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Beyond Comparison
Reading Relations between Indigenous Nations

When Creek-Cherokee scholar Craig Womack published *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* in 1999, he issued a passionate call for attention to "tribally specific literatures and critical approaches" that are cultivated by "working from within the nation, rather than looking toward the outside" (225, 12). In so doing, Womack built upon Robert Warrior's advocacy of the use of Indigenous scholarship to study Indigenous texts in *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (1994) and Jace Weaver's foregrounding of the relation between Indigenous literature and Indigenous communities in *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (1997). Womack, Warrior, and Weaver subsequently united their voices in the publication of *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (2006), thereby consolidating a literary-critical movement of the same name. American Indian literary nationalism, variously known as Native literary nationalism or Indigenous literary nationalism, continues to exert a powerful influence on Indigenous literary studies, offering a much-needed corrective to modes of scholarship that unquestioningly impose Euro-Western theories upon Indigenous texts or that homogenize culturally-specific writing by reducing it to a "pan-tribal stew" (Womack 62).[1]

Almost two decades after the publication of Womack's book, Native literary nationalism continues to offer vital principles for reading Indigenous literature. At the same time, this duration is substantial enough to prompt reflection about the movement's possibilities and challenges. One challenge, for example, has concerned the fraught resonances of the Euro-Western "historical 'nation-state' model, which depends upon unifying patriotism, coercive policing of perceived deviance, and hegemonic allegiance to the structures of the state at the expense of kinship and other loyalties"

(Fagan et al. 21). Distinguishing Indigenous nationhood from "industrialized nation-states," Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice avers that "Indigenous nationhood is more than simple political independence or the exercise of a distinctive cultural identity; it's also an understanding of a common social interdependence within the community, the tribal web of kinship rights and responsibilities that link the People, the land, and the cosmos together" ("Go Away, Water!" 151). Despite these distinctions, scholars have expressed concern over the "dominance of male perspectives" in much Native literary nationalist criticism, as well as the movement's primary focus on American texts and contexts (Fagan et al. 26, 21)—features that risk perpetuating the exceptionalism of Euro-Western nationalism.

Critics have also discussed the ways that Native literary nationalism has seemingly overshadowed cosmopolitanist literary analyses that, broadly construed, focus on "situating . . . Indigenous literatures within broader multicultural, transnational, and global contexts" (Allen, "Decolonizing Comparison" 379).[2] According to Chickasaw scholar Chadwick Allen, these two modes—the nationalist and the cosmopolitanist—have, over the past two decades, often been framed as antithetical. Sketching out this "rift hypothesis," Allen describes the

> recent truism that a great rift now exists between competing schools of scholarship on . . . Indigenous literatures . . . Each side is easily caricatured. The nationalist position can be dismissed as having little to say about Indigenous literatures 'as literatures' . . . The cosmopolitan position can be dismissed by its detractors for foregrounding the study of purely literary matters, such as style or aesthetics, and for minimizing the importance of specific tribal contexts. ("Decolonizing Comparison" 379)

Such a rift, however hypothetical or real it once was, now appears to be on the decline, as Justice contends that there is a "growing understanding in critical circles that literary nationalism and cosmopolitanism are—or can be—complementary approaches" ("Currents" 338).

While recent currents in Indigenous literary scholarship are warming to the idea that literary nationalism and cosmopolitanism can be complementary, much less has been said about *how*, in *literary critical practice*, scholars might formulate reading methods through which such complementarity could be enacted.[3] The objective of this essay is to derive one such possible methodological approach from Indigenous literature itself while engaging with recent Indigenous scholarship along the way—notably that of Allen and Māori scholar Alice Te Punga Somerville, who have each formulated methods for reading "Indigenous-Indigenous encounter[s]" (Somerville, "The Lingering" 23).

By reading Indigenous literature for what it teaches about critical methods, I seek to translate Native literary nationalism's call for prioritizing Indigenous knowledges and methods into a reading practice that carefully attends to how Indigenous literary texts articulate, on their own terms, interactions with diverse Indigenous communities. Attention to such interactions may, in turn, contribute to more inclusive versions of Native literary nationalism, demonstrating how distinct, local forms of Indigenous nationhood may be strengthened and enriched, rather than diluted, through exchanges across different Indigenous cultures. At the same time, carefully considering how Indigenous authors and texts depict such Indigenous-Indigenous interactions may also help to generate a more accountable and responsive method of reading with and beyond the nation. From this perspective, I argue for a methodological shift away from "comparative" and "cosmopolitan" frameworks, and toward readings of Indigenous-Indigenous encounters that foreground the terms of engagement and the particular modes of relationality articulated in and by Indigenous authors and literary texts themselves.

Considering the Trans-Indigenous: Recent Methods and Debates

In his 2012 book, *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*, Allen advocates the pursuit of Indigenous literary studies on a global scale, "not to displace the necessary, invigorating study of specific traditions and contexts but rather to complement these by augmenting and expanding broader, globally Indigenous fields of inquiry" (xiv). In formulating a new approach to studying the "global Indigenous" (xix), Allen recommends a shift away from the term "comparative," which, from "its Latin roots," etymologically "unites 'together' (*com-*) with 'equal' (*par*)" (xiii). According to Allen, the idea of "together equal" "sounds like a noble goal" but, "in the actual practice of literary scholarship, it is often impracticable—or simply uninteresting" (xiii). As an alternative, Allen introduces the concept of the "trans-Indigenous." Like the terms "*trans*lation, *trans*national, and *trans*form," Allen contends, "*trans*-Indigenous may be able to bear the complex, contingent asymmetry and the potential risks of unequal encounters borne by the preposition *across*" (xv, emphasis original). Despite his advocacy of a shift in nomenclature from "comparative" to "trans," in his 2014 essay, "Decolonizing Comparison: Toward a *Trans-Indigenous* Literary Studies," Allen recommends engaging "on Indigenous terms, the ideals and best practices of comparative approaches to literary studies," which he identifies as "focused attention to language and

idiom, close reading, interpretation, and contextualization" (382). While none of these analytic techniques is the sole purview of comparative literature, the question of what it means to engage them "on Indigenous terms" remains unclear. The essay's title, however, suggests that the "trans-Indigenous" reading practices formulated by Allen in his 2012 book might map a "decolonizing" direction "toward" which critics might move.

In his monograph, Allen argues that trans-Indigenous literary studies hinge upon "a methodology of focused *juxtapositions* of distinct Indigenous texts, performances, and contexts" (*Trans-Indigenous* xvii). Building on the etymology of the word "juxtapose" that "unites 'close together'. . . with 'to place,'" Allen asserts that "Indigenous juxtapositions place diverse texts close together across genre and media, aesthetic systems and worldviews, technologies and practices, tribes and nations . . . and historical periods and geographical regions" (xvii-xviii). Like the question of what it means to engage the "ideals and best practices" of comparative literature "on Indigenous terms," it is also important to ask: what makes a "juxtaposition" an "*Indigenous* juxtaposition"? Is it the content of what is being juxtaposed or the subject position of the critic doing the juxtaposing? Or, are "Indigenous juxtaposition[s]" those enacted by Indigenous texts themselves through allusion, intertextuality, and other ways of addressing multiple Indigenous cultures? In theory, the answer could be any or all of the above. Throughout Allen's book, however, juxtaposition is primarily developed in terms of the critic's act of "placing together" or "staging" (xix). Allen at times tempers his use of "staging"—a word that could suggest a constructed combination—with the adjective "purposeful," while, in other instances, he speaks of "an explicit process of experimentation with different forms of juxtaposition" (xix). The modifiers "purposeful" and "experimental" generate potential contradiction for understanding how critics should select the texts and contexts to be "placed together," while the question of what constitutes purposefulness and for whom lingers.

The dilemma regarding the extent of critical agency exercised in "staging" juxtapositions comes to the fore in chapter 3 of *Trans-Indigenous*, wherein Allen analyzes Kiowa and Cherokee author N. Scott Momaday's poem "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919." Throughout his corpus, Momaday recursively returns to the scene depicted in this poem: the ceremonial honouring of his Kiowa paternal grandfather, Mammedaty, "who was a member of the *Tian-paye*, or Gourd Dance Society," at a giveaway, "an ancient Plains tradition of giving gifts as a public expression of honor and esteem" ("Sacred

Places" 113). Although this event took place before Momaday was born, the scene is transmitted to him via his father's stories, through which Momaday "could see . . . [the giveaway] as vividly as if [he] had been there" ("Sacred Places" 113).

In chapter 3, Allen draws out the dual resonances of "trans-Indigenous" as both "trans-national" and "trans-media," with the latter term referring to a movement across art forms. Allen analyzes Momaday's poem in relation to Kiowa pictographs, Navajo weaving, and Māori carving—or what Allen calls "aesthetic systems" (106)—that he employs as "analytic tools" to generate new interpretations of the poem (131).[4] Although "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919" does not reference these art forms, Allen asserts that "Kiowa and Navajo systems of aesthetics can be connected to Momaday's biography and poetic process, and their use in the interpretation of his work can be justified by appealing to the tribal affiliation, family history, and personal experience of the author" (131).[5] Certainly, Momaday does combine elements of multiple Indigenous and Western cultures in some of his work, including his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *House Made of Dawn* (1968), wherein he interweaves Kiowa, Navajo, and Jemez Pueblo influences. "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919," however, is a very different text that focuses upon familial memories related to a specific time and place. With regard to his final turn to Māori carving, Allen states, "as far as I am aware, Momaday has no personal or professional experience" with and "no particular stake [in]" Māori culture (*Trans-Indigenous* xxviii). The connection, instead, is a product of Allen's own interests and training—a move that is in keeping with Allen's framing of trans-Indigenous scholarship as "grounded in" the Indigenous critic's own cultural context (xix), while also "radiat[ing] outward" in ways that may reflect her "biography" and routes (xvii). Such recognition of the Indigenous critic's positioning as rooted in her own culture resonates with the principles of Native literary nationalism. However, the question remains of how the move outward is negotiated, especially for non-Indigenous critics such as myself, as I discuss below.

The chapter's first interpretive experiment seeks "to conceive the poem as a contemporary, literary version of the kind of pictographic marker used in the customary Kiowa winter and summer counts" (111). In this vein, Allen analyzes the poem "as a mnemonic device designed to help organize an event of communal, familial, and personal importance within a temporal framework" (111). Allen's reading here is more persuasive than the subsequent juxtapositions because it remains conceptually associative, considering how

Kiowa pictographs depict culturally specific perspectives on temporality and communal remembrance, which resonate with the notion of genealogical memory that Momaday expresses in "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919." The emphasis is on a culture's way of understanding time—a topic Momaday has spoken of in interviews and discussed in references to Kiowa calendars in his writings (Woodard 55)—rather than a schematic formal correlation between two different "aesthetic systems" (i.e., poetry and pictographs).

The chapter's next interpretive step, however, seeks to demonstrate how "we can read Momaday's Kiowa poem as though it were conceived as . . . a Navajo textile" by employing a formalist experiment (116). In describing this interpretive process, Allen uses the active voice when discussing the readerly/critical "we"; but, when discussing the poem's conceptualization, he uses passive and conditional wording ("as though it were conceived"), which risks displacing Momaday's creative agency. In this section, Allen translates the poem into numerical data by counting lines and syllables, asserting that "[t]he twelve lines of the poem are divisible in multiple ways, and Momaday's sequences of odd- and even-numbered syllables per line lend themselves to multiple patterns" (120). Allen's admission that the poem's lines could be divided in "multiple ways," ranging from the "obvious" to the "elaborate," acknowledges that, in this reading methodology, the critic makes decisions about separating and schematizing the lines of a poem that the author chose to write without stanza breaks (120, 121). By "group[ing] the lines into sequences," Allen creates "'active' and 'static' blocks or spaces" that mimic "Navajo textile designs" (120). He then draws "a line to connect the number of syllables per line" (124), forming circles and triangles that resemble common symbols in Navajo weaving, thereby revealing what Allen calls "[d]eep [p]atterning" (115). While Allen's use of the term "deep patterning" to describe the connections between different art forms from distinct cultures appears to veer toward the revelation of a universal Indigenous aesthetic unconscious, he proactively rebuts such an interpretation:

> Let me be clear: I do not argue for an understanding of aesthetics that is *pan*-Indigenous, which would suggest a single aesthetic system applicable to all Indigenous cultures in all historical periods. On the contrary, I argue for the possibility of engaging distinct and specific Indigenous aesthetic systems in the appreciation and interpretation of diverse works of Indigenous art including written literature. (106)

His distinction, then, seems to lie with the power of the critic who "engag[es]" "Indigenous aesthetic systems" as "analytic tool[s]" (131) in order to re-read

Momaday's poem in new ways rather than revealing something operative within the poem itself (126). Perhaps that is precisely Allen's point: namely, that the critic's experimentation in applying different "aesthetic systems" to texts is a form of engagement and readerly "pleasure"—a term he uses repeatedly throughout the chapter (104, 107, 112, 131, 135)—that is, in itself, worthwhile.

When might certain forms of "staging juxtapositions" shift the power dynamics of interpretation too much into the hands of the critic and, in so doing, too far away from the artists and cultures whose works are being discussed? As a settler scholar, I am differently positioned than Allen to the work of Indigenous literary studies and I therefore have a responsibility to interrogate how I exercise critical agency. For these reasons, I feel cautious about incorporating Allen's experiments in "staging juxtapositions" (*Trans-Indigenous* xix) into my own reading methods. If I am correct in interpreting Allen as suggesting that the critic's experimentation in applying different "aesthetic systems" to texts constitutes a mode of generating "meaning and pleasure for multiple audiences" that is, in itself worthwhile (136), then it is important to consider when such a project's worth might be outweighed by its risks. While Allen focuses upon Indigenous critics and "multiple audiences who identify as Indigenous" (136), I worry that in its least reflexive (mis)interpretation by non-Indigenous readers, Allen's methodology of "staging juxtapositions" could enable forms of cultural appropriation or tokenistic cultural tourism. To guard against such problems, I am searching for methods that prevent different texts and contexts from being "plac[ed] together" in ways that are determined arbitrarily by the critic. Moreover, I am interested in considering how modes of reading Indigenous-Indigenous interactions might do more to actively incorporate the principles of Native literary nationalism.

Reading Self-Recognition in Indigenous-Indigenous Literary Relations

In *Tribal Secrets,* Warrior expounds two inter-connected principles that are key to affirming what he calls Indigenous "intellectual sovereignty" (xxiii). The first principle is that "critical interpretations of . . . [Indigenous] writings can proceed primarily from Indian sources" (xvi). The second is "that Native American writers be taken seriously as critics as well as producers of literature and culture" (xvi). In a similar vein, Justice argues that "Native literature is an expression of intellectual agency as well as aesthetic accomplishment" and "it has a role to play in the struggle for sovereignty, decolonization, and the reestablishment of Indigenous values to the healing of this wounded world"

("Currents" 336-37). Engaging these principles from the perspective of a non-Indigenous scholar, Sam McKegney contends that "[t]he non-Native ally must respect the creative integrity of the Native author, not by uncritically agreeing with everything she or he says, but by analyzing closely the significance of her or his representations" ("Writer-Reader" 45-46). Quoting Kimberly Blaeser, McKegney calls for "attentiveness to critical methods arising 'out of the literature itself'" ("Writer-Reader" 47) that respect the complex ways that texts "call into being" the varied "communities toward which . . . they are oriented" (*Magic Weapons* 54).

Such a reading strategy affirms what Yellowknives Dene political theorist Glen Coulthard refers to as a turn toward Indigenous self-recognition in which Indigenous people reject the modes of identification prescribed by the settler state and, in turn, set the terms through which they envision and represent themselves. According to Coulthard, "the pathway to self-determination" hinges upon "Indigenous peoples empowering themselves through cultural practices of individual and collective self-fashioning" (18). In this context, Coulthard cites Anishinaabe writer Leanne Simpson, who contends that "[b]uilding diverse, nation-culture-based resurgences means significantly reinvesting in our own ways of being: regenerating our political and intellectual traditions; articulating and living our legal traditions; language learning; [and] creating and using our artistic and performance based traditions" (qtd. in Coulthard 155). I want to mobilize Coulthard's concept of self-recognition to illuminate the work that Indigenous literature performs in giving voice to the manifold ways that Indigenous peoples envision and enact individual and collective identities. Literary scholars, I contend, have an opportunity to support Indigenous self-determination by highlighting the particular terms of self-recognition and relationship that Indigenous authors express.

What would it mean, then, to translate these principles articulated so cogently by Native literary nationalism into a reading practice for analyzing literary representations of Indigenous-Indigenous engagements? In envisioning this translation, I take a cue from Somerville's *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* (2012), in which she foregrounds the importance of studying "Māori *articulation* of connections with the Pacific" (xxvi). Somerville italicizes the word "articulation" to foreground "the extent to which our worlds are themselves produced by language" and how "texts are engaged not only with the description or representation of things (communities, histories) but with their very *production*" (xxvi-xxvii). In

other words, Somerville reads Māori literature with a view to understanding how writers express affinities and disjunctures between Indigenous peoples across Oceania. Attending to both the artists' and the texts' articulations need not entail a reductive assumption that authors determine the totality of all possible meanings that their articulations may effect. Rather, it entails pushing beyond simplistic understandings of authorial intent or coherent, bounded texts while carefully considering the intricate ways in which texts themselves speak—as well as the contexts out of which these textual commentaries emerge and the layered ways they may generate meanings in relation to multiple readerships.

To put these principles into reading practice, I want to return to the textual example at the heart of chapter 3 of *Trans-Indigenous*: Momaday's poem, "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919." My goal in doing so is to consider what Momaday's writing teaches readers about how to approach his art, thereby forwarding a method of reading for connections between Indigenous communities that foregrounds the text's complex articulation of Indigenous self-recognition. The title of the poem itself issues a call to specificity of time and place, signalling the location of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma's headquarters at a historical moment when, according to Momaday, "the Plains Indians had lost their freedom, their economy, their religion, and, very nearly, their spirit" ("The Testament" 75). By the early twentieth century, the Kiowa's land base had been decimated by allotment policies and the Bureau of Indian Affairs was aggressively targeting Indigenous dances for eradication, including what Indian Commissioner Charles Burke called "so-called religious ceremonies" that involved "the reckless giving away of property" (qtd. in Kracht 326). Although agents like Burke attempted to dismiss the giveaway as a "reckless" pursuit, settler anxiety hinged upon this ceremony's integral role in "maintaining and building intertribal relations" between the Kiowa and their Plains allies, the Comanches, Cheyenne, and Apache nations (Meadows 115). By invoking such a specific time and place in the poem's title and yet focusing upon intensely personal memories in the body of the poem itself, Momaday's text simultaneously alludes to and yet also decentres the context of colonial oppression. In so doing, the poem reclaims the giveaway in a sacred space of ancestral memory and reaffirms this ceremony's embodiment of longstanding Kiowa principles of relational engagement. In this way, the poem acts as a "vital testament of survival" (Momaday, "The Testament" 75) for Kiowa nationhood and its foundational practices of relationality, both within the Kiowa community and as the nation

constituted itself in and through diplomacy with other Indigenous nations.

With regard to Allen's trans-media analysis of Momaday's poem, there is much about Momaday's corpus that invites critical consideration of the use of multiple art forms. Momaday's work often interweaves photographs and drawings—the latter created by both the author and his father, renowned painter Al Momaday, throughout his writing. What seems surprising about Allen's analysis, however, is that in choosing to use different "aesthetic systems" as "analytic tools" to read the poem, he does not engage substantially with the one art form the poem *does* explicitly invoke—namely, beadwork. The speaker of the poem remarks: "In the giveaway is beaded / the blood memories of fathers and sons" (*In the Presence* 136). Allen notes that the poem establishes a "genealogical sequence" of "grandfather, father, I" that is "'beaded' together" across space and time (*Trans-Indigenous* 115). In this sense, the poem invokes Kiowa beading to emblematize the intergenerational transmission of history via "blood memory"—what Allen elsewhere has described as Momaday's "signature trope" that resists "the U.S. government's attempt to systematize and regulate Indian identities through . . . blood quantum" and "redefines Indian authenticity in terms of imaginative re-collecting and re-membering" (*Blood Narrative* 178). Despite this crucial linking of beadwork and blood memory, Allen instead focuses his discussion of the poem's "genealogical sequence" in terms of Kiowa pictographs. With regard to beadwork, Allen notes briefly that the poem's reference to beading is "most obviously associated with Plains Indian arts but also can be associated with Navajo weaving" (129) in order to proceed with his analysis of Navajo patterns.[6]

What might be learned from taking the poem's own trans-media cue and considering beading in the context with which it is "most obviously associated" in the text—namely, Kiowa culture? In her study of Kiowa art between 1875 and 1935, Jenny Tone-Pah-Hote argues that "[t]oo often, [Kiowa expressive culture . . .] has been seen as decontextualized objects, items of purely aesthetic value" rather than considering the vital role it has played in "the social and political history of the Kiowa" (3). Returning to Momaday's poem with Tone-Pah-Hote's insights in mind, it is important to recall how the poem invokes beadwork to describe "the blood memories of fathers and sons," or the forging of a paternal line of intergenerational memory, much like beads held tightly together on a string. In Kiowa culture, however, beadwork is an art form largely practiced by women. By 1919, in the wake of land dispossession and the decimation of traditional hunting economies, Kiowa women had transformed traditional beadwork into a

crucial economic support by producing large quantities of goods for trade in souvenir art markets (Rand 132-39). While Kiowa women "engag[ed] with the capitalist market," their "beadwork . . . defied capitalist principles" by refusing to "conform to the dictates of white customers" (Rand 139). Moreover, Kiowa women retained their more elaborate designs, such as those displayed on infant cradleboards, for work within their own nation, thereby using beadwork to "cement and communicate the importance of family and community relationships" (Tone-Pah-Hote iv).

Speaking of cradleboards—"fully beaded baby carriers" that are one of the most significant forms of beadwork in Kiowa culture (Tone-Pah-Hote 205)—Momaday has remarked:

> In the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the old way of life and hope itself were lost, the old women, the grandmothers, began to make cradles. They made them for children yet unborn. . . . They were gifts to those, beyond their own time . . . who would bear and determine the future, who would restore their world, if their world could be restored. ("The Testament" 75)

In this context, Momaday asserts: "I have come to think of the Indian cradle as a relic of recovery, a symbol of simple survival, an ancient faith in the continuity of generations" ("The Testament" 75). Referencing this discussion, Jenny Tone-Pah-Hote contends that Momaday "acknowledged that women's artistic labour linked generations of Kiowa men and women over time" (205). Returning to Momaday's reference to beading in "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919," then, it might be possible to discern an additional layer of meaning embedded in the poem's vision of intergenerational connection between "fathers and sons." Specifically, the image that entwines blood memory with beading may braid not only the past with the future but also the paternal with the maternal, thereby articulating the principle of "[b]ilateral descent" in Kiowa society that "allowed an individual to maintain strong ties to both sides of her family" (Rand 29). In this way, the poem might offer a tribally-specific articulation of kinship affiliations that resists the imposition of colonial heteropatriarchy and affirms a self-determining vision of Kiowa nationhood.

In addition to the textual cues within "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919," Momaday's recursive return to the scene of Mammedaty's honouring throughout his corpus generates a rich contextual apparatus through which to read the poem and guide the development of what McKegney calls "critical methods arising 'out of the literature itself'" ("Writer-Reader" 47).[7] For example, Momaday re-embeds his poem within his essay "Sacred Places" in ways that further translate its key theme of relational engagement outward

into a broader context of Indigenous-Indigenous connection. To illustrate the concept of "sacred places," Momaday begins his essay by re-imagining the giveaway once again. Locating this site, Momaday remarks, "[t]here is a place, a round, trampled patch of the red earth, near Carnegie, Oklahoma, where the Kiowa Gourd Dances were held in the early years of the century" ("Sacred Places"113). Momaday then re-cites his poem to convey how this event "relates [him] to the sacred earth" (113). From this grounding in a familial and tribal centre, Momaday gestures outward to articulate what he understands as a shared value amongst Indigenous nations across North America. Momaday asserts: "In Native American oral tradition the reverence which humans have for the earth is a story told many times in many places in many languages" (115). One of these languages, Momaday suggests, is pictographs. Thus, by reading "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919" in dialogue with "Sacred Places," a re-framed trans-media analysis of pictographic art emerges that foregrounds the text's own articulations.

Grounded in personal knowledge of Kiowa pictographs, Momaday registers a connection to a sacred site outside of Kiowa territory marked by a different pictographic aesthetic—namely, "the great gallery of rock paintings at Barrier Canyon, Utah" that were created by an Indigenous society potentially millennia ago (115).[8] These rock paintings become a source of inspiration for Momaday, who expresses both a connection and difference to them and the peoples, distanced by time and space, who made them. Rather than attempting to map Kiowa pictographic aesthetics onto the great gallery, Momaday respects the cultural specificity of this art, which remains, on one level, opaque. Specifically, he remarks:

> The figures in the eternal procession at Barrier Canyon are related to us in story. We do not know the story, but we see its enactment on the face of the earth, that it reaches from the beginning of time to the present to a destiny beyond time. We do not know what the story means but more importantly we know *that* it means, and that we are deeply involved in its meaning. (115, emphasis original)

Momaday's method for approaching "the story" inscribed in the Barrier Canyon pictographs, therefore, avoids any attempt to dissect the design schematically. Instead, he focuses upon the effect created by the pictographs—namely, the honouring of sacred earth. As Momaday avers, "[s]acred ground is in some way earned. It is consecrated, made holy with offerings—song and ceremony, joy and sorrow, the dedication of the mind and heart, offerings of life and death. The words 'sacred' and 'sacrifice' are related" (114). In this way, Momaday recognizes the principle of consecration

while the particular ceremonies involved in that honouring remain respected from a distance, without translation or dissection. Momaday's articulation of Indigenous-Indigenous connection therefore remains subtle and complex, acknowledging the story of the other without attempting to tell it himself.

Issuing an explicit message to scholars, Momaday cautions: "the sacred . . . transcends definition. The mind does not comprehend it; it is at last to be recognized and acknowledged in the heart and soul. Those who seek to study or understand the sacred in academic terms are misled. The sacred is not a discipline. It is a dimension beyond the . . . mechanics of analysis" (114). Thus, rather than marking the pictographs as an "aesthetic system" that can be neatly juxtaposed with Kiowa culture through an examination of "[d]eep [p]atterning" (Allen, *Trans-Indigenous* 115), Momaday's essay offers cues for moving beyond the "mechanics of analysis" and toward an understanding of Indigenous-Indigenous connection articulated in terms of Indigenous epistemologies and practices.

Although Momaday wrote "Sacred Places" more than two decades ago, his work offers important insights for re-imagining methods for reading Indigenous-Indigenous interactions today. For instance, Momaday's writing offers an alternative vantage point to Somerville's discussion about the basis upon which Indigenous-Indigenous connection might be forged. Focusing upon the shared experience of colonialism linking diverse Indigenous communities, Somerville asserts:

> colonialism is necessarily at the centre of 'Indigenous-Indigenous' identity, not because it belongs at the centre of how specific Indigenous communities think about themselves, but because it is the basis of inter-community connection. When colonialism is excluded from the framing of Indigenous-Indigenous connection, there is a concerning tendency to homogenise Indigenous communities as connecting 'because we all love the earth mother' regardless of our actual cosmological beliefs. . . . Certainly there are spaces outside of colonialism where Indigenous communities might meet, but these meetings are dependent on first . . . recognising each other in the context of (de)colonisation. ("The Lingering" 24)

While responding to colonization's impacts is often a powerful impetus for collaborative engagement amongst Indigenous nations, Momaday's writing demonstrates how decolonial connection may be enriched by grounding solidarity in reciprocal Indigenous-Indigenous recognition of distinct Indigenous "values and practices" (Coulthard 154). Here, Momaday's practice resonates with Coulthard's advocacy of a "turn away" from the "colonial politics of recognition"—a turn that does not deny or forget about colonialism but, rather, grounds resurgence in what Leanne Simpson calls a turn toward

"a flourishment of the *Indigenous* inside" whereby Indigenous communities "decolonize 'on [their . . .] own terms'" (qtd. in Coulthard 154). Although Coulthard's call is formulated primarily in terms of self-recognition *within* Indigenous communities, Momaday's writing offers a vision for extending Coulthard's argument toward decolonial solidarity *between* Indigenous nations. Specifically, Momaday's essay gestures toward respectful modes of Indigenous-Indigenous diplomacy founded upon reciprocal recognition of "the very best practices of our traditional cultures, knowledge systems and lifeways in the dynamic . . . [and] fluid context in which they were originally generated" (Simpson qtd. in Coulthard 155). Rather than appropriating the practices of other Indigenous nations, Momaday's essay enacts recognition that acknowledges shared values while also respecting each nation's autonomy.

Momaday's essay, "Sacred Places," offers a powerful example of articulating connections centred on affinities between Indigenous epistemologies and lifeways. For Momaday, reverence for the sacred generates a reaching out to the sacred sites of other Indigenous peoples, tempered by respect for cultural specificity that allows other nations' understandings to remain "profoundly mysterious" (115). Although Momaday's invocation of the sacred risks being construed as a "homogenis[ing]" stereotype of Indigenous peoples' love for "the earth mother" (Somerville, "The Lingering" 24), his discussion formulates connection in particularly nuanced ways. In Momaday's suggestion that "[w]e do not know what the story means but more importantly we know *that* it means," the sacred remains an open site of possibility rather than a homogenization of all Indigenous "cosmological beliefs": each nation's narratives orbit differently around the concept of the sacred, thereby "transcend[ing]" any singular or universally translatable "story" ("Sacred Places" 115, 114). While this belief in the sacred is anchored in a space outside of colonial thought, it becomes, in turn, the basis for resisting colonial encroachment. In this sense, Momaday's perspective overturns the assumption that colonialism is the necessary catalyst for Indigenous-Indigenous connections, giving priority instead to Indigenous solidarity grounded in Indigenous terms, which may then be used to resist colonial power. Momaday ends his essay with a call to Indigenous communities to "take steps to preserve the spiritual centers of our earth, those places that are invested with the dreams of our ancestors and the well-being of our children" (116-17). The sacred, then, becomes a way of asserting Indigenous land claims, not by capitulating to the terms set by settler state law but, rather, by grounding Indigenous rights and responsibilities to land in Indigenous ethics.

I want to be clear that I am not proposing "the sacred" as a new paradigm for reading all Indigenous-Indigenous interactions. Such a proposal would inscribe a new homogenizing approach to Indigenous literary studies and, thus, overwrite the intellectual sovereignty of Indigenous authors. Instead, I am seeking to demonstrate how Momaday's writing forges its own pathway out towards other Indigenous communities. In retracing this route, I want to underscore the importance of attending to how Indigenous authors may articulate their own terms of recognition and relationship with other Indigenous communities—articulations that will certainly vary for different authors. In the case of Momaday's writing, his articulation of "sacred places" offers something much more complex than the founding of Indigenous-Indigenous connections upon a fixed and universalized spiritual belief. Rather, the particular example of Momaday's invocation of the "sacred" offers a broader lesson about the process through which Momaday reaches outward to other Indigenous communities. This teaching is about relational engagement, framed through a nested set of familial, tribal, and inter-national Indigenous affiliations. In so doing, Momaday expresses respect for difference and cultural specificity while also giving voice to what he perceives as shared values grounded in respect for and responsibility to the land.[9] The particular terms through which Momaday expresses this reaching outward are his own, but the idea of relational engagement, I want to suggest, may have broader implications.

Literary scholars have already attempted to create critical approaches informed by Indigenous philosophies of relationality. For example, Justice's concept of "kinship criticism" attends to the active, living, and ongoing "relationship of our literatures to our communities—and the role of that relationship in ensuring the continuity of indigenous nations into the future" ("Go Away, Water!" 150). While Justice's primary focus is on the relationships within nations, Tol Foster develops a literary critical approach of "relational regionalism" that studies regional "*interzones* where different constituencies [including settler, diasporic, and Indigenous groups] collide and, as a result, renegotiate their communal cultural frames" (272). For both scholars, foregrounding relationality means understanding Indigenous belonging in terms of a relationship to community that "isn't a static thing; it's dynamic, ever in motion" (Justice, "Go Away, Water!" 150), a process that Foster describes as "transmotion" (292). By highlighting Momaday's mode of relational engagement formulated throughout "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919" and "Sacred Places," I wish to complement

these discussions by focusing specifically on the relational engagements between and across Indigenous nations that are enacted within Indigenous literature.

With regard to the particular task of studying relations between Indigenous nations, it seems especially important for Indigenous studies to generate its own modes of analysis rather than reiterating the logics inscribed in disciplinary formations like comparative literature, which have historically studied national literatures articulated in terms of Euro-Western nation-state models. Taking up the call of Native literary nationalism to ground critical practices in Indigenous knowledges, then, I have sought to demonstrate how reading Indigenous-Indigenous interactions might be revitalized by attending to Indigenous practices of self-recognition and relationality as articulated within literary texts themselves. By reading Indigenous literature as a rich archive of stories of interaction between diverse Indigenous communities, it might be possible to generate critical interpretations from the ground up rather than imposing paradigms upon literary texts that may exceed or complicate their parameters. Attending to the specificities of texts' articulations is not only vital for respecting Indigenous authors' intellectual sovereignty; it is also crucial for sketching a more robust picture of what Indigenous self-recognition looks like in practice when negotiated between and amongst collectivities with a range of internal differences—of gender, sexuality, age, and mixed ancestry, to name only a few. Additionally, by reading Indigenous-Indigenous encounters in terms of Indigenous articulations of relationality, it might be possible to further distinguish Indigenous formulations of peoplehood from Euro-Western nationalisms, thereby underscoring what Justice calls "the ability of Indigenous nationalism to extend recognition to other sovereignties without that recognition implying a necessary need to consume, displace, or become absorbed by those nations" (*Our Fire* 24). Reading relations between Indigenous nations thus opens pathways to other worlds of belonging breathed to life in Indigenous stories.

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NOTES

1 The term "Indigenous" and, hence, the phrase "Indigenous literary nationalism," is often used by critics in Canada in order to reference internationally recognized Indigenous rights in documents such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (see Fagan et al.). Though I am a settler scholar living in Canada, throughout this essay, I use the phrase "Native Literary Nationalism" because it more accurately signals the US context in which Womack, Weaver, and Warrior originally formulated this paradigm.

2 In debates about the "supposed conflict" between the "broadly conceived 'nationalist' and 'cosmopolitanist' schools of Native literary criticism" (Justice, "Currents" 338), "cosmopolitanism" is used as an umbrella term for a range of critical practices that read Indigenous literary texts from more than one tribal or national location in conversation. For these reasons, the terms "cosmopolitanist" and "comparativist" are frequently used interchangeably, though this interchangeability and the absence of more specific definitions may in part be a result of the type of caricaturing that, Allen contends, has occurred in the framing of this conflict. Rather than speaking in generalities, this essay will engage with specific methods for reading Indigenous-Indigenous interactions developed by Allen and Somerville.

3 Craig Womack has modelled some critical possibilities in his reading of Joy Harjo's "vision of pan-tribalism" grounded in "Creek specificity" (*Red on Red* 235). My essay seeks to offer additional possible methods while engaging with recent work on "Indigenous-Indigenous encounters" that has been published since Womack's book.

4 Allen has written extensively about Momaday's work, and specifically with regard to "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919" in chapter 4 of *Blood Narrative* and "N. Scott Momaday: Becoming the Bear."

5 Allen elsewhere notes that "Momaday spent his own formative years moving between the Kiowa country of his father's native western Oklahoma . . . and Indian reservations located in Arizona and New Mexico," including the Navajo reservation and Jemez Pueblo, where his parents taught ("N. Scott Momaday" 208).

6 Citing Kate Peck Kent's *The Story of Navajo Weaving* (Heard Musuem, 1961), Allen asserts that "[i]n Navajo textiles 'beading' can refer to 'a narrow band in which tiny blocks of color alternate'" (*Trans-Indigenous* 129).

7 While "Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919" appears as a stand-alone poem in Momaday's collection *In The Presence of the Sun*: *Stories and Poems, 1961-1991* (1992), the poem is also embedded without a title, though set off in italics and indented, in an essay entitled "Sacred Places" in his book *The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages* (1997). Additionally, Momaday discusses the giveaway in his 1976 memoir, *The Names* (94), and his poem "The Gourd Dancer."

8 The cultural attribution and dating of the Barrier Canyon rock art has long been a matter of archaeological debate. In 1971, Polly Schaafsma argued that the "Barrier Canyon Style" constituted "a unique style of prehistoric pictographs" that "was distinct from that of the Anasazi, Fremont, or Numic inhabitants" of the Archaic Period (Manning 43). Later, petroglyphs as well as pictographs in the "Barrier Canyon Style" were discovered. In 1988, Schaafsma dated the art to between 2000 BC and AD 1, and in 1989 Schroedl suggested that this art could date back "as early as 6,000 to 8,000 years ago" (qtd. in Manning 45). In 2014, Pederson et al. suggested that the art was produced between AD 1-1100, (12986). However, Pederson et al. also note that "[a]s more age constraints are obtained on BCS panels, we can test whether it was produced over a considerable span

of time. If so, then it was made by peoples of contrasting heritage, but who nevertheless maintained a common tradition, expressed in the compelling iconography of the BCS" (12991). Such archaeological approaches to this art frame it as "prehistoric" alterity that needs to be decoded as empirical data rather than focusing on Indigenous "*articulation* of connections" (Somerville, *Once Were Pacific* xxvi) to this art.

9 While it would be misguided to homogenize Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island, many Indigenous intellectuals speak of Indigenous principles of living with others derived from the teachings of the land. For instance, discussing the foundations of Cherokee nationhood, Justice refers to "the relational reality that Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee) has called 'ecosystemic,' the understanding that Indians '[are] not removed from and superior to nature but rather an essential part of that complex of relationships we call environment'" (*Our Fire* 160-61). Alex Wilson, a scholar from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, speaks of "understandings and philosophies shared by most Indigenous cultures . . . in particular, the very old knowledge that we are all related. Within these relationships we are accountable to and share responsibility for the well-being of each other and the lands, water, and earth that we rely on and that sustain life" (328). According to Kanienke'há:ka scholar Taiaiake Alfred, "Indigenous philosophies are premised on the belief that the human relationship to the earth is primarily one of partnership. . . . The partnership principle, reflecting a spiritual connection to the land established by the Creator, gives human beings special responsibilities within the areas they occupy, linking them in a natural and sacred way to their territory" (470).

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