



Chapitre de livre

2015

Accepted version

Open Access

This is an author manuscript post-peer-reviewing (accepted version) of the original publication. The layout of the published version may differ .

Introduction: The Indigenous Contexts of “Native.” “American.” “Literature.”

Madsen, Deborah Lea

How to cite

MADSEN, Deborah Lea. Introduction: The Indigenous Contexts of “Native.” “American.” “Literature.”. In: Routledge Companion to Native American Literature. Madsen, D.L. (Ed.). New York : Routledge, 2015.

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:87628>

Published in *The Routledge Companion to Native American Literature*, ed. Deborah L. Madsen (New York & London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1-12.

INTRODUCTION

The Indigenous Contexts of “Native.” “American.” “Literature.”

Deborah L. Madsen

“When asked by an anthropologist what the Indians called America before the white man came, an Indian said simply, ‘Ours’” (346). In this reversal of the dominant colonialist view of New World colonial history, Vine Deloria Jr. highlights an indigenous-centered perspective that is characteristic of Native American Literature and the approaches to it used in this *Companion*. If asked what Indians might call American Literature, they could answer simply, “ours.” That is to say, the work of indigenous expressive artists in the Americas, since long before contact with Europeans, has constituted the literature of Native peoples in America. In *Red on Red*, Craig Womack uses the metaphor of a tree to challenge the genealogical assumption that indigenous literatures are only one of the ethnic or multicultural “branches” of the canonical U.S. literary tree: “tribal literatures are not some branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk,” he asserts. “Tribal literatures are the *tree*” (6-7 original emphasis). The inappropriate juxtaposition of Native American texts with other “hyphenated” American literatures (such as African- or Asian-American) obscures fundamental differences between indigenous literatures and the literatures of migrant (all non-indigenous) communities. The most fundamental aim of this *Companion* is to promote the reading of Native American Literature as indigenous literature by providing the contextual information that is needed in order to recognize and appreciate the complex relations among modes of Native identification, historical events, sovereign tribal worldviews or cosmologies, indigenous expressive and aesthetic traditions, and the specific traditions of Native American Literature.

One of the most damaging consequences of settler colonialism in the Americas, possibly even beyond the disruption of intimate tribal relations with homelands, has been the attempted erasure of Native artistic presence – through the destruction of written artifacts or ancient mounds and earthworks, for example – in order to validate the claim that New World “savages” possessed no “civilization.” The limited visibility of Native peoples (as Brandy Nālani McDougall calls it in her chapter) is a consequence of these efforts at erasure coupled with the prominence given to stereotypes of “the Indian.” The chapters that follow elucidate the diverse contexts of indigenous experience that are needed to bring the Native quality of Native American Literature into central focus and heightened visibility. These chapters also survey the rich historical, generic, stylistic and tribal range of Native literary texts that counter, subvert, and ultimately render irrelevant static Indian stereotypes in favor of the dynamic representation of Native American experience.

While every national literature is distinctive, requiring that readers bring to it a basic competence in terms of historical, social, cultural, intellectual and aesthetic contexts, Native American Literature presents a particularly complex case. There are currently more than 560 federally recognized Native American tribes in the U.S. and Alaska, with many more tribal groups that have not been granted official recognition. Regionally, these tribes have experienced distinct histories of colonial contact – with European powers such as the British, French, Spanish, Dutch – and further radical displacement and reorganization in the period since U.S. independence. Thus, historically, the Native tribes of the U.S. experienced very different legacies of colonization in the period before the U.S. Supreme Court took control of Native issues and, since then, in terms of distinct state-level interventions. The tribes of Native North America continue to constitute distinct social and cultural communities, each of which has been shaped in particular ways by the impact of

European colonization. The interplay between the indigenous cultures that endure and these colonial impacts form a framework of allusions and references that characterize Native American literary texts. These allusions may not be familiar to non-Native readers, or indeed to Native readers whose heritage differs from that represented in a specific literary text. This is what the present *Companion* seeks to provide: a comprehensive yet manageable introduction to the contexts essential to reading Native American Literature. I have been consistently referring to “Native American Literature” (as befits the volume’s title) and, while the term has coherence and a powerful conventional meaning, it is essential to remember that the very category “Native American” is itself an invention or product of this history of colonization. So it is worth reminding ourselves about the complex nature of each of the terms used in the title of this volume: “Native. American. Literature.”

“Native”

All of the terms “Native American,” “American Indian,” and “indigenous American” are used to describe people who inherit, by descent from the first inhabitants, claims on the territory now known as the United States of America. These general terms apply to all “first people” regardless of any specific tribal affiliation. However, Native peoples often self-identify according to tribe (Cherokee or Anishinaabe or Tlingit, say) rather than with a generalized or “pan-Indian” term like “Native” or “indigenous” American. The advantage offered by the term “Native American” is its inclusivity, encompassing all tribal groups within the U.S. and Alaska, as well as the significant number of writers who trace their ancestry to several tribes and those who identify as being of mixed race. The term “Indian” carries strong colonial associations as the preferred term used by the U.S. Federal government (to name the Bureau of Indian Affairs, for example) but for this reason is an important reminder of the fact that “Indian” is a legal definition as well as a racial, cultural, social, and personal identity marker. The term “indigenous” is possibly more problematic, especially in literary terms, because of its anthropological connotations; however, in the period since the ratification of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People this term has entered more general use to name the important commonalities shared by indigenous communities globally. Throughout this volume all three terms are used by contributors who choose the terminology that is most appropriate to the issues they discuss.

“Native American” designates a range of kinds of identities: in settler-colonial terms, “Native” is a racial identity; in tribal terms “Native” is a mode of self-identification that names relationships with family, clan, tribe and other Native peoples in addition to the U.S. nation-state. U.S. federal government recognition confers legal identity but is far from the sole determinant of Native identity. It was sadly ironic that in 2007, on the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown and amidst celebratory reminders of that era’s most famous story – that of Pocahontas – contemporary tribal communities descended from seventeenth-century Powhatans were still struggling to gain federal recognition. In the document “Procedure for Establishing That An American Indian Group Exists as an Indian Tribe” (1978), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) sets out the terms under which an indigenous tribe can petition for recognition from the U.S. federal government and makes clear that the burden of proving their indigenous status lies with the tribe. In the latest list of recognized “Indian entities” not one of the Virginia tribal groups – the Mattaponi, Pamunkey, Chickahominy and Eastern Chickahominy, Rappahannock, Upper Mattaponi, Nansemond, Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), and Patowomeck tribes, the Nottoway Indian Tribe, and the Monacan Indian Nation – appears as a legally constituted U.S. indigenous community and in fact Virginia – like many of the originally-colonized states – is home to no recognized tribes at all (see Department of the Interior “Indian Entities”; National Parks Service).

The questions surrounding “authenticity” – who is Indian; what is the nature of indigeneity; what counts as “Native” American Literature; who qualifies as a “Native American” writer and how

that identity is determined – run through much Native American Literature and scholarly engagements with it, as Judit Kádár explains in her chapter. External criteria include membership of a federally recognized tribe; acceptance as a member of a tribal community; and “blood quantum” (or proportion of Native ancestry). The latter became an influential definition of Indianness only in the latter nineteenth century, following the requirement of the Dawes Act that tribal members formally enrol in order to determine who was entitled to an allotment of land. This “objective” measure of descent becomes especially complicated for individuals who are of mixed blood either due to inter-tribal marriage or inter-racial marriage; this is discussed by Carol Miller in her chapter on literary engagements with urban Native experience. Again in urban contexts, the validation of identity through tribal community recognition can be problematic and, as Miller points out, underlies Native insistence that “urban” refers to a complex and evolving “experience” rather than a category of identity for indigenous people. This distinction also opposes the damaging stereotypes that claim “real” Native people cannot survive in the modern urban environment by focusing instead on the experiential continuance of Native individuals and nations through adaptation and the development of an “indigenous urbanity,” as Miller calls it. The mythical figure of the “Vanishing American” is captured in Gerald Vizenor’s concept of the “*indian*” – italicized and lower-case – to express the fictional nature of this constructed stereotypical character that is placed in a mythical historical and territorial environment far removed from the contemporary lived world (*Fugitive Poses* 15). The “*indian*” fills the representational gap left by the colonial erasure of real, complex, living Native people.

The mixed-race identity claimed by many canonical Native American writers and represented by the literary protagonists of many canonical texts destabilizes these Native stereotypes. Mixed-blood characters navigating between cultural worlds disturb the normative racial and also gender and sexual values of settler-colonial society. The role of gender and sexuality in the structure of settler-colonialism is interrogated and deconstructed by scholars who approach these identities from the perspective offered by indigenous Feminisms and through gender roles such as Two Spirit/Queer Indian identities. The analysis of how patriarchy and heteronormativity operate as strategies of settler-colonialism to subvert and erase pre-contact tribal practices of gender and sexuality (by scholars like Mark Rifkin, Andrea Smith, and Deborah Miranda) expose direct links between the violent occupation of colonized lands and colonial violence against women and those of non-normative sexual orientation. Alicia Cox and Leah Sneider explain how violent attempts to dismantle traditional tribal gender and sex roles constitute an attack on tribal sovereignty and self-determination at the most intimate level of self-identification; and remind us of the power of Native challenges to settler normativity. As Chris LaLonde’s quotation from Linda Hogan’s poem “The Truth is” reminds us: “it is dangerous to be a woman of two countries” (5). The mixed-blood in Native American Literature disturbs U.S. epistemologies by presenting these colonialist ways of knowing as highly contingent when viewed from the perspective of tribal realities. LaLonde refers to this in terms of epistemological disobedience, represented at its most fundamental by the refusal to be defined by or as the “*indian*.” A long-running controversy focuses on the degree of emphasis that should be placed on the components of mixed-race identity. Scholars sometimes labelled as “cosmopolitans” like Elvira Pulitano place great emphasis on European rather than indigenous heritage when discussing “hybrid” or mixed-blood identities. But the long history of Native-settler contact repeatedly shows the incorporation of European (and Asian) elements into cultural practices that remain resolutely Native. As contributors to this *Companion* – such as Earl Fitz, Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Drew Lopenzina, Kenneth Roemer, John Gamber, and others – conclusively demonstrate, indigenous writers have consistently included styles of expression borrowed from colonists to produce forms of expressivity that are no less indigenous for making use of foreign materials that could enhance communicative power – often in the interests of cross-cultural explanations or to advance the rights of indigenous communities.

Cross-cultural relations, of course, can be inter-tribal as well as “colonial-cosmopolitan.” As

I have already mentioned, Native America includes more than 560 tribal nations, though the category “Native American” has been constructed historically as a monolithic identity. Many of the following chapters comment on the difficulty of generalizing across such tribal diversity: from Earl Fitz’s overview of the many different indigenous languages and cultures of the American hemisphere that incorporates Anglo-French Canada, the U.S., Spanish America, and Brazil; to Birgit Brander Rasmussen’s account of indigenous literacies from the Andes to Panama, throughout Meso-America, across the North American Plains to Alaska, in the woodlands, along the eastern seaboard, and throughout the Northeast; to Janet Fiskio’s survey of indigenous foodways of North America, which include thousands of practices from the arid farmers of the Sonoran Desert, to the Salmon peoples of the Pacific Northwest. A few specific instances that put into question the concept of “Native America” are singled out for particular attention: Brandy Nālani McDougall offers an overview of the cultural, historical, and political contexts that shape colonial relations between the United States and the incorporated territory of Hawai‘i, the unincorporated territories of Guåhan (Guam) and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the freely associated states of the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Marshall Islands; Susan Kollin examines how Aleut, Athabaskan, Eyak, Haida, Iñupuit, Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Yupik literatures have all addressed issues of colonialism through questions of community and identity, land struggles, statehood, tourism, and resource extraction; and Iping Liang considers the transpacific relations between Native American and indigenous Asian literatures (what Chadwick Allen might call “trans-indigenous” relations).

“American”

The term “American” in “Native American” represents another complex terminological issue. “American” implicitly identifies the geography of North America with the political culture of the United States. Yet Native Americans were largely ineligible for U.S. citizenship until the passage of the Nationality Act of 1940, though the process of granting full citizenship began with the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. Before 1924, the granting of U.S. citizenship depended upon assimilation and the surrender of tribal citizenship, a sacrifice that many Native people were unwilling make. The conjunction of the terms “Native” and “American” then exposes a number of key contexts: the ongoing colonized conditions that influence the identities and lifeways of indigenous Americans; the conflictual dynamic that underlies the history of relations between Native American peoples and, initially, the colonies that became the U.S., then the U.S. as an independent nation-state and imperial power; and the importance of U.S. law in attempting to shape Native North America into the desired image of the U.S. federal government – from the period of treaty-making and the Marshall Decisions of the 1830s, through the establishment of reservations and the attempt to dismantle them through the Allotment Act of the late nineteenth century, to the various strategies of forced assimilation and the recent acknowledgements of Native rights in U.S. laws like NAGPRA and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The colonial era until around 1830, as David J. Carlson explains, is marked by an uneven history of treaty-making, up to the unilateral suspension of treaty-making by the U.S. under the Indian Appropriations Act of 1871. Native nations and colonizing states held different views of what a treaty is and what it does; consequently, treaties reveal details of indigenous political thought and cultural practice as well as functioning as a mechanism of colonization. As Bruce Johansen also observes in his chapter, much of the political activism beginning in the 1960s turned to treaty rights as a strategy for reclaiming tribal traditions and preserving access to resources. Carlson highlights the preservation of indigenous traditions in the form of the treaty which functions as a type of performative, dramatic text encoding specific tribal understandings of diplomatic and human relationships. Literary texts may use the history, or individual acts, of treaty-making as part of the

story or diegesis while engaging on the rhetorical level with the issues of textual interpretation that are central to the function of treaties. That is, by asking how meanings are constructed that create inter-personal, inter-national, and even inter-species (a topic taken up by Brian Hudson) relations, literary engagement with treaties and treaty history can work as a tool for de-colonization.

The 1830s is often characterized as the start to the Removals era because of the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the series of legal decisions by Chief Justice John Marshall that enabled the forced relocation of eastern tribes to “unsettled” and “reserved” territories west of the Mississippi under the Act. In her discussion of the so-called “Marshall Trilogy” Sabine N. Meyer outlines the legal conceptualization of Native sovereignty that emerged in each case and analyzes the legal and cultural fictions that John Marshall employed to validate his arguments. An enduring complication that originates in Marshall's decision in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) is the definition of indigenous tribes as “domestic dependent nations.” That is, autonomous nations that are territorially bounded by the U.S. and ideologically placed as “wards” of the U.S. federal government. This changed the terms by which treaties could be made between nations of equal status, asserting the plenary power of the U.S. Congress over Native tribal nations. In 1851 Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Act, which allocated funds to create reservations ostensibly for the protection of western tribes against the increasing and violent encroachment of settlers on their territory, though the threat may equally have been posed by Native occupation of land and control of resources that threatened to limit the westward expansion of the U.S. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw an intensification of the “Indian Wars” that had been continuing since first contact with colonists, with the Seminole, Navajo, Sioux, Apache, Ute, Modoc, Arapaho, Comanche, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Nez Percé among the tribal nations that engaged the U.S. militarily. In the stereotypical narrative of the vanishing “*indian*,” indigenous peoples emerge as the tragic victims of these military encounters – perhaps nowhere more so than in accounts of massacres and other atrocities – but Oliver Scheiding reminds us that Native literary responses to warfare are more than defensive strategies of resistance and containment; rather, literature has been a location for the reevaluation of complex intersections among Native peoples and Euro-American settlers.

The Indian Appropriations Act of 1871 brought to an end treaty-making and all government-to-government negotiations between the U.S. and Native American tribes, while the decades of the 1870s and 1880s saw moves by Congress to redefine Native people as individuals rather than as members of distinct tribal nations. The General Allotment Act (or Dawes Act) of 1887 empowered the Department of the Interior to divide tribally-held lands, to distribute an allotment to each enrolled tribal member, and to sell “excess” lands to U.S. settlers. In the half-century following allotment, approximately two-thirds of formerly tribal land moved into non-Native ownership. Allotment required that all Native people formally enroll as members of their tribal nation; that degrees of Native descent (blood quantum) be recorded and used to determine whether individuals were “competent” to manage their own financial affairs; that allottees adopt U.S. citizenship (which became possible more generally only in 1924); and, at its most basic, the process of allotment transferred legally recognized Native landbases to the trusteeship of Congress, thus giving the U.S. legal title to the land. As Mark Rifkin makes clear, the aim of this project was to eliminate the tribe as a political entity and to force Native people to assimilate to the individualistic property-owning model of the “proper” U.S. citizen, with corresponding pressure on Native forms of self-representation. The sale of reservation lands raised funds to support new and existing programs to train indigenous people to become citizens. Between 1879 (when the Carlisle Indian Industrial School opened) and 1924 (when full citizenship rights were granted to all Native Americans), the U.S. government sponsored efforts to assimilate Native Americans by educating them in boarding schools located both on and off reservations. As Tova Cooper explains, these effects produced an ongoing and often highly traumatic legacy for Native American identity and culture.

By the early twentieth century, Native-settler relations had seen an end to treaty-making, the

imposition of U.S. citizenship, and the abandonment of aggressive allotment and assimilation programs. The ending of organized assimilation efforts was largely the consequence of the critiques of federal Indian policy set out in Lewis Meriam's influential 1928 report, submitted to the Secretary of the Interior as *The Problem of Indian Administration*, which determined many of the provisions of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, which is also known as the "Indian New Deal." Under the Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, John Collier Sr., the Act reversed the privatization of communally-held lands under the Dawes Act; facilitated a return to tribal self-governance, in part by restoring tribal management of resources such as land; and assisted in the creation of tribally-controlled educational resources. As Joseph Bauerkemper points out, these policy changes promoted corresponding and long-lasting shifts in tribal discourses regarding kinship and citizenship. However, in 1953 Congress adopted the policy of "Termination" and a return to aggressive assimilation in the effort to make all Native Americans within the territorial limits of the U.S. subject to the same laws, rights and responsibilities as all U.S. citizens. This meant ending federal recognition of and responsibility for some 109 tribes before the policy was abandoned in 1968. Bureau of Indian Affairs services were discontinued, legal jurisdiction was transferred to state governments, tribal sovereignty was abolished and, under the BIA Relocation Program, Native people were actively encouraged to move from tribal lands to urban centers where they were promised assistance with housing, training and employment. Carol Miller offers an account of the impacts of termination and relocation on the experience of indigeneity in this period and in literary reflections on the urban Indian experience. Certainly, the power of Congress unilaterally to abolish the existence of tribal nations served to underline the extent of the plenary power that the U.S. federal government could exercise over Native American nations.

The impact of termination on American Indian communities was devastating. In 1968, the Indian Civil Rights Act began the process of restoring Native self-determination by requiring tribal consent for states to assume jurisdiction over Indian land and, by extending some but not all Constitutional protections of individual rights, offered tribal courts the opportunity to interpret the law in terms of specific tribal traditions and so extend the exercise of tribal sovereignty. This period saw renewed the political activism of the Red Power and American Indian Movements though, as Bruce Johansen points out, indigenous activism and protest had been a necessary response to settler colonialism from first contact. Other legislative acts that continued to promote Native self-determination include the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, and the Native American Languages Act of 1990. Two legislative instruments – the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 – were significant forerunners to the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which answered to a long history of Native outrage concerning the misappropriation of indigenous sacred artifacts and human remains. Amelia Katanski addresses the Act's imperative for communication among groups such as tribal governments, museums, government agencies, scientific organizations, and indigenous advocacy organizations, as a context for her argument that literary texts about repatriation themselves constitute legal co-texts in that they produce and embody dialogue about NAGPRA, its potential and its limitations. In the same way that treaties function in David J. Carlson's account, so texts about NAGPRA work performatively to do that which they are about, communicating both on the level of content and also of rhetorical form. These positive twentieth-century legislative moves towards indigenous self-determination and the reversal of centuries of colonial violence (physical and cultural) must, however, be evaluated in the context of a fundamental and enduring paradox in U.S.-Native relations. This basic contradiction is summed up by Eric Cheyfitz in his account of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In the Declaration, land is clearly identified as the crucial issue confronting indigenous peoples but, the issue of the rightful possession of this land is rendered ambiguous. The Declaration makes reference to the "dispossession" of indigenous lands by colonial powers and also to indigenous peoples' "rights to their lands" – lands that have already

been taken away from them by the invading colonial power. Consequently, Cheyfitz concludes, while the Declaration may intend to endorse the liberation of indigenous peoples it remains a colonial document because it explicitly recognizes the legitimacy of “the territorial integrity” and “political unity” of the dominating settler-colonial states. In the same way, acts by the U.S. Congress may endorse increasing self-determination for American Indian tribes but these legislative moves are always located within the context of congressional plenary power over tribes that in U.S. terms remain largely, as in Chief Justice Marshall’s formulation, “domestic dependent nations.”

The history of Native American Civil Rights and documents like the UN Declaration conceptualize the possibilities for indigenous sovereignty from the colonial “outsider” perspective of the Westphalian nation-state; but Native writers adopt an indigenous-centered view of this dynamic to assert the continuous existence of tribal world-views, traditions, values, and practices to promote tribal sovereignty in relation to such things as inter-nation diplomacy (discussed here by Tammy Wahpeconiah), management of environments and environmental resources (Lee Schweninger), non-human animals (Brian Hudson), food (Janet Fiskio), health (Hsinya Huang), religion (Susannah Hopson), community (Kirby Brown), and the forms of activism required to ensure the survivance of these forms of tribal sovereignty (Bruce Johansen). These Native-centered ways of knowing and relating to reality are profoundly disturbing to settler-colonial epistemologies and the social, cultural, political, and legal systems they support. The grounds of indigenous epistemology is, literally, the ground – the land that gives meaning to indigeneity. As Jace Weaver describes, “When Natives are removed from their traditional lands, they are robbed of more than territory; they are deprived of numinous landscapes that are central to their faith and their identity, lands populated by their relations, ancestors, animals, and beings both physical and mythological. A kind of psychic homicide is committed” (38). Thus, sovereignty is a claim to land that makes possible the claim to identity – an identity that is defined by a network of relationships that are known in the context of a reality based on these “numinous landscapes.” It is this claim to tribal sovereignties that are grounded in Native ontologies that can make Native American literary texts seem obscure. Texts assume some familiarity with the distinctive nature of tribal understandings of what it means to be human in relation to health and spirituality, animals and plants, and to physical environments, as well as the impact on Native communities of environmental devastation and the extinction of animal species in the wake of colonization – as well as the interconnectedness of the various expressions of Native sovereignty. As the chapters in this volume make clear, the continuity of Native America, as a distinct group of tribal communities sharing common fundamental values, despite more than 500 years of colonial onslaught – and the preservation of these values as fundamental to a vital and living Native sovereignty – is an assertion of sovereignty the performance of which takes a variety of expressive or literary forms.

“Literature”

The term “Native American Literature” is complicated not only by the identification of “American” with the United States, as a governmental, social, and cultural entity that continues to claim plenary powers over indigenous nations, but also by the identification of “American” as signifying an anglophone culture. Changes in language usage were an essential impact of colonization: the tribes of the south and southwest encountered Spanish-speaking colonists; those of the northeast experienced first contact with francophone fur-trappers and traders; the tribes of the Atlantic seaboard encountered the English. A fundamental principle of assimilation efforts was the eradication of tribal languages; an effort the reversal of which required the Native American Languages Act of 1990 to guarantee the right of Native people to use their indigenous languages. While English is the language used most commonly by Native American writers – and in all canonical texts in the field – many Native American literary texts use code-switching between

English and a tribal language sometimes with the inclusion of elements of a European colonial language, such as French or Spanish, as well. This is only one of the ways in which Native American expressive culture puts into question the issues of language and literacy – questioning the definition of “literature” itself.

Beyond the well known opposition between oral expression and writing, material cultural forms such as wampum or petroglyphs, pictographs or geoglyphs or earthworks complicate the ways in which literacy is understood in Native American Literatures of all periods. Thus, the ancient mound-builders of what is now Newark, Ohio allow Cari M. Carpenter to orient her discussion of Native American intellectualism through the lunar earthwork that challenges the western equation of literacy with intellect, while Birgit Brander Rasmussen discusses the historic use of hieroglyphic scripts inscribed on the trunks of trees and on birch bark, wampum in the Northeast and quipus in the Andes and then, in the aftermath of colonization, pen and paper. The violent erasure of indigenous expressive cultures in the early contact period marked the beginning of the state of invisibility that has characterized colonial approaches to the systems of indigenous literacy. And yet, as Rasmussen reminds us, the historical record includes examples of intercultural exchange, such as the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún who worked with Aztec scribes to produce texts that brought into dialogue Spanish and Aztec writing systems and languages, producing culturally hybrid documents uniquely rooted in the colonial context: including work like the *Florentine Codex* and the books of *Chilam Balam*. Or in seventeenth-century New France, the Franciscan missionary Christian Le Clerq attempted to learn the Mi'kmaq writing system and, according to Rasmussen, adding some signs that he invented himself, produced a hybrid writing system. Drew Lopenzina also reminds us that when Native people were introduced to western forms of literacy, these forms were brought into conformity with their own traditions, creating new syncretic forms of expression that had their roots in indigenous customs. He quotes Lisa Brooks' point that “transformations occurred when the European system entered Native space. Birchbark messages became letters and petitions, wampum records became treaties” (13). These forms, which are better described as “syncretic” than “hybrid,” enact an interplay of speech acts and visuality that, as David Stirrup explains, expresses particular intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic histories through the performance of relationships between narrative and visual art-forms.

The importance of visuality in Native traditions of expressivity is sadly ironic given the invisibility of Native literacies that has been wrought by colonial violence. Yet traces of indigenous expressivity can be found in representations of Native American identities in key, canonical settler texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as Kathryn Gray demonstrates, by attending to how Native American identities are mediated and the ways in which Native American voices are translated and transcribed for English-speaking readers. Drew Lopenzina also finds evidence for Native religion, laws, and writing in the colonial reports of, for example, ceremonies to which settlers were witnesses and sometimes participants. While wanting to deny the “civilization” of Native peoples by denying the existence of expressive tribal cultures, still colonists could not avoid the traces of indigenous cultural presence in their writing, just as Native writers like Caleb Cheeshateaumauk, Samson Occom, Joseph Johnson, William Apess, and George Copway could not but write with both Native and white audiences in mind. While oral tribal traditions could not be denied, oral language was frequently misread and misinterpreted as a simplistic, even primitive, form of expression in contrast to the supposedly more sophisticated form of writing. But as Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez shows, orality is potentially a more complex form than writing (though contemporary Native American writers skillfully incorporate oral techniques into their printed texts). Oral communication is, to use her term, “conversive”: supportive of the interpersonal and intersubjective relations that directly affect personal, interpersonal, and community wellbeing. The centrality of community, tribe, nation, place, and interpersonal connection to the hermeneutics of indigenous expressive traditions links these traditions to tribal ceremony, as Diveena Marcus explores in her discussion of the indigenous theory of knowledge that underlies Native practices of

song, language, and dance.

These expressive traditions and indigenous literacies lend Native American Literature a range of unique textual and aesthetic forms, forms that facilitate substantive engagement with specific moments in Native history and sovereign tribal world-views. Stephanie Sellers introduces the relatively new literary genre of the Indigenous Communal Narrative which, in contrast to the much older ethnographic genre of the “as-told-to story,” works to incorporate an entire community – the earth, animals, plants, and the cosmos as well as the human tribe – into the voice of the narrative. The creation of the text does not involve a monolithic, authoritative, singular voice speaking for the whole nation in the form of an “as-told-to” autobiography but requires consultation and collaboration with the tribal Council, clan historians, and living descendants. As-told-to narratives have been criticized for reproducing a non-indigenous vision of Native lives and, at worst, perpetuating the stereotype of the “*indian*”: Birgit Däwes highlights the work being done in drama that parallels the developments in Native-centered life-writing discussed by Stephanie Sellers. Däwes focuses on the innovative strategies used by contemporary playwrights to dismantle and redefine the cultural imaginary of the *indian*, and to replace hegemonic representations with original voices, using the stage in myriad ways to create sites for the negotiation of identity and cultural difference, memory and tradition, as well as issues of sovereignty, agency, and futurity.

The development of the Native American literary tradition is marked by that openness to innovation that I described above as a syncretic trait. Mediations with the Anglo-European tradition are mapped by Kenneth Roemer: Jane Schoolcraft's use of the language and vocabulary of nineteenth-century poetry, Alexander Posey's use of late nineteenth-century satiric dialect sketches, John Joseph Mathews' use of the *Walden* model, the transformations of Anglo-American Modernist conventions in the writings of Scott Momaday, Leslie Silko, and Louise Erdrich, and LeAnne Howe's blendings of historical realism and mythical interventions. John Gamber notes John Rollin Ridge's use of the Western dime novel in *The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murrieta* (1854) and Alice Callahan's affective use of sentimental interiority in *Wynema* (1891). As Lopenzina shows for the earlier period, in later forms of Native literary expression, indigenous writers exercise their freedom to incorporate dominant literary traditions and conventions in ways that may be variously subversive (in the sense of deconstructing settler-colonial epistemologies) or “indigenizing” (by give these forms new meanings that express Native world-views). This process of borrowing is not restricted to European expressive forms, as Iping Liang shows in her discussion of transpacific literary relations: Native American writers have adopted elements of Asian literary forms and philosophical traditions – most notably haiku poetics – but indigenous Asian writers have also been free to borrow from models made available by Native American Literature. The development of the Native American literary tradition has involved not only influences from outside but also the internal pressures of periodization and canonicity. The novelistic tradition is mapped by John Gamber, the poetic tradition by Kathryn Shanley and David Moore, the tradition of storying through short fiction by A. Robert Lee. Some of the most recent additions to these traditions have been in the area of intermedial or text-and-image expression. In contemporary popular genres, film, and digital media, Native literary expression continues the long traditions set out in this *Companion*: refusing boundaries between the literary and the visual, mediating between Native and non-Native aesthetics, referencing a range of indigenous signifying forms such as birchbark scrolls, codices, petroglyphs, and wampum. In film, the comic, the graphic novel, digital shorts or what Susan Bernardin calls “poem-films,” visual storytelling operates within a network of complex relationships that mediate tradition and innovation.

This *Companion* engages with the long and dynamic traditions of Native American Literature in the broadest sense, relating the distinctive histories, world-views, traditions, aesthetic forms, and cultural contexts – while acknowledging the multiple scenes of tension (historical, political, cultural, and aesthetic) that inform Native literary engagements with issues of community identity, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, language, and sovereignty – all of which are needed to

prepare readers to approach the work of writers from diverse Native American tribal backgrounds with an appropriate readiness to appreciate these literatures specifically as forms of indigenous American expressivity.

WORKS CITED

- Allen, Chadwick. *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- Brooks, Lisa. *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Deloria, Vine, Jr. *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*. New York: Scribner, 1995.
- Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs.
[145A2100DD/A0T500000.000000/AAK3000000] "Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible To Receive Services From the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs." The Federal Register 80. 9 (14 Jan. 2015): 1942-48. Web. Accessed 30 Jan. 2015.
<http://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/webteam/documents/document/idc1-029026.pdf>
- . "Procedure for Establishing That An American Indian Group Exists as an Indian Tribe." *Federal Register*, 43. 106 (1 June 1978).
- Hogan, Linda. "The Truth is." *Seeing Through the Sun*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985. 4-5.
- National Parks Service, Historic Jamestown, "Meet the State-Recognized Virginia Indian Tribes." Web. Accessed 30 Jan. 2015. <http://home.nps.gov/jame/historyculture/virginia-indian-tribes.htm>
- Pulitano, Elvira. *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.
- Vizenor, Gerald. *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.
- Weaver, Jace. *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Womack, Craig S. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.