spectrality with Indigenous memory. While Silko also plays with the idea of the Ghost Dance in *Almanac*, specifically likening Menardo's bulletproof vest to the ghost shirts worn by dancers that supposedly could protect against bullets, Alexie, once again, has a much more direct approach. By specifically linking the spectral killer's violence to the Ghost Dance, Alexie reframes the narrative of the Ghost Dance from being a fatalistic relic of a dying Indigenous culture as it is portrayed in the colonial imagination to a material ritual of survivance.

Although he was not the first dancer,³⁸ Wovoka is credited as the originator of the widespread Indigenous resistance movement that is the Ghost Dance. Wovoka began the dance because of a vision that came to him on 1 January 1889. In this vision, Wovoka was taken to heaven where he:

saw the dead— Paiutes, other Indians, and whites as well—and received instruction about how to proceed so that the living would be reunited with the dead in heaven. The People were to be honest, work hard, and adopt a generally accommodating relation to the whites. They were also to perform a series of dances based on the traditional, Paiute round dance. (Krupat '*That the People*' 47)

³⁸ Wodzwob, or Fish Lake Joe, was a Paiute prophet who had a vision in 1869 that the dead would return in 'three to four years time' (Hittman quoted in Krupat 46). This first iteration of the Ghost Dance was far more localized to Wodzwob's Walker River Reservation area than Wovoka's Ghost Dance ended up being. This first movement ended in 1871 when the dead did not return.

For decades, this description of the Ghost Dance that is informed based almost exclusively on the late-nineteenth-century research of white anthropologist James Mooney has permeated discourse on one of the most enduring instances of Indigenous resistance. But as is true of Gothic scholarship of Indigenous ghosts at large, Mooney's understanding of the Ghost Dance is hampered by his status as a non-Indigenous outsider. Estes points out in *Our History is the Future* (2019) that Mooney's description paraphrased by Krupat above is lacking crucial context. According to Estes, 'Wovoka taught peace – not through perpetual harmony with white settlers, and certainly not through submission to Christian morality or dogmatic pacifism. Rather his call for peace was pragmatic: under present conditions, armed Indigenous resistance was futile' (125). Put in conjunction with the events in *Indian Killer*, it becomes clear that the conditions have changed since Wovoka, and armed resistance becomes a more possible alternative to peace with colonisers. Marie voices this sentiment towards the end of the novel when she is expelled from Mather's class. While he pretends to be the victim to her over-aggressive assertion of her Indigenous person, Marie tells Mather: '[I]f all Indians Ghost Danced, then all the Europeans would disappear [...] Yeah, you don't believe in the Ghost Dance, do you? Oh, you like its symbolism. You admire its metaphorical beauty, enit? [...] You love Indians so much you think you're excluded from our hatred. [...] If the Ghost Dance had worked, you wouldn't be here' (313). Read through the eyes of a coloniser – even a supposedly sympathetic coloniser like Mather claims to be – Marie's words are harsh and personally offensive. This reaction stems from two things: a desire to see oneself as similar to the Other, and a misunderstanding of the connotation of the Ghost Dance.

Bergland articulates this misunderstanding from a purely white perspective, stating that Indigenous ghosts – and vengeful ones in particular that use the Ghost Dance as a form of power – focus 'on the dead rather than the living. Rather than affirming life [they affirm]

death' (167 – 168). Indigenous ghosts participating in the Ghost Dance are not affirming death. They are enacting survivance and resistance against Euro-American colonisation. If the Ghost Dance means the expelling of colonisers from Indigenous lands, of course it would appear to colonisers that the Ghost Dance is a dance of death. Estes, however, explains that in Indigenous tradition, the Ghost Dance has the complete opposite connotation: 'The Ghost Dance, in the revolutionary sense, was about life, not death; it was about imaging and enacting an anticolonial Indigenous future free from the death world brought on by settler invasion' (16). The Ghost Dance is one of the most enduring symbols of Indigenous resistance, but as Marie notes in *Indian Killer*, it is not simply a symbol. The Ghost Dance is a continuing act of survivance. Through dancing, Indigenous people assert their personhood and their ability to overcome the privations of colonisation. In this way, Indigenous resistance like the Ghost Dance differs slightly from Bhabha's definition of hybridity in which there is no 'possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (4). With Alexie's depiction of Indigenous resistance in *Indian Killer*, there is a hierarchy: it is simply the reverse of the hierarchy of the coloniser.

It is important to note, however, that this hierarchy does *not* imply that Indigenous resistance is a static tradition. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that Indigenous people are an exemplary case of a group of resisters who manage to keep traditions while avoiding 'the dangers of the fixity and fetishism of identities within the calcification of colonial' that celebrate a 'romance of the past' (Bhabha 9). As Krupat points out, the entire concept of a static tradition is a European transplant. According to Indigenous thinking, Krupat states, 'Traditionality and modernity are, once more, names for different sorts of emphases and possibilities; the terms do not name an opposition' ('*That the People*' 11). It is unsurprising, then, that Alexie's killer is depicted not as a messiah figure, but as one dancer in a tradition of resistance. In the final pages of the book, Alexie describes the killer's arrival at an Indian

reservation – any and all Indian reservations – and the dance they begin to perform at the reservation's graveyard:

The killer is softly singing a new song that sounds exactly like an old one [...] The killer sings and dances for hours, days. Other Indians arrive and quickly learn the song. A dozen Indians, then hundreds, and more, all learning the same song, the exact dance. The killer dances and will not tire. The killer knows this dance is over five hundred years old. (419 – 420).

In this image, Alexie links the killer's actions to a history of survivance not just since the Ghost Dance, but since the first moment of colonisation: the song is both ancient and new, as is the dance. This lack of temporal regularity – at least according to coloniser expectations – is what indicates that the killer's song and dance are able to adapt and change to any time period, including into the future. Thus, reaction *can* in some instances be survivance. Without reaction against colonial violence, there can be no change.

IV. Conclusion

This final image of a perpetual dance also echoes a possibility expressed by Marie. In the same conversation where she exposes Mather's ignorance of the Ghost Dance, Marie states:

'Maybe this Indian Killer is a product of the Ghost Dance. Maybe ten Indians are Ghost Dancing. Maybe a hundred. It's just a theory. How many Indians would have to dance to create the Indian Killer? A thousand? Ten thousand? Maybe this is how the Ghost Dance works.' (313)

Marie's point raises two major contributions to how an Indigenous perspective of the Gothic can affect perceptions of time and spectrality. The construct of time as understood by the coloniser is not beholden to Indigenous time concepts like the Laguna Pueblo's tortilla or the Coast Salish's simultaneity of the dead participating in the lives – and economies – of the living. Like the identity of the killer, their supernatural abilities, and their status as both human and bird, the power of the Ghost Dance is inaccessible to a purely colonial epistemology. While the power of the Ghost Dance may not be precise according to linear, Cartesian time, that does not mean it does not exist. Secondly, the spectrality tied to

Indigenous memory and Ghost Dancing in *Indian Killer* is almost essentially the reverse of Silko's thanatopolitics. The killer is initially corporal, but takes on incorporeal and eventually birdlike qualities, but it is their *corporeal* violence alongside their spectrality which most directly addresses the horrors of colonisation, imparting violence back on the settler population.

Marie's understanding of the Ghost Dance is significant because she is the only non-Indigenous character who comes close to creating an identity independent of manifest manners. Marie is staunchly and proudly Indigenous as a Spokane woman, yet she also understands that performing Indigenous traditions is not the most productive way to enact change and survivance. Marie reflects:

Other people, Indians and not, could run around on the weekends pretending to be what they thought was Indian, dancing half-naked and pounding on drums, but Marie knew there were hungry people waiting to be fed. Dancing and singing were valuable and important. Speaking your tribal language was important. Trees were terrific. But nothing good happens to a person with an empty stomach. (331)

In Marie's thinking, there are people who perform a beau-ideal of Indianness – significantly, other Indians are not excluded from this category – and there are people who actually work to fight injustice. She certainly learned her values of anti-capitalism, anti-colonialism, charitability, and empathy from her Indigenous cultural background, but she does not act as if her Indigenous background and the colonised space of Seattle are or should be different. Crystallising this point, Estes states: 'A tradition is usually defined as a static or unchanging practice. This view often suggests that Indigenous culture or tradition doesn't change over time – that Indigenous people are trapped in the past and thus have no future. But as colonialism changes throughout time, so too does resistance to it' (21). This is the heart of survivance.

Between Silko's *Almanac* and Alexie's *Indian Killer*, there exists a broad range of interpretation about the connection between Indigenous empowerment and spectrality. From

an examination of just these two novels, it becomes clear that the spectrum of representations of Indigenous ghosts in works written by Indigenous authors themselves goes far beyond the comparatively static representations in Euro-American, and especially imperial American, Gothic. Alexie's use of trickster storytelling further illustrates avenues of artistic expression and scholarly inquiry into the overlap between Indigenous storytelling and the Gothic, which is testament both to the novel's interaction with multiple modes and to the precarity of the Gothic's status as a Euro-centric mode. The final novel I will examine in this section, Louise Erdrich's *The Plague of Doves*, also expands concepts of haunting and spectrality, as well as offering a different focus of survivance. While both *Almanac* and *Indian Killer* cite memory as an integral part of Indigenous identity to varying extents, *Doves* examines how memory and Indigenous identity are affected when an individual also shares a community and blood with settlers. The haunting memory of colonial atrocities is therefore quite a different manifestation from *Almanac*'s spectral ghosts and their dreamer allies and *Indian Killer*'s vengeful dancing killer.

**Chapter 6: ‘History Works Itself Out in the Living’: The Coloniser Windigo and
Mixedblood Survivance in *The Plague of Doves***

Like the other two novels discussed in this section, Louise Erdrich’s *The Plague of Doves: A Novel* expresses the anticolonial power of Indigenous Gothic through the way it forefronts memory and trauma. Unlike the others, however, Erdrich’s thematic concern is focused on the subject-position of mixedblood Indigenous people in a way that acknowledges the horrors of colonialism while not advocating for the complete removal of settler populations. Each of the novel’s four narrators – Evelina, Judge Coutts, Marne Wolde, and Cordelia Lochren – address the complexities of identity and memory when coloniser and colonised interact, fall in love, create families, and enact violence upon each other. Whereas the other novels I have explored in this section foreground land reclamation as an integral part of anti-colonial justice, *Plague of Doves* takes a more individualised approach to the issue of anti-colonial justice – one that redefines an essentialism of Indigeneity that Alexie’s *Indian Killer* and Silko’s *Almanac* arguably fall prey to: that the trauma of colonisation is so connected to identity that simply returning land to Indigenous people cannot undo colonisation’s damage.

In *Doves*, it is not enough to Ghost Dance away the coloniser or walk the long black road to the Laguna Pueblo stone snake because, in many cases, the coloniser is an Indigenous character’s partner, or grandfather, or the co-parent of their mixedblood child. No amount of land can fill the metaphysical void of considering oneself half-Other. In this way, like *Indian Killer*, Erdrich’s text can be seen to play in a trickster manner with terminal creeds, and the ‘static definitions’ they impose upon people and cultures (Stafford 155). Erdrich’s outlook regarding the terminal creed of essential Indigenous identity, however, is much more hopeful and offers much more of a perspective beyond the prison of colonial expectation. Erdrich’s focus on mixedblood Indigeneity combined with the disruption of the terminal creed that land reclamation is the best way to heal from colonial scars makes it so the narrative is able to

unpick the complexities of *living* with the history of genocide, rather than seeing that colonial history as an end of Indigenous subjecthood.

Taking place in the fictional town of Pluto, North Dakota, *Plague of Doves* ties together the lives of early settlers, their offspring, and original Indigenous inhabitants as they intermarry, have children, and live together on, around, and between the disputed border between reservation and settler land. This mixed setting echoes the mixing of social and racial groups present within the novel, but the border between reservation and settler land is also a site of trauma and an act of racial violence: the posse lynching of three Indigenous men and one Indigenous teen who were wrongly suspected of murdering a settler family with the exception of a months-old baby. The trauma of this event remains a spectre hanging over the lives of Pluto and the reservation's residents as their lives become more and more entangled: the grandchild of a posse member has a child with the great-grand niece of one of its victims; the only surviving member of the – for him attempted – lynching is the son-in-law of one of the posse's leaders; one of the original settler's mixedblood descendants marries the daughter of this same almost-victim. Meanwhile, the real murderer of the Linden family walks free among the residents of Pluto.

The trauma that divides the town therefore also ironically unites it. Through the intermixing of Indigenous and settler groups, Erdrich's work explores and expands upon representations of survivance and haunting. Survivance 'constitutes a creative stance expressed in practices that improvise on colonial circumstances to cultivate and advance tribal identities and tribal futures' (Carden 98). In *Doves*, Erdrich's tribal future does not deny the possibility of coexistence with descendants of colonisers, especially on an individual basis, and does not essentialise tribal identity by requiring that Indigenous personhood completely rejects coloniser. Furthermore, Erdrich explores colonial monstrosity in a way that highlights the lived horror of integral witnesses to colonial violence, centring the real

material and psychological consequences of colonialism as horrific rather than thanatopolitically powerful. One of the ways Erdrich accomplishes this is through establishing the cannibalistic outlook of manifest manners and the way it creates unreliable, monstrous subjects. More than the other novels by Indigenous authors in this section, then, it is colonialism that is made spectral and that haunts the text, rather than Indigenous ghosts themselves.

I. Mixedblood Realities, Terminal Creeds, and Survivance

The specific colonial history *Doves* interacts with explicitly throughout the novel is the practice of allotment and cultural genocide via tribal schools.³⁹ Allotment was the practice of the US government breaking reservation land up into parcels “owned” by Indigenous individuals without their input or consent. These parcels were often revoked or placed in “stewardship” by the government, allowing white settlers to take over ownership of the land. As Vine Deloria Jr puts it, ‘[t]he justification for breaking up the tribal land estate was to enable individual Indians to have land of their own – thus taking advantage of the great civilizing force of private property – and to enable Indians to learn how to manage property’, and in the case of the fictional town of Pluto, encouraging farming (*Red Earth White Lies* 19). In addition to taking away Indigenous groups’ agency regarding reservation land, the US government also forcibly removed Indigenous children from their families and kept them in boarding schools where they were subjected to a myriad of inhumane horrific treatments, including being punished for speaking their native tongues and for practicing their religions. As Strehle puts it, ‘Denied subjecthood within the state, Indians were reduced to internal “specters of the foreign,” [...] to be colonized by the imperial nation’ (quoting Kaplan 135).

³⁹ For more information on how the history of tribal schools and their impact on Erdrich’s novels, see Strehle, Susan. *Contemporary Historical Fiction, Exceptionalism and Community: After the Wreck*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

While the colonial state denies Indigenous subjecthood, that does not, of course, mean that subjecthood remains spectral for Indigenous people themselves. Therefore, while *Doves* inarguably interacts with, as Madsen states, ‘the very real historical “metanarrative” of settler-colonial possession and indigenous genocide’ (46), this does not mean that the text remains static in its definition of what it means to be Indigenous. Per Vizenor’s concept of survivance, the characters within *Doves* experience first- and second-hand the horrors of colonisation but are not defined solely as victims.

Essentially, in *Doves*, Indigenous people’s subjecthood is allowed to coexist alongside with their intricate relationships with colonisers and their descendants *after* the atrocities of allotment, Indian boarding schools, and the lynching in Pluto. These atrocities mark not the end of Indigeneity, but a moment of adaptation and survivance that define Indigeneity just as much as a connection with the land or a sense of pre-colonial spirituality. This stands in stark contrast to the Indigenous spectres written by non-Indigenous authors I examined in the first section, but also somewhat in contrast to *Almanac* and *Indian Killer*. Whereas the focus in the previous two texts has been either the retributive or restorative power of Indigenous spectres and memories to return to a pre-colonial ideal, in *Doves*, justice does not require a return to a pre-colonial ideal. The focus on mixedblood Indigeneity combined with the disruption of terminal creeds makes it so the narrative is able to unpick the complexities of *living* with the history of genocide, rather than seeing that history as an end of Indigenous subjecthood. Furthermore, acknowledging and giving a name –mixedblood – to the specific subjecthood arising from Indigenous and colonial ancestry only further cements its validity as an Indigenous identity. Whereas characters in other novels eschew any connection to coloniality – Yoeme from *Almanac* and Reggie from *Indian Killer* being particularly strong examples – or are spiritually and/or physically ruined by their connection to coloniality – like Menardo in *Almanac* – Erdrich’s Indigenous people learn to survive alongside a colonial past. In short, by

exploring mixedblood society, connections, and identity, Erdrich is able to demonstrate the complexity of identity without falling into the trap of ascribing to terminal creeds.

According to Vizenor, disrupting terminal creeds is key to survivance, because '[c]ultures are not static, human behavior is not static. [Indigenous people] are not what anthropologists say we are and we must not live up to a definition' (Cotelli quoting Vizenor, quoted in Lee 'Introduction' x). Because survivance and the rejection of terminal creeds like race essentialism allows for a more nuanced approach to identity and what it means to "be Indian," survivance stands outside of the Cartesian binaries ascribed by Enlightenment thinking. In this way, *Doves* and its interaction with the concept of survivance presents a more complex attribute of Indigenous Gothic. All the texts that have been previously explored are preoccupied with the figure of the Other. In the non-Indigenous texts, in typically imperial Gothic fashion, the Other was compared or juxtaposed to the white Cartesian settler male in particular as his dark double. In *Indian Killer* and *Almanac*, the settler is seen as an Other of Indigenous thought: one that is defined primarily by their capacity to – or fervour in – committing colonial atrocities and/or capitalist values that uphold the colonial bedrock present in American society in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. In contrast, *Doves* does not paint settlers automatically with the same brush. Although colonial atrocities are depicted in the novel and are a major site of horror in the text, there is not an overall concept of an "Indian" or who exists naturally in contrast to a coloniser.

The novel's insistence on refusing the existence of fundamental differences between coloniser and colonised is significant not just because of its trickster qualities, but because it subverts the sort of divisive nationalistic rhetoric prevalent during George W Bush's presidency when the novel was being written. Post-9/11, the Bush administration seized on The War on Terror as an excuse to secretly survey alleged "enemies of the State" with the

passage of the PATRIOT Act in October 2001. Bush preached tolerance and solidarity in a speech given at the Islamic Centre of Washington D C just six days after 9/11 (Hamblin np). Yet with the launch of the War on Terror and the human rights violations that came with it – the bombing of civilians which continued in the Obama administration seven years later, the tortures at Abu Ghraib, and the unlawful incarcerations at Guantanamo Bay, to name just a few – the Bush administration and military also spent an enormous number of resources scrutinising Muslims and people of colour for signs of “anti-American” terrorism. At the same time, the war lined the pockets of politicians with investment in corporations such as Lockheed Martin, including then-Vice President Dick Cheney (Cummings np). Like Reagan, Bush implemented across-the-board tax cuts to Americans which overwhelmingly benefited the ultra-wealthy to the point that, according to Stiglitz who was writing in 2007, in 2012, ‘the average reduction for an American in the bottom 20 percent will be a scant \$45, while those with incomes of more than \$1 million will see their tax bills reduced by an average of \$162,000’ (‘The Economic’ np). In essence, the period in which Erdrich wrote *Doves* was increasingly divisive. The insistence on connection, then, is highly subversive.

Unlike the previous novels, the answer to colonial atrocities comes not from exorcising an Other, but through, as Kurup notes ‘restorative justice’ (101). With its focus on mixedblood identity and depicting survivance, *Doves* strikes a balance that Vizenor argues is the true difference between coloniser and Indigenous sensibilities. Vizenor states:

[T]hese are Romantic generalizations, but if you’ll permit me: the religious attitude among most tribal cultures here is one of balance rather than annihilation, in contrast to the interest of the blest to illuminate and annihilate evil. The Christian objective is to rid the self and the soul, the family, and the community of evil, to isolate and destroy it. It’s a war, a holy war to end evil. The same language is a part of American consciousness – the war on poverty, the war against ignorance [...] But the experience expressed in tribal culture is not that complete elimination or annihilation of anything. It’s a balance, not a terminal creed. (Bowers and Silet 44)

The potential for peace and healing that Erdrich depicts through a focus on communal ties and restorative justice is emblematic of this sort of balance. This balance acknowledges that

land reclamation – or one might say physical isolation of the evils of colonialism and destruction thereof – cannot heal wounds as deep as the ones created by colonisation. From the perspective of balance that Vizenor outlines, the idea that all settlers must be driven from Indigenous soil appears as a terminal creed, because colonisation forces Indigenous and settlers together, even into legitimately loving relationships alongside the clearly racialised and violent ones. By focusing on a restorative justice approach to colonisation that includes but is not limited to land reclamation and is not dependent upon the exorcising of all settlers, Erdrich's *Doves* manages to avoid potential essentialising of what justice for Indigenous people looks like. As Kurup puts it, the approach found in *Doves* 'is an inherently Native American practice and most aligned with tribal wisdom and values, which include mediated discussion and open dialogue, spiritual practice and ceremony, community-based conflict resolution and representation, and traditional reparation practices' (101). In a recent interview for AARP online, Erdrich states, '[w]e live in a haunted age. We're haunted by the legacy of racism, by our overuse of the world's resources' (Delehanty np). Yet, as *Doves* demonstrates, haunting and remembrance go hand and hand, and without remembrance, there can be no closure or growth.

II. The Colonial Cannibal and the Drive to Kill: Manifest Manners in Motion

Although *Doves* is preoccupied with disrupting notions of colonial Otherness, it does not shy away from the memory of colonial atrocities. Similar to *Pet Sematary* and *The Hunger*, *Plague of Doves* uses the figure of the cannibal to invoke monstrosity. Unsurprisingly, however, cannibalism in *Doves* is tied to colonisers rather than Indigenous people and, more specifically, to the figure of the human cannibal rather than a wendigo or a zombie. Furthermore, while the act of cannibalism is still considered monstrous, the figure of the cannibal is often one of play and one invoked, particularly by Mooshum in his story about

Liver-Eating Johnson, in order to poke fun at colonial dichotomies and social expectations. In the colonial imagination, cannibalism is a ‘prime symbol or signifier of “barbarism” for a language of naturalized typification and essentialized difference that would harden in the negative racism of the nineteenth century’ (Lindenbaum 488). Likewise, as Cohen argues, monsters like the cannibal are monsters of prohibition. They ‘[exist] to demarcate the bonds that hold together that system of relations we call culture, to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot – *must* not – be crossed’: boundaries such as “civilised” and “barbarous” (Cohen 13). Certainly Liver-eating Johnson is a figure at least of disgust if not horror. However, Cohen’s definition of the cannibal as a monster of prohibition must be tweaked when filtered through the trickster mode of storytelling Erdrich employs. Mooshum’s trickster approach to the colonial cannibal acknowledges the existence of these associations with the cannibal but uses them to empower and embellish his own story of survivance. By turning the colonial cannibal into a site of humour, *Doves* avoids ““mere reaction” to colonial invasion and deprivation’ (Carden 98). In this way, Mooshum’s depiction of the colonial cannibal is still a site where ‘boundaries between personal and national bodies blur’ (Cohen 10), but one where the colonised Indigenous person comes out on top by acting in a subversive manner – not just one that makes the coloniser a victim but one that illustrates that the very concept of the “barbarous cannibal” is a colonial construct.

In Mooshum’s story, Liver Eater and Mooshum meet almost as equals. Both are on the prairie hunting for food. It is only after Liver Eater runs at Mooshum and attacks him that Mooshum begins to run until he realises he can use his own hunger and anger to fight back. Erdrich writes, ‘I get to thinking. Riel, if he’d won there would be some justice! This devil would not dare to chase an Indian. Hey, I think, I’m hungry too! Let’s give Liver Eater some of his own medicine, anyway. I’ve got sharp teeth’ (38). Two things separate Erdrich’s depiction of cannibalism from the kind depicted in texts such as *Hunger* and *Almanac*. First,

the similarities between cannibal and potential victim are highlighted throughout. Although Liver Eater is monstrous – ‘He’s covered with ragged skins and he has a scrawly beard [...] all crusted with old blood’ (38) – he, similarly to Mooshum, is for the most part simply a victim of hunger. Mooshum exclaims that Liver Eater is “‘very hungry, too!’”: ‘too’ meaning like Mooshum himself (38). Therefore, in Mooshum’s story, Erdrich avoids the idea of cannibalism as inherently something evil or Other. Whereas in *Hunger* cannibalism is a mark of disease and degeneracy and in *Almanac* cannibalism aligns the cannibal with the Destroyers, there is no such moral judgement in Mooshum’s story. Yet, though Liver Eater and his would-be prey are similar, Mooshum’s turn to cannibalism himself is still seen as a *justified* reaction – Mooshum literally uses the word ‘justice’ – not just to Liver Eater’s initial attack, but to colonialism at large. Therefore, Liver-Eating Johnson is a figure of neocannibalism, according to C Richard King’s definition: ‘neocannibalism fosters [...] power relations, relations of domination and exploitation. In neocannibalism, individuals and institutions absorb difference, feeding off alterity like phantasmagoric parasites to create identities, experiences, and communities’ (113). Just as the Indigenous cannibals of the imperial Gothic are symbols of barbarism, disease, etc. instead of authentic representations of Indigeneity, Liver-Eating Johnson is a symbol of the cannibalistic nature of colonialism. Throughout *Doves*, Louis Riel and his doomed socio-religious uprising is a point of trauma, particularly for Mooshum and his family, who lost most of their belongings and were displaced because of Riel’s defeat. An act of cannibalism against Liver Eating Johnson, therefore, is explicitly symbolic of fighting back against all colonial aggressors. Mooshum’s cannibal, then, is a monster of necessity rather than a monster of prohibition. Cannibalism does not represent ‘incorporation into the wrong cultural body’ (Cohen 14) or a border ‘that cannot – *must* not – be crossed’ (Cohen 13), it represents a site of empowerment and reclamation of personhood. As Carden notes, ‘[s]ince the “suffix *ance* is a quality of action”,

survivance endows survival with power, purpose, and agency' meaning Mooshum's story of cannibalism is also a story of survivance (quoting Vizenor 98).

The story of Liver-Eating Johnson is a fiction crafted by Mooshum in the manner of the trickster, whose motivation is to 'amuse, surprise, shock, outrage, and generally trick us into self-knowledge' (Owens Introduction 248). By presenting himself as a cannibal, the lovable Mooshum disrupts the manifest manners of colonial expectation that cannibal equals evil in all contexts, including Indigenous ones. He amuses his grandchildren Evelina and Joseph and his brother Shamengwa, and shocks and outrages the Catholic priest Father Cassidy. By fashioning himself as a cannibal of justice Mooshum rejects the colonial narrative that cannibalism is evil while simultaneously playing in a trickster manner with the concept of Indigenous monstrosity turned against colonial monstrosity. Even further, Mooshum uses his story to poke fun at the Catholic concept of transubstantiation and of keeping body parts as relics. When Father Cassidy reacts with horror to Mooshum saying that he kept Liver Eater's nose as a trophy after winning their battle, Mooshum responds: "And what piece of good Saint Joseph is lodged in our church's altar?" asked Mooshum. He spoke in a nunlike voice, gentle and reproving' (39). By equating a monstrous image of cannibalism to the practice of human-remain Catholic relics, Mooshum points out the holy in the supposedly evil and vice-versa. When Mooshum goes on to compare the eucharist to Johnson, Madsen argues that Erdrich 'creates the novel's opportunity to suggest that cannibalism is an appropriate image of the workings of settler colonialism' (37). However, this is more than just a suggestion: it is an outright equivalence. Significantly, though Mooshum has made a compelling argument for cannibalism-as-justice, he does not categorise eucharist or relics as justified or justifiable. This is because, as Peter Sands notes and C Richard King summarises, 'critical understandings of others as cannibals have justified colonial projects, sanctioned the recreation of indigenous peoples after Westerners, and

promoted the fabrication of imagined communities' (110). Of course, this observation is nothing new from a decolonial perspective. However, Mooshum's trickster conceptualising of cannibalism-as-justice *is* unique even in the Gothic mode as is the humorous tone Mooshum takes towards Indigenous cannibalism.

This is not to say that Erdrich depicts all cannibalism as equal. In fact, by broadening the possibilities of the cannibal beyond simply monstrous "Other" to incorporate the playful and the just, Erdrich avoids narrowing a definition of what is acceptable for Indigenous people to take part in, mirroring Erdrich's more complex approach to the theme of identity. Unlike the old woman in *Almanac* who, while starving, kills and eats one of the almanac's keepers and is therefore aligned with the Destroyers in Silko's text, Mooshum's fabled cannibalism is seen as a just response to colonialism. One key difference is that in *Almanac*, the woman and the child keepers of the almanac are all Indigenous while in Mooshum's story Mooshum is specifically fighting against a coloniser. However, Silko's text specifically blames 'the epoch of Death-Eye Dog' for the old woman's cannibalism (251). Her act is because, '[d]uring the epoch of Death-Eye Dog human beings, especially the alien invaders, would become obsessed with hungers and impulses commonly seen in wild dogs' (*Almanac* 251). In this instance, the Indigenous cannibal remains abject, despite her hunger and desperation. She remains, by Cohen's definition, a monster of prohibition. In *Doves*, Erdrich avoids this narrow definition and, rather than painting all instances of cannibalism – fictional or otherwise – with the same brush, adds crucial context that always centres the colonial monster as the most horrible of monsters. It is the coloniality of a character that causes monstrosity, that allows them to do or think of doing the unthinkable like eating another human. This is because it is not the act of cannibalism which is inherently evil according to the morality of *Doves*, but the drive to assert one's colonial and therefore racialised social and economic power over the Other, which can also be achieved by cannibalism.

This distinction appears in Judge Coutts' retelling of his grandfather's participation in the doomed town-site expedition to the Pluto area. Coutts' grandfather finds a certain reverence for and kinship with the Métis guides Henri and Lafayette Peace, though he himself is a settler. When one of the other settlers, Bull, dies during the harsh winter, Coutts recalls how the other settlers – the ones who have not befriended the Peace brothers – want to eat Bull's body. Erdrich writes:

The Buckendorfs' eyes glowed with hunger like mystic stones and their yellow fangs had grown. There had been talk of eating Bull, and the guides had promised to kill anyone who tried. They were the ones who buried poor Bull and set a great pile of stones over his grave. They knelt with their rosaries and prayed to the Virgin Mary to rest his soul. (111)

The Buckendorfs, already hungry for land, hunger also for the flesh of their fallen once-comrade. It is their colonial nature which manifests the instinct for cannibalism, not an inherent part of their whiteness, and this cannibalism, unlike Mooshum's trickster story is rooted in monstrosity. The Buckendorfs' desire for cannibalism is Othered: their eyes become 'like mystic stones', unfeeling, inhuman, horrific and unfathomable to Coutts and the Peace brothers, and 'their yellow fangs had grown' to further demonstrate their hunger and ferocity. Furthermore, the Peace brothers' defence of Bull's body cannot be categorised as a "pure," pre-colonial Indigenous act because of their devout Catholicism, which forbids anything that could be seen as desecration of the body. Significant also is that this story is told from the perspective of a settler and further filtered through his mixedblood grandson, as the Judge is the actual storyteller in this case. Throughout all these layers of history and culture, the one truism is that the Buckendorfs' hunger exceeds the hunger of someone starving in the wilderness: it exceeds understanding because it is rooted in colonial sensibilities. This is further solidified by the fact that the Buckendorfs are one of the main aggressors in the posse lynching of Mooshum and the three other Indigenous men.

Yet as all the other Indigenous texts in this section show, colonisation is not just a thing of the past. In Marn Wolde's narrative, Erdrich uses the wendigo in order to discuss the ongoing, ravenous nature of colonialism manifested in settlers, even those who choose to mix families with Indigenous neighbours. To the settler-descended Marn, however, it is her mixedblood husband, Billy Peace, who becomes the wendigo. Once a devout disciple of Billy's revivalist and cult-like religion, Marn becomes wary when they return to her family farm and Billy is suddenly interested in taking over – i.e. inheriting or appropriating – the farm. She says, 'I don't know who I married anymore. It's like he's supernatural. He is horribly tireless, exhausting everyone so much that we have to take shifts to keep up with him. I carry his shirts, socks, underwear, trousers, out to the clothesline to hang. They are so large now they do not require clothespins' (154). Where once Marn admired Billy's drive and devotion to the cause, he now becomes '*horribly tireless*' to the point that he exceeds human capacity. With this excess of energy comes excess of the man himself, as exemplified by his transformation from a relatively slim to a very fat man. Furthermore, and key to Erdrich's critique of coloniality, Billy's physical growth comes at the threat of a perceived reduction of Marn herself and the reduction of her land holdings. Erdrich writes, 'This was reservation, Billy says, and should be again. This was my family's land, Indian land. Will be again. He says it flat out with a lack of emotion that disturbs me. Something's there. Something's different underneath' (152). As Madsen notes, Marn's attitude toward Billy's seemingly new and monstrous desire for land is a reflection of her coloniality. Marn displaces her own hunger for land as a settler onto Billy, who in turn she makes into a monster *because* of his desire. According to Madsen, through Marn's story, 'we are invited to read closely in the minutiae of narration to see the performative nature of discourse: the capacity of language and stories to give ontology to, and create, what is received as reality. This is the effect created by the possessive logic of settler sovereignty' (25). An inverse of Mooshum's

trickster reimagining of the cannibal which gives power and justification to the Indigenous monster, Marn's wendigo Billy is Othered by his 'supernatural' size and capacities, by his supposedly emotionless drive for land reclamation. However, Marn cannot be relied upon as a narrator because she too wants the land and sees it as rightfully hers. This wendigo perspective differs from the one present in *Pet Sematary* as it is explicitly about maintaining colonial-capitalism instead of a vague, haunting sense of revenge. The specificity of the type of hunger Edrich's wendigo characters have toward the world and toward others illuminates the consequences of this hunger. In other words, while the wendigo of *Sematary* is largely symbolic and therefore less effective at critiquing material consequences of colonialism, the wendigos of *Doves* are rooted in real, historical injustices and therefore are more effective critiques of the actual settler-colonial-capitalist system.

Billy's monstrosity, therefore, is a transposition of Marn and her family's manifest manners, a 'displacement' as Madsen puts it that, rather than demonstrating any excess on Billy's part, instead exposes Marn's own colonial leanings (26). Like *The Hunger*, Marn makes Billy into a monster of prohibition by showing a physical transformation. While this is partially achieved via Billy's weight gain, the transformation is completed when Billy literally becomes one with the Earth when he is struck by lightning. As the lightning hits, Marn remarks: 'Billy, the conductor with his arms raised, draws down the power [...] Billy is alive, bigger than before, swollen with unearthly power. [...] He bawls into the sky, shaking his head back and forth as the clouds open [...] We turn away from the window. "Mom," I say, "we've got to stop him." "No one's ever going to stop him," she answers' (156 – 157). Marn paints herself and her family as the victims of Billy's excess. Godlike yet bestial, he communes with nature in order to become willingly monstrous, a colonial connection of wilderness and Otherness that has already been explored many times. However, though this situating of Billy-as-monstrous is an attempt to, as Madsen argues, obscure 'Marn's own

family history and their collective land hunger' it cannot completely obfuscate Marne's own battle with monstrosity, which is also clearly explored throughout her narrative section (26).

Marn's narration almost immediately introduces her uncle Warren, a mentally ill man who, it is later revealed, is the true murderer of the Lochren family. Repeatedly, Marn is harassed by her uncle who appears to see his own monstrosity in her, stating: 'It's on you, I can see it [...] It's on you, I can see it, you're gonna kill' (177). Eventually, Marn embraces her own monstrosity, murdering Billy and posing his body in a fake suicide-by-hanging. In other words, Marn justifies her own monstrosity via Billy's perceived monstrosity, which, again, is a common feature of imperial Gothic. However, quoting the work of anthropologist Ruth Landes, Madsen writes, 'The windigo disorder involved *projection of the sufferer's fears and vindictiveness* . . . from profound melancholy to violence [until] in the latter phase the sufferer yearned to kill and eat all human beings around' (38 emphasis Madsen).

Therefore, although Marn attempts to make Billy into a wendigo figure, her desire to portray him as a monster simply reflects her own monstrosity. This interplay is Erdrich's trickster storytelling at work. Though the story is told from Marn's perspective, she is what Cohen refers to as a monster of becoming. Cohen states, 'These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place' (20). Cohen's word 'us' does heavy lifting, as it represents the culture from which the monster is spawned (Cohen 3). Too frequently in American literature, the 'us' culture is imagined to be the dominant socio-political one – in the US, white settler descendants often from the middle class. Benedict Andersen alludes to this very issue in *Imagined Communities* (1983) when he critiques 'the unselfconscious use of "our"' which in turn delineates an Other outside of the community (17). However, this is not the perspective or the critique Erdrich argues.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ For a more lengthy critique of previous readings of Marn's narrative, see Madsen, Deborah L, 'Discontinuous Narrative, Ojibwe Sovereignty, and the Wiindigoo Logic of Settler Colonialism: Louise Erdrich's Marne Wolde.' *Studies in American Literatures*, vol. 24, no. 2, (Summer 2012), pp. 17 – 38.

Speaking of Marn's wendigo nature, Mary Catherine Harper writes, 'Marn has no sense of shame or fear of consequences. Marn has become a modernist amoral character: isolated, mistrustful, unbalanced in her spiritual, sexual, and communal relations. She has punched through the veneer of Western civilization into the primal land of serpent and apple' (22). Such a reading is partly correct, but still wrongly figures the monster as abject Other *opposed* to colonial rationality rather than an outcome of colonial thinking itself. In other words, Marn does not become the wendigo because she 'punch[es] through the veneer of Western civilization': this configures the West as non-monstrous and the Indigenous wendigo as the true monster. Moreover, Marn is rewarded for committing murder by inheriting the land she wanted all along, therefore she cannot 'fear [...] consequences' because there are no negative consequences for Indigenous murder in a colonial State.

Marn is a monster of becoming because of her ability to misrepresent the world and centre herself as a victim when, in fact, she is a colonial aggressor. The fact that her section ends with the murder and posed lynching of Billy harkens back to the posse murders that plague the entire history of *Doves*. She becomes a wendigo figure, echoing her uncle Warren who, while he did not personally lynch the Indigenous men, might as well have since they were wrongly accused of the murders he committed. In fact, Marn's transformation into wendigo is essentially a homecoming into her family's legacy. Like the spectre of the lynching, Warren hovers in the periphery, a reminder of a past that cannot stay buried. Marn states that Warren 'would stare and stare at you like he was watching your blood move and your food digest. Warren's face was a chopping block, his long arms hung heavy. He flew into disorderly rages and went missing, for days sometimes. We'd find him wandering the farm roads bewildered and spent of fury' (139). Everything about Warren's description embodies death. His gaze is predatory and his very face in being 'like a chopping block' is the foundation upon which violence is not only possible but expected. Additionally, he is

unstable and unpredictable in his rages. Warren is not even a monster of prohibition in this context, like the would-be cannibal Buckendorfs: he cannot be because he is violence incarnate, and the violence he commits is indiscriminate and, again unlike the Buckendorfs, for no apparent personal gain. In an odd way, Warren exists outside of society, devoid of most meaningful human characteristics. Though Warren is a white man, he does not seem to commit violence for any racially or economically motivated reason. In this manner, Warren becomes a sign of violence, similar to the ways in which Indigenous people in texts like *Blood Meridian* are signs. Like those Indigenous figures, Warren is defined by his simple rage. Evelina explains, ‘To everyone he met, he nodded and said, “I’ll slaughter them all”’ (228). Therefore, while Marn’s monstrosity and embodiment of the wendigo is a symbol of her fears regarding land reclamation, vindictiveness, and violence, Warren’s violence is separate from any colonial desire – though this is not to say that he is exempt from the privileges and power that come from being a settler in a colonised State. While Marn is unremorseful about Billy’s murder, Warren’s murders are shown to be an act of mental instability unrelated to social or economic gain.

The few moments where Warren regains a sense of humanity are when he appears remorseful about the murders of the Lochren family and subsequent lynchings, even to the point that he appears to be trying to confess. While acting as an orderly at the mental hospital where Warren stays, Evelina remarks on his odd habit of trying to give her and other people folded up dollar bills: ‘He tried to give it to me. “No,” I said, curling his dry fingers around the money. “Please.” His old eyes begged, moist and red. “I did it because they told me...,”’ but he choked on what he might say and his voice was a crow’s croak’ (233). Warren’s mannerisms here stand in stark contrast to his usual violent state wherein he claims he will ‘slaughter’ everyone. Although he is unable to articulate properly what he has done, he seems to know that it was wrong. He even cries and attempts to make some sort of economic

reparation along with an apology to the only Indigenous person he interacts with in the text. Additionally, it is revealed at the end of the novel that he also left Cordelia Lochren – the only survivor of the murders – money during his life and after his death. Cordelia remembers ‘we’d find small, carefully folded bills of cash hidden outdoors in places Electa or I would be certain to find them’ (307) and when Warren dies he leaves her box full of ‘hundreds upon hundreds of wadded bills of assorted (mainly small) denominations, and of course I recognized their folded pattern as identical to the bills that had turned up for me all through my childhood’ (310). Though Warren’s attempted apologies are far from making up for the harm he caused, his remorse and Marn’s lack thereof is an important delineation in terms of categorising violence. Often in criticism, colonial violence is figured as a disease. Kurup even argues that Holy Track’s murder is him succumbing to ‘the disease his mother had not accounted for [which] was racism, for which there is no blessing of protection or inoculation’, which is a strikingly metaphorical observation about a successful lynch mob (104). Warren is indeed mentally ill, yet he is also remorseful in lucid moments: he seems to understand his impact not just on Cordelia Lochren but also, potentially, on Evelina as an Indigenous woman. Conversely, though Marn is even warned about her violent tendencies by her uncle, she still commits murder *because* it is the mechanism through which she can maintain her land claims. Though horrific and monstrous, as Erdrich exposes with Marn’s wendigo transformation, colonialism is not a disease. It is a completely avoidable choice with material rewards and, for Indigenous people, grave consequences.

III. The Devil Within in the Mixedblood Imagination

In addition to the colonial and monstrous settlers like the Woldes, Buckendorfs, and Wildstrands, however, there are enough settlers to the town of Pluto that mixedblood families frequently form and even thrive. The existence of these mixedblood families, in fact, provide

an opportunity for further critique and complication of the realities of living in a colonised space, mostly for Indigenous people, but also for settlers who are engulfed in a colonial expectation of violence and racism. Speaking of the difficulties of living as a descendant of Indigenous people and settlers, Vizenor likens being mixedblood to trying not to capsize in a canoe. He states:

There is a balance. I don't mean balance in a political sense, but balance in a symbolic healing sense [...] You have to stay alive, and if you're tipping in your goddamn canoe, you seek the balance. You don't know in advance what structure works: you have to seek balance that'll keep the thing afloat, because it doesn't make any sense to go overboard and it wouldn't make any sense to destroy the canoe for tipping you out. (Bowers and Silet 49)

In Vizenor's philosophy, there is no prescription – no terminal creed – which predetermines how a mixedblood person can find their own identity. It is something an individual must find for themselves. While there is no space in this balance for excusing the horrors of colonisation there is also no space for allowing these horrors to make one go 'overboard' and drown. Finding balance *is* survivance because it allows one to move forward, rather than simply reacting to a past atrocity. Balancing is creating 'an active presence, more than the instincts of survival, function, or subsistence' (Vizenor quoted Carden 98). This is not to say that Indigenous people cannot be victims of violence, but rather that, after being a victim, it is possible to metaphorically right oneself and imagine one's own future outside of that victimhood – an Indigenous future that, especially in the case of mixedblood ancestry also recognises the complexity of one's identity. This balance partly relies, like *Almanac* and *Indian Killer*, on tribal wisdom and Indigenous memory. Unlike *Almanac* and *Indian Killer*, however, balance does not remain haunted by or totally eschew settler people based solely on their blood quantum as settlers.

Critics have noted that Erdrich's entire Justice Trilogy, which includes *Doves*, *The Round House* (2012), and *LaRose* (2016), interrogates the very concept of justice as defined by the West. Kurup argues that the lynching in *Doves*, 'does not provide for the standard

trappings of a death sentence: no legal defense, judge, or jury, and no final words, no blessings, no last meal, and no opportunity for a last-minute stay of execution' and that it is horrific because it 'highlights the dangers of not acting within the bounds of the law, without measured thought and discussion, but acting from passion, a thirst for revenge, and the lesser, baser impulse of racism' (105). Kurup's reading, however, assumes that the philosophical underpinnings of the colonial US justice system like the right to a "fair" trial or the right to be judged by a jury of peers *does* provide justice. However, Vizenor notes that this definition of justice that relies on the expulsion of an Other is a Christian value. In the Christian figuring of justice and purity, the 'objective is to rid the self and the soul, the family, and the community, of evil, to isolate it and destroy it. It's a holy war, a holy war to end evil. The same language is a part of American consciousness [...] the objective is completely to end and destroy it' (Bowers and Silet 44). By Vizenor's definition and in Erdrich's formulation in *Doves* the colonial justice system does not and cannot dispense justice because it is inherently flawed. In addition to not punishing the lynch mob for the murders they commit, the officials of Pluto are completely uninterested in catching the person truly responsible for the Lochren murders, instead letting these wounds fester into myth and rumour. That the Pluto justice system cannot even catch the murderer – a man who goes on multiple violent rampages outside the Lochren murder according to Marne and Evelina – is testament to its inefficiency. In contrast, the focus on memory as an important part of Indigenous justice allows for the balance of which Vizenor speaks.

Evelina describes the socio-cultural web created by such an event as the lynching thus: 'I think of how history works itself out in the living. The Buckendorfs, the other Wildstrands, the Peace family, all of these people whose backgrounds tangled in the hanging [...] Now that some of us have mixed in the spring of our existence both guilt and victim, there is no unravelling the rope' (243). The Pluto justice system was unable to give justice to

either the Indigenous men who were lynched or to the Lochren family, whose killer is still at large. Now both victim and violator have become too closely entangled to claim one's identity is only linked to victim or only linked to aggressor. Herein lies the true horror but also, oddly, the true reconciliation of *Doves*: since colonisation already has taken place, there is no return to a precolonial ideal, because that has now become a terminal creed. To try to return to this unreachable past – or in Vizenor's canoe metaphor, to be angry at the canoe for existing – is to deny an Indigenous future not just without colonialism, but beyond it. It is only by remembering and living through history that some sort of justice can be achieved; it is, after all, a song played by Corwin Peace – the character whose lineage is the most entangled in relation to the hanging – that finally kills Warren Wolde, and even this is not intentional on Corwin's part. "Justice" is, in a sense, served by Corwin killing Warren unintentionally. However, no one actually involved in the murders or the subsequent lynchings themselves brings about this justice; it is achieved almost by accident. By showing the act of balance that Vizenor advocates for in regard to mixedblood identity, Erdrich demonstrates the limits of colonial interpellation. Althusser writes, 'Ideologies never stop interpellating subjects as subjects, never stop "recruiting" individuals who are always-already subjects' (193 – 194). The refusal of the Indigenous people to be defined by the violence done to them, the trickster impulse to make a monster like the cannibal into a figure of justice, the ability of Indigenous memory to bring justice where the US justice system could not, all speaks to the limits of colonial interpellation. Ideologies like the racist ones put forward by colonialism may interpellate Indigenous people as victims or racialised Others, but Indigenous people do not have to give power to this interpretation of subjecthood. In fact, the logic of colonisation which leads to events such as the posse lynching run counter to any humanity.

Mooshum's memory of the lynching is a key moment in defining monstrous colonial violence perpetrated because of hatred, greed, and Othering. This violence, distinct from the violence carried out by the mentally ill Warren is carried out by colonial monsters: the 'madness on this earth' as Asiginak puts it (75). The violence of colonial monsters creates integral witnesses – in this case, the lynched Indigenous men and Mooshum as a survivor – and its horrors are not isolated according to ancestry. By Primo Levi's definition of integral witness, as explained by Cavarero, 'the integral witness, is he who has gone to the heart of the horror' (np). Since 'the heart of horror' is death and a complete revocation of subjecthood, the failed lynching of Mooshum provides an interesting extension of Levi's definition. Though Sister Mary Anita later tells Evelina that 'Mooshum told Eugene Wildstrand that he and the others were at the farmhouse', resulting in the posse, Mooshum's horror and certainty at facing death was not diminished (250). In fact, Mooshum suffers a kind of survivor's guilt both for surviving the lynching and for being the unwitting instrument of death to the other Indigenous men. When Evelina describes Mooshum's attitude while telling the story of the lynching, she notes the difference to his normal manner: 'Now it was like he was stuck in some way, on some track, like he couldn't stop the story from forcing its way out' (68). Unlike the integral witnesses of *Almanac* who gain power in death, Mooshum as an integral witness finds no such thanatopolitical agency and neither do Asiginak, Holy Track, or Cuthbert Peace.

In *South African Gothic* (2018), Duncan draws upon the work of André Brink to argue that postcolonial works containing horror can 'invoke the gothic as a lexicon for what lies beyond the fact-finding' of atrocities like Apartheid and, in the US, colonialism (102). Those postcolonial Gothic histories 'are not records in a robust sense, but "slivers" – to borrow the term developed by Harris – that do not recollect the past, but [...] participate in mourning it' (Duncan 102). Mooshum's retelling of the lynching, steeped as it is in horror

and without any thanatopolitical power, is emblematic of this kind of mourning. It is a powerless kind of memory, one centred on living through and with the horror of colonisation. Unlike the ghosts of *Almanac* and *Indian Killer* that gain power from being remembered, the ghosts in Mooshum's past are not active figures themselves who extract any revenge for their unjust deaths. Instead, it is Mooshum's memory of these individuals that is foregrounded as haunting in the text. Arguing that mourning is essentially perpetual, fallible memory, Duncan writes, 'impossible mourning is thus an ethical promise to remember in spite of memory's fallibility' (103). In the case of Mooshum's memory of the haunting, it is not so much Mooshum's narrative voice and fallibility that is highlighted by Erdrich, but rather the sorts of juxtapositions of tone and character that arise from the act of mourning. In several moments throughout Mooshum's story of the lynching, he describes sounds and sights as beautiful. The beauty that Mooshum recalls only compound the horror of the situation and juxtapose the peace of the natural world with the man-made evils of colonisation. Recalling the capture of Asiginak, Mooshum remembers, "'We got one anyhow, let's hang the one we got,'" sang a man from outside. It was a lovely, melodious voice with a German buzz' (69). Unlike the colonial Destroyers of *Almanac* or the racist shock jockey in *Indian Killer*, the posse in *Doves* have the ability to represent beauty as well as horror: it is a 'lovely, melodious voice' that 'sings' the desire to commit racially charged murder. Even nature itself is seemingly indifferent to the horrors occurring. This very juxtaposition recalls the trickster impulse of Mooshum's storytelling. In the vein of *Indian Killer*, *Almanac*, *Meridian*, *Semetary*, and *Hunger*, the common-place representation of the Other is anything but lovely, yet by not depicting the colonisers as monstrous in their *appearance* or voice, Erdrich avoids the association of evil with ugliness. In fact, one can even have 'beautiful' qualities and still be monstrous. Moreover, it is these 'beautiful' men's desire and choice to become killers that makes them horrific, rather than some inborn quality.

The act of lynching, then, appears even more monstrous because it is humans and not monsters so debasing and damaging their fellow man. For example, in stark contrast to the ‘death hilarious’ ‘barbarous’ ‘clowns’ of *Meridian* (McCarthy 55), the human qualities of victim and perpetrator are highlighted by Erdrich. Doing so further illustrates the hand of the colonial State’s distinction between colonial Person and Indigenous Other in encouraging such crimes. Recalling the helplessness of the memory of being an integral witness,

Mooshum states:

Cuthbert’s head was all blood now. His eyes were hidden in his bloody hair, his neck awash with blood, his dirty shirt was blood all up and down. He spoke Ojibwe from inside the bloody mask and said to Holy Track, ‘Don’t worry. There is another boy among them. Pretty soon one of them will notice and remember the sheriff’s words. They’ll let you go. When you speak of my death to others, tell them of my courage. I am going to sing my death song.’ (75)

The detail to which Mooshum remembers Cuthbert’s physical and mental anguish makes the passage sickening to read and starkly illustrates the uselessness of ‘fact-finding’, as Duncan notes of post-Apartheid texts, in such a horrific act. Cuthbert has lost nearly every physical marker of his identity. His deformed nose has been sheered away by the posse and his entire face is now a ‘mask’ that reflects the violence done to him. When beholding such horrors perpetuated by human beings who have chosen to be so evil, finding a thanatopolitical power in death is far from the first thing on a victim’s mind. This, again, foregrounds the experience of colonial horror *as* horrific rather than thanatopolitical. The story is recounted in a way that avoids speaking of the dead as ghosts, instead favouring this material approach to violence that foregrounds the body and the psyche. In this way, the story of the lynching differs in its depiction of the power of Indigenous memory from the thanatopolitical Indigenous ghosts in *Almanac* and the corporeal/non-corporeal killer in *Indian Killer*. Indigenous memory in *Doves* is, effectively, more rooted in the materiality of the lived horrors and realities of colonisation.

Although the scene is less gory than, for example, some of the scenes of colonial violence depicted in *Meridian*, or the carnage wrought by Gage-as-wendigo in *Semetary*, the violence is much more visceral because it is told from the perspective of an integral witness – first Mooshum and then, somehow, by Holy Track. Thus, there is no room for the Indigenous men to ‘function [...] as triumphant agents of Americanization’ (Bergland 4). Rather, their memories are a source of pain and horror so deep it shakes the foundations of what is human. Though the following passage is long, it is essential to understanding the depth of the horror Mooshum and then Holy Track suffer as integral witnesses. Edrich writes:

They sang the [death] song twice before the Buckendorfs shook themselves and prepared the wagon. Emil steadied the two horses and counted down to whip them at the same time. The boy tried to open his mouth to join in his uncle’s song, but could only hum to himself the tuneless lullaby that his mother had always used to sing him to sleep. The Buckendorfs threw their arms back, cut the horses at the same time, then again, harder. The wagon lurched, stopped, then bucked forward. The men stumbled but did not stop singing. Finally, the horses bolted away. They halted after twenty feet. The men tried to keep singing even as they strangled. The boy was too light for death to give him an easy time of it. He slowly choked as he kicked air and spun. He heard it when Cuthbert, then his uncle, stopped singing and gurgling. Behind his shut eyes, he was seized by black fear, until he heard his mother say, *Open your eyes*, and he stared into the dusty blue. Then it was better. The little wisps of clouds, way up high, had resolved into wings and they swept across the sky now, faster and faster. (79)

By showing the horror of becoming an integral witness, Edrich illuminates how ‘no conclusive coming-to-terms with the past is possible’ (Duncan *South African* 37). This is, as Duncan argues, a quality of ‘Gothically incarnated’ history, which she writes, ‘cannot be completed, and thus must be remembered ceaselessly’ (*South African* 37). Furthermore, the depth of horror shown in this passage demonstrates why it is a terminal creed to believe that, simply with the reclamation of Indigenous land, true healing can come to colonised people. The hurt and dehumanisation is simply too deep.

Additionally, though it is true that *Almanac* and *Indian Killer* both show a *history* of colonisation and how colonisation evolves into capitalism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, neither of those texts show in such detail and with such internal reflection an

instance of settler violence committed against an Indigenous person. Such scenes are often alluded to, or even mentioned outright – such as with La Escapía’s list of atrocities that she brings to Bartolomeo’s trial – but never from the *perspective* of the integral witness. Murray describes the question that lies at the heart of thanatopolitics as: ‘How might those deaths [of the non-immunised] rise up, and haunt, the spaces of biopolitical production’ (718). Thus, as I explored in the *Almanac* and *Indian Killer* chapters, death is in some ways a state of power for Indigenous ghosts. Conversely, while the lynching in *Doves* certainly also haunts the text, it is associated with the utter helplessness of colonial violence. There is not necessarily power in death: both the lynching and Billy Peace’s death, which echoes the lynchings, demonstrate this. Thus, thanatopolitical power in turn appears as a terminal creed in the face of such absolute colonial violence. Instead of showing power, the lynching shows the dehumanising effect of manifest manners because the horrific material effects of this Othering are the focus of the lynching and how Pluto society reacts to it. Although Holy Track appears to hear his deceased mother’s voice and find some sort of peace at the moment of death, readers are not left with a sense of peace themselves. For the living, the dread and the horror remain.

Moreover, rather than simply affecting the murdered Indigenous men, Mooshum’s memory shows that colonial violence’s victims even extend beyond the colonised and integral witnesses. Kurup notes that the lynching ‘highlights the way in which historical trauma is imprinted upon both the Ojibwe and non-Ojibwe community since the violent incident inextricably binds the two parties’ (106). Similarly, mourning is extended to settlers as well, regardless of family status or blood quantum, which in turn illuminates the thematic difference between an inherent adherence to white supremacy in settlers and the choice to participate in colonial atrocities. In this manner, Erdrich asserts how colonialism is not a disease or other metaphorical symbol, but is a material act, in the Althusseran sense, based on the ideologies of a terminal creed. Included in Mooshum’s memory of the lynching is the

presence of his friend Johann Vogeli, who is dragged into participating because of his father Frederic, and who has no desire at all to hurt the Indigenous men. Erdrich writes Johann ‘was riding next to [Mooshum], his hands clutching the mane of his horse. His tears rushed down and wet the leather of the saddle. Frederic Vogeli rode up beside his son and swung his arm back, then smashed his knuckles and forearm across his son’s face’ (76). Clearly, for Johann, the death of the Indigenous men is not a site of triumphant Americanisation. It is also true, however, that Johann remains silent and does not try to help the Indigenous men. At least in part, this is due to his father’s physical and emotional violence which Frederic repeatedly uses to reinforce the narrative of white supremacy and “manly” qualities – i.e., lack of emotion, lust for violence, etc. Kurup writes that the lynching is an example of ‘the real, everyday racism rampant in American towns, particularly those bordering reservations in the early twentieth century’ (104). Johann’s horror at the depravity of the situation, the posse’s absolute conviction that they are correct in their actions, and the presence of some original settlers such as the Buckendorfs – as well as a decolonial understanding that acts of racial violence *are part* of the colonial State – show the dangers of critically uncoupling racism and colonial violence by referring to colonial violence as a disease rather than a choice.

In fact, in contrast to the wendigo characters Marn and Warren, the posse members do not need to be compared to legend or disease in order for the depth of their monstrosity to be clear, and thus the monstrosity of settler colonial white supremacy. Alongside the visceral horror in the passage where Holy Track is lynched and becomes an integral witness, the certainty of justice that infuses the actions and words of the posse members is depicted as horrific. Furthermore, as the posse commits the murders out of passion rather than material gain – unlike Marn who is trying to keep her farm – they have the potential to appear even more depraved than the wendigo-Marn to readers. When the sheriff and Colonel Lungford attempt to stop the lynching, Wildstrand, who is Mooshum’s father-in-law, and Frederic

Vogeli clearly explain that the Western notion of justice is not the goal of the posse: instead, it is revenge. Erdrich writes:

‘That’s a boy you caught,’ said Colonel Lungford to them all. ‘No more than.’
 ‘That’s a killer,’ said Vogeli. ‘Don’t you have no conscience?’
 Wildstrand, holding his horse tight up, spat and coldly addressed the sheriff and the colonel. His eyes stood out black as tacks on white paper. ‘Didn’t you or didn’t you step in that house?’ (73).

It is important to note that the posse lynching is *not* an example of “failed” justice in the sense that the Western justice system failed. Instead, it is a commentary on absolute inability of the colonial US State to create or enforce a justice system. In *American Revenge Narratives* (2018), Kyle Wiggins notes that America’s ‘national stories extend an ancient vengeful tradition’ (3). This echoes Höglund’s observation that how, once Othered in imperial Gothic texts, the mere existence of ‘Native Americans [...] give rise to conflict that demands a violent resolution’, specifically including lynching (*Imperial Gothic* 22). Justice via Indigenous memory is not just an alternative to colonial justice, it is the *only* potential way to find the balance that mixedblood and settler neighbours must maintain in order to survive.

IV. Conclusion: Memory without Thanatopolitics

When Evelina confronts Mooshum about his role as informant to the posse, and his omission of this fact in the original telling of his story, Erdrich positions this acknowledgment as a potential method of healing. Originally, in an attempt to find someone to blame for the atrocities committed on and in her community, Evelina ‘became obsessed with lineage’ (86). However, Evelina cannot find any answers in her obsession because the lineages, including her own – since her great-grandfather was the Wildstrand from the posse – are simply too entwined. Evelina remarks, ‘[t]here were a few people, one of them being Corwin Peace, whose chart was so complicated that I erased parts of it until I wore right through the paper.

Still, I could not erase the questions underneath' (86). The 'blood history of the murders', as Evelina calls it, cannot answer the questions of why such an act of violence happened, because the answers are not rooted in a terminal creed such as blood quantum, but in the individual choice to adhere to white supremacy (86). The Wildstrand of the posse also had at least a sexual relationship with Junesse Milk, Mooshum's mixedblood wife. That Wildstrand's son, John, had an affair with another Indigenous woman resulting in the birth of Corwin Peace. This is not to say that Erdrich goes out of her way to redeem the kind of colonial violence Wildstrand and those like him commit: instead, survivance and therefore Indigenous future relies on the ability to see nuance and identify the underlying cause of horrors like white supremacy rather than blaming blood quantum or an inherent vice within white settlers.

In the final section of the novel, Cordelia Lochren, the only surviving member of the family whose murder crystalised the violent colonial underpinnings of Pluto, poses a question: '[W]hen all that remains of Pluto is our collected historical newsletters bound in volumes donated to the local collections at the University of North Dakota, what then? What shall I have said? How shall I have depicted the truth?' (308). If one relies upon adhering to terminal creeds of identity via blood quantum or some precolonial concept of Indigenous identity in order to define themselves, then these questions are unanswerable and the memory of the truth of Pluto – like the memory of the lynching – is indeed unbearable. But realising that 'history works itself out in the living' (243), as Evelina eventually does, is more bearable and sustainable. Through living and finding a balance based on one's own communal connections, it is possible to imagine a future where memory is honoured but does not bind the survivors of colonialism to mere spectral remembrance.

More so than the other novels in this section, *Plague of Doves* is interested in depicting the lived horrors of colonialism in an intimate detail that leaves little to no space for

a thanatopolitical turn. Additionally, the lack of resolution and the emphasis on question regarding history, identity, and truth points to Vizenor's idea of the balance of the canoe. There can be no set answer to what Indigeneity is, only an interpretation of oneself based on individual need and history. Erdrich's lack of a prescriptive solution to the horrors of colonialism therefore is more effective at avoiding terminal creeds than *Almanac* or *Indian Killer*. This is not to say it is more anti-colonial or more Indigenous than the other texts. Rather, Erdrich's approach to the haunting quality of colonisation offers a counter-narrative to the more thanatopolitical texts in this section. This speaks both to the breadth of ways in which Indigenous authors use haunting to confront settler sensibilities and to the fact that Indigenous critiques of colonisation are not monolithic. Showing the range of responses to colonial violence, and the range of depictions of integral witnesses avoids perpetuating 'the course of dominance, the racist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as "authentic" representations of Indian cultures' that is manifest manners (Vizenor *Manifest Manners* vii). Because these Indigenous texts focus explicitly on the death-machine that is colonial-capitalism, it is no surprise that the vengeful Indigenous dead are seen as a powerful force to subvert the narrative of white supremacy. However, when a return to pre-colonial isolation is the underlying current of an Indigenous text, as is the case certainly in *Almanac* and arguably in *Indian Killer*, the practicality of what this materially means is important. *Doves*, with its emphasis on mixedblood characters and moments of survivance that are individual, rather than prescriptive, asks more questions of its readers than it answers. Yet, in many ways, it offers more possibilities of identity and Indigenous future.

Conclusion:

I. The State of the Union: Gothic Studies and American Empire

Throughout this thesis, I have shown how a decolonial approach to Euro-American Gothic fiction that centres imperialism as the dominant socio-political-economic force exposes the extent to which colonialism still rules the non-Indigenous imagination in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. I have also shown a handful of Indigenous texts that offer counter-perspectives of colonial horror and of the Indigenous spectre. These texts show potential ways forward out of the cycle of colonial-capitalism and critique that system in the modern day. Unsurprisingly, they also subvert the terminal creeds of colonialism much more successfully than the Euro-American texts because they do not mythologise the material horrors of colonial-capitalism. Additionally, to different extents, they do not inherently divide the coloniser subject from the colonised subject so absolutely. These qualities make it so Indigenous horror fictions bring the horror of colonialism and colonial epistemology home more viscerally than King's *Pet Sematary* with its invasion of the nuclear family, or the graphic violence of McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. They demonstrate that, as Owens argues, 'America never became postcolonial. The indigenous inhabitants of North America can stand anywhere on the continent and look in every direction at a home usurped and colonized by strangers who [...] laid claim not merely to the land and resources but to the very definition of the Natives' (Owens 'As If' 14 – 15). Yet, by showing that colonisation is a *choice* and not the default way of interacting, these Indigenous Gothic texts can also offer ways of coexistence or anti-imperialism that is rooted in finding common ground through collective memory.

Centring Indigenous perspectives of identity, history, spirituality, corporeality, ghostliness, haunting, and memory – to name just a few examples – is the primary way I believe scholars can avoid a cycle of the colonality of power and the colonality of knowledge within the academy. It is long past time the white-dominated academy and the

white-dominated field of Gothic Studies acknowledged the equal footing that Indigenous epistemologies hold with Western philosophy and the detrimental effect to literary criticism created by mapping non-Native ways of knowing onto Native texts. As Höglund argues in *American Imperial Gothic*:

Empire is a trauma that the gothic cannot stop rehearsing and so this very genre can be seen as a manifestation of a collective, guilt-informed post-traumatic stress disorder [...] However [...] American imperial gothic is not the post-traumatic disorder manifesting in culture, it is an attempt to manage such manifestations. Thus, the American imperial gothic initiates a project of remembering but then turns it into a comforting ritual of forgetting. (174)

What I hope to have demonstrated is that when authors and critics alike simply show that “colonisation was bad” – for example, through the horrific excess of McCarthy’s frontier, the transformation and annihilation of the Creed family, the deprivations and monstrosity of the history of the Donner Party – they are not saying anything particularly interesting, nuanced, or decolonial. Acknowledging that colonisation was/is harmful is stating a fact. The ‘rehearsal’ of the ‘trauma’ of Empire, as Höglund puts it, is merely another Gothic cycle that can – and often does – reinforce an idea of the “inevitability” of colonialism. It erases the boundaries of colonial epistemology, which, as Mignolo argues, is a cornerstone of colonial difference: ‘The epistemic colonial difference divides one from the other. Of course, this does not place one against the other but underlines the colonial difference as the limit of the assumed totality of Western epistemology’ (85).

In fact, this very issue is apparent in the way critics of [Euro-]American Gothic often talk about America itself. Time and again, scholarship on [Euro-]American Gothic works assert that the existence of American Gothic is ‘paradoxical.’ David Mogen, Scott P Sanders, and Joanne B Karpinski demonstrate this pitfall when they state:

[T]he very concept of American gothic is paradoxical, since so much of American culture denies the possibility of the gothic experience. As the imaginative border between the known and the unknown, the frontier subject has provided a bridge to gothic domains, but much in American tradition regards such exploration as frivolous, vaguely immoral, and essentially unnecessary. (1)

Similarly, Eric Savoy argues that the [Euro-]American Gothic's existence is 'entirely paradoxical: an optimistic country founded upon Enlightenment principles of liberty and "the pursuit of happiness", a country that supposedly repudiated the burden of history and its irrational claims, has produced a strain of literature [...] haunted by an insistent, undead past' (167). Charles L. Crow argues, 'The Gothic exposes the repressed, what is hidden, unspoken, deliberately forgotten in the lives of individuals and of cultures', implying that the Euro-American Gothic exposes the repressed structures of colonialism (2). Such a definition of American tradition, culture, or imagination, however, is itself colonial. It reinforces the manufactured narrative that the Enlightenment values which colonisation uses to create racial/economic boundaries between coloniser and colonised are an intrinsic part of "American experience" or "American mindset," rather than a conscious deployment of biopolitical structures that are colonial created for the benefit of a small group of white economic, cultural, and political elite in order to further their own power and wealth. It also erases the continual Othering of Indigenous people and voices in US politics, literature, and even the academy that colonialism relies upon to justify itself. If it is true that politics is 'always [...] embedded in the Gothic' then the willingness of some critics to either unconsciously or consciously perpetuate the colonial ideal of America's image should be very worrying indeed (Edwards *Gothic Passages* xix). In short, critics who highlight 'optimism', 'liberty', and rationality as inherent qualities of American-ness assume via erasure of non-white perspectives in this framework that the colonial, Euro-American perspective is "America" when, in fact, these qualities represent the face and agenda of American imperialism.

Though Euro-American texts that centre on colonialism or the frontier show the 'conflict between the inscribed history of civilization and the history of the other, somehow immanent in the landscape of the frontier' they do not always or consistently show that this history is a

cause of colonial biopolitics which are, themselves, built on Western ideas and not fact (Mogen et al 17). Similarly, colonial hauntings by Indigenous ghosts written by non-Indigenous authors do not, by default, show the complete horrors of colonisation. Bergland observes that ‘This model of ghosts as public, political entities may seem to conflict with prevailing assumptions that ghosts are private and internal. But [...] [m]odern consciousness internalizes the political just as it internalizes the spectral’ (7). Any internalization that comes from the appropriation or erasure of Indigenous voices by non-Indigenous writers, however, should be automatically understood as colonial. In essence, as I have alluded to with previous analyses but wish to make explicit here, it is impossible to use the image of dead, spectral, or monstrous Indians as a non-Indigenous person to critique colonialism without simultaneously reinforcing colonial epistemologies and ideologies of white supremacy. In the theoretical framework of Mignolo, in other words, anyone not Indigenous cannot write from inside the colonial difference, even if they are another minority: they simply do not have access to Indigenous epistemology or cosmology from any cultural avenue. This is the root of the issue when Gothic critics point out that, while political and frequently anti-establishment, the Gothic is not always progressive or decolonial.

It is paramount, however, that the texts I have proposed as exhibiting an Indigenous Gothic quality are not simply using a “Western” mode to “speak back” to the coloniser in some way. This, again, figures the British or Euro-American concept of the Gothic as some totalizing authority that pre-dates or supersedes any non-British tradition of horror that exists conterminously and achieves similar ends. Too frequently, critics ignore the colonial difference or, by advocating for the Gothic as a tradition inherently connected to British-ness or Euro-American subjectivity,⁴¹ enacts the kind of linguistic imperialism that Fanon

⁴¹ As Burnham so succinctly puts it, ‘standard narratives of Gothic literature situate its origins firmly in eighteenth-century Britain and in response to the European Enlightenment – a geographical location and historical moment that are equally distant from Native Americans and indigenous traditions of storytelling’ (‘Is There An Indigenous Gothic’ 225). For examples of this see: Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. 2nd edition. Routledge,

critiques in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon writes, that colonized people suffer in their souls ‘an inferiority complex [that] has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality’ and ‘finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards’ (9). To avoid this sort of epistemic violence, then, it is imperative that further discussion about a potential Indigenous Gothic not measure the success or effect of a text in proportion to its Euro-American or British counterparts, but according to Indigenous culture and epistemology. This background, of course, is not always available to non-Indigenous scholars which highlights not the inability to connect Indigenous horror to a global Gothic tradition, but the limits of the coloniality and colonial of knowledge.

II. The Academy and Colonial Difference: Broadening Frontiers

Louis Owens writes in ‘As If an Indian Were Really an Indian’ that, ‘While Native American literature is gradually finding a niche within academia, one discovers predominantly an absence of Native American voices in works by major cultural theorists and respected writers’ (13). Owens observes that well-respected non-Indigenous authors such as Toni Morrison and Edward Said can appropriate Indigenous ghosts and identity uncritically in ways that rely upon colonial epistemology and imagery. Owens states, that in *Playing in the Dark* (1992), Morrison ‘adopts the rhetoric of imperial discovery and cites Hemmingway’s “Tontos” as well as Melville’s Pequod without ever noting an indigenous Native presence shadowing her figuration of blackness in America’ (13). Owens adds that Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) demonstrates ‘[t]he most extraordinary denigration of Native

2014. ; Crow, Charles L. *History of the Gothic: American Gothic*. University of Wales Press, 2009, pp. 3 – 7 ; Crow, Charles L. Preface. *A Companion to American Gothic*, edited by Charles L. Crow, Wiley Blackwell, 2014, pp. xvii – xix.

American voices [...] [T]his celebrated father of postcolonial theory dismisses Native American writing in a single phrase as “that sad panorama produced by genocide and cultural amnesia” (13). In addition to showing how deeply the “inevitable” death of the Indian is ingrained within non-Indigenous subjects, Owen’s critique of existing supposedly post-colonial author’s colonial use of Indigeneity reflects the need to recognise the significance and genius of trickster writing within Gothic Studies, especially as the trickster and Gothic modes can have such interlinked agendas. In other words, rather than existing as merely a “niche,” the way forward towards a more decolonial academy and decolonial Gothic is by giving primacy to Indigenous works that more effectively eschew colonial epistemology – or expose it for the ideology, rather than the default way of being, that it is.⁴²

Owens continues his critique of American literary studies, stating, ‘It is difficult to take seriously any cultural or critical theorist who is ignorant of’ Indigenous literature ‘or who, if [they are] aware of it, clearly relegates it to a “minor,” “subjugated,” or “deterritorialized” knowledge worthy of only silence or erasure’ (‘As If’ 13 – 14). The type of annoyance and anger expressed by Owens, however, cannot be relegated to or expressed only by Indigenous scholars. It is imperative that Western scholars address the gaps in their own knowledge bases and the impossibility of Western scholars to be able to fill these gaps that are Indigenous in nature. Speaking of Indigenous ghosts and the prevalence of dead Indians in Euro-American writing, Bergland argues ‘White American and Europeans want to hear their own mythology so much that they put it into the mouth of a dead Indian. This is ghostwriting with a vengeance’ (160). It is also, however, a refusal to acknowledge the colonial difference.

⁴² For more information on the nuances of what it means to be ‘decolonial’ – and how decoloniality goes *beyond* merely being inclusive within the academy – see: Bhambra, Gurminder K., Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu. Introduction: Decolonising the University?, *Decolonising the University*, edited by Gurminder K Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, Pluto Press, 2018. ; Duncan, Rebecca. ‘Introduction: Decolonial Gothic.’ *Decolonising Gothic*, special issue of *Gothic Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, (2022), pp. 219 – 227. ; Duncan, Rebecca. ‘Decolonial Gothic: Beyond the Postcolonial in Gothic Studies.’ *Decolonising Gothic*, special issue of *Gothic Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, (2022), pp. 304 – 322.

Mignolo writes, ‘The colonial difference is reproduced in its invisibility’ (73). When critics of the academy advocate for a type of decolonisation of the academy that simply teaches some colonised texts alongside the colonial ones, there is a misunderstanding that doing so is somehow ‘a liberating strategy or decolonization project that [...] includes everybody, the colonizer and the colonized’ (Mignolo 73). What such a perspective of “decolonising fiction” fails to address is that Indigenous thinking does not exist to “fill in” gaps in Western thinking, or to offer alternative perspectives. Indigeneity does not need to be compared or contrasted to colonial epistemology in order to be valid. Thus, in some ways, it is important to acknowledge that the texts I chose to analyse in this thesis are not the limit of a potential “Indigenous Gothic.” Nor is it for me or other Euro-American or European scholars to determine what an Indigenous Gothic canon might ultimately include or what the ultimate wider definition of an “Indigenous Gothic” is beyond those texts that explicitly deal with colonial-capitalism, as the ones I have analysed. What *is* clear, however, is that there is a rich and powerful oeuvre of Indigenous horror that deserves to have its critical day in the sun and that there exist elements of Indigenous storytelling that undermine the narrative that the Gothic is a purely European or Euro-American tradition.

If, indeed, the primary function of the Gothic is ‘the production of affect and emotions, often extreme and negative’ that signals ‘a horrified, paralysing encounter with something unspeakable [...] too intense for words’ (Botting *Gothic* 6), it begs the question, what is more horrifying or more unspeakable than the experience of being colonised? If, as Gothic scholars insist,⁴³ monsters ‘come to reflect upon the monstrosity of social or familial institutions that constructed them and, in suffering or defiance, manifest an appeal that sides with marginalised and excluded groups’ what is truly more monstrous and harmful in colonial

⁴³ See: Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. 2nd edition. Routledge, 2014. ; Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. ‘Monster Culture (Seven Theses).’ *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pp. 3 – 25.

society than the vampiric machine of colonial-capitalism (Botting *Gothic* 172)? Moreover, if the Gothic emerges at least in part as a reaction against Enlightenment rationality, what is truly more destabilising to the Cartesian worldview than an Indigenous one which, pre-colonisation, existed entirely outside the bounds of a ‘Western’ rationality? Whereas *Euro-American Gothic* ‘exposes the cultural contradictions of national myth’, an Indigenous Gothic does not just expose the myth but undermines its supposedly “inevitable” existence (Goddu 10). Indigenous trickster writing that uses horror in order to undermine colonialism, therefore, is a reasonable start to broadening the frontier of what is currently considered “American” Gothic and to respecting – and advocating for – the recognition of colonial difference in Gothic Studies. However, Indigenous scholarship of what is considered monstrous and why outside of the material effects of colonisation, is equally important to understanding a potential Indigenous Gothic.

III. Indigenous Horror – Indigenous Gothic?

I wish to close this thesis with an exploration of Indigenous fiction that, because it is generally unconcerned with deconstructing colonisation or any sort of critique of whiteness at large, exists outside of the framework of Indigenous Gothic that I have outlined throughout this thesis and above. This is fiction that depicts horrors as they relate to Indigenous culture outside of (or at least mostly outside of) colonisation. The socioeconomic world that the Indigenous characters live in in these fictions is often one that reflects the socioeconomic effects of colonisation and centuries of attempted genocide, however the horror comes from within: from Indigenous monsters independent of any interaction with colonisers. One of the most exciting and innovative Indigenous writers working on horror fiction that fits that bill today is Stephen Graham Jones. Jones creates art that exemplifies ‘the epistemic colonial difference [...] the fact that it is urgently necessary to think and produce knowledge from the colonial difference’ but it should be understood that Jones’ horror fiction that I will be

focusing on is minimally concerned with whiteness (Mignolo 85). Essentially, these works, even more so than the works of Indigenous Gothic I explored in the second half of this thesis, should not be read primarily in relation to how they are perceived by white subjects and epistemologies. Of much greater concern in these novels is the Indigenous-based horrors that haunt the living Indigenous characters. This is not to say that the characters are not affected by colonisation, but that, essentially, there is something *beyond* colonisation, and beyond the epistemology and worldview of colonisation that is the locus of horror.

Jones' novella *Mapping the Interior* (2017), and his novel *The Only Good Indians* (2020) demonstrate the need for Indigenous scholars to helm the work of identifying/codifying/exploring a potential Indigenous Gothic because they have much more immediate access to the meaning of the kind of horror written by Jones. *Mapping the Interior* follows the story of a young boy named Junior, his younger developmentally disabled brother Dino, and his mother who moved outside of their reservation following the death of the boy's father several years previously. Junior, a sleepwalker, becomes convinced after a sleepwalking incident one night that he can see the ghost of his father in Blackfoot fancydancer regalia walking through their house. Their father was not a fancydancer before his death, but Junior states 'In death, he had become what he never could in life' (17). As the novella progresses, however, and Dino begins to get sick with a mysterious illness, Junior becomes convinced that his father, whose ghost only he can see, is a malevolent presence, existing in 'a matted nest of hair and grass and saliva' underneath their house, drinking vampirically from Dino in order to come alive again (79). Although the ghost of Junior's father is clearly depicted as monstrous in the text, and shares qualities with the vampire, it is not identified by the text *as* a vampire or any other Western monster. The ghost of Junior's father is an entirely Indigenous creation, one that needs to be critically informed in any scholarship by an Indigenous – and, in this particular case, Blackfoot – understanding of

ghostliness and monstrosity. In short, any scholarship by a non-Indigenous – or perhaps even specifically Blackfoot – scholar will be inherently lacking.

Similarly, *The Only Good Indians* features a haunting even more uncanny to non-Indigenous audiences than *Mapping the Interior*. Several years after a hunting incident where four friends trespassed on the reservation elders' hunting ground and gruesomely killed a pregnant deer, the now-grown friends – and one of their children, Denorah – are haunted by the doe's therianthropic ghost Po'noka.⁴⁴ Sometimes human and sometimes elk, like Alexie's owl-killer, Po'noka hunts and kills all four of the original hunters, but is able to be exorcised by Denorah when she is spared from being shot once more and is reborn into an elk form with her once-dead calf. The ending, like the ending of *Indian Killer*, figures the story of Po'noka's rescue by Denorah as part of a tradition of Indigenous culture and survivance. Jones positions the story as being told in a lodge by an old man to a group of children as Indigenous stories have been told for centuries. He writes, 'Because it's the end of the story, the old man holds his right hand up again, like the Girl did that day, and all the children do as well, and then, just like the Girl does four years later [...] he balls that hand into an upraised fist [...] It's the beginning' (349). Clearly, horror that ends in hopefulness via memory is an element in many Indigenous stories. A wider connection to this stylistic similarity in other, non-horror Indigenous stories is outside of the scope of this argument, but a potentially ripe area of inquiry.

In addition to sharing corporeal and non-corporeal qualities with Alexie's killer, *The Only Good Indians* also recalls the Indigenous figure of the Deer Woman whose existence can be seen in many cultures throughout the US and Canada, each featuring their own iteration and specific meaning. Unlike the killer of *Indian Killer*, however, there is no question of Po'noka's corporeality simultaneous with her mutability and her therianthropic

⁴⁴ Meaning 'elk' in Blackfoot (149).

existence. Furthermore, though all the Indigenous characters are initially puzzled by her, they do not see her existence as impossible. Po'noka cannot then be read as a reaction to terminal creeds or the central antagonist of a mystery story à la *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as is the case with *Indian Killer*. Although there are elements of mystery and suspense in *The Only Good Indians*, it is primarily a story of ghostly revenge, rather than “whodunnit.” It certainly also is not a colonial haunting, as the four Blackfoot friends are clearly culpable for the actions that lead to the haunting by a choice to ignore traditional as well as legal rules of hunting rights. However, without a Blackfoot understanding of ghostliness, Elk or Deer Woman, or the cultural toll of broken traditions, a deep analysis of *The Only Good Indians* is impossible.

The difficulties in accessing Indigenous perspectives from the outside as a settler or otherwise non-Indigene, however, are legion. Works that catalogue Indigenous monsters are often written by non-Indigenous writers and sometimes collected in dubious circumstances that can have detrimental effects on Indigenous people and groups. For example, John Robert Colombo's *Windigo: An Anthology of Fact and Fantastic Fiction* (1982) is used by scholars such as Tony Magistrale and Michael Blouin to inform their understanding of the wendigo. Colombo's *Windigo*, however, is a text anthologised by a non-Indigenous author whose first “encounter” with the wendigo was ‘in the pages of an anthology of horror stories [...] in Algernon Blackwood's classic tale (which I have the privilege of reprinting here)’ (Colombo Introduction 6). In addition to Blackwood's short story, the majority of the “wendigo stories” in this collection are from non-Indigenous people who are, in fact, part of the long arm of epistemological colonialism: surveyors, missionaries, army officers, explorers, anthropologists, ethnographers, and traders. These stories are shown alongside Indigenous works such as the art of Ojibwe artist Norval Morrisseau, also known as Copper Thunderbird, and are largely presented as fact regardless of who collected the stories or how they were

obtained (94). Essentially, if it had been written one year later, King's wendigo in *Pet Semetary* would appear to have as legitimate a place in Colombo's anthology as Blackwood's. Such a critical framework is farcically unethical and uncritical. However, I cannot fully blame scholars such as Magistrale and Blouin for using what few resources are available to them as scholars who have no personal connection to Indigenous cultural history. When the colonial difference and Indigenous epistemology is erased from the academy, *all* scholarship suffers. Similar to the issue of the wendigo that faces all who would analyse King's work from a decolonial perspective, a deeper analysis of the horror of Jones' ghostly fancydancer or Po'noka cannot be made from outside the colonial difference. It is the responsibility of those in power to seek out and amplify the perspectives of Indigenous people to avoid repeating the kinds of fictional erasures I have explored in real life.

What non-Indigenous scholars are left with, then, is a yearning for knowledge that they might not ever have access to, either because of a lack of funding or perceived interest in Indigenous stories or because, simply, these monsters and their cultural underpinnings are not for consumption outside of their original culture. Speaking of the importance of community, Silko writes, '[t]o be a people, to be part of a village, is the dimeson of human identity that anthropology understands the last, because this sense of home, of the people one comes from, is an intangible quality' (*Yellow Woman* 90). Additionally, Silko states that Indigenous storytelling is unique from Euro-American storytelling in that it places 'an incident in the wider context of Pueblo history so that individual loss or failure [is] less personalized and [becomes] part of the village's internal narratives about loss and failure, narratives that identity the village and that tell the people who they are' (*Yellow Woman* 90). To be a scholar outside of an Indigenous community and part of the dominant colonising culture, then, is to be unable to access Indigeneity fully. Reading works by Indigenous scholars and consuming Indigenous works of art and culture when invited is not inherently re-enacting colonialism,

but neither does wide reading adequately fill the epistemological void left by the colonial difference. Rather than seeing this as a stumbling block, however, I propose that recognising this shortfall in colonial epistemology and in existing Gothic or horror criticism is an opportunity for growth and inclusion. It is an opportunity for transformation beyond the boundaries that the Gothic purports to expose: boundaries like human *or* animal, civilised *or* barbaric, coloniser *or* colonised, Western *or* Indigenous. At the very least, the idea that ‘America and its literature *have* no history’ to be exposed by the Gothic should be seen as a tired, colonial assumption born out of racist colonial myth (Goddu 9). Instead, *Euro-American* Gothic must be recognised as one type of Gothic that arises from colonisation, and is one of many perspectives from a diverse, heterogeneous proliferation of peoples that exist after, with, and through colonisation. Whatever comes of an “Indigenous” Gothic is not ultimately for Euro-American or other non-Indigenous scholars to define, but the potential in this area of scholarly study should be given the excitement and attention it deserves from all areas of literary and horror studies. Forget the “frontier” of the Western imagination: it is what lies beyond in the Indigenous imagination that is truly ground-breaking.

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