

**Reading Red Power in 1970s Canada:
Possibility and Polemic in Three Indigenous Autobiographies**

Marko Davidovic

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the M.A. degree in English Literature

Department of English
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa
Unceded Algonquin Territory
2016

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Abstract

The reorientation of federal state policy on Canada's relation to Indigenous peoples that occurred in the years 1969-1974, although heralded as progressive, inaugurated not so much an age of liberation, restitution, and reconciliation as a bureaucratic and institutional framework for perpetuating settler-colonial processes of dispossession and assimilation. This was a period of intense struggle both within and without Indigenous politics, as activist dissidents to the increasing institutionalization of negotiation with the colonial state were branded as pathological and dangerous "Red Power" militants and phased out from mainstream political discourse.

As they lived through the contradictions of these processes, three such militants turned to writing autobiographies that would become foundational influences upon the development of Indigenous literature in Canada: Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, Howard Adams's *Prison of Grass*, and Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel*. These autobiographies, which explicitly spoke to the writers' political and activist experiences and positions, occupy a complicated position in Indigenous literary history. Often relegated to a bygone moment of polemic, bitterness, and resentment, they have been more or less systematically misread or dismissed as works of literature by literary critics. This thesis proposes that considering these works in their formal and narrative specificity, as well as constituting a literary-critical and literary-historical end in itself given the dearth of scholarly attention paid to this period of Indigenous/Canadian history in general and these works in particular, can open up productive theoretical and critical insights into two ongoing disciplinary concerns: dismantling ongoing scholarly investments in colonial premises about and usages of narrative, subjectivity, and history; and envisaging possible relations between Indigenous literature(s) and literary study and anti-colonial political processes, especially processes of activism and movement-building toward decolonization.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I want to thank all of the Indigenous teachers, friends, and comrades I've been privileged to learn from. This thesis could not exist without their teachings, labour, and patience. I likewise thank the Algonquin people on whose unceded and unsundered land I have lived, studied, and worked these last six years, including the entire duration of this MA. As always, I thank my interlocutors, Char, Oli, and Jackie – three incredible critical minds and revolutionary spirits whose visions of another world I've been blessed to participate in. And I want to specially thank Gareth: without the influence of your dagger-sharp thought and your intellectual courage, principle, and resolve, this project simply would not exist. To my parents, Vanja and Dusan – thank you for 24 years of unconditional encouragement and support, and for your gifts to me, for courage in criticism and integrity in thought, for revolutionary hope and enduring love. Next I want to thank my MA cohort for making this experience a little easier, for light in darkness. Special thanks to Sammy for good humour and cheer, and to Tina, of course, without whose unwavering support, brilliant company, and compatibly dysfunctional working habits I never in a million years could have gotten through the long, long hours of writing this thing.

I have to thank SSHRC for funding my work. And of course I owe the deepest thanks to my supervisor Jenn Blair, a remarkable scholar without whose patience, attentiveness, and brilliance the ideas in this thesis could never have taken intelligible shape.

And thank you, Anna – always. My work, my very survival these last months, stands as a testament to your unfaltering and loving support, advice, and insight.

A special thank you to my grandfather, my *deda*, who passed away in the early months of my MA. Every intellectual fibre in my body I inherited from you. I wish I could talk to you about these things. I can only hope that, in all your generous, sensitive, compassionate wisdom and experience, all your love of truth and justice, you'd be proud of what I've written, even if the Canada I describe is not the Canada you knew and hoped for. *Hvala*. I dedicate this to you.

Introduction

In 1974, Cree-Metis organizer Vern Harper and Anishinaabe warrior Louis Cameron conceived of a Native Caravan, a convoy of Indigenous people that would traverse Canada from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside to the heart of Ottawa, bringing its grievances directly to the seat of the government that claimed to represent their interests in a nonviolent but resolutely grassroots and direct-democratic manner (Harper 9).¹ The Caravan grew rapidly, tapping effectively into widespread frustration with the methods of bureaucratic organizing and negotiation of provincial and national representative organizations, foremost among them the National Indian Brotherhood (predecessor to today's Assembly of First Nations) (10). As it crossed the country, the convoy fostered a vibrant and lively mingling of ideas between communists from city centres and traditionalists raised on the land, secular progressives and radical Christians, Indigenous people and non-Indigenous allies (40) – people who shared little beyond a commitment to direct action, a critique of bureaucratic negotiation, and a hope for the radically anti-colonial alternatives that the people, united, might yet be able to realize in the world. In Toronto, Metis organizer Maria Campbell – already a best-selling author – joined the Caravan and gave a rousing speech which earned a standing ovation: "For the last four years I have been on a real downer, because I thought I would never again see the work I watched my father and other Native people do during the 1940s. It seemed that all we were ever going to accomplish was organizing more bureaucratic offices" (47). But the direct democratic model of engagement that the Caravan prefigured was cut short at the very steps of Parliament, where it was met not with government functionaries, let alone PM Pierre Trudeau, but with lines of riot police (60). The Caravan had understood and represented itself as a peaceful emissary with a list of grievances; it was treated by the state as a riot to be shut down, a rabble to be dispersed. On

¹ The Native Caravan has been mistakenly – if disclosively – attributed to Metis revolutionary Howard Adams (Palmer 410), who had by this time already withdrawn from political engagement in Canada.

this cold dry October day, Harper reflects, the government sent a clear message to Indigenous people across the country: stick to the state-sanctioned channels or else² (65). The case of the Caravan – both its expansive hopes for movement-building and grassroots political change and the openly repressive instantiation of colonial power with which it was met – can serve as an entry point to the moment of "Red Power" militancy among Indigenous activists in Canada. By 1974, to be sure, Red Power in Canada seemed to be a spent political force; in light not only of the phasing-out of domestic activists through both repressive and ideological means but of changes on the world stage like the capitalist turn in China and the veritable extermination order against the analogous American Indian Movement in the US (Palmer 408), Indigenous politics in Canada had coalesced largely around the very avenues of negotiation, bureaucratic organization, and appeals to recognition that the Caravan challenged and attempted to bypass. But in spite of this apparent decline, this "real downer," the radical hopes and possibilities of the Red Power moment found enduring repositories in the autobiographical works of three militant activists – Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (1973), Howard Adams's *Prison of Grass* (1975), and Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* (1975). Both the themes these texts engage and their innovative choices of tone, form, and structure are indelibly marked by the contradictions of their writers' activist experiences, by the stark contrast between the semblance of newfound unity and productive dialogue dominating high-level Indigenous politics and the literal and metaphorical dispersal of more radical Indigenous voices.

² Harper notes a handful of "professional" politicians involved in the representative orgs who came out in strong support of the Caravan and condemnation of the state's action: Stan Daniels, a Metis leader who I will discuss in my chapter on *Halfbreed*; Harry Daniels, longtime combatant of the recently-resolved Daniels case on Metis rights; Art Manuel, then a young militant, today a lauded political leader in BC and recent author of *Unsettling Canada*; Jim Sinclair, who succeeded Howard Adams as leader of the militant Metis Society of Saskatchewan. But there were the exceptions; big names on the national scene, like George Manuel and Harold Cardinal, demurred or patronized about both the Caravan and its dispersal (Harper 77-78).

This thesis undertakes a fuller and more complete appreciation of the specific anti-colonial insights and potentialities of these "Red Power"³ texts, both individually and as a dialogue emanating from a comparable politics and moment in (literary) history. This dialogue can illuminate the 1969-1974 period and the contemporary recognition-based approach to Indigenous politics that it inaugurated, contribute to ongoing debates concerning possible relationships between Indigenous literature and anti-colonial activism and politics, and enrich our understanding of Indigenous literary history in Canada and, indeed, its complex and uneasy position in relation to institutions of Canadian literature. Within literary scholarship, all three texts have been associated – often in reductive, simplistic, and problematic terms – with a "polemical" moment of impassioned social protest in Indigenous literary history (King 186).⁴ Their diverging reception histories are marked with irony and contradictions: *Halfbreed*, an instant bestseller, was quickly inscribed in the burgeoning national literary canon as a modern Canadian classic in accordance with a narrative of beneficent integration. *Prison of Grass* and *Bobbi Lee*, meanwhile, were uniformly read according to what has been characterized as "the 'problem' and 'pathological' logics pinned onto the bodies and minds of Indigenous people" (Greensmith 252). Although the last twenty-five years have seen a veritable explosion in Indigenous literary criticism (Ruffo *xi*), often oriented toward challenging colonial

³ We need not overstate the political coherence of "Red Power," which was variously applied as a pejorative and as a defiant self-identification; certainly, it never had (or desired) any unified organizational expression across the country. "Red Power," in my usage, connotes a mood of agitation and revolution arising in multiple places across the country at once, a mounting militancy that was increasingly co-opted in the turn of Indigenous politics toward centrism and state-defined terms of negotiation after the White Paper. I also use it to refer to the theoretical and political context of radical Indigenous activism and organizing of the 60s and 70s, heavily influenced by Marxist national liberation struggles that were occurring at the time throughout much of the Third World and that manifest in North America in the militancy of Black Power and AIM in the US as well as in the revolutionary movement for secession in Quebec in the 60s. Obviously, given the situation of decline in (and about) which these three activists wrote, this politics was never consolidated into a successful movement for change in Canada.

⁴ Thomas King's important 1990 essay challenges the widespread characterization of Indigenous writers as "post-colonial writers," a paradigm which often functioned (and functions) to reinscribe colonial violence and its overcoming as the central structuring facts of Indigenous expression, history, and subjectivity. To steer toward a more nuanced approach, he forays four categories through which to understand Indigenous writing: tribal, interfusional, associational, and polemical. He proposes these categories more to texture the homogenizing post-colonialist commonplace than to erect an authoritative classificatory system; nevertheless, as I will show in the chapters, the category of "polemical" or "social protest" literature in particular has, with unmistakably dismissive connotations, been reproduced more or less uncritically within the broader body of scholarship.

presuppositions of dominant scholarly practices and restoring Indigenous literary works to Indigenous intellectual and epistemological contexts, more recent appraisals of these three works have continued to reproduce colonial⁵ presuppositions about their shape, emphasis, and construction dating back to the earlier dismissals. These reception histories can simultaneously illuminate and be illuminated by the unique ways in which the works thematize, criticize, challenge, and resist models of subjectivity, unity, and narrative that functioned in the Red Power period and onward to divide and conquer – specifically, to buttress the co-optation of Indigenous resistance by narrativizing historical progress and individuating and silencing grassroots dissent. In this regard, a revisitation of these autobiographies has the potential to offer anti-colonial insights, possibilities, and critiques that speak to and complicate contemporary practices of literary scholarship; at the same time, in recovering and affirming the specific operations of their critiques and theorizations of anti-colonial possibilities in an ongoing settler-colonial context, this revisitation is germane to the contemporary juncture in Indigenous politics. Many Indigenous scholars, activists, and organizations in Canada are increasingly open and militant in their criticisms of state-centric avenues for decolonization and reconciliation, challenging long-standing hegemonies in Indigenous politics concerning where, how, and on whose terms progressive change will take place. In the remainder of this introduction, I will elaborate the unique significance of these texts, not only to work toward a fuller and more nuanced appreciation and practice of literary history but also to put them in conversation both with contemporary trends and conversations in Indigenous literary criticism and to evolving but also recurring modes of Indigenous resistance to settler-colonialism in Canada.

⁵ Generally speaking, in this thesis I will intend "colonial" in the sense of partaking in or advancing a Canadian project of assimilation, dispossession, and (cultural) genocide. Presuppositions or premises are colonial inasmuch as they couch this project as granted or as inevitable, and thereby render the violence of both the project and its means invisible, natural, and metaphysical. This is somewhat distinct from a usage of "colonial" often implicit in discourses of decolonization, which tend to focus on colonial i.e. Eurocentric/western attitudes, belief systems, and patterns of thought (hence, for the most part, my use of "anti-colonialism" rather than "decolonization"). However, there will often be productive and interesting overlap between these usages.

S1. Red Power, Idle No More, and Indigenous resurgence

The years 1969-1974 saw the consolidation of reformism and negotiation as the dominant strategy for resolving Indigenous grievances in Canada, a hegemonization spurred on in large part by the release in 1969 of the (Pierre) Trudeau administration's infamous White Paper. This openly and unapologetically assimilative policy was received with a pan-Canadian furor and mobilization of Indigenous people, precipitating its formal retraction in 1971 and, following further pressure from the newly invigorated and united voice of political leaders and representative bodies across Canada, the inauguration in 1974 of a comprehensive land claims system for the negotiation of modern-day treaties. Although this period is generally assessed as a triumph for Indigenous unity in resistance, the rerouting of political power and voice to prominent leaders, negotiators, and chiefs was often, as the Caravan suggests, at the expense of the younger and more militant voices that had emerged over the course of the previous decade of civil rights-inspired unrest and politicization on reserves and in urban Indigenous communities. For many such activists, who increasingly found themselves under rhetorical attack by their erstwhile representatives, the turn to high-level negotiation and bureaucracy represented a state co-optation of the 1960s mood of resistance, resurgence, and revolution. The spectres of movement-building and grassroots political change receded into the future and the Red Power advocates were pushed firmly out of the public sphere as the Trudeau administration drove its message home on the steps of Parliament in October 1974.

Today, anti-colonial alternatives to state-centric structures, institutions, and processes are pushing back, and Indigenous scholars and critics are theorizing the erosion of the long-standing hegemony of liberal and reformist paradigms for decolonization. This backdrop imbues these three Red Power autobiographies with new relevance, against developmental histories that locate the necessity for polemic and protest in the distant past and obscure the continuities of settler-colonial processes of dispossession, assimilation, and extinguishment of inherent Indigenous

land rights. Dene political theorist Glen Coulthard has influentially argued that the reorientation of state policy in the early 70s constituted a tactical but not strategic shift in the settler-colonial project of dispossession, from explicit termination⁶ to a liberal project of mutual recognition. Coulthard defines settler-colonialism as a set of structural relations that facilitates "the dispossession of Indigenous people of their lands and self-determining authority" (Coulthard 7), a process that has taken place since the 1969-1974 period not (primarily) through open violence and repressive force but "through the asymmetrical exchange of mediated forms of state recognition and accommodation" (15). Mohawk policy analyst Russ Diabo has identified the comprehensive land claims process on Canada's "unilateral negotiation terms" as the crucial contemporary level of settler-colonial dispossession, functioning to "[end] First Nations pre-existing sovereign status through federal coercion of First Nations into Land Claims and Self-Government Final Agreements that convert First Nations into municipalities and their reserves into fee simple lands, and bring about extinguishment of their Inherent, Aboriginal and Treaty rights" (Diabo 52).⁷ Algonquin Anishinaabe elder Lynn Gehl has similarly argued, from her exhaustive case study of the Algonquin land claim,⁸ that the land claims policy takes advantage "of the very poverty that colonial policies and laws have imposed on Indigenous nations" by forcing them, for lack of alternative and material necessity, into an inequitable structural relation oriented toward legal extinguishment of Indigenous rights (Gehl 67). In this ongoing context of dispossession, as Eve Tuck has pointed out, showy overtures to broad-based reconciliation and

⁶ One of the most explicit statements of the policy of termination was Duncan Campbell Scott's "Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department" (Scott 1920). This objective was to be achieved through tactics including the residential school system and the ban on Indigenous cultural practices.

⁷ "Fee simple land" refers to a legal category of land ownership importantly distinct from Aboriginal title, first in that it is granted by the Crown and with reference to the validity of the Crown's interest in the land, and second in that it is individual rather than collectively held, such that individuals can sell, lease, or bequeath it at will.

⁸ The Algonquin claims area comprises most of the land bounded by the Ottawa and Mattawa River watersheds, including the National Capital Region and the University of Ottawa. Whereas most nations involved in negotiating self-government and a contemporary land claim have been relatively isolated from the settler population and exist as the majority population within their ancestral territories, the Algonquin nation hosts over 1.2 million people in its territory today (Gehl 23). At present, negotiators have recommended the transfer of just under 4% of this claims area to Algonquin ownership.

personal, individual decolonization often amount to "moves to innocence," operating to assuage settler guilt and complicity and restore a unified settler futurity by disavowing what remains irreconcilable without fundamental, radical transformation of settler-colonial structural relations and institutions (Tuck 3). These scholars provide a set of critical, theoretical, and political coordinates that allow for a restoration of the Red Power texts to an ongoing history of resistance and resurgence, beyond the colonial binary – too often literalized by applications of repressive force and state mediation of resources, identities, and political possibilities – of integration versus defeat.

Nor are advances in theory and criticism solely responsible for rendering anachronistic the argument that Red Power tactics, sentiments, and insights are ineffectual, counterproductively "polemical," or dated. The frustration with state-sanctioned political channels that underlies and informs these critiques has also given rise to a contemporary resurgence in the kind of grassroots organizing work that Campbell in 1974 counterposed hopefully to "organizing more bureaucratic offices." The turn away "from the assimilative reformism of the liberal recognition approach" (Coulthard 154), which has manifested particularly in a surge in grassroots resistance and civil disobedience along the lines of environmental justice and Indigenous defense of unceded land,⁹ has brought to newfound prominence the (never absent) figures of militancy¹⁰ and of movement-building. The figure of

⁹ A handful of notable examples include the resistance to fracking development by the Mi'kmaq of the Elsipogtog Nation in New Brunswick in 2013 (see Miles Howe's *Debriefing Elsipogtog*), the long-standing land (re)occupation at Unist'ot'en camp in defense of Wet'suwet'en territory in BC, multiple direct actions against pipelines in BC and Ontario, and, on the other side of the border, the ongoing resistance to the Dakota Access pipeline at Standing Rock.

¹⁰ Militancy is a perennial theme of all three writers covered in this thesis and, indeed, has never been absent from on-the-ground practices of Indigenous politics in Canada, although it has not been a fashionable topic for scholarship. By "militancy" I do not mean some determination or will to violence, disruption, or machismo, but rather a refusal to allow the boundaries of acceptable resistance be delimited by the framework of legality of the very system that is ostensibly being challenged and opposed. Coulthard has spoken to this issue by emphasizing a contemporary preoccupation with defining "the type of tactics that are being represented as morally legitimate in our efforts to defend our land and rights as Indigenous people, on the one hand, and those that are increasingly being presented as either morally illegitimate or at least politically self-defeating because of their disruptive, extralegal, and therefore potentially alienating character, on the other hand" (166). For a longer history of Indigenous militancy, its means and aims, see Boyce Richardson's *Drumbeat: Anger and Renewal in Indian Country* (1989).

the movement in particular – which fundamentally evokes questions concerning how (and whether) to relate local, particular, and rhizomatic struggles and resistances to a larger and more unified strategy for confronting settler-colonial society and the colonial state – has loomed large over Indigenous politics, theory, and criticism since the experience of Idle No More in winter of 2012. This decentralized, largely spontaneous but pan-Canadian movement of cultural affirmation and alliance-building started from opposition to the Harper government's Bill C-45 and went on to profoundly influence a new generation of Indigenous thinkers, activists, and warriors.¹¹ Coulthard has written that "Canada has not seen such a sustained, united, and coordinated nationwide mobilization of Indigenous nations against a legislative assault on our rights since the proposed White Paper of 1969" (161). Dale Turner, meanwhile, has pointed out that Idle No More should be seen as

Aboriginal peoples reminding Canadians (yet again), just as they did in 1969, that this dialogue has deteriorated and is in danger of disintegrating. This is because the federal government's solution to the Indian problem has not changed: extinguish Aboriginal title, open up Aboriginal homelands to large multinational resource companies, and exploit natural resources for the economic benefit of "all" Canadians. Aboriginal peoples can either participate in this economic venture or be left behind to gradually, and inevitably, vanish from the world. (Turner 2014: 122)

Turner's framing of Idle No More as a cautionary reminder about the ongoing process of settler-colonial dispossession and assimilation resonates at a moment when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has apparently reinvigorated dialogue on decolonization. The TRC, a government initiative that may have the effect of recentering the state and state policy as the principal site of political struggle after Idle No More's groundswell of grassroots activity and alliance-building, posits reconciliation as a complex and troublingly malleable signifier with possible meanings ranging "from serious political and socio-economic transformation to the maintenance of the status quo" (Henderson and Wakeham 9) via a depoliticized process of

¹¹ The movement and its lasting impact(s) are charted through the excellent collection *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement* (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014).

healing Indigenous communities "in order to entrench a post-reconciliation political relationship" (Turner 2013: 109). In this context, it is important to attend to the possibilities Idle No More disclosed and to bear in mind that it is not principally in theorizing a critique of settler-colonialism and a resurgence of Indigenous values but in the active, on-the-ground process and practice of movement-building and forging alliances that an Indigenous alternative to the colonial binary of integration and vanishing is presently being posited, in counterpoint to the problematic metaphorization of decolonization that the deconstruction of colonial binaries as an end in itself often entails. These developments give us more than sufficient grounds to reject, from the standpoint of contemporaneity, the commonplace that the Red Power texts are dated and irrelevant works of polemic and social protest – and, going further, to interrogate the settler-colonial interests served and disclosed in such critical and scholarly dismissals. By recovering these foundational works of Indigenous literature in Canada in their specificity as political autobiographies written in a period of declining activism, moreover, we illuminate how historical and political dynamics of colonialism and resistance are integrally shaped, influenced, and undercut or complicated by narrative and discursive processes. If Idle No More is indeed the greatest show of Indigenous unity since 1969, then literary works from and about the earlier moment may do much to sharpen and illuminate both stakes and possibilities of anti-colonial movement-building and political alternatives for the present and for future generations. At the same time, these foundational works of Indigenous literature in Canada can lend clarity and insight to the theorization of creative agency and Indigenous expression's anti-colonial potentialities, while also exposing and challenging how colonial narrative recuperates and co-opts Indigenous agency, expression, and affirmation to bolster processes of dispossession and assimilation.

S2. Literary activism and settler-colonial society

This thesis fills a scholarly gap in Indigenous literary history, for even when these works have been objects of scholarly attention, they have not been interpreted in the political, theoretical, historical, and literary context of Red Power, much less read together as works constituting a dialogue on potentialities and limitations of literature and narrative in relation to anti-colonialism in a settler-colonial context.¹² In recent years, scholars in Canada, influenced by the theoretical framework of Indigenous literary nationalism developed in the US, have placed an increased emphasis on how the study of Indigenous literature(s) can be politically and socially accountable to Indigenous communities and nations engaged in on-the-ground struggles against settler-colonialism (Sinclair 21). This important development often entails drawing Indigenous literary criticism into an interdisciplinary framework, especially proximate to social work and critical pedagogy in its emphasis upon the concrete, local and particular at the community and nation level. Yet there has also been significant work done to theorize in more general terms the context, aims, and effects of Indigenous writing in Canada in relation to the dominant settler-colonial society and to ongoing processes of settler-colonialism. Jo-Ann Episkenew has defined these related but distinct approaches in arguing that Indigenous literature today "serves two transformative functions – healing Indigenous peoples and advancing social justice in settler society – both components in the process of decolonization" (14). Cree-Metis scholar Emma

¹² I should register at this point that there has been much work in recent years by Indigenous scholars in elaborating the meaning(s) and use(s) of stories and practices of storytelling in the context of Indigenous intellectual traditions and epistemologies (for a collection of such work, see MacLeod 2014). This is a booming and vital field but not one to which I presume to add – hence my use of "literature and narrative" rather than "storytelling." Moreover, although it is certainly possible to perform a reading of these three texts that understands them in a larger continuity of Cree-Metis and Sto:lo intellectual traditions respectively (and there have been several such readings of *Halfbreed*, if not of the other two works, most notably Miner 2009 and MacKay 2014), I elect to consider them in critical relation to colonial tropes of narrative, subjectivity, history, and autobiography which are reproduced in and through settler-colonial structures and institutions. Campbell, Adams, and Maracle certainly had Indigenous antecedents to draw on, in spite of the persistent colonial notion that Indigenous literatures (expansively defined) were nonexistent prior to the 1970s, but it is the way in which they positioned themselves in relation to settler-colonial society and structures – literary and otherwise – that highlights the formal specificity of their works as political autobiographies. A fuller understanding of their critiques of conventional (colonial) narrative structures can only deepen contemporary appreciation of Indigenous writers' exploration of anti-colonial alternatives in form and narrative.

LaRocque models an instance of advancing social justice in settler society by reading canonical classics of Canadian literature through the lens of Indigenous resistance writing, arguing that as literary scholars in the Canadian context "our principal task [...] is the humanization of Native peoples [...] How do we deal with real Native cultures and political actions, indispensable to human agency, without resorting to ethnological or political pigeonholing?" (LaRocque 2010: 147). For LaRocque, Indigenous literary expression has the potential to dislodge a long history of racist representations in the Canadian cultural consciousness and thereby engender a more broad-based appreciation in settler-colonial society of Indigenous humanity and Indigenous rights. This thesis takes its lead from these approaches, while also speaking to the question of orientation toward the dominant settler society as it recurs in the significant and expanding body of criticism on Indigenous autobiography, life writing, or life narrative. Such criticism focuses on the ways in which authors use autobiography to "call for a larger social awareness on the part of the dominant culture" (Kurzen 211) by "rejecting hegemonic notions of the self-made individual in favor of a collective, more fluid identity" (203), situating autobiographical works in Indigenous intellectual traditions and epistemologies rather than within the liberal-individualist conventions of Western autobiography as a genre. This body of criticism does much to deepen and enrich our understanding of the continuity of Indigenous intellectual histories, against problematic historiographical tendencies to underscore colonialism as an irremediable rupture from a pre-colonial past; however, my approach will focus more on ways in which the Red Power texts chart, engage with, and challenge crucial tropes of western autobiography and the colonial conceptions of subjectivity, society, and collectivity or unity they disclose. While registering the material efficacy of these tropes as they are reified and literalized by structures and institutions of the settler-colonial state, the Red Power autobiographies nevertheless steer in various ways toward conceptions or possibilities for political subjectivity that avoid the individuation, static fixity, and homogenization of autobiographical convention. In this regard, my approach will root

itself in a more historicist framework, exploring specific ways in which the Marxist and radical activist background of the Red Power authors illuminates the particularities of the critiques and possibilities of their (re)thinking of the autobiographical subject.

This thesis turns to the texts of the Red Power period with the working hypothesis that the radical organizers who turned to literary expression in large part out of frustration with the inefficacy of conventional political avenues to effect genuine anti-colonial change have important insights into questions such as: how is settler-colonial society to be confronted on terms not dictated by the settler majority, and how can literature participate in the construction of a different set of terms? Is there a meaningful distinction to be made between engagement with settler-colonial society, with all the heterogeneity it implies, and engagement or confrontation with the settler-colonial state?¹³ How can Indigenous literature hold to the advancement of social justice in settler society on Indigenous people's terms – which often involves confronting the state – without being reductively characterized as polemical, oppositional, and bitter? And in such circumstances, can settler affects like uneasiness and guilt, often utilized to typify Indigenous critiques as counterproductive and inappropriate, be mobilized in politically and pedagogically productive ways? The prevalent and understandable concern among critics of Indigenous literature that an excessive emphasis on colonizer-colonized relations will leave us "less able to engage with writing that is not overtly "resistant" or political" (Reder 2010: 132) may have had the paradoxical effect of leaving us less able to engage with writing that *is* overtly

¹³ I have placed an emphasis, here and in all three chapters, upon the idea of decentering the state, so it may seem counterintuitive to continually be referring to the Canadian state as a discrete entity and, indeed, to waive the immense contemporary interest in Indigenous literary criticism on transnationalisms (Ruffo *xv*). Although transnationalism is particularly germane to Indigenous literature insofar as state borders are colonial impositions that often ran arbitrarily through communities and traditional territories, it can also dangerously elide the specificity of heterogeneous settler-colonial power centres, processes, and policies, as well as histories of resistance against what have been understood as discrete foes. As my project is structured by 1969-1974 and the present moment as two periods raising the possibility of a pan-Indigenous confrontation of Canadian settler-colonialism, and as the Red Power texts have often been discussed and neutralized in ways specific to the history of Canadian nationalism and national literary criticism, it makes sense to orient this thesis – however critically – to the specifics of the Canadian case. I would also note here that this distinction between the settler-colonial state and settler society is not often made explicit in Indigenous literary criticism, but that it is a crucial distinction for Campbell, Adams, and (especially) Maracle.

resistant and political but that has nevertheless been deemed fundamentally unproductive. Can we revisit the potentialities of "resistance" texts and attend carefully to their form, structure, and narrative without thereby reinscribing them in a canon of works determined to be sufficiently productive for critical engagement and attention? This thesis suggests that the exclusion of the Red Power texts from canonical and literary-historical consideration need not be understood as a mistake to be corrected; rather, this very exclusion is mutually illuminative of the concrete narrative and formal techniques with which the Red Power writers resisted settler-colonialism and its mechanisms – literary and narrative as well as political – of co-optation and assimilation.

My methodology throughout the three chapters of this thesis is broadly historicist,¹⁴ attending to the particularities of the writers' formulation of and response to colonial problems in the context of literary history as well as the history of political movements and of relations between Indigenous people and the colonial state. This approach emphasizes both continuities and ruptures within the theoretical, political, and literary dialogue these texts constitute, focusing on the vastly different backgrounds and contexts the writers drew upon to make sense of and think about their comparable positions; their distinct utilizations of form and narrative within the general framework of autobiography; and their heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory theorizations of settler-colonial process and anti-colonial resistance, as expressed through their creative practice. In the first chapter, I consider Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* as an intervention in the hegemonization of the recognition paradigm, drawn from the historical lessons of Metis resistance, arguing for Indigenous unity apart from the mediation of the categories, structures,

¹⁴ Nevertheless, I want to briefly register here some of the crucial theoretical antecedents that implicitly inform my work and structure my thought. In addition to the Indigenous critics, literary and otherwise, that I have discussed in this introduction, my critique of the mechanisms by which dissenting individuals are constructed as problems and sites of violence within broader social narratives of progress and productivity owes much to Sara Ahmed's discussion in *Willful Subjects*; my framing of the problematics of abstract unity collapsing irreducible difference into a (phal)logocentric economy of the One is heavily informed by my study of Luce Irigaray's engagement with Levinas and the existential "problem" of the Other; and my choice of a historicist approach itself is disclosive of my political, theoretical, and philosophical investment as a Marxist in dialectical materialism, understood here as a rejection of the Hegelian notion of a "history of ideas" that proceeds independent of the live contradictions of social conflict, of politics (as an expression of struggle between classes), and of material necessity and economic relations.

and institutions of the settler-colonial state. At the same time, I critique its (considerable) reception history for its "culturalist" representations of the text, arguing that selective readings of its narrative and structure in scholarship have effectively reproduced the colonial premises of McClelland & Stewart's 1973 pitch of the book as a Canadian bestseller in a national(ist) literary canon. Unlike *Halfbreed*, Howard Adams's *Prison of Grass* has been unilaterally dismissed in literary scholarship for its expressive, polemical temperament and supposedly overpartisan history of colonial power and resistance. My second chapter takes these dismissive reactions as suggestive of Adams's more fundamental rejection of conventional and colonial scripts of personal autobiography, political subjectivity, and historical narrative, and explores how his adoption of a mixed and dynamic form between history and autobiography allows him to model a practice of political autobiography that does not necessitate the disavowal of unproductive affects or of radical critique. The attempt to model such a subjectivity is explored further in Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel*, which occupies a peculiar position in Indigenous literary history in that Maracle has since become one of the most important Indigenous writers and theorists on the Canadian literary scene. While the original text of *Bobbi Lee* has generally been dismissed, like *Prison of Grass*, as polemical, shrill, and unproductive, critics have often treated Maracle's reprint of the book with the Women's Press in 1990, which features extensive additions that commented on and engaged with the original text in light of the Oka Crisis in 1990 and significant advances in Indigenous literature in Canada. My third chapter reflects upon how Maracle's reprint of the text in 1990 suggests productive possibilities, at the intersections of literary expression and activism or movement-building, for the very virulence and militancy of Red Power critiques as potential openings for settlers into dialogue that need not reproduce the inequities, invisibilized violence, and silences underwriting settler-colonial relations. This final chapter thereby opens up reflections upon how a sympathetic reevaluation of the Red Power period and its texts enriches our understanding of Indigenous literature and literary history. It

will lead into a conclusion that speculates on more general implications of this thesis's argument for critical and scholarly practice in a settler-colonial context, while also reflecting upon limitations and gaps in the approach I adopt here and how they suggest further research on these texts and problems in an interdisciplinary and ethically responsible framework.

Lastly, I would like to include here a brief reflection upon my own positionality and the spirit of this close engagement with Indigenous writers. As a settler in the context of an English department at an academic institution, it is not my intention to position myself as intervening in Indigenous politics, theory, or literature, nor, certainly, as delimiting what constitutes viable, legitimate, or authentic resistance for Indigenous people. I have no presumption to pontificate upon how people who have been exploited, oppressed, and dispossessed "ought" to respond to or address their exploitation, oppression, and dispossession. Where I do touch upon and engage with these fields, I submit this thesis in a spirit of ongoing learning and sharing, a stage in the ongoing process not only of developing an ethically and politically responsible and accountable scholarship but also of my own growth, self-criticism, and education. Insofar as it *is* an intervention, it is principally an intervention in the discursive and critical practices, conventions, and presuppositions through and with which literary scholars – particularly (non-Indigenous) scholars of Canadian literature – simplify and thereby smooth over the unease of relations between Canada and Indigenous people, invisibilizing ongoing processes of settler-colonialism and representing Indigenous identity, expression, and lives as abstract and scholastic. Some of these practices can be traced far back through the colonial history of literary production and criticism in Canada¹⁵ and continue to haunt, if not structure, how scholars practice literary

¹⁵ It should not escape notice, for instance, that one of the primary architects of the colonial policies of assimilation and termination enacted throughout most of the 20th century was Duncan Campbell Scott, whose work, which very often concretizes narratives of Indigenous disappearance and settler futurity, was regarded as unproblematically integral to the Canadian national canon well into the 70s. To this day, my own institution gives out a prize in his name for undergraduates of extraordinary accomplishment in the field of Canadian literature. I consider it a truism that in Canada, the constitution of a national canon, a national culture and literature, has often been integrally implicated in genocide, cultural and otherwise, of Indigenous people.

history. To make these relations truthfully "rough" again in a literary context – rather than presenting them as harmonious, such that Indigenous anger and resistance appear as sites rather than inevitable results of violence – requires going beyond a conception of Indigenous people as the red tile in the Canadian multicultural mosaic and perhaps still further beyond metaphorical conceptions of decolonization, like that of John Ralston Saul, that take Canada's Indigenous roots as essential to Canadian national identity. This desire to problematize such easy and painless consolidations of Canadian identity was the point of departure for this research, and it continues to structure my reflections as an academic and as an activist.

"Then together we will fight our common enemies:"

Storying Solidarity in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*

Maria Campbell has described her manuscript of *Halfbreed* as "a letter [she] wrote to [herself]" during her grassroots work and political engagement in the 60s and 70s, when she worked as an activist, an organizer, a "community healer and teacher" (Lutz 42). The dominant historiographical tendency is still to claim that this was a period when Indigenous people across the country joined their voices in unity for the first time to speak out against and confront the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) and its assimilative policies; however, this was a context of considerable struggle and contestation, as proponents of profoundly divergent directions for Indigenous politics clashed. Campbell herself, as one of the activists sometimes identified and often disparaged as a militant advocate of Red Power, was positioned on what would increasingly emerge over the course of the 70s as the losing side. This context and positioning, which has generally been excluded from the considerable body of scholarship on *Halfbreed*, can illuminate and deepen our understanding of much remarked-upon aspects of the text, including its adoption of an autobiographical form, its progression from a closely observed portrait of Metis communal life to a chronicle of Campbell's own political activism, and the narrative function of the character of Campbell's great-grandmother, Cheechum. Moreover, the text's deployment and thematization of lessons from the history of Metis resistance to colonialism, a political tradition that preexists the imposition of colonial categories and (neo)liberal rights-based discourses, constitutes an important intervention in contemporaneous political and discursive processes of dividing and conquering.

At the same time, this reading will suggest that the tendency in scholarship on *Halfbreed* to either ignore or characterize in individualized and personal terms the extensive sections that deal explicitly with politics – that is, with organizing, collective resistance to colonialism, and Campbell's self-positioning within the terrain of Indigenous politics – is disclosive of ways in

which a Canadian liberal nationalist project has functioned and continues to function to systematically integrate Indigenous resistance and consolidate the hegemony of the settler-colonial state. In this regard, I will argue that much of the scholarship on *Halfbreed* does not leave behind crucial colonial premises of the "high nationalist" 1970s, during which dominant Canadian literary and cultural institutions laboured to provide an ideological justification for Canadian exceptionalism and thereby to legitimize Canadian colonialism as a progressive historical development in the national teleology¹⁶. Indeed, the 1973 publication of Campbell's manuscript by "Canada's publishers" McClelland & Stewart was premised upon Jack McClelland's sense of its potential to function as a bestseller on a broader Canadian literary marketplace defined by this renewed nationalist agenda (McClelland 4).¹⁷ This centering of the settler reader – or the Canadian subject, a more general category which suggests the possibility of subsuming both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people into a unified *telos* of reconciliation and national futurity – has the inevitable effect of distancing the novel from the grassroots and activist context within which Campbell herself moved, obscuring the political and theoretical problems and contradictions of the conditions within which Campbell wrote and, ultimately, neutralizing the radical challenge it may otherwise present to Canadian colonialism. In this regard, as I will demonstrate, *Halfbreed* is a text of incredibly disclosive contradictions: the testimony of a political radical explicitly arguing for a more unified and far-reaching anti-colonial movement, taken up within literary and critical history to legitimize, shore up, and

¹⁶ Canadian literature was properly institutionalized as a subject of scholarly inquiry in the 1970s, a period fully conterminous with the Trudeau government's extensive ideological effort to articulate a new progressive Canadian nationalism after the decline of the Red Tory nationalist model, exemplified in George Grant's 1965 lament for British Canada as a dominion of the north, bulwark against the heedless materialism associated with America. Trudeau was faced with the dual challenge of defining the independence of the Canadian capitalist class on the world stage (see the Canada Development Corporation) and defusing explosive internal threats to Confederation (intimations of Indigenous resistance, certainly, but even more importantly the left-wing nationalist revolutionary movement in Quebec). Cultural institutions in this period worked overtime to justify Canadian specificity with reference to liberal tropes of cultural difference, inclusive and expansive multiculturalism and global citizenry.

¹⁷ In a letter, McClelland counselled significant cuts, modifications, and revisions, arguing that " what she is writing is not an autobiography but what I would call for want of a better term, a selective autobiography or if you prefer, a biography with a purpose. [...] I am satisfied she has the nucleus of a truly remarkable book here. I think it could be made into a national bestseller if she is prepared to give it the additional effort that it deserves."

consolidate the colonial project it criticizes. The original paperback, which did indeed become a McClelland & Stewart bestseller, encapsulates these tense, potentially antagonistic interests, purposes, and audiences in its subtitle – "A proud and bitter Canadian legacy."

After reading *Halfbreed* in the political context, I will return to a critical appraisal of a history of literary scholarship and criticism continuous with McClelland's subtitle in at least two important (colonial) respects. Firstly, in positioning the text's disclosure of Indigenous experience and identity as an edifying inheritance of contemporary Canadians, the subtitle participates in the constitution of what Eve Tuck has called the metaphorization of decolonization, which allows for a series of settler moves to innocence – for a confrontation of guilt and complicity in colonial history only to allow for the possibility of absolution – and, ultimately, for the restoration of a holistic, reconciled settler futurity (Tuck 3). Much of the later criticism is continuous with this project in that it takes up the "problem" of Metis-ness and Metis identity with reference to questions of essential hybridity and mixedness, germane to considerations of Canadian identity and Canada as what John Ralston Saul famously described as a metis nation (Saul 1). The tendency within the criticism to see this supposed confusion of identity, rather than an ongoing history of colonial violence, as the primary source of Maria's¹⁸ difficulties and the motor of the book's trajectory of overcoming adversity thereby functions integrally to distance the book from its political context and to constitute the reader and audience as white, settler, and Canadian. Secondly, in framing the text's anti-colonial critique principally as a function of Campbell's personal bitterness rather than of structural conditions or collective historical grievance, the subtitle hints at a far-reaching colonial project of individuating dissent as personal, private, and potentially pathological, which I will discuss at much greater length in the next chapter. This process of individuation is integral to the colonial production and regulation of Indigenous people as good or bad (neo)liberal subjects. As a critical approach, it

¹⁸ I will refer to the character represented in the autobiography as "Maria" and to the author as "Campbell."

informs in its turn the history of autobiographical readings of *Halfbreed* like those of Bataille and Sands, Buss, Cairnie, and Culjak, which have represented it according to a script of heroic individualism and personal strength and Maria as an extraordinary, exemplary subject surviving and overcoming colonial conditions. I argue that *Halfbreed* itself can function as an anti-colonial intervention in these colonial processes which historically operate according to a divide-and-conquer logic to neutralize Indigenous movements of resistance, break down possibilities for solidarity, and regulate expressions of dissent. My reading of *Halfbreed's* critical history in this political context will suggest that at least two constitutive functions of the Canadian nationalism of the 70s continue to structure much critical scholarship on Indigenous literature: to consolidate Indigenous resistance into liberal articulations of Canadian exceptionalism and nationalism and to legitimize Canadian settler-colonial society both domestically and internationally as having duly reconciled with "its" Indigenous people. I will argue that insofar as scholarship separates literary works from their specific political and ideological context, it fundamentally replicates McClelland's gesture of depoliticization and reinscription in an ostensibly neutral literary marketplace. This reading will set up the next two chapters, which will leave the explicit consideration of literary criticism and how it produces and represents resistance behind to consider how other radical activists aligned with Red Power, far from being mired in the individual bitterness and pathology of a polemical moment in Indigenous literary history, engaged in nuanced ways with the problematics of the fraught 1970s and thematized the contradictions of their own positions *vis-a-vis* collective histories and narratives of resistance and decolonization in a settler-colonial context.

These readings will serve to interrogate and problematize what Kristina Fagan Bidwell has described as the strong tendency of Canadian media representation and Canadian reviews of Indigenous literature toward "culturalism," the sharp division of Indigenous politics from Indigenous culture and subsequent consideration of Indigeneity in literature in largely cultural

and apolitical terms. In a settler-colonial context, this practice has the effect of positioning Indigenous works of art or storytelling as so many "interesting cultural artifacts [belonging] to Canada's past" (Fagan 2004: 13) and bracketing or deferring the political realities of Indigenous struggles for land rights and restitution, self-government, and sovereignty. This process, moreover, allows for the tension and, on occasion, outright acrimony of colonial relations – relations shaped by contradiction, struggle, and dissent – to be subsumed into the hollow, constructed unity of a liberal framework, wherein Indigenous culture and identity can come to represent an important "red tile in the Canadian mosaic" while Indigenous politics, except in their most state-centric, reformist, and unchallenging form, can be either ignored altogether or represented as erratic, potentially dangerous deviations from a harmonious, beneficently multicultural norm. To a certain extent, the very publication of *Halfbreed* as a Canadian bestseller by McClelland & Stewart, positioned for the consumption of the presumed Canadian and settler audience, entails a certain culturalist and depoliticizing operation. I will consider how critical and scholarly tendencies toward culturalism can reproduce such an operation, functioning integrally to serve explicitly colonial and nationalist ends by erasing Indigenous political challenges to the material foundation of the Canadian state in the forms of direct actions, land (re)occupations, and civil disobedience, and thereby naturalizing the settler-colonial state as without a possible or practicable alternative. The effect of this naturalization is to represent decolonization as metaphorical, individual, or personal,¹⁹ while collective Indigenous politics

¹⁹ The discourse and posture of both our present PM and a number of important figures within Windmill (notably full partners Jeff Westeinde and Scott McDougall, active in engaging Indigenous critics on Twitter), the real estate development company currently in the process of building condos upon the unceded and sacred Algonquin land around the Chaudière Falls at the heart of Ottawa, are exemplary of the ways in which metaphorical understandings of decolonization are presently being deployed to legitimize dispossession and suppress dissent and resistance to colonialism. Leanne Simpson has pointed out that although Trudeau is perpetually "flanked with Indigenous drummers and dancers" and "clouds of smudge," and although Indigenous territories are being acknowledged consistently at the beginning of events since his ascension, these apparent markers of the decolonization of individuals and of respect for Indigenous culture have not yet been demonstrated to have necessary correlation to a genuinely anti-colonial politics; in Simpson's formulation, a smudgier dispossession is still dispossession (Simpson 2016).

oriented toward more far-reaching and systemic change are represented only in terms of the forms proscribed by the colonial state.

In recent years, many scholars in Canada and the US – most of them Indigenous – have staked their opposition to these patterns by insisting that Indigenous intellectual traditions, storytelling, and life writing cannot be understood as abstractly separate, divided by some insurmountable historical, temporal or cultural divide, from contemporary Indigenous individual and collective lives, experiences, and struggles. At times, such arguments, often made in the context of the critical framework of Indigenous literary nationalism, have been accused of polemicizing or subsuming the creative agency of text to a political project; however, in light of a longer history of subsuming the politics of works and their authors to relatively abstract considerations of form, agency, identity and aesthetic achievement, I choose to follow these scholars in their attempt to develop a balanced critical approach that does not leave the sphere of the explicitly political behind, but simultaneously does not take literary works as mere extensions of a political programme into a different form. On the contrary, I will argue that *Halfbreed* in the context of the politics of the period it depicts and of Metis intellectual tradition both suggests and models a unique political purpose for storytelling, as a practice with the potential to constitute and actualize unity along the lines of expansive kinship relations. In this argument, I follow powerful and important readings of *Halfbreed* against the colonial grain by scholars like Miner, MacKay, Reder, Episkew, and Suzack; the latter two in particular challenge critical tendencies to "assert the autonomy of Campbell's text without situating it historically" (Suzack 124), which can inadvertently reproduce colonial concepts and logics of individual success. While all of these readings do much to situate Campbell's work as a storyteller within Metis intellectual tradition, they have not explored how *Halfbreed* draws explicitly on the history of militant Metis resistance to colonialism to respond to the political context of Campbell's own moment, when the radical possibilities of the late 60s were increasingly being phased out within hegemonic discourses of

Indigenous politics. To draw out the specificity of this argument – of how Campbell's storytelling functions concretely as a political intervention, opening up and imagining radical anti-colonial possibilities that political discourses no longer accommodated – I will now turn to a brief discussion of the political conditions in which Campbell wrote, in the context of the White Paper, Red Power in Canada, and the specificity of the case of the Metis.

S1. Recovering an anti-colonial intervention

One of the vital contributions of the Indigenous literary nationalist analytic framework has been its systematic insistence on situating readings of works by Indigenous writers "within the history and politics of those nations' community existences," thereby making it possible to understand them as expressions of a specific people's shared experiences and intellectual traditions²⁰ (Sinclair *et al* 20). This practice, which has been modelled by Indigenous critics for decades, does not refute the possibility of solidarity or similarity between nations; rather, it rejects the anthropological, structuralist, always colonial notion of an essential, monolithic Indigeneity against the "authenticity" of which heterogeneous peoples, nations, and communities can be measured. In the literary nationalist framework, political and cultural affiliations between Indigenous nations and communities – as between Indigenous communities and settlers – are to be built toward and achieved, rather than presupposed.²¹ Often these constructions are precipitated by colonial excesses that expose the urgent necessity of a united political front and the solidarity and coordination of movements of resistance that otherwise face somewhat heterogeneous struggles; it was, for instance, in the wake of the 1969 proposal to end the Indian

²⁰ This should certainly not be taken to suggest that any given people's experiences, stories, traditions, or politics are monolithic. Jo-Ann Episkew has pointed out that *Halfbreed* inspired other Indigenous people to write their autobiographies precisely to counter the naive settler notion that she could be a mouthpiece or a "living synecdoche" for the whole of Indigenous – or Metis – people (Episkew 79).

²¹ Political and cultural affiliations among Indigenous *individuals* are in some sense, however, presupposed, which seems to be the most common critique of the framework among scholars of Indigenous literature in Canada (Sinclair *et al* 2009). I cannot explicitly address this very large and very important point about movement-building in a (neo)liberal context here, nor do I believe is it my place as a settler scholar to do so (and neither do I expect the problem has an easy resolution in pure theory); however, my discussion of *Halfbreed* will, I hope, at least suggest an awareness of and engagement with this crucial presupposition.

Act that Indigenous resistance to colonialism was coordinated on a national scale for the first time (Palmer 401). In other words, the concept of Indigeneity as such is itself a colonial construct,²² but it is a construct of great importance to anti-colonial movements insofar as it has been – and continues to be – strategically deployed to articulate a shared experience of resistance to Canadian settler-colonialism, which Glen Coulthard defines as the systematic "dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their land and self-determining authority" (7) across the territory presently claimed by the Canadian state.²³ As such, although it does not seem to me to be possible to begin a reading of *Halfbreed* in its political, aesthetic, and intellectual contexts without starting from the specific case of the Metis in Canada, this should not imply that the book only addresses itself to Metis people, nor that the insights drawn from "Metis nationalist" readings like that of Dylan T. Miner are clearly separable from both operations of and resistance to Canadian settler-colonialism more generally. Indeed, as I argue in this section, *Halfbreed* can be more productively understood both as an intervention in a colonial presumption of monolithic Indigeneity which erases the Metis *and* as a productive site for possible articulation of cross-cultural affiliations between the Metis and "status Indians," toward a more expansive model of Indigenous solidarity and social and political resistance.

The question of Metis identity has dominated many readings of *Halfbreed*, but often these readings have been more interested in "Metis-ness" as an abstract concept or metaphor than they have in the self-definition and self-understanding of the Metis people. For critics in a loosely post-modernist and post-colonial framework like Julie Cairnie, Jodi Lundgren, Toni Culjak, and Armando Jannetta, the primary drama of *Halfbreed* is Campbell's struggle to

²² To be sure, it is at least in part to register difference as well as similarity that successive generations have steered away from homogenizing terms like "Indian," "Native," and "Aboriginal." To note that the concept of monolithic Indigenous identity has its roots in colonial constructions and narratives is not to negate that the concept of Indigeneity has meanings, uses, and significances that exceed and escape its colonial determination.

²³ The concept of Indigeneity is, of course, also productively deployed across nation-states to articulate the arbitrariness of colonial borders and to build a still broader basis for collective resistance to settler-colonialism. However, this deployment occasionally elides concrete political differences – imposed, but nevertheless reified by different exercises of colonial power – between national contexts, which specifics are the focus of my analysis here.

reconcile her mixed heritage and hybrid identity; these readings focus extensively upon the early chapters that deal with Campbell's family life and fit generally into a culturalist approach concerned with theorizing how the oppression of the Metis is a function of their status as an "in-between-people" in essence, neither Indigenous nor white. Cairnie plainly states the colonial and assimilationist investments of this tendency when she argues that the concept of hybridity is useful insofar as it "involves the reconciliation of the precolonial culture with the colonial experience, a reconciliation which enables the articulation of a postcolonial identity" (Cairnie 96). In other words, if the primary dilemma of the Metis is their unstable identity, a function of their existence between cultures or worlds, then the resolution of the problem can be located in the production or articulation of a post-colonial identity, such as that supposedly found at the end of *Halfbreed*. The underlying logic of such an argument is individualistic, certainly, but it is also marked by a kind of essentialism, either of race or of culture – that is, it evinces a sense that Metis identity necessarily or essentially entails, for reasons of biology or of culture rather than of society, individual and collective liminality. Against such an essentialist understanding, Nicole St-Onge has suggested that Metis identities are "fluid, relational, and situational" (St-Onge 2); Brenda Macdougall elaborates that, historically, "firm Metis identifications and self-consciousness only crystallized in moments when external threats forced group mobilization" as catalysts of a "sense of collectively held rights" (Macdougall 15). Such assertions of collective identity historically functioned to organize a united front out of a people otherwise loosely defined by a mobile way of life over a fluid geographical expanse, as well by kinship relations and a complex genealogical structure – a structure complicated all the more, Macdougall explains, by the Metis practice of non-endogamy, which differentiates the Metis from similarly mobile peoples like Jews or Roma (13). Much like the issue of defining a common, universally shared Indigeneity, then, the problem of determining whether given individuals "really" – rather than relationally – are or are not Metis is constructed through the imposition of colonial

categories on Indigenous peoples and expressly precipitated by settler-colonial encroachment on collectively held rights on (and responsibilities to) the land. In *Halfbreed*, Campbell herself underlines this point with the example of Qua Chich, her great-aunt; she and Maria's family are kin and continue to understand and relate to one another as such, and this kinship and shared understanding both preexists and outlasts the coming of the treaty-makers. However, due to her husband's choice to settle beside the lake, "he was counted in" when the treaty-makers came and "they *became* treaty Indians instead of Halfbreeds" (Campbell 22, my italics), in a colonial performative that was played out across the country as settlers deployed policy and legislature to define and delimit the terms of Indigenous relations to the land and to one another.

Although it is important to bear in mind, as Episkenew has pointed out, that the same settler-colonial project with the same purposes and designs on land claimed as "Canadian" effectively produced both the "treaty Indian" and the "Halfbreed" or "not-Indian" in relation to itself (28), the material consequences of these colonial determinations for Indigenous people who were "counted in" and Indigenous people who were left out are certainly not negligible. Indigenous people with status were covered by the provisions of the paternalistic, colonial, and patriarchal Indian Act, which nevertheless afforded them some legal recognition (Weaver 4); they were promised special rights on reserve land through the treaties, limited though these rights necessarily were; and they were assured some protection from settler incursion and unscrupulous land dealings (32), which became the inescapable norm as Canada expedited the mass immigration of European settlers – duly inculcated with racist and colonial ideas – to the prairies. The Metis, by contrast, were granted no legal recognition of their Indigeneity from the Canadian state until the Constitution Act of 1982; from the state's point of view, they did not exist as Metis, and therefore had no legal protection from either settler racism or state repression (Suzack 129). For decades of open and unapologetic settler-colonial dispossession, then, the Metis were invisible to the state and to state-centric politics except insofar as they presented a problem on

what was taken for *terra nullius*, as squatters, poachers, and otherwise willful and recalcitrant subjects of the crown – subjects, that is to say, of repression.²⁴

But the political context of the early 70s, when Campbell wrote, was a uniquely galvanizing one in many respects, and the real need – and real possibility – of collective mobilization, both among the Metis and among all Indigenous peoples, was acutely felt. This history informs *Halfbreed*, certainly, but it is also explicitly depicted and thematized as an integral if almost universally overlooked part of *Halfbreed's* narrative, in the last quarter or so of the book dealing with Maria's engagement in Indigenous politics. 1969 saw the presentation of the Trudeau administration's "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy," the infamous "White Paper," which effectively proposed a three-year plan for the termination of Indian status and the abolition of the Indian Act under the pretense that the reserves functioned as a system of ghettos precluding First Nations from full and equal participation in modern Canadian society. Pierre Trudeau rationalized the piece of legislature in no uncertain terms with reference to a crossroads: Indigenous people would either cease to exist as legal and political entities and assimilate into settler-colonial society, or they would remain "a race apart in Canada" and the dominant society would "go on adding bricks of discrimination around the ghetto in which they live and at the same time perhaps helping them preserve certain cultural traits and certain ancestral rights" (Trudeau). His rhetoric explicitly designates the options for Indigenous people as either assimilation or a preservationist stasis most akin to that of articles in a museum or a mausoleum. Unsurprisingly, this open admission of the settler-colonial state's assimilative intentions – of the relinquishment of land claims and claims to self-governance as the very *telos*

²⁴ The gradual "visibilization" of the Metis in Canadian law and policy recently reached a new chapter with the landmark Daniels decision, which clarifies a long-standing ambiguity concerning whether the federal government has legal and constitutional responsibility for non-status Indigenous and Metis people in Canada, as it does for status Indians and Inuit people. Although this ruling, a milestone for recognition of the Metis, represents the result of many years of struggle, there is reason to be pessimistic as to how or whether it will fortify the ongoing Metis bid for recognition of inherent rights to self-determination and self-government under *international* law, in accordance with UNDRIP, rather than within the rubric of the Canadian constitution.

of Indigeneity as recognized by the state – precipitated the coordination of anti-colonial resistance from coast to coast, which in turn brought a (nominal) end to the policy of termination's long reign as the dominant paradigm on Indigeneity in Canadian colonial history. The National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) came together at this moment in history explicitly as a reformist alternative to the threat of revolutionary anti-colonial action; indeed, the Cree leader Harold Cardinal cautioned that if the state insisted on continuing on the path of assimilation, Indigenous people would be forced to try to solve their problems by following "the dangerous and explosive path traveled by black militants of the United States" (Cardinal 90). Yet Cardinal's insistence on negotiation with the Crown and on reform of the policies of the Indian Act functioned also as a recentering of state bureaucratic structures and legislative processes in the expression of Indigenous resistance to open colonialism, and as a decentering of more radical anti-colonial projects that had started to find political articulation throughout the 60s (Palmer 407). One effect, then, of this shift of political leaders of the movement toward negotiation with the state over the terms of the Indian Act was inevitably to reentrench preexisting colonial determinations of Indigeneity – that is, to reproduce the logic of the treaty-makers and their arbitrary delineations of the terms and subjects of status. Cardinal's rhetorical invocation of the threat of militancy to legitimize the bureaucratic apparatus of the NIB as the best option for both Indigenous people and the colonial state is problematic when one considers that the NIB's stated prerogative was to insist upon the maintenance of the existing "legislature and constitutional bases of Indian status and rights" ("Citizens Plus" 192), which did not apply to the Metis and functionally (re)dichotomized Indigenous collective identity around the colonial construction of Indian status. The irony of Cardinal's suggestion that Indigenous people without the (however limited) recognition of the Indian Act would be forced to pursue militancy as their only recourse was that, as Campbell's book functions to show, the Metis were and would remain, in light of the NIB reformist project, precisely such a people – excluded in this sense from the pan-Canadian

(and state-centric) political unity that emerged in these years. Evidently, what Coulthard has referred to as the 1970 "hegemonization of the recognition paradigm" as simultaneously the legislative expression of colonial power *and* the political expression and *telos* of anti-colonial resistance (3) functioned at the time to reentrench the colonially imposed disparity between Metis interests and the dominant forms of recognizable Indigenous politics in Canada.

In light of this political context, it becomes possible to think of *Halfbreed* as a strategic intervention in colonial recuperations of independent Indigenous movement-building that serve to reify racist and colonial legislative divisions sown between Indigenous peoples and within the Indigenous movement. The tacit operation of this divide-and-conquer strategy in the supposedly triumphant and unifying aftermath of the White Paper is only taken up explicitly in the last chapters of *Halfbreed*, as when Campbell recounts how a Metis proposal for a nation-wide federation that would present a unified anti-colonial front to the government "was rejected by the Treaty Indians," who "felt that the militant stand that would be taken by such an organization would jeopardize their treaty rights" (Campbell 155). If most of the existing criticism has either ignored these sections or subordinated their politics as dated and/or polemical, my reading will consider this problem as significantly structuring and shaping the book's entire trajectory and providing a vital interpretive key to much more well-known sections frequently read according to a culturalist and individualistic paradigm, including Campbell's evocation of her Metis community and her seemingly triumphant avowal of survival at the end of the novel.

Historically, readings of *Halfbreed* – even recent ones that return it to its Metis context – have consistently ignored or forgotten that it is the first-person account of a political radical explicitly thematizing the Indigenous politics of her day. By recovering this context and situating Campbell's choice of form, medium, and emphasis in the political and ideological struggles of her moment, we can simultaneously deepen our understanding of Indigenous literary and political history in Canada and challenge the (neo)colonial reinscription of Indigenous resistance

in the hegemony of a settler state that has historically refused to recognize the Metis as Indigenous at all. Although we can indeed understand *Halfbreed* as an assertion of collectively held Metis rights against the external threat of political erasure, it need not be according to an essential logic that is either cultural and predicated upon authenticity or biological and predicated upon blood and mixedness. Instead, we can consider how her articulation of Metis identity in the form of a story itself functions to open up political possibilities.

Campbell's decision to articulate the critique of dominant political formations as an instance of storytelling itself suggests Campbell's role as an organizer in illuminating paths for Indigenous political expression that can and do function as alternatives to the bureaucratic, legislative, and liberal discourses and structures within which the NIB embedded itself. *Halfbreed* can be taken to suggest a more holistic and expansive model for political life, one in which the storyteller, understood as "a community healer and teacher" (Lutz 42), serves an integral function in organizing people along the lines of collective consciousness. Episkenew has recently reiterated that a transformative function for Indigenous literature is to heal Indigenous people from the violence of hundreds of years of colonialism, displacement, and dispossession, including the prevalence of colonial conceptions of political life and collective identity (Episkenew 14). In this regard, healing, far from being a personal and individual pursuit or an entirely and exclusively cultural project of revitalization, has an integral role in making possible forms of solidarity across the lines of colonial and state-sanctioned categories of Indigeneity that can allow for the formation and consolidation of coordinated anti-colonial fronts. In telling "the story of a people" (Fagan *et al* 2009: 159), then, Campbell is both suggesting and modelling an alternative – simultaneously more specific and more expansive, simultaneously against the abstract notion of Indigeneity as such and the equally abstract notion of essential difference along the lines of colonial determinations like status – to state-sanctioned and colonial avenues for Indigenous political expression. These alternatives, I will suggest, are made possible by

Campbell's conscious articulation of the accumulated lessons of the Metis people's resistance to Canadian colonialism, a political tradition framed, shaped, and informed by a land-based model of collective rights and responsibilities that preexists the imposition of colonial political categories and (neo)liberal rights-based discourses. This reading will finally open up the possibility of a critical reflection on the contradictions and tensions engendered by literary-critical considerations of *Halfbreed* that separate it from this political context and thereby reinscribe its argument in the hegemonic paradigm of state recognition and liberal multiculturalism.

S2. *Halfbreed* as a political autobiography

Given *Halfbreed's* publication as a "Canadian legacy," in some sense an educational work intended for settler audiences unfamiliar with the situation of the Metis or, in many cases, of Indigenous people in Canada more generally, it is not surprising that scholars have largely interpreted the first half of the book, dealing with the history of the Metis and with Maria's youth in her Metis community, as principally ethnographic and cultural. Certainly, Campbell positions her personal narrative in terms of the "story of a people;" however, her narration thereof is far from politically neutral. Rather than beginning with what some Metis scholars have since conceived and defined as ethnogenesis, the birth of a qualitatively different, new people at a confluence of preexisting cultures (Macdougall 3), Campbell opens with the moment of Confederation and traces its subsequent material effects upon the Metis²⁵ following the Canadian state's purchase of western lands from the Hudson Bay's Company and its "opening of a new land" to waves of European settlers (Campbell 9). She thereby sets up her people as existing prior to, and living autonomously from, the newly created state power, the constitutive and foundational act of which is to lay claim to the land upon which they lived and to performatively

²⁵ Campbell deliberately uses the word "halfbreed" throughout, rather than Metis. For a comprehensive discussion of the significance of this usage and of the issues with critical tendencies to abstract it from historical and ideological context, see Miner 2012.

constitute them as "squatters with no title to the land they lived on" (9) – that is, as legal non-entities upon the land. She describes how the newly established lands acts' provisions functioned as an arbitrary imposition on the Metis, who had "lived on the land for years before the lands acts had even been thought of" and whose understanding of rights (and responsibilities) on the land diverged radically from the notion of land ownership as conceived within a capitalist framework. As a function of this overtly colonizing threat to their collectively held rights, the Metis invited Louis Riel from exile to help mobilize them around the call for "land for our people" (64) in the North-West Rebellion of 1885. In light of Riel's oft-cited prophecy that his people would sleep for a hundred years but that when they awoke, it would be the artists that gave them their spirits back, Campbell's articulation of the story of her people – reclaiming as a token of sovereignty the very name that has been used to oppress, marginalize, and erase them as Metis and as Indigenous (Miner 151) – can be understood as aspiring to make possible another kind of group mobilization in defense of collectively held rights, of Indigenous rights never recognized by the state and yet challenged in a new way by the threat of fragmentation of the waxing Indigenous movement of the early 70s, once again along the lines of colonial categories.

The problem of identity in *Halfbreed* is thus set up not as abstract and scholastic but as intimately tied to political challenges that necessitate a group mobilization of the sort that Riel helped to realize – that is, to the need for unity in resistance to colonial threats of fragmentation and of erosion of rights. Cheryl Suzack has noted that in Campbell's narrative, "colonization disrupts Aboriginal identity to displace an ideal of community with imposed structures of naming and difference" (Suzack 131). Although it is true that naming and difference constitute an integral mechanism of colonization, it is important to note that Campbell distinguishes them from colonial power; in her narrative, colonial categories are themselves arbitrary discursive impositions that only take on performative significance insofar as they are backed up by the state's power to make Indigenous rights and relationships to the land contingent upon

participation in its structures – and, in the last instance, legitimized by military force, by the repressive application of state power. In this regard, settler-colonialism functions in large part by means of structural relationships that do not only *name* but *construct* divisions among Indigenous people and thereby undermine the (political, not essential) unity and integrity of resistance movements. In the case of Riel's rebellion, the increasingly militant mobilization is fragmented when Ottawa issues "[land scrip] purposely to a chosen few which [causes] a split within the Halfbreed ranks" (Campbell 11),²⁶ ultimately resulting in the military defeat of the Metis forces in the archetypal instance of repressive exercise of state power against Indigenous resistance. Campbell closes this opening chapter with an inventory of what "the history books say" about this stand of the Metis at Batoche, taking on a clinical, juridical tone to describe how state-sanctioned ideology figures them as "defeated," permanently and irretrievably dispersed from this moment on, once again non-existent from the point of view of the state (11).²⁷ She thereby sets up her story as a counter-history to this official, state-sanctioned and state-centric narrative of defeat, disappearance and decline.

A throughline in this counter-history, challenging readings that have subsumed it to something like the NIB's progressive project of reconciliation on the terms of the colonial state, is the figure of Maria's great-grandmother Cheechum, whose refusal to accept defeat at Batoche is reiterated at the beginning and end of the book (15, 156). Indeed, it is in rearticulating the relatively abstract form of Cheechum's practice of Metis nationalism – in her lifestyle and in her

²⁶ According to Camie Augustus, "Scrip was designed to extinguish Métis Aboriginal title, much as treaties did for First Nations. However, the Métis were dealt with on an individual basis, as opposed to the collective extinguishment of title pursued through the treaty process [...] The basic premise to scrip was to extinguish the Aboriginal title of the Métis by awarding a certificate redeemable for land or money – the choice was the applicant's – of either 160 or 240 acres or dollars, depending on their age and status."

²⁷ The next chapter will engage in a reading of how Howard Adams also draws on this history, and particularly on the figure of Louis Riel as the living symbol of this world-historical defeat, to respond to and thematize his own position as a radical within this political development. I will argue that unlike Campbell, whose call for unity against division has proven at times amenable to colonial recuperation as enacting reconciliation and restoring settler futurity, Adams insists upon occupying the impossible figure of the lone dissident and resists integration into any such project.

lessons – that Campbell positions *Halfbreed* as a concrete political intervention in the context of her own historical moment. Synthesizing the experience of the rebellion in which she participated, Cheechum teaches that the sowing of division and in-fighting among the people is a crucial tactic of colonialism in foreclosing upon radical possibilities for solidarity in resistance. When a young Maria, teased by white classmates and ashamed of her family's poverty, curses her parents and community, Cheechum tells the story of Riel's resistance so as to teach "[Maria's] first real lesson":

Despite the hardships, [the Metis] gave all they had for this one desperate chance of being free, but because some of them said, "I want good clothes and horses and you no-good Halfbreeds are ruining it for me," they lost their dream [...] "They fought each other just as you are fighting your mother and father today. The white man saw that that was a more powerful weapon than anything else with which to beat the Halfbreeds, and he used it and still does today. Already they are using it on you. They try to make you hate your people. (47)

Although this lesson is not explicitly a political one, it has a formative effect upon how Maria ultimately articulates her rejection of the state-funded Indigenous organizations and posits the radical alternatives entailed by solidarity and movement-building. It is not only or primarily the ideal of *community*, understood in a cultural or ethnographic sense, that is disrupted by this colonial tactic of constructing and reifying difference, but also the ideal or dream of liberation through united struggle. This point is underlined at an important turning point of *Halfbreed's* narrative, a chapter in which Maria's father Danny attends political meetings hosted in the community by Jim Brady, a Metis socialist organizer from Alberta, and begins to work toward organizing the Metis in Saskatchewan. His politicization and growing dedication to (re)building a movement for liberation and land rights inspires the young Maria as well as Cheechum, suggesting as it does the faint possibility of a renewal of the apparently lost dream of Riel's resistance: "Cheechum was excited for the first time and would pace the floor until Daddy got home from his meetings and tell Mom and Cheechum and Grannie all that had happened" (65). The mounting hope – and threat – is neutralized, however, when the government hires some of

the men in the community, selectively integrating them into settler-colonial structures so as to "[cause] much fighting among our people, and [divide] them" (67). Over time, this division, coming from within his community but also within his own family as Maria's mother begs him to quit his agitation, kills this dream in Danny and succeeds in turning him into "another defeated man."²⁸ This memory, which marks the disruption of the ideal of community and the point at which Maria "began to grow up," is invoked once more in the book's final act, when Maria reflects upon what defeated her father's generation – how "our people were divided and fought each other once their leaders had been hired by the government" (152). Yet in spite of Maria's attempt to act in accordance with this lesson, history seems to repeat itself with the movement of the 60s; she recounts in broad, fatalistic strokes how the government, again sensing the threat posed by a coordinated anti-colonial movement to the very existence of the settler-colonial state, makes material concessions to given leaders and communities – leaving those activists and organizers who, like Campbell, spoke out against such attempts to placate the movement to "be phased out and branded as communists." By this point, the narration does not need to enter into specifics or linger upon either the interests behind or the dynamics of this process. The pattern of struggle traced intergenerationally in the opening chapter, in Cheechum's lesson, and in the Jim Brady chapter is registered in Campbell's remark that what was conceded was "not very much, just enough to divide us again" (156).

Following this trajectory of apparent defeat, the last two pages of the novel, which cover in quick succession the death of Cheechum and Maria's full acceptance of her legacy and inheritance, present a considerable interpretive challenge. Historically, these pages have lent themselves to what Suzack describes as a historical tendency to read *Halfbreed* according to the conventional terms of western autobiography as a valorization of a heroic individual, an

²⁸ The real-life Jim Brady, for his part, disappeared under mysterious and suspicious circumstances on a trip to the north in the late 60s. There is still no clear evidence to suggest definitively whether this disappearance was connected to his political activities.

approach which "disavows [...] material conditions" and "advocates an interpretation of Native subjectivity and women's identity that privileges the rugged individual as an agent in her own transformation" (Suzack 124). In this approach, the text ends on a note of hope and affirmation as Maria becomes the inheritor of her Cheechum's spirit of resistance even at a moment when "the land had changed, my people were gone, and [...] to know peace I would have to search within myself" (Campbell 7). This reading has an individualist logic, certainly, but also a culturalist one in that it represents Maria's final statement as an abdication of the political and, perhaps, an embrace of literary expression in determining and stabilizing her identity as Metis. However, these readings come under considerable scrutiny if we understand Cheechum's lessons as imparting above all the will to Metis political unity and resistance against the fragmentation and individuation that constitutes colonialism's "most powerful weapon." Her nationalist rejection of Canada's ostensibly generous efforts to integrate Indigenous people into settler-colonial institutions and structures – Maria's inheritance, as Episkenew has pointed out (Episkenew 2002: 58) – has always been underpinned by intimations of unforeclosed alternatives, dreams and desperate chances of liberation. But it is not until this last passage, and Campbell's crucial closing invocation of Cheechum's lesson of the blanket, that Campbell expresses this spirit of pride, self-reliance, and refusal to surrender as a concrete political intervention – and as a recuperation of the inchoate hope of earlier movements and struggles – for her own time:

The years of searching, loneliness and pain are over for me. Cheechum said, "You'll find yourself, and you'll find brothers and sisters." I have my brothers and sisters, all over the country. I no longer need my blanket to survive. (157)

In the framework I have been sketching, her inheritance need not and ought not be understood according to the traditional logic of autobiography as an individual and personal one. Rather, it becomes a story to be shared, opening up the possibility of constituting bonds and ties

independent of the mediation of the colonial state and opening up the possibility of group mobilization and unified resistance.

At the same time, I have argued that, in light of how Campbell positions herself politically, the final section of *Halbreed* should not be read according to an abstract and essentialist logic reifying colonial categories and subsumable to the representative function of the official, state-sanctioned Indigenous organizations. Instead of being understood as transparently describing a pre-existing and natural unity, this part of the book should be considered in light of the contexts of Metis storytelling and kinship relations as engaged in the project of *constituting* bonds, toward a politicized unity in opposition. Critical treatments of *Halbreed* have often paid close attention to what Suzack has referred to as the "ideal of community" described in the first part of Campbell's narration.²⁹ Much of this first half of the book is given to demonstrating that the absence of legal recognition – and active repression by the state, which figured traditional practices of hunting and trapping as poaching (54) – by no means entailed the end of Metis communal life and identity, even in terms of (increasingly criminalized) relations to the land. It functions in this sense, per Miner, as an anticolonial reclamation of Indigenous identity and an expression of sovereignty against the colonial hegemony on disappearance (Miner 2012: 162). However, this should not imply that Campbell describes a community defined by ideal and essential Metis-ness along the exclusionary and hierarchical lines of race;³⁰ rather, and in spite of stigmatization and criminalization from settler society and the settler state respectively, the community maintains much of its coherence along the expansive lines of kinship. As Episkenew points out, although a real material difference separates "status Indians" from the Metis, and

²⁹ See, for instance, Lundgren 1995 or Acoose 1993.

³⁰ Campbell avoids such abstractions and refuses to elide internal differences and axes of lateral oppression within her community – such as internalized misogyny – while nevertheless emphasizing the origin and function of patriarchal ideology as a crucial mechanism of settler-colonialism in dividing Indigenous people and eroding Indigenous peoplehood (Campbell 144). For a very thorough and important discussion of Campbell's intervention in the explicitly patriarchal structure of the Indian Act – and how "status" is and was determined in relation to fatherhood in the Canadian context – see Suzack 2005.

although a generation of people with status have by this point been subjected to a residential school apparatus and forced to internalize prejudice and colonial ideology, they continue to understand their landless relations as kin (Episkenew 2002: 59-60). Moreover, the Metis culture of non-endogamy persists in spite of settler-colonial racism, as is illustrated by the case of a British war bride's wholehearted adoption into the community "to raise a large family" (Campbell 25). This understanding of collective identity as predicated upon fluid and relational kinship formations – formations, moreover, defined outside of the terrain of state recognition and situated in tacit opposition to the settler society – suggests that Campbell's final evocation of her "brothers and sisters, all over the country" implies not essential or natural unity, but rather political unity and movement-building independent of the colonial centre.

At the other end of the pole, readings that have taken this to imply that the redemptive possibility with which the novel ends is a personal and individual one for Maria herself inevitably bifurcate the story of Maria's growth and development as individual from the (hi)story of collective identity and collectively held rights which she positions herself as telling in the first chapter. Bataille and Sands, for instance, position Campbell as one who survives her personal struggle and becomes "ready to work to make life better for all her people" (125), a tendency followed by Agnes Grant, Janice Acoose, and Julie Cairnie, among others. In reinscribing Campbell within the (neo)liberal narrative of the heroic individual overcoming adversity, such readings repeat what Campbell explicitly describes as the error of interpretation which led her to think that Cheechum wanted her "to go out into the world in search of fortune" rather than "to discover for [herself] the need for leadership and change" (143). Instead, I want to revisit the lessons from Cheechum – drawn from her own, very long, occasionally militant history of resistance – which Campbell explicitly connects to a kinship-based model of community and resistance in her closing words to suggest the possibility of a political alternative to the redemptive triumph of the heroic creative individual. I close my reading of *Halfbreed* with a

consideration, then, of the political – rather than individual – significance of Campbell's performative claim that, now that her ties of kinship connect her to "brothers and sisters" across the country, she "no longer [needs her] blanket to survive" (157).

As I have argued, Cheechum presents a throughline of historical resistance in the story, embodying a counter-narrative that opposes all things related to the colonial state and the mediations of identity it offers – that is, state-sanctioned narratives of Metis defeat and disappearance, divisive colonial tactics of selective integration into state structures, and settler society as a whole (15). Yet Campbell introduces the blanket teaching – the most direct statement of Cheechum's philosophy and of what has been characterized even by recent scholars like Deanna Reder as her isolationist, non-participatory posture (Reder 2015: 181) – directly before introducing her own involvement in the Indigenous movement in Alberta. She explains that:

My Cheechum used to tell me that when the government gives you something, they take all that you have in return – your pride, your dignity, all the things that make you a living soul. When they are sure they have everything, they give you a blanket to cover your shame. She said that the churches, with their talk about God, the Devil, heaven and hell, and schools that taught children to be ashamed, were all a part of that government. When I tried to explain to her that our teacher said governments were made by the people, she told me, "It only looks like that from the outside, my girl." She used to say that all our people wore blankets, each in his own way. She said that other people wore them too, not just Halfbreeds and Indians, and as I grew up I would see them and understand. Someday though, people would throw them away and the whole world would change. (137)

This section is an important pivot in the novel in that it both precedes Campbell's entrance into political activism and follows a scathing criticism of what colonial state recognition of Indigenous identity, in spite of its attendant material benefits, entails. Campbell critically appraises both the Department of Indian Affairs' welfare policy and employment opportunities predicated upon the individual performance of a colonial, commodified model of Indigenous authenticity, or "being a white man's Indian" (134). In Cheechum's formulation, the material benefits that follow from these forms of participation in colonial categories – a selective

distribution of resources on the part of the colonial power – cannot be separated from the price that they exact, the blanket as an individuation and isolation to "cover [the] shame" that is systemically disseminated and inculcated through the state's structures, institutions, and ideological apparatuses. But this ought not be taken to imply a moralistic (and colonial) division between Indigenous identities that are assimilated, compromised, inauthentic and shameful versus those that are independent, pure, authentic, and proud. In suggesting "that all our people wore blankets, each in his own way," Cheechum emphasizes instead that colonial institutions always already function to interpellate subjects of the state and to mediate identities prior to any voluntary embrace of colonial categories, and that there is no "authentic" individual standing heroically outside of this oppressive relation between the people and the government, presented outwardly as a relation of identity. In effect, she suggests although it *appears* that the colonial state and its structures are made by the people, in "reality, ugly as it [is]," individual subjectivities (including those of non-Indigenous people) are functions of those structures. Yet this lesson does not amount to a deterministic and fatalistic conception of totalizing colonial-capitalist ideology. Instead, it allows for a surprising reversal of terms that subverts the dominant narrative of Metis defeat and disappearance to position the historical status of the Metis as an invisible, hidden people in the eyes of the government as a source of strength, a potential repository of empowerment and insight. Excluded from the explicit discursive and material mediation of the colonial state yet nevertheless alive, vibrant, and unified along the expansive lines of kinship relations, the community of Maria's childhood, especially in the moment of excitement entailed by the possibility of mobilization, substantiates the hope of identity *and* unity in opposition to colonial hegemony, outside of the colonial categories that fix, determine, and define Indigeneity, an operation that necessarily involves instilling power dynamics, reifying them through selective distribution of resources, and dividing both community and movement. If (mis)recognition of the government as constituted by and serving the people can only operate on

the basis of (neo)liberal individuation – of hiding under one's blanket – Campbell suggests that the alternative, throwing away the blanket, amounts to a coming-together in kinship and solidarity apart from the totalizing discourses and institutions of the colonial state.

This metaphor is deployed concretely with reference to Campbell's friend Stan Daniels, who becomes the leader of the Metis Association of Alberta at the same time as – and in an analogous role to – Harold Cardinal in the NIB (155). Describing the way in which he changed "as government money" and "public recognition" became available to him, she writes:

Today [...] Stan and I each go our separate ways [...] Sometimes I feel sorry for him. I know that he sees what is wrong, but he can't or won't do anything to try to change it. Maybe he's just too tired to continue [...] I don't blame him. I can only hate the system that does this to people. (145)

This critical assessment of the path Stan has chosen is explicitly tied to the blanket metaphor when Maria tells Cheechum about both Stan Daniels and her own grassroots work with sex workers and survivors of abuse (149); Cheechum responds in no uncertain terms that "the blanket only destroys, it doesn't give warmth" (150). Her critique is reiterated when Campbell comes to that final image of division and disillusionment, when the Canadian government offers money and recognition to sections of the growing Indigenous movement and "the blanket that our leaders almost threw away suddenly started to feel warm again, and they wrapped it tightly around them," leaving dissenting, radical voices like Maria's to be "phased out and branded as communists" (156). The concept of authentic Indigeneity, in this context, is not an *alternative* to participation in the colonial categories upon which the parliamentary and bureaucratic apparatuses of the state are built; rather, it is one of those very categories which function to divide, individuate, take and destroy "everything that makes [one] a living soul." The binary of authenticity or purity vs assimilation, in this light, can itself be understood as a colonial double bind rather than a material reality – as coextensive aspects of the colonial model of abstract, individual Indigeneity, materialized in integration in colonial structures and discourses, that the

blanket represents, and which Campbell's story of a people expressly speaks against. In ending that story with a reminder of her "brothers and sisters, all over the country," she leaves open the possibility of giving up the blanket and (re)building cross-cultural solidarity, support, and resistance along lines of literal and metaphorical kinship, across the country, in explicit opposition to Canadian colonial state power. The redemptive possibility the book leaves open, then, is neither the NIB route of reform, which is closely tethered to the strategic reification of colonial categories, nor an individual transcendence of colonial conditions through extraordinary acts of creative or political expression. It suggests instead an understanding of storytelling as participating in collective healing, movement-building, and coordination of a kind of resistance – vexed by colonial divide-and-conquer tactics in the time of both Riel and of Maria's father – that might finally allow Indigenous (and, Campbell hints, non-Indigenous) people "together [to] fight our common enemy" (157) and work to realize Cheechum's dream of liberation. Precisely *how* this can happen is by no means foreclosed or determined within Campbell's narrative, which has made possible readings across a wide variety of political positions; however, I suggest that the extant possibilities for anti-colonialism *have* been foreclosed upon far more often, implicitly or explicitly, within the history of settler-colonial recuperations of her story for the building and consolidation of the nation. I will close this chapter with a critical and contextualized consideration of the tendencies of some of these readings, reflecting upon what this reading of *Halfbreed* can disclose about the colonial structures of dominant critical practices in an ongoing settler-colonial context.

S3. "A proud and bitter Canadian legacy"

In keeping with conventional Canadian literary historiography, Episkew has recently stated that "neither Campbell nor her publisher anticipated the effect that *Halfbreed* would have on its readers" (78), and although this may be true for Campbell, it seems to overlook in an important way McClelland's hope and expectation that he had a Canadian bestseller on his hands.

McClelland's subtitle can be revisited in light of a well-contextualized reading of *Halfbreed's* "proud and bitter" rejection of the politics of recognition taken up by leaders of the Indigenous movement like Cardinal and Daniels. Indeed, Campbell seems explicitly to refuse reconciliation on the state's terms just as Maria had earlier "told [welfare] to shove it" (Campbell 135). I want to briefly discuss and analyze the paradoxical logic of the liberal (literary) nationalism that managed to inscribe such a refusal to integrate on the terms of the dominant society *into* the dominant society as a "Canadian legacy." If only Indigenous politics that did not challenge state power explicitly were assimilable to this nationalism, which political positions (like Campbell's) had to be erased or redefined as personal or private rather than political? If this nationalism functions in literature by recentering the guilty conscience of the Canadian reader, who inherits both the blessing and the burden of a greater knowledge of "Canadian" history, how does it necessarily also decenter the agency of Canada's willful Indigenous subjects? I will only gesture toward these questions of agency and the pathologization and individuation of political dissidents here, as they will be taken up in much greater detail in the next chapter.

As I have mentioned, the historic moment of the early 70s marked an important shift in the state's political relation to Indigenous people, what Coulthard has called the hegemonization of recognition rather than of (explicit) termination. This shift necessarily entailed a shift in national ideology; the figure of the doomed, noble savage, ubiquitous well into the 60s, was to be phased out for a figure that could be understood simultaneously as a people among peoples in a multicultural, heterogenous state and as the ur-figure of Canadiana, a crucial wellspring of Canadian exceptionalism. I understand these interrelated figures as nationalist in that they serve to legitimize rather than to challenge the Canadian nation-state and consolidate a nationalist ideology around the supposed progressive essence or destiny of Canada as a state and as a society. By representing Campbell according to a liberal and individualist or a culturalist lens in turn, the Canadian literary establishment was able to produce her as just such a figure,

overcoming the notion of disappearing Indigeneity but in such a way as to fortify rather than challenge the Canadian teleology. Writing in *Quill & Quire* in early 1974, Rudy Wiebe hailed Campbell's narration as "the voice of the true Canadian woman" (Edwards); in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, meanwhile, Peter Allen opined that her direct account was "an invaluable contribution to our understanding of Canadian culture" (Allen 406). This understanding, to be sure, pained the conscientious liberal reader; Holbert's review, as cited by Reder, dubbed *Halfbreed* shocking precisely because "the hand that holds the book trembles at what it has done" (Reder 2016: 179). Yet the lesson was framed as unmistakably *for* and *about* Canadians and Canadian society, refining and sensitizing them and thereby helping to define them as exceptional through their relation to and inheritance of this history. In 1973, Maclean's published some excerpts of *Halfbreed* with an introduction that put a fine point on the importance of Campbell's book – of an other's-eye-view, as it were – to Canadian self-understanding: "We see these little bands of Indians and Métis as we drive into such towns and cities as Fort Macleod and Prince Albert and The Pas. Only this time we are witness through the eyes of one of the people we stare at" (Fagan *et al* 27). Campbell's narrative thereby seems to open up the possibility of a (however painful) mythologization of Canadian towns and cities, and indeed, of the Canadians who pass through them, who become reinterpreted as the inheritors of a burden, a responsibility, and, assuredly, a world-historical significance. By the same token, if the Canadian literary nationalism of the 70s often regarded transcendence of the merely local and provincial as a marker of national exceptionalism, *Halfbreed* seemed to provide a "story [that] lies beyond anger and hope and is the greater artistic achievement for moving past autobiographical protest to envision the human meaning of degradation" (Allen 408). Allen's structuralist assessment further elaborated that the story "[transcended] its creator's opinion of its meaning," marking the anger, hope, and protest of the book as incidental affective properties of its author that existed in spite of its significance as a modern Canadian classic that both aspired to and attained

universality. Together these reviews suggest that within the Canadian literary marketplace, Maria Campbell, whose stern expression adorned the cover of the book, took on the role of the primordially Canadian figure, disclosing in her narrative something that might teach Canadians how to *be* more fully Canadian – which meant, at the same time, how to emerge onto the world stage as Canadians, transcending the limitations of the merely local, provincial, and personal.

This final point suggests that the Canadian nationalism of the 70s was constituted in part upon a kind of paradoxical post-nationalism – a transcendence of the particularity of old-fashioned nationalism that would become possible insofar as Canada settled its relations with its Indigenous peoples, heard their voices, and assumed their inheritance. If we take seriously this idea that early institutionalized knowledge production on *Halfbreed* – and other works by Indigenous writers in the 70s – was paradoxically shaped and informed by the question of Canadian national identity, it becomes considerably less surprising that *Halfbreed* criticism, which boomed in the postcolonial 90s, reflected a persistent obsession with defining, theorizing, and knowing (Indigenous) identity (Fagan *et al* 259). Many of these readings, as I have explained, take their point of departure from an apolitical and ahistorical understanding of Indigeneity-as-such, predicated upon colonial concepts of race or culture.³¹ In this framework, to borrow the formulation of one critic of Metis literature who fits into the pattern I am describing, it is in some sense the "mixed heritage" or hybridity of the Metis that leads "whites and other Aboriginal groups" to dismiss their legitimacy as a people (Andrews); the liminal situation of the

³¹ For instances of this understanding of the Metis as victimized on account of their existence between cultures or worlds, rather than on account of colonial policy, arbitrary and selective treaty-making, settler racism, and state repression – an understanding which reifies and naturalizes colonial categories – one can refer to Buss 1990, Grant 1990, Petrone 1991, Cairnie 1995, Jannetta 1995, Lundgren 1995, Culjak 2001, or Kaup 2002, among others. Although these readings participate to a greater or lesser extent in this critical tendency, they all emphasize in a reductive way Maria's alienation from her Indigenous relations without tying this alienation to settler-colonialism and the processes by which it deliberately operated to sow division among Indigenous people. Given that settler-colonialism often continues to operate in precisely this way, for a settler scholar embedded in an institutional apparatus of knowledge-production to emphasize the difference between the Metis and status Indigenous peoples – and to theorize it with reference to race or to culture, even if via supposedly anti-essentialist concepts such as hybridity – is essentializing in a way that reinscribes settler-colonial categories as natural.

Metis, their historical existence between the lines of colonial policy, is thereby ascribed to biological or cultural destiny, rather than connected to the aims and methods of colonialism. In this regard, "culturalist" readings of Metis literature that erase or overlook Metis and Indigenous political realities in a context of ongoing settler-colonialism often function further to reify the very colonial categories to which *Halfbreed*, as I have argued, suggests a powerful alternative framework.

Nor, I suggest, should this pattern of postcolonial criticism be understood as discontinuous with the 1970s project of consolidating a basis for Canadian exceptionalism on the world stage and, domestically, legitimizing the state and state-sanctioned avenues for Indigenous political expression. In their foundational 1990s publications, both Penny Petrone and W.H. New articulated the importance of studying and understanding Indigenous literature via the project of more fully understanding Canada, whether it be by coming to a conscientious awareness of "the ugliness of racism that is part of Canada's social history" (Petrone 120) or, as the back cover of New's collection suggests, by recognizing "Native literature as an integral part of the Canadian cultural scene." This pattern suggests the proposition, following my reading of Cheechum's lessons, that certain expressions of Indigenous nationalism *qua* strategic reification of colonial categories – and, accordingly, preoccupation with definition of who is and is not Indigenous – have been produced by Canadian literary and critical institutions as not only palatable to Canadian national self-definition, but integral to it – a "proud and bitter Canadian legacy" indeed.

I have argued that Maria Campbell's book provides a critique of and alternative to the politics of recognition which the Indigenous leaders of her historical moment were beginning to take up. Episkenew has pointed out that *Halfbreed* "has been one of the most widely read books in the Indigenous community [and] has inspired other Indigenous people to tell their stories" (Episkenew 77). As such, it should not be surprising that the project of problematizing and

implicitly critiquing the hegemonic forms of Indigenous politics of recognition, which often depends on presuppositions both of homogeneity and of exclusion in its reification of colonial categories, has recurred in both Indigenous literary production and literary criticism in Canada over the decades since. I have grounded the study of the following chapters in a consideration of the concrete specifics of *Halfbreed's* critique because, as I have suggested, this particular critique has always already been produced simultaneously as a critique *for* Canadians, as a necessary lesson for a nation's coming-of-age, in a manner that represents literary and cultural expression as standing entirely apart from movements for political change. Through this process, periodically reinscribed in the critical tradition, Indigenous literature has been understood as confessional, personal, individual, edifying to the sensitive, tolerant Canadian reader and simultaneously disclosive of essential Canadian truth that nevertheless need *not* be concretized in measures to end ongoing processes of settler-colonialism; politics happens *elsewhere than here*, in the very forms of negotiation, reform, and recognition that Indigenous literature, following *Halfbreed*, supposedly spurns, problematizes, and rejects. Through this nationalist process which separates politics out from literary works, however, political legitimacy is in effect rerouted to state-recognized expressions of Indigenous politics, and, by the same token, to the colonial state itself.

In this last section, I have considered how and why Campbell's call for genuine anti-colonial unity has historically been utilized to forward a nationalist project of reconciliation and stabilization of the settler state. In the next chapter, I take up the 1975 text of another Metis advocate of Red Power, the Marxist historian and organizer Howard Adams. Like Campbell, Adams was among the dissidents phased out with the hegemonization of the paradigm of recognition. In *Prison of Grass*, which mixes historical narration with autobiographical passages, he deploys a considerably different set of literary tactics to explore and reflect upon this process of phasing-out. Whereas Campbell's text draws on Metis history and communal life to imagine

possibilities for genuine unity in opposition to colonialism, Adams positions himself in dramatic opposition to the unified futurity posited by the colonial state so as to simultaneously invite *and* challenge the process of delegitimization of dissenting voices, codified and pathologized as bitter outliers, radicals, or malcontents. In this regard, Adams's text refuses, on a more fundamental level than Campbell's, reinscription and integration into the Canadian colonial project and its literary and cultural canon; in this context, its brief and troubling reception history can be understood as disclosive of the colonial investments of histories and historiographies – within and without the literary context – produced as institutional knowledge. With this reading, I will consider Adams's seldom-read text as engaging in the same mid-70s dialogue as *Halfbreed* – on the relationship between Indigenous politics and storytelling, on the problematics of the politics of recognition and its alternatives, and on possibilities for literary expression and interpretation in the contradictory context of settler-colonialism.

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"I felt like a phantom:"

Prison of Grass as a Red Power Reclamation of Spirit

In the previous chapter, I challenged readings of Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* that deracinate it from the historical context of the mid-1970s and the political context of Campbell's dissident opposition to the liberal politics of state-centric negotiation and reform. I argued that Campbell draws upon and rearticulates the historical lessons of Metis resistance to suggest possibilities for collective Indigenous identity and unity apart from – and in opposition to – the mediation and recognition of the state. In effect, her (re)interpretation of Metis history leads her to suggest that the Metis people's supposed invisibility to and relative autonomy from state structures and categories since Confederation can itself be a source of insight, solidarity, and empowerment at a moment when Indigenous politics are increasingly integrating itself into those structures and predicating their programmes upon strategic reification and recognition of the Indian Act's colonial categories. I linger on this summary of last chapter's argument because Howard Adams's *Prison of Grass* is another Metis autohistory emanating from the vociferously contested and politically unstable 1970s, highlighting the historical invisibility of the Metis in contrast to their ongoing history of resistance to colonialism, and positioning its narrator in relation to a legacy that can speak in illuminating ways to the patterns unfolding in the present. Like Campbell, Adams was positioned far to the left of an Indigenous movement that was, in the early 70s, increasingly investing in both the structures and the discourses of the colonial state and, in the process, increasingly phasing out the militants of "Red Power" as dangerously radical individuals, lone dissenters fundamentally unrepresentative of Indigenous views, interests, and politics. But whereas *Halfbreed*, with its call for unity against colonial division, has often been read selectively through a culturalist lens as supporting rather than opposing liberal individualism, moderate politics, and reconciliation with/to settler-colonialism, *Prison of Grass*

takes an approach to politicizing narrative and autobiography that more fundamentally resists integration into the Canadian settler-colonial canon. While this resistance has led to the text's dismissal within Canadian literary criticism as dated, narrowly subjective, and expressively polemical, this chapter will take it as a more complex and ambivalent quality in an (ongoing) context of imagining political and theoretical alternatives to settler-colonial integration and assimilation, and explore a more nuanced consideration of its dynamics in terms of the book's context, form, and argument.

I will explore how *Prison of Grass* articulates Adams's experience as a political dissident, systematically phased out from dominant discourses on Indigenous political and collective futurity, in relation to the historical position of the Metis as a people invisible to the recognition of the colonial state after the defeat at Batoche and the hanging of Riel. This construction allows Adams to suggest possibilities for collective empowerment and agency independent of the mediation of the hegemonic centre and its recognition of identities and rights. Furthermore, in large part by virtue of its peculiar and unique form – an interlacing of autobiography and dense historical narration – *Prison of Grass* resists interpretation as either a narrative of heroic individual overcoming or of purely or primarily cultural resurgence and renewal, presenting an anti-colonial challenge that could not be subsumed within, but only pathologized and phased out by the hegemony of the settler-colonial state. To draw out this challenge, I will explore how the specificity of *Prison of Grass*'s mixed literary form allows Adams to intercept the tendency in European autobiography (and in European criticism and commentary *on* autobiography) towards liberal individualism by articulating his narrative with and through the political, historical, and collective. A significant and expanding field in recent scholarship has challenged the practice of reading Indigenous autobiography or life narrative according to the individualist logic of the European genre of autobiography; according to one leading figure in the field, Cree-Metis scholar Deanna Reder, "the use of autobiography to provide the history and role of colonization

in our worldviews and praxis" constitutes an important contemporary articulation of Indigenous intellectual traditions and conceptions of "a communal, collective sense of self" (Reder 156). I will certainly argue that Adams's text can and should be read as part of this tradition of Indigenous autobiography, not least in its deployment of personal experience in the context of a historical genre associated with expectations and norms of objectivity and in its insistence upon the collective and systemic character of affects and realms of experience conventionally coded as private and individual. At the same time, this reading will emphasize the political reasons for and operations of his critical engagement with the dominant tendency toward the individualist logic of Western autobiography, figured in *Prison of Grass* as a crucial ideological mechanism of co-optation and, ultimately, of colonial narrativization. This work will complicate reductive assessments of the book's supposedly polemical character and contribute to the restoration of a more complete and holistic literary and political history of the Red Power period in Canada.

S1. Defeat and disappearance of the Red Power radicals

The comparatively few references to Howard Adams within scholarship on Indigenous literature have functioned by means of a dual tactic to delegitimize it both as history and as literature. In their implicit bifurcation – in keeping with the critical tendency traced and complicated in the previous chapter – of the historical and the autobiographical components of *Prison of Grass*, they have served two distinct functions: to associate him with the polemical or "social protest" literature characteristic of the bygone 1970s, and to frame his work as expressively emotional, disclosive of personal, individual feeling and, ultimately, pathology. Thomas King's influential 1990 article "Godzilla vs Post-colonial" groups *Prison of Grass* as an exemplar of "social protest" literature along with a handful of other works, including *Halfbreed*; he describes this group somewhat sympathetically as "that literature [...] that concerns itself with the clash of Native and non-Native cultures or with the championing of Native values over non-Native values" (King 186). Marta Dvorak unpacks the more critical view implied by King's distinctions

in criticizing this phase's key works as "[corresponding] to an oppositional discursive strategy" predicated upon binary thought, potentially reducing literature to a purely sociological entity (Dvorak 2002) – a model increasingly left behind, in her judgment, by King himself among others. Similarly, Penny Petrone's important Indigenous literary history describes *Prison of Grass* as a militant, inflammatory work written "in prose that is passionate though clichéd," and contraposes the early 70s' "books of protest and defence written from partisan motives" to the "works of history" that only began to appear later in the decade (Petrone 113). As this quotation suggests, the characterization of Adams by both sympathetic and unsympathetic commentators as expressively angry and bitter has lent itself to a further dismissal of his work's legitimacy as history as well as its worth as literature. Barnett Richling describes *Prison of Grass* as an "intensely angry polemic" and dismissively comments that "Whatever its merits as history, its politics are clear enough" (Richling 1989: 148). The more sympathetic Emma LaRocque nevertheless typifies Adams as "[seething] with outrage and criticism," the most "expressively angry" of the social-protest writers (90). A critical review of Adams's later book *A Tortured People* by Neal McLeod sounds a similar note of critical sympathy by focusing at length on its "combative, angry tone" and that goes on to suggest that although Adams's "anger and hatred for the colonizer" may have been necessary and effective in the sixties and seventies, it loses its efficacy "for people of [McLeod's] generation" (180). In *A Tortured People*, Adams had himself reflected on this pattern, its racialized connotations and its consequences:

I am reminded that my language is too political, pejorative and rhetorical. I do not apologize. My language is in harmony with my race/class and colonization. Behind my back, I hear the whites whisper in mockery, 'He's a Red Power radical.' All my credibility is destroyed, and I am reduced to an over politicized halfbreed. (Adams 1994: 8)

Here Adams describes the process by which his language as a whole is marked as radical, violent, and dangerous, deviating sharply from preestablished scripts for proper or appropriate Indigenous expression – with the result that his insights are altogether subsumed back into a

racialized (and racist) trope of backwards bitterness and doomed recalcitrance. As the selection of quotations above suggests, this process of situating Adams in a distant, faintly defunct past by emphasizing the backwardness of both his content and his tone has been carried out both on the popular and the academic level, with varying degrees of theoretical sophistication and ideological justification.

My reading will suggest that these reactions can serve both as an entry point into *Prison of Grass's* specificity and as an instance of the colonial patterns of management of expression and pathologization of political dissidence that it works to expose, critique, and resist. In the preface, Adams claims that the book is an attempt "to examine history and autobiography and their intersection with colonization" (Adams 6). From the start, Adams posits, first, a complicity between or inextricability of history and autobiography, and, second, that the forms of history and autobiography together have political implications in a context of ongoing settler-colonialism. But the book never explicitly names or identifies these implications, nor does it overtly reflect upon or examine the relationship between history and autobiography, instead seeming only to imply that Adams's personal experiences are not separable from a much longer colonial history. To open up a more nuanced exploration of what *Prison of Grass* identifies as intersecting tropes of history and autobiography complicit in colonialism and, furthermore, to explore how its form and content constitute a critical examination thereof, I want to spend some time considering the political context of Adams's turn to literary expression. If the previous chapter situated Campbell's book in part as a delineation of the terms of struggle between the advocates of a state-centric politics of recognition and integration and dissenting voices of Red Power like Campbell and Adams, this chapter will position *Prison of Grass* as a reflection on the (historical *and* autobiographical) narrative tropes deployed by colonial power to define the parameters of anti-colonial possibility, confine and manage resistance, and construct integration

as the sole avenue for realizing Indigenous agency.³² The rapidly changing political landscape of the years 1969-1974 and Adams's participation and engagement within it can expand upon the preface's stated concern with how history and autobiography function together to naturalize colonial disempowerment, individuation, and hegemony, and illuminate Adams's strategies of self-representation, especially the ways in which he draws upon and represents the figures of Riel and Riel's rebellion in conversation with his deployment of autobiographical narration.

Following the 1969 unveiling of the White Paper, a great emphasis was placed upon the newfound Indigenous political unity that swept across the country, organizationally represented by the emergence of the NIB on the federal level and by the renewal of groups like the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood (MIB) provincially. These groups, drawing liberally on radical and militant rhetoric, went to considerable lengths to legitimize themselves as representative and democratic expressions of Indigenous people's interests, and indeed as the only means through which Indigenous people could realistically hope to have their interests represented in negotiations with their opponent, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA). Yet Bryan Palmer notes as an irony that the White Paper's apparent success in unifying Indigenous people across the country around negotiation with various levels of government effectively drowned out younger, more militant voices (Palmer 407). He suggests that this process, although tactically different, functionally accompanied the deployment of brutal repression – a "virtual extermination order" (408) –

³² Much more remains to be said about the similarities and differences of Campbell's and Adams's texts, perhaps in light of their personal relationship (which I will briefly touch on in this chapter's conclusion). It is worth nothing at least that Maria Campbell's approach to contemporaneous Indigenous politics and discourse is that of an activist embedded *within* the process of movement-building, professionally and personally close to many advocates of a state-centric politics (see the discussion of Stan Daniels in the previous chapter). This positionality, as well as her occupation as an activist and community worker and, indeed, her youth, cannot but inform the generally hopeful and affirmative way in which her text criticizes the methods of the movement of her day from the inside, as it were. The much older historian and scholar Adams, on the other hand, takes on and thematizes the vantage point of the outsider, totally phased out, excluded, and in exile following a moment of decisive defeat. The tone and form of his critique and approach can be looked at in light of what Campbell herself noted after his death: "Howard was never afraid to [say what he felt]. But on the other hand, it was also a way to keep himself separate from his community. Métis people were not really a part of his life, at least not his everyday life, except maybe on the page." (*Otapawiy!* 240). A more complete understanding of the dynamics of *Prison of Grass* as well as its extratextual lives – in Indigenous studies especially, where it is regarded by many as a classic (Alfred 2009) – could no doubt be furnished by a closer investigation of this relationship – but this is beyond the scope of this chapter.

against American Indian Movement (AIM) radicals in the US from 1972-75. James Burke, a former employee of the MIB, goes still further in underscoring the complicity of reformist organizations and the colonial state in quashing alternative avenues for Indigenous politics in his out-of-print exposé *Paper Tomahawks: From Red Tape to Red Power*. Burke argues that the function of the 1969 White Paper was not necessarily or primarily to effect and complete assimilation in a single stroke, but rather to diffuse the increasingly volatile and militant political consciousness of Indigenous people by establishing negotiating instruments comprised of "cooperative Indian representatives whose commitments would be binding on Indians on a nation-wide basis" (Burke 9). He suggests that although the White Paper gave the *appearance* of having had the opposite of its intended effect when leaders like Harold Cardinal boldly avowed refusal to cooperate with federal government until treaty matters were settled, this appearance was not borne out in the practice of the provincial and national organizations or the Indigenous negotiators in the following years (22). In his exhaustively detailed firsthand account of the MIB's operation from 1969 to 1974, Burke argues that the organization not only proved itself incapable or unwilling – for structural reasons, particularly its reliance on state funding – of taking a principled, forceful stand against colonial dispossession, racist housing and hiring policies, and deliberate exploitation of Indigenous labourers, but also demonstrated that in order to maintain its representational authority and the semblance of political unity, it was willing to move to undercut political opposition, principally from the young activists and organizers who were both willing and able to take a militant stand against the DIA and the colonial, capitalist interests it protected and represented (77).

Adams himself bore witness to this process by which young militants, many of whom were nationalists or traditionalists, were constructed by multiple levels of the state apparatus as individualistic and selfish figures antithetical to (the state-sponsored organizational embodiments of) Indigenous values, interests, and futurities. By the late 1960s, he had himself already clashed

with Saskatchewan Metis organizers aligned organizationally or politically with the Liberal, assimilationist Ross Thatcher government and had in the process "[become] an object of fascination for the media, which invariably referred to him as a 'militant' and 'red power advocate'" (Pitsula 226). In 1968, the Thatcher government plied the moderate Metis Association of Saskatchewan with funding to undermine alternative and more radical political groups like the Saskatchewan Native Action Committee and the Metis Society of Saskatchewan (in both of which Howard Adams played a significant role); it expressed its hope to the Association that it would become "the voice of the Metis in our province," as "splinter groups [...] formed by a very small group, and more often for personal gain and prestige" could only threaten and weaken the organization (227).³³ Burke describes a comparable political struggle, and the deployment of similar rhetorical devices from the state-funded reformist position, in the Manitoba context. In 1969, Dave Courchene, president of the highly subsidized MIB, delivered a speech which systematically conflated insistence on independence from the state and on self-government with militancy and violence, denouncing Red Power advocates and suggesting that any political strategy deviating from the MIB party line must necessarily be propounding indiscriminate chaos and bloodshed (Burke 81). Like the Thatcher government, Courchene imputed selfishness and narrow individualism to Red Power militants – an accusation denounced by Burke, given that the militants were generally grassroots organizers who benefitted in no clear material way from their activism, while Courchene himself was living well on Ottawa's payroll at the time (82). In this case, both Courchene and Thatcher deploy an increasingly widespread narrative of this period, articulating the advancement of collective Indigenous interests as inextricable from collaboration with the (federal or provincial) government. The conditions of possibility of this discourse were twofold: in objective terms, it required the renewed presence of heavily subsidized and state-

³³ In spite of this depiction of Red Power advocates, Adams turned down on principle a well-paid government position as minister for Indian and Metis Affairs the very next year (Pitsula 226).

dependent Indigenous organizations, which were indeed brought to the fore with the coordination and homogenization of anti-colonial resistance following the controversy of the White Paper; and in subjective terms, it necessitated that dissenting voices propounding collective alternatives should be individuated, pathologized, and phased out, made out as a small, unstable minority fundamentally at odds with objective reality, the "actual" interests of Indigenous people, and historical progress. This invective, although one tactic among a plethora, was in many ways effective. Throughout the 1970s, Howard Adams "was increasingly attacked and marginalized by official leaderships of government-funded Aboriginal organizations" (Simmons 10); by 1975, when *Prison of Grass* was published, Adams had gone into political exile in California, revolutionary sentiment across Canada had been curbed, and the threat of organized Red Power militancy – undercut with the extermination of the American Indian Movement in the US – had apparently given way to a hegemonic paradigm of negotiation and reform.

In this context of apparent defeat, Adams, like Campbell, revisits the history of the Metis to make sense of his own position. But whereas *Halfbreed* has the structure of an intervention in the present, oriented toward a better future – spending only a chapter or two on nineteenth-century history, with Cheechum as the living embodiment of that legacy of resistance throughout the rest of the narrative – *Prison of Grass* lingers in close detail on the distant past, considering the specific dynamics of dominant historical narratives and how they function in a colonial context to suppress individual and collective agency, empowerment, and pride. As a result, where *Halfbreed* affirmatively refutes a state-sanctioned and hegemonic narrative of the defeat of the Metis at Batoche and their subsequent disappearance with the undeniable reality of Campbell's community's continued survival, coherence, and identity – precisely in the absence of state recognition and mediation – *Prison of Grass*, as its bleak title may suggest, takes considerably more seriously the efficacy of language, narrative, and discourse as they are

mobilized by colonial hegemony. This caution resonates in light of the reinscription of *Halfbreed* within a nationalist canon and opens up the possibility of taking *Prison of Grass's* refusal to lend itself to literary interpretation as conventionally understood (and as practiced in *Halfbreed's* history) as an anti-colonial strength, rather than a creative or literary weakness, of the text. Moreover, Adams's critical examination of two ostensibly distinct forms of narration – autobiography and history, one concerned with the individual and one with the collective – can serve in turn to illuminate the historical and political context of the 70s by tracing the narrative mechanisms through which settler-colonial hegemony maintains and naturalizes liberal individualism and the forms of politics it implies. Yet in spite of this rejection of and resistance to the Indigenous unity and futurity propounded by the politics of representation, and the narrative tropes through which it consolidates its hegemony, Adams's text refutes the libertarian logic of the lone dissident, the exceptional martyr to a defeated cause. Instead, Adams insists upon the possibility of a unity constituted not upon the abstraction of an inherent or essential identity but constructed upon commonalities of embodiment, experience, affect, and materiality. In this regard, *Prison of Grass* goes beyond mobilizing a resistance to and critique of the liberal and colonial tropes of narrative to intimate what it might look like for an irreducibly heterogeneous multitude to come together in unity and solidarity against a shared enemy. In so doing, Adams opens a space for critical reflection upon the ways in which Indigenous agency is produced, distributed, and condensed under what he understood – and experienced in his own life – as the violence of liberal hegemonies in settler-colonial conditions. Given this sense of what his text resists and why, we can now move to a consideration of some of the seemingly contradictory and competing impulses of *Prison of Grass* – in particular, its insistence upon Adams's own embodiment and materiality punctuating a corrective history of Riel's rebellion and reexamination of the figure of Riel himself as typified, abstracted, and recast as a symbol in dominant colonial histories.

S2. "They even say I look like Louis Riel"

Most of *Prison of Grass* consists in a historical-materialist counter-narrative of the Red River and Riel resistances, a period which Adams counterposes to a bleak and disempowered present:

The native people in a colony are not allowed a valid interpretation of their history, because the conquered do not write their own history. They must endure a history that shames them, destroys their confidence, and causes them to reject their heritage. Those in power command the present and shape the future by controlling the past, particularly for the natives. A fact of imperialism is that it systematically denies native people a dignified history. (43)

In this account, the future is shaped by narrative – insofar as Indigenous people are denied a history of agency and empowerment, their present-day agentic possibilities remain confined, proscribed and managed by the colonial power. In itself, this argument is uncontroversial, but Adams's adoption of a mixed form that sidelines himself as an agent and, indeed, almost entirely excludes discussion of his quite remarkable political and academic career seems to altogether contradict the project of presenting a positive individual model of agency, empowerment, and resistance. Instead, Adams chooses to adopt an orthodox Marxist³⁴ mode of narrative that downplays the role of individual actors to emphasize the agency of the people, or the masses, in moving history; this decision is inextricable from his choice to define and narrate himself throughout the book not by his exceptional individual actions, but in terms of his materiality and embodiment, his everyday experiences, and his affective responses, including that shame which he positions as disclosive of structural and systemic oppression. His discussion of the case of

³⁴ I do not intend "orthodox Marxist" pejoratively here. I intend it to mean above all the position of upholding the centrality of class struggle and class difference (which Adams did to the end of his life). "Revisionist" Marxism is that Marxism that leaves behind the idea that the theoretical division of society into (economic) classes – proletariat and bourgeoisie – is fundamental to a politics of theory of emancipation from capitalist exploitation and oppression. It therefore connotes a supposedly "Marxist" politics or theory that nevertheless abandons the strategic goal of qualitatively ending class society (capitalism) and abolishing the state. In many "socialist" states of the 20th century, revisionism manifest itself in the position that a classless or proletarian society has already been successfully achieved and that the state apparatus is therefore a legitimate and transparent expression of the collective interests of "the people;" in capitalist countries, meanwhile, it translates most often to a social-democratic or parliamentary politics that does not consider the state to have an essential or fixed class character or interest (i.e. it is not fundamentally or essentially a bourgeois state, and could therefore be turned to serve the interests of "the people" if only the right party were at the head of it).

Riel himself can provide an interpretive key to how these two somewhat unintuitive creative choices together constitute *Prison of Grass's* challenge to the politics *and* narrative tropes of the representative politics of identity and how their function of rerouting agency to exceptional individuals functions to close off collective and democratic alternatives in a settler-colonial context.

At the same time, Adams's historical materialist argument about the figure of Riel vis-a-vis his people can be interpreted as a commentary on his own position, a component of his autobiography fundamentally indivisible from the passages that explicitly describe his experiences. The parallel between Adams and Riel had been drawn regularly during his political engagement in Saskatchewan in the late 60s, a period of messianic hopes and aspirations (Lutz *et al* 248). Maria Campbell reflected after Adams's death that the first time she saw him, "eloquent and dramatic" in a fringed buckskin shirt and beaded choker speaking to the Senate committee in Ottawa, her first thought was "He looks just like Louis Riel!" (237). It was a comparison that Adams did not discourage, and on at least one occasion, he made ambiguous reference to it in a speech:

This comparison is made continuously by my own people and by white people because – they even say I look like Louis Riel – because, in emotion I'm sort of the evangelistic type of leader, and because I am a militant ... There's no doubt about it. I'm a revolutionary. (Pitsula 227)

Like Riel, Adams was highly educated, charismatic, and well-spoken, and returned to Saskatchewan from a kind of exile in the US to engage with the political situation of his people. Yet *Prison of Grass's* counter-history of the figure of Riel and the struggles with which his name is associated suggests a problematization not only of this comparison, but more fundamentally of the way in which exceptional individuals are constructed – and how those reductive constructions are later conscripted, co-opted and deployed – within dominant historical narratives. In this regard, Adams engages in a uniquely political way with the enigma and

paradox of Riel, what Albert Braz has described as "the tremendous fluidity in the aesthetic representations of the Métis leader" (3). Braz argues that figurations of Riel – perennial across both political and literary discourse in Canada – "bear little resemblance to their ostensible model, underscoring not only the fluidity of the Métis leader's image but also his continuing elusiveness even more than a century after his death" (191). Adams refigures this fluidity and elusiveness not to (re)construct a version of Riel as a uniquely enigmatic presence in Canadian history, but rather to model a practice of political autobiography consciously speaking (back) to the narrative processes that function to supplement and naturalize settler-colonial domination. In this regard, his argument about Riel functions to illuminate the specificity of his own case and of how the mixed form he assembles in *Prison of Grass* may open up the possibility of recuperating what Indigenous people are systematically denied, "a dignified history."

The second section of *Prison of Grass* details what Adams dubs "Halfbreed Resistance to Imperialism," sharply and dramatically contradicting the images of subjugation and defeat he invokes in the first section; yet Louis Riel enters this section belatedly and almost surreptitiously, in a block quotation rather than in Adams's own words (52). If what LaRocque has called the European "hero-oriented treatment of history in which the people are forgotten" (Braz 201) functions to represent Riel as the sole and exceptional architect of resistance, Adams distributes Indigenous agency in a context of anti-colonial struggle along popular, direct-democratic lines. He argues that the 1869-1870 "civil war" that historians misleadingly characterize as a rebellion (Adams 51) was the most heightened point of a conflict between two economic systems, "the old economic system represented by the Hudson's Bay Company and the new industrial system" (50). Negotiations between the Company and Ottawa had gone on for several years without any meaningful consultation with the people of Red River (present-day Winnipeg). The announcement of a successful purchase and of Ottawa's plan to enforce its new ownership throughout Rupert's Land through the imposition of armed forces – with no apparent

consideration of local residents' interests, let alone of Indigenous rights or land titles – led the largely Metis and Cree population, with the support and participation of sections both of Hudson's Bay Company officials and of non-Indigenous locals (52), to organize and seize Fort Garry before it could be taken by what they then apprehended as a foreign, potentially hostile power (54). They collectively established a provisional government that called for direct negotiation with the Canadian government to extract a policy guarantee for protection of Indigenous rights and interests in the land, prior to the transfer of administrative control; the avenue of negotiation seemed to prove fruitful, and on July 15, 1870, Manitoba became a province of Canada rather than a colony (58). However, Adams suddenly strikes a note of dissonance by marking the gap between "the federal government's promises" and "another plan [that] was unfolding in Ottawa and London" (57) – the imposition of the new regime by force of arms, under cover of a peace mission. The result was a reign of terror and oppression by racist settlers and colonial forces against the Metis, precipitating the large-scale exodus that scattered them across Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the northern United States (58). Throughout this sequence, Adams's Riel is almost a non-presence, his actions and thoughts suggested almost entirely through passages Adams cites from the historian Auguste de Trémaudan.³⁵ In Adams's text proper, meanwhile, the active tense is used principally with reference to "the local people" (56), "the Red River people" (57), or "the people's provisional government," a democratic body struck under Riel's direction but independent from him as an agent (55). Riel thereby hovers as a peripheral figure from paragraph to paragraph until the chapter's very end, when Adams briefly describes Riel's election to parliament for the district of St Boniface in the 1871 federal elections. Adams contends that it was only at this point that Ottawa deployed propaganda to construct Riel as the key agent in the rebellion and, particularly, in the 1870 execution by the provisional

³⁵ Trémaudan was himself commissioned in the 1920s by the Union Nationale Métisse to write a corrective history about the resistances and about the role played by Riel; most of his sources came from the oral accounts of Metis veterans of those struggles.

government of the "passionate racist" Thomas Scott, who had played an aggressive role in the Orangemen's project at Red River of inciting racial strife, assaulting and harassing Indigenous people, and plotting the assassination of Riel himself. On the contrary, Adams suggests in one of his rare rhetorical deployments of the active tense with reference to Riel, "[he] gave evidence as a witness and in fact pleaded that leniency be showed to the accused" (55). The construction and representation of Riel as the sole or principal motive force of the violence at Red River thus serves a crucial propaganda function, not only or primarily in criminalizing a figure of importance, but in casting an individual as the focal point of agency and power and diverting empowerment from those who actually and actively exercised it in history (i.e. juries, committees, and assemblies of local residents and ordinary people). Adams's counter-deployment of a historical materialist framework – which is too often characterized as a reductively deterministic, progressivist, and disempowering paradigm – serves in this regard the function of grammatically and syntactically *redirecting* agency and empowerment within his narrativization. In this regard, it is not solely or primarily through explicit or didactic content but on a formal level that Adams challenges the individualist and individualizing tropes of biographical and historical narrative alike.

The spectral presence of Riel in Adams's depiction of the struggle of 1869-1870 nevertheless becomes a figure of argumentative focus in his more elaborate and more detailed narrative of the 1885 resistance:

The term "Riel Rebellion" for the hostilities of 1885 is not only misleading but incorrect because it implies that Louis Riel alone was responsible for the hostilities. The truth is that he entered only the later stages of a long struggle involving many groups in the Northwest. (70)

Adams again details the socio-economic conditions – poverty, unrest, grievances amidst broken promises and ignored petitions across the Northwest – that capitulated the organization in 1883 of a popular movement of both Indigenous and white residents. He emphasizes that the decision

to "fetch" Riel (73) was taken after prolonged discussion by people in several districts, "both native and white," and that his role was "[to work] for the Northwest people's movement, not [to lead] it" (80). He is careful to counterpose Riel's own pacifist and moderate inclinations (91, 92, 94) to the racist government invective that quickly moved to "[describe] Riel as an advocate of hostilities and a leader of the 'poor ignorant' Metis who would do what he commanded" (73). Here Adams explicitly draws the link between the individualizing tropes of conventional history and the disempowerment that colonialism foists upon Indigenous people to "command the present and shape the future": as Riel becomes a scapegoat for the repressive violence that the colonial-capitalist state would deploy against the resistance movement, legitimizing that violence on the part of a blameless government, he is simultaneously set up as an exceptional (if woefully misguided) historic agent set above and apart from a disempowered and vulnerable multitude. In dualist terms, Riel becomes the disembodied and abstract agent of idealist history while the actual economic and political issues, and mass organizing, significant to materialist history would be obscured and disappear (109). In this regard, Adams suggests, there is an intrinsic relationship between choice of narrative strategy and delimitation of the field of politically anti-colonial possibilities. If colonial idealist history succeeds in representationally and rhetorically determining Riel as the only historic agent capable of leading his people to liberation, then it also paves the ground for his hanging to take on symbolic significance far beyond him as the ultimate realization of Metis disempowerment, leaving behind only "defeated generations" (98). It is in part in Adams's attentiveness to this problematic – and his affirmation that historical narrative is materially effective in foreclosing upon political possibilities and hopes – that he marks his autobiography in *Prison of Grass* as an effective repository for such possibilities of resistance rather than as a doomed exercise in formal experimentation.

Toward the end of his history, Adams breaks from the discursive strategy of maintaining Louis Riel as a ghostly non-presence at the periphery of his paragraphs, carefully confining his

agency to other historians' block quotations. Instead, he speaks directly to how he sees Riel and what lessons he draws from the experience of his construction as a radical, dangerous, potentially pathological individual: "Riel was a leader in ideas who wanted to guide his people through a struggle in order to create a better society where love and freedom would prevail. Riel was inspired by a revolutionary vision of the world, but he was not insane" (113). If, as I have suggested, Adams was acutely conscious as he wrote of the proposed affinity – spiritual, world-historical, and even physical – between himself and Riel, then this passage, coming after the prolonged deployment of a historical materialist framework that strives to undo the individuation of (and crystallization of historical agency in) the figure of Riel, may represent a rare comment on how Adams actually sees the role in history of charismatic figureheads like Riel – and, perhaps, himself during the messianic, hopeful years of Red Power. Yet even as he acknowledges this point of unity in revolutionary hope and optimism, Adams goes to lengths to resist for himself the progressive disembodiment and abstraction of the figure of Riel in colonial history. For him, the martyring of Riel was made possible not only by Riel's (symbolic) refusal to carry a gun but, more significantly, by his refusal to suspect "that the eastern newspapers would purposely distort news against the Métis [and] make [him] out as an unpopular rebel leader" (114). It was Riel's amazing naivete in this regard that allowed for the colonial constructions that would assume hegemony after his death, consequences of his underestimation of the colonial state's power *outside* of the explicitly political or even military realm, and its willingness to deploy language, narrative, and history at multiple institutional levels to consolidate its control.

For his part, however, Adams was deeply and presciently sensitive to the politics of language (Hamilton *et al* 165) – to the function of language in maintaining colonial subjugation, robbing colonized peoples of a dignified history, and suppressing resistance through the tactics I have traced above, of individuation, pathologization, and abjection. In this light, *Prison of Grass*

itself can be understood not only as Adams's adoption of a new form in propounding his revolutionary vision and agitation, but as an attempt to resist, via an examination of how history and autobiography are complicit in a settler-colonial context, what Riel failed to recognize as a threat: his *own* individuation and pathologization in dominant, colonial narrative – in a sense, the threat of his own disembodied martyrdom as Riel's reincarnation. Even as he describes the totalizing power and domination of colonialism after the defeat of the Metis, then, the act of writing to expose the mechanisms of its operation may model a form of resistance situated in the concrete, embodied individual. Adams's historical materialist analysis and discussion of Riel thus suggests the contours of a framework that simultaneously does not underestimate the grasp of hegemonic historical narrative – a grasp which he had experienced himself as the collective fist of neocolonialism tightened around him and sent him into exile – but at the same time does not reproduce its disempowering conclusions, in form or in content. Adams thus registers both the material efficacy of dominant historical discourse in making the figure of Riel into a metonym for Metis agency and the possibility of breaking from it, or at least resisting effective assimilation into it, in the present.

Like Riel, Adams as a political organizer had operated as part of an organized, democratic movement responding to concrete socio-economic conditions and systemic oppression, himself often taking a subsidiary or background role and on at least one occasion speaking out against younger and more militant factors in the Saskatchewan Native Action Committee (Pitsula 226). To this day, however, when spoke of at all he is spoken of as a unique or exceptional individual, an outlier within Indigenous (and Indigenous literary) history – in his articulation of Marxist-inspired nationalism (Million 2013: 87), in his expressive anger and outrage, or in his singular leadership of important crests of Red Power activity. This final construction is exemplified in a comment by Bryan Palmer in particular when he mistakenly claims that the Native Caravan, a cross-Canada protest convoy of Indigenous people frustrated

with the bureaucratic organizations that came to Ottawa for direct negotiation and was met instead by riot police, was principally organized and led by Adams (Palmer 409). On the contrary, as Vern Harper's rich firsthand account of the Caravan demonstrates, Adams's critiques of the co-opted Indigenous organizations (Harper 77) and his keen engagement with a Marxist analytic and strategic framework (40) were certainly not unique, especially in the regional and local Saskatchewan context where Adams organized in spaces long since politicized and radicalized by socialists and communist sympathizers like Medric McDougall, Malcolm Norris, and Maria Campbell's own father, Dan Campbell (Pitsula 222, Hamilton *et al* 191, Harper 44). The ongoing subjugation of knowledge of these and other Indigenous resistances and political and land struggles outside of the bureaucratic context of prominent chiefs, councils and, increasingly, MPs, functions to justify Adams's concern that dominant historical narrative operates continuously to misrepresent, obscure, and reduce images of collective empowerment of Indigenous people.

I have suggested, then, that *Prison of Grass* exhibits a keen awareness of the mechanisms and implications of the construction of exceptional, unusual, potentially pathological individual agents as it pertains to historical narrative and colonial struggle. At this point in history, Adams had developed an ambivalent and complicated relationship to the figure of Louis Riel, one hinging upon his awareness of many of the same processes functioning for many of the same reasons – dividing and conquering, suppressing resistance – with renewed vigour in the contested period of the early 1970s to isolate Adams and figures like him as over politicized, radical, and potentially dangerous. In this light, *Prison of Grass* takes on the character of a dynamic reflection upon the kinship between Riel and Adams: a shared revolutionary vision, on account of which both would ultimately be constructed as figures antithetical to the long-term good of their people, figures for whose actions and overactive agentic capacities the "poor ignorant" Metis would ultimately suffer. It is ironic that Adams saw Marxist materialism as a means to

undercut this pattern and set himself back into a dignified and "[authentically] Indigenous" history of resistance (Adams 6), given that his orthodox Marxist framework would later be used by commentators like McLeod and Million to characterize him as out of touch with Indigeneity and with his people. Yet perhaps this reentrenchment of his isolation is unsurprising given that the precise *form* of dissent, or resistance, that Adams propounds and models in his writing is unlike Maria Campbell's. Adams insists, explicitly and at great length, upon the illegitimacy of "the Ottawa regime" and the ongoing outrage of colonial domination and subjugation, refusing an Indigenous futurity in co-articulation with that of the colonizing Canadian power. By thus adopting a discourse and posture that totally refuses nationalist co-optation – metaphorically refusing to lay the gun down – Adams further defines himself against Louis Riel, whom he so resembled. This commentary can help to illuminate *Prison of Grass's* unique deployment of short autobiographical passages and how Adams positions himself as a character within the (critique of) narrative that the book represents. If, as I have argued, one of the crucial arguments of Adams's counter-history is a rejection of the haunted, disembodied figure of the liberal individual agent and a distribution of agency among the people as a collective, then the autobiographical passages, with their insistence upon the concrete, irreducible particularity and difference of embodiment, serve an integral function in complicating the potential problematic abstract *one-ness* of "the people" as a concept. By telling his consciously partial and partisan history from a finite standpoint, motivated and structured not by historical necessity or abstract identity but by shared structures of experience and affect, Adams suggests a revolutionary anti-colonial path that, while avoiding homogenizing unities, nevertheless refuses the libertarian ethos³⁶ of relativism and maintains an openness to dialogue, solidarity, and movement-building.

³⁶ An integral component of which is the posture of resistance that might be termed Byronic – that of the exceptional, rugged lone dissident who bears witness to the hidden truth of underlying corruption and depravity and who reflects it back in an individual disclosure of systemic violence.

S3. Embodiment, affect, and excarceral history

Like Adams's Riel, Adams himself seems in many ways a peripheral and passive figure in *Prison of Grass*, a character to whom things happen rather than a primary agent propelling the action. In this section, I want to discuss Adams's choice to represent himself not in the context of his extensive, dramatic, and controversial personal involvement in Saskatchewan Metis politics and the Red Power movement more generally, but in terms of brief fragments of embodied experience, framed as systemic, even everyday occurrences and typified by emotion, trauma, and affect. Adams would later in life attempt, with little success, to compose the more conventional and genre-bound autobiography *Prison of Grass* might have been; at the time of his death in 2002, he left behind a "a disarranged pile of almost six hundred pages" comprising fragments of at least three distinct autobiographies (Lutz *et al v*). I have argued that Adams's choice to write a materialist history on his people's legacy of resistance enabled him to make sense of, comment upon and intervene in his own legacy in the wake of Red Power as an extraordinary figure, a firebrand radical in political exile in 1974; now I will briefly consider how his sparing deployment of an embodied self functions as a way of putting himself and his lived experiences – at their most concrete and visceral – back into dynamic conversation with the ongoing struggles of his community and people under settler-colonialism. By maintaining this ostensibly personal and private element at the forefront of his examination of autobiography and history, Adams asserts possibilities for resistance in the concrete immediacy of the present – not *by* liberal individuals who garner sufficient recognition to transcend the objective, material conditions of Canadian settler-colonialism, but *for* irreducibly heterogeneous and embodied individuals who, insofar as they share the brunt of colonial domination, may yet be joined together in anti-colonial struggle and the realization of collective agency. In this regard, *Prison of Grass* suggests a "felt theory" of resistance that marks individuation and pathologization as

colonial tactics that occlude the systemic axes of exploitation, oppression, and colonization underlying potentially disclosive instances of affective intensity.³⁷

Indeed, Adams's deployment of emotion and embodiment can be seen as prefiguring contemporary trends in the application of affect studies to Indigenous literature, which argue that the private/public distinction functions in a colonial context to delegitimize planes of affect as collective and political responses to colonialism, to vest systemic oppression in given pathologized subjects, and to reentrench (neo)liberal isolation. Certainly, given the tableaux of victimization and of frustrated helplessness that Adams presents intermittently throughout *Prison of Grass*, alongside the history of repressive force and defeat he traces, it is not surprising that it has been framed as a disempowering work, unproductively reentrenching the suppression of Indigenous agency and maintaining colonial power and its operations as central. However, this reading simultaneously reproduces some of the liberal premises of both autobiographical and historical narrative that the text argues against and reinscribes the very distinction between the personal and the collective that Adams seeks to challenge in both form and argument. Although *Prison of Grass* persistently criticizes and resists liberal narrative tropes, it maintains the centrality of individual experience in the sense that what has historically been relegated to the personal, private, and embodied becomes a constitutive moment in the narration of historical movement. Indeed, the very act of writing history – of engaging in the work of *Prison of Grass* – is framed within the text as springing in the first place from Adams's personal experience of domesticity and private affective responses to absence and dispossession.

³⁷ The concept of "felt theory" comes from Indigenous feminist Dian Million and her study of Indigenous women's autobiographies. Her 2009 description of the problem the concept is meant to address resonates to a certain extent with Adams's work and its critical treatment: "It is also to underline again the importance of felt experiences as community knowledges that interactively inform our positions as Native scholars, particularly as Native women scholars. Our felt scholarship continues to be segregated as a "feminine" experience, as polemic, or at worst as not knowledge at all" (54). I will return to this question, and the gender politics that complicate it, at greater length in the third chapter.

Like Maria Campbell, Adams situates himself consciously in and draws inspiration from a lineage traced by kinship, closely associated with the inheritance of resistance at Batoche. The first chapter after his account of the defeat in 1885 suddenly and sharply draws shut the historical distance between Adams himself and the contours of civil war he has been tracing, as he writes "Seven years as a political prisoner in a colonial jail is what my great-grandfather, Maxime Lépine, got for fighting the cause of native freedom and justice" (98). This figure of the colonial jail structures the entire narrative, and what has been perceived as its carceral, disempowering tone and emphasis, insofar as Canada itself "from a Native point of view" is framed as itself the prison of grass, a large-scale corollary to Lépine's imprisonment. Yet the sense of the figure in this section is twofold: Adams lingers primarily not upon the imprisonment of Lépine (who, enfeebled by the experience, died two years later), but upon his erasure from the stories and histories his great-grandson inherited. He relates how the rhetoric deployed at Lépine's trial characterized him and 10 other defendants as irresponsible, as "poor miserable unprotected creatures who had no representative in Parliament, nobody to speak for them, nobody to advance their interests..." (99). In effect, the defense lawyers drew on the same colonial invective that had constructed Riel throughout the resistance as both the advocate of hostilities and the exceptional leader of the "poor ignorant" Metis. In Adams's own family life, then, dominant historical narrative materializes in bodies as an affective presence, acutely experienced as a locus of disempowerment, of constraint upon individual agency and upon collective identity:

In my childhood, I often stayed with my grandparents on the old scrip farm of Maxime Lépine at Batoche. I did not realize at the time that I was tramping in the footprints of a noble guerilla warrior. Maxime's spirit was not there, not felt at all. Of the many games we halfbreed kids invented, not one was related to the struggle of 1885. This history was hidden from us because our grandparents and parents were defeated generations [...] How much easier and happier it would have been to start knowing the glory of our forefathers and their accomplishments. The truth would have given us all strength and pride, but instead we followed in the debased path cut out for us by the white image-makers. (98)

This passage provides another entry point into Adams's predilection for historical materialist storytelling, which restores to history the agency of people otherwise relegated to the private realm – here, one's own family and family members – and, in his application, challenges the construction of the hanging of an individual, Riel, as the definitive, conclusive moment of defeat for Metis agency and identity. If we thus understand the figure of the prison not only as the literal jail that robbed Adams of the opportunity to know his great-grandfather, but as the colonial narrative that constructs as "poor miserable unprotected creatures" those left behind after Riel's execution, then Adams's writing of a corrective history can itself be construed as an *excarceral* act, part of a process of healing, revitalization, and resurgence.

In a paradoxical way, then, Adams mobilizes his personal experiences of shame, hurt, and anger to actively open up paths for restoration of historical and contemporary agency; in this regard, he suggests that these affective responses are not individual and private, to be separated from political engagement, historical development, and the story of a people, but rather that they are dialectically related to the very possibility of telling a dignified – and therefore *excarceral* or liberatory – history. In a prescient insistence on the situatedness of knowledge, Adams cites Trémaudan, who claims that during his historical research among the Metis, "The point was established that [our] truth was entirely different from what was being told as the truth, either in public opinion or published books" (101). But Adams writes *his* history at a moment when what was increasingly being told as "an" Indigenous truth of history – a narrative, propounded by leaders like Harold Cardinal, of rebirth, pride in the politics of recognition via the Indian Act and Indian status, and movement toward post-coloniality in the wake of the government's 1969 shift in policy³⁸ – was one that necessarily marginalized, excluded, and phased out dissidents like

³⁸ The homogenization of Indigenous identity that this implied had important and perhaps even more glaring ramifications from the point of view of Indigenous women, as Cheryl Suzack has discussed in her essay on *Halfbreed* and as I will consider much further in my third chapter on *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* in conversation with Indigenous feminisms.

Adams, constructing them as radical, militant, angry, bitter. In effect, the anger of Adams and young Red Power militants was construed and constructed as an impediment to, as *barring the way* to, Indigenous futurity and agency in a liberal, reformist framework of negotiation and bureaucracy. It is not surprising, then, that Adams insists upon the affects of anger, frustration, and rage to ground in his embodied present the situated history he crafts in *Prison of Grass*. In a number of the autobiographical tableaux, these quintessentially negative or "unproductive" feelings from the point of view of the dominant narrative become important sites of disclosure of systemic issues and axes of historical, and not individual, affect, the apprehension of which precipitates the possibility of new forms of solidarity with family, community, and ancestors.

The autobiographical passages of *Prison of Grass* can be said in a sense to constitute counter-autobiography in that, rather than progressively moving from the collective and communal to a sense of Adams's uniqueness, exceptionality, and, ultimately, immortalization in transcendence of material and historically specific conditions, they move in precisely the opposite direction: a man described (and denounced) as exceptional, a veritable inheritor to Riel, identifying structures of his embodied experience that situate him in solidarity and kinship with his community, relations, and people. Rather than placing him above his people as a heroic paragon or martyr – as was so often done with the figure of Louis Riel – this autobiography pictures him in his everyday experience, in snippets and flashes of experience that are not at all organized into a cohesive or coherent progressive arc but instead maintain a punctual, cyclical logic as they reiterate anger, frustration, and all the daily negative affects of life under colonialism. But this reiteration is just what discloses so many opportunities for overcoming colonial individuation and for unity in anti-colonial struggle. For instance, Howard's experience of racism and degradation in seeking a job, and his mother's justification and naturalization of employers' racist hiring policies, becomes an opportunity to reflect upon how cheapening and devaluing Indigenous labour via racist abstractions is a historic condition of possibility for the

entire Canadian economy (11); likewise, an experience of harassment by RCMP officers, who mock and torment Howard with a torrent of racist and sexist invective about Indigenous women, opens up a larger condemnation of colonial management of representations of Indigenous people at multiple levels of Canadian society, from policy to churches and schools (39). The logic of these passages is consistently *toward* collective experiences of racism and exploitation, systemic axes of oppression, and the material conditions of colonialism, which Howard positions as a truth consistently underlying (and giving the lie to) pat narratives of reconciliation, unity, and good intent. Each experience of systemic dehumanization, in effect, provides evidence both of the efficacy of constraints upon individual agency under colonialism – the impossibility of heroic individual overcoming, made manifest in affects of frustrated helplessness³⁹ – and suggests viscerally, in upwellings of affect, how intolerable, unstable, and unsustainable the contradictions of settler-colonialism and its narratives are.

Yet one of the most lengthy and important of these passages, coming directly after Adams's description of the hanging of Riel, renders explicit how *Prison of Grass's* continual movement back from abstractions – be they of reconciliation, progressive narrative, heroic individuality or hollow, representative unity – and toward cycles of Canadian colonial violence also constitutes a movement of solidarity and potential unity, precisely in light of the untenability of Canadian settler-colonial society. Following a two-page spread that juxtaposes a series of statistics (updated for the 1989 edition, underscoring how comparatively little has changed for Indigenous people in terms of systemic, material conditions), Adams passes to a personal description of his mother's early death at 52 (122-123). He explains how he has spent a number

³⁹ One could make the argument that, as a consequence of this narrative style, Adams abdicates individual accountability and responsibility. This would be a difficult – and certainly problematic – argument to make in the case of racist hiring policies or police harassment, but it may have relevance in cases where Adams discusses the internalization of racism and colonial norms, in particular as an intersectional critique of some of his own interactions with women, especially Indigenous women. Although such a reading would no doubt be interesting – and perhaps effective in connection to Maria Campbell's criticisms of what she describes as the sexism of Adams's generation – it does not seem to me to be my place to make it. I will, however, briefly return to this point in this chapter's conclusion.

of years denying their kinship as he sought personal success in white society, all the while distancing himself from "the albatross of a halfbreed heritage" – what he had to that point understood on the colonizer's terms as a carceral legacy of defeat, disempowerment, and dispossession (123). In his mother's death, however, he is suddenly forced to reckon with the two forms of incarceration that he described with reference to his great-grandfather: the literal, material dispossession and marginalization of Indigenous people as prisoners in a vast colonial jail, the ramifications of which are detailed in stark factual terms on the previous page and in his mother's early, inexplicable death; but also the construction of a heritage of defeat, which had impelled him to distance himself from the history and present of his people. In the striking passage that follows, Adams's physical body becomes a tormented site of disclosure of historical truth, as he is wracked by a visceral response to the contradictions of the narrative he has assumed and taken on:

Once outside the hospital, I broke into crying, violent crying. I cried so long that I thought I would vomit [...] I realized for the first time what the white-supremacist system had done to me, how it had perverted my sense of values and twisted the most beautiful relationship between two people. I puzzled over the tragic scene until my head was about to explode. I was tortured. (123)

In the context of my reading of how Adams's historical materialism allows for the restoration of Indigenous agency against a constructed historical narrative of disempowerment, this passage should not be understood as an abdication but rather as a recuperation of ethical agency and responsibility as Adams's body viscerally rejects (and ejects) the trappings of the assimilationist, individualistic path he had previously followed. Outside the hospital, he is flooded with a series of "counterproductive" affects, his body seeming all at once to shed and exude the accumulated colonial violence not just of his impoverished family life (124-125) but also of his own attempts to distance himself from his parents, his community, and his people – in effect, to abstract and disembodify himself from his Indigeneity. Snapped out of the individuation and abstraction of the

colonial narratives he has internalized and pursued in his life, Adams reflects directly upon routinized and naturalized patterns of violence, upon the long years of "hunger and anguish and sacrifice" that have accumulated in his mother's own body and actively brought about her early death: "To me, death at 52 meant a violent death – my mother had died at 52 because she was a halfbreed oppressed by Canadian colonialism" (125). The violent emissions rocking his body escalate rapidly as this subjugated history of violence wells up within him in turn, manifesting not in the inward, consuming violence of an early death but in a violence that yearns to spill forth beyond the limits of his body: "My entire body was in a rage. Somebody had to suffer for this. If I had had a machine gun, I would have raced through the streets of Prince Albert spraying bullets" (124). With these lines, finally, Adams fully occupies the position of dangerous and pathological militant suggested by the comments of Ross Thatcher, Dave Courchene, and other critics of Red Power. Rather than denying or disavowing that anger imputed to him, Adams insists upon it, upon its slow, simmering origins, and upon the way in which it informs his analysis of Canadian colonialism as a coherent system to be understood as a whole and overthrown through revolutionary organizing (126). Moreover, he insists that the anger and violence, like poverty itself, are *not* individual attributes of unruly Indigenous subjects, not "the psychological or personal weaknesses of individuals" (126). By thus rendering affect and affective intensity in relation to systemic planes of collective experience, historical memory, and contemporary material conditions, Adams crystallizes his critique of the hegemonic autobiographical subject around the potential for, or perhaps the necessity of, an oppositional politics of resistance.

This passage can be productively compared to the ending of *Halfbreed*, and Maria's final statement that she no longer needs her blanket to survive. Both reflections follow the death of a family member and mark a similar kind of activist awakening, a determination to struggle and a renunciation of the pursuit of the ideals of colonial society. But insofar as the ending of

Campbell's book seems to take the shape of an overcoming of shame and an inheritance of her exceptional ancestor's spirit of resistance, it has historically proven relatively easy to interpret according to liberal and individualist logics that represent its narrator as a heroic figure overcoming the adverse conditions of her origin and upbringing and successfully resolving the instability and conflict of her book's plot (often imputed, as I have demonstrated, to an ambivalence of identity). Howard, in contrast, does not inherit or assume any position following his mother's death; the event does not explicitly change, enrich, or modify his own subjectivity. Indeed, far from constituting what could be mistaken for a transcendence of colonial conditions, this passage represents an awakening to them as persistent, undeniable, and intrinsically unstable, expressed through Howard's own body. Finally, rather than inheriting his mother's strength and resilience, Adams positions himself as standing in solidarity with her embodied experience of oppression, pain, and suffering – an experience which he recognizes himself to share. In all these regards, the text resists and refuses reinscription in any affirmative canon, in any narrative of resolution, overcoming, or reconciliation; yet this refusal need not be understood as an abdication of agency, an avowal of failure, or a disclosure of personal pathology. Instead, as I have argued, *Prison of Grass's* insistence upon material conditions and embodiment even in the context of perpetual cycles of colonial violence may consist in precisely its potential virulence as a repository of radically anti-colonial possibilities. If its work is to disclose the contradictions of colonial narratives without purporting to resolve or stabilize them in a heroic act of artistic or creative triumph, then there is certainly an intimation of revolutionary possibility in the way in which this disclosure, expressed in his body's overbrimming visceral response, impels him to reclaim, through all the obscurity of dominant history and in spite of all the marginalization experienced in his own socio-political moment, a historical and collective identity in solidarity enabling dignity, agency, and hope.

S4. Adams's legacies

I opened this chapter discussing how Howard Adams's text has historically been excluded from consideration as a literary work, effectively written out of Indigenous literary history in Canada. When *Prison of Grass* has been discussed, what I have described as its refusal to participate in liberal narrative tropes – of the triumph of individual agency, of personal affirmation through literary or creative expression, of progressive trajectories or teleologies in either history or autobiography, or of the separation of the private and affective from the realm of the properly political and collective – have led it to be dismissed as, at best, unsuccessful as a work of literature, and, at worst, partisan, polemical, inappropriately subjective and expressive, and even disclosive of personal pathology. Ultimately, my claim is not that these dismissals are "wrong" in that they miss something essential about the text's construction and content; rather, it is that the intuition that they express about the character and depth of the text's practice of resistance may be understood to constitute, not the text's weakness from a literary standpoint, but its strength and complexity from an anti-colonial standpoint. Moreover, I have suggested that an attentive reading of *Prison of Grass's* formal construction, implicit and explicit theorization of narrative and colonialism, and relation to its historical and political context can complicate simplistic notions of the text's "polemical" character and shed light upon what these constructions disclose about some of the premises, assumptions, and implications of scholarly and critical practice in an ongoing settler-colonial context.⁴⁰ In effect, the text poses a challenge to norms and standards of

⁴⁰ Concretely, for instance, this consideration may complicate the implicit moralism of the stated concern among a number of contemporary critics of Indigenous literature in Canada that – given the necessarily limited resources, funding, and opportunities for publication and distribution of Indigenous writers – we must be careful not to posit a definition, however flexible, of what constitutes valuable literary expression of Indigenous writers (Fagan and McKegney 30). Several important scholars have deployed such an argument to shy away from the "political, sometimes polemical" (Sinclair et al 2009: 20) subjectivities and frameworks embraced by critical approaches like Indigenous literary nationalism. In a way, however, this argument might serve to maintain conservative truisms as to which works are or are not worthy of being approached as literary texts, maintaining modernist categories of aesthetic or formal exceptionality; in this case, avoiding highly politicized texts or frameworks of analysis in the name of maintaining a heterogeneity of views may simply redirect the problem of normative expectations and pressures for Indigenous writers, elevating works that are obviously formally or generically experimental while

what exercises of Indigenous creative agency constitute acceptable or successful forms of resistance – a challenge to narrative tropes and generic distinctions which is lost insofar as one tries to recover the text as "actually" succeeding as either a work of (objective) history, an autobiography stabilizing the subjectivity of Adams-as-protagonist according to a logic of individual overcoming, or a creative work that, in its very enactment of personal agency, opens up a site of resistance. At the same time, I have suggested that considering the text in light of Adams's historical and political position and its avowed intention to examine, complicate, and challenge practices of history and autobiography from an anti-colonial point of view enables us to apprehend the text's intimation of models of excarceral agency in solidarity with invisibilized, pathologized, marginalized, and resisting Indigenous populations both in the past and present.

Whatever the legacy of Howard Adams's written work on the broader Canadian literary and scholarly stage, he had an undeniable effect in inspiring other Indigenous people to write their stories and address their lived realities. Against what often seems like the necessarily homogenizing paradigm of the representational politics of peoples, nations, and communities, which tends toward recentering moderate or conservative voices and standpoints, Indigenous writers in Canada have sought and found ways of articulating specificity and difference in literature, steering beyond the parameters and terms of reference of mainstream political discourse. Indeed, Jo-Ann Episkenew points out that many Indigenous people wrote autobiographies in response to texts like *Halfbreed* precisely "to reveal the diversity of cultures and experiences inherent within the Indigenous population" to settlers inclined to assume cultural and political homogeneity (79). *Prison of Grass*, insofar as it situates the embodied knowledge Adams is producing as "A Native Point of View," sets itself up as open to productive dialogue with modes of Indigenous embodiment and historical experience that differ significantly from his

increasing the pressure on more radical Indigenous writers and activists not to be too "over politicized," polemical, or angry in their literary expressions.

own. This is an important point, for my analysis has suggested that although Adams worked to deconstruct and leave behind the liberal individualism of autobiographical and historical narrative convention – without thereby dissolving concrete, embodied, irreducibly different individuals into a homogenous category of "the people" or "the masses" – his text is nevertheless marked by a certain alienation from forms of communal and relational identity, existence, and struggle in the present day, which may invite an Indigenous feminist response or interpretation. Notably, all of the tableaux of embodied expressiveness that serve to situate him within the history of his people have a solitude about them; the passage I have focused on takes place after he has left his mother for the last time in the hospital, and it unfolds as an expressly individual bodily process rather than as a relational one. The lesson he derives from his mother is thus positioned as an internal realization to which he is forcibly awakened upon the event of her death – a process which has a certain abstraction about it compared to, for instance, the way in which Maria learns from Cheechum through teachings, lessons, communication and dialogue. Similarly, Adams's theorization of political organizing, mass work, and armed struggle as historical expressions of collective, democratic agency – indeed, as a dignified history to be aspired to and emulated – implies a lingering distinction between "real" political work and the forms of labour in domesticity that he associates, in the present, with his mother and with a situation of helpless suffering under colonialism, suggesting that there is a certain gendering to Adams's figuration of historical materialist narrative as a device of collective empowerment. Maria Campbell underscores a practical corollary to this tendency in theory and composition when she reflects that although she came to love Howard as a friend, they were never political colleagues; the possibility for more expansive solidarities was foreclosed by his tendency toward unintentional, but also uncritical, chauvinism (Lutz *et al* 238). This weakness of Adams's practice and theory with regard to the lived *relationality* of movement-building and radical politics – to collective life, communication, and the personal ethics of solidarity – opens up the

possibility of setting his insights and frame of analysis into productive conversation, not only with Maria Campbell's work, but with the work of Lee Maracle, herself a Red Power advocate in the Vancouver context at the time Adams was organizing in Saskatchewan. In the following chapter, I will consider Maracle's own conflicted response to the political contradictions of the 1970s. Her 1975 memoir *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* encapsulates many of the same issues Adams and Campbell engage with, but its production and publication history also complicates and thematizes the (often gendered) problematics of lived ethics and of building emancipatory relationships in solidarity in the radical organizing of the period, which Campbell discusses only in passing and Adams glosses over altogether. Yet this discussion should not negate the words of Maracle herself, who would later reflect in an interview that it was Howard Adams's voice that "cut her loose" as a writer in her own right, that freed her to express herself (Lutz 178). This legacy, an instance of what many of his contemporaries and later, students, would attest to, is not to be understated. In light of Adams's attempt to model the liberation of Indigenous agency from colonial language and narrative, it overshadows the limits of his theory and practice and provides an intimation, a prefiguration, at least, of the revolutionary vision he harboured even to the very end of his life in exile.

"Are you going to drive us all into the sea?"

Hope for Reciprocity in *Bobbi Lee's* Unfinished Dreamspace

I have suggested that *Halfbreed* and *Prison of Grass*, texts written by radical activists increasingly crowded out of and excluded from mid-1970s discourses of Indigenous politics in Canada, constituted a turn to autobiography as a medium for imagining and articulating revolutionary possibilities for alternative "Red Power" forms of identity, solidarity, and unity in a settler-colonial context of liberal democracy.⁴¹ Although the original text of Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* indisputably belongs to the same moment – politically, culturally, and tonally – as these two texts, its 1990 reprint simultaneously deepens and challenges the dialogue I have been tracing through the mid-70s. Even while mobilizing and explicating some of the political and anti-colonial implications of the text's resistance to western expectations of narrative, Maracle in 1990 emphasizes the potential of Indigenous literature and storytelling to take on a vital role in a decolonizing project of subjective transformation. In this regard, Maracle orients *Bobbi Lee*, in many ways a polemical "resister" text akin to *Prison of Grass* in its uncompromising Red Power politics of opposition, toward settler-colonial society.⁴² This move allows her to suggest the potential for Indigenous resistance to invite settler readers and audiences into dialogue on and against colonialism that need not take as its precondition the erasure, sanitization, and management of Indigenous expression, affect, and agency. The reprint thereby attempts to realize transformative possibilities for collective action left ambiguously

⁴¹ As opposed to settler-colonial regimes that historically or presently take the more openly and unapologetically repressive form of dictatorship or fascism. This distinction can always stand to be problematized, as Adams's discussion of the unaccountable violence of colonialism suggests, but it is nevertheless politically significant and marks the tone, form, and theme of these texts (as opposed to, for instance, Fanon's work).

⁴² Certainly, we need not exclusively assume, as critics of earlier decades have, that the imagined reader of *Bobbi Lee* – either in 1975 or 1990 – is a settler or a non-Indigenous person. Nevertheless, an in-depth exploration of how the story has functioned for Indigenous audiences – and Maracle has mentioned that one of the reasons she did not modify the original text of *Bobbi Lee* was respect for the many young Indigenous people, writers and otherwise, who had approached her over the years with well-worn copies of the 1975 publication (Maracle 1991) – is well beyond the scope of this paper. This chapter will focus instead upon the conversation Maracle initiates with settler audiences, illuminating how its complexities unfold, often implicitly, throughout the text.

deferred by Campbell and Adams, whose texts, I have argued, de-centered not only the settler-colonial state but in many ways also settler audiences and consumers as such. This politically complex shift can be seen as informed by fifteen years of hegemony of the politics of recognition, fifteen years' historical distance from the messianic revolutionary hopes of the Red Power period, as much as by Maracle's own trajectory as an activist and as a poet and, perhaps most importantly, the early-90s blossoming into the mainstream of both Indigenous resistance and Indigenous literary expression.

Where Campbell maintains that her (not inconsiderable) literary and artistic output should be understood first and foremost as just one part of her life's work as a "community healer and teacher," and where Adams dedicated most of his life after *Prison of Grass* to teaching corrective, anti-colonial history at university, Lee Maracle has become, and remains, one of the most published, most recognized, and most lauded Indigenous⁴³ writers and poets in Canada. In addition, her critical writing on Indigenous literature and its anti-colonial possibilities over the last thirty years, including "The 'Post-colonial' Condition," *I Am Woman*, and "Oratory on Oratory," has made her one of the most important and influential theorists in Indigenous literary scholarship in Canada, as well as a key figure in the development of contemporary Indigenous feminist frameworks. If the previous two chapters involved critical recuperations of systematically obfuscated or marginalized thinkers, this chapter will also invite a reevaluation of Maracle's later and more familiar writerly trajectory in light of her often overlooked 1975 text and its 1990 reprint (with an additional preface, opening chapter, and epilogue). While *Bobbi Lee* tends to be viewed solely through the lens of the conversations and political context of the 90s, my discussion will seek to explore how the difficulties, possibilities, and politics of the text are

⁴³ In the last two decades or so, Maracle has positioned herself explicitly as a Salish writer of the Stó:lō Nation. It was not until 1985 that she learned that a Salish man she had called "Uncle" all her life was her actual father; to that point, and at the time of writing *Bobbi Lee*, she had understood herself as Metis on her mother's side and white on the side of the man she called father. Nevertheless, in both the 1975 original and the 1990 reprint, Maracle positions herself as part of a more generalized Indigenous "we," constituted primarily by solidarity in resistance to colonial violence.

illuminated by its initial historical context, that of Red Power. I have defined this period in terms of the crowding-out of radical activists from political discourses and from narratives of progress, collective identity, and reconciliation, and of their subsequent turn to literary expression to articulate and conceptualize more fundamentally anti-colonial possibilities for movement-building and unity that need not subsume difference, dissent, and heterogeneity. The 1990 reprint of *Bobbi Lee* occupies a unique position in issuing from and engaging with the concerns, challenges and possibilities of this period but simultaneously looking forward to (and participating in) the full emergence of Indigenous literature and literary theory into the public sphere in the 90s. Approached as a transitional text in this regard, *Bobbi Lee* functions to illuminate the legacy of the Red Power period's anti-colonialism, apart from and against the liberal politics of recognition, into present-day Indigenous literature and literary scholarship; at the same time, it can complicate developmental literary histories that locate polemic and militancy in the distant past and thereby depoliticize and downplay the radicalism of Maracle's work since the 90s, reinscribing it in a liberal political paradigm of recognition, reconciliation, and individual creative success.

This reading will thereby build on the previous two chapters' critique by taking up Maracle's theory and practice of Indigenous literature as potentially bridging crucial distances between, on the one hand, the potency of the Red Power critique of settler-colonialism and the ongoing colonial function of the Canadian state and, on the other, the uneasiness and discomfort of settler mass audiences when confronted with instances of Indigenous critique and resistance (including literary expressions, representations, or critiques of colonial violence). To this end, I will move from a brief discussion of *Bobbi Lee*'s reception history, which has often reproduced the binaries of integration (on the terms of settler society, into colonial state structures) and individual pathology, to a consideration of how Maracle's own theorization of anti-colonial poetics challenges and overturns them, explicitly in her more recent theoretical work and

implicitly in the opening chapter on Oka included in the 1990 reprint, which bridges *Bobbi Lee's* original narrative with the contemporaneous surge in opportunities and avenues for Indigenous expression. This opening chapter will thereby inform a reading of how the narrative of *Bobbi Lee*, in its representation of Bobbi's activism, relationships, and experiences of oppression, constitutes not only a running critique of (neo)liberal, individualistic modes of consolidating unity and relating to difference reproduced by the political organizing of the 60s and 70s, but also leaves live and open-ended transformative and even revolutionary possibilities for solidarity, dialogue, and relationality, foreclosed upon by colonial hegemony in the 70s but potentially opened up in a new way in the early 90s, following the high-profile confrontation at Oka and increased public interest in the lives and writing of Indigenous people in Canada. This is not to overstate the necessity of a political and theoretical continuity between the Red Power militants of the 1970s (who, after all, argued strongly against a political or pedagogical orientation toward the dominant settler-colonial society) and more contemporary practices or practitioners of Indigenous literature and literary scholarship; however, it *is* to trace and shape a relationship and trajectory more complex and nuanced than mere supersession, the disavowal of a polemical moment in light of the development of more sophisticated forms of expression. The case of *Bobbi Lee*, which Maracle describes as a text about "why we must talk" (Maracle 11), can suggest how and why Indigenous political organizing in the context of Canadian settler-colonialism, and its internal contradictions, logically (rather than just as a matter of historical incident⁴⁴) gives rise to the development of an Indigenous literary history in Canada as a necessary, if perhaps not in itself sufficient, component of anti-colonial movement-building and struggle.

⁴⁴ For it is historically undeniable that *Halfbreed*, an explicitly radical, progressive, and anti-colonial text, was one of the foundational influences upon other Indigenous writers and upon the emergence of an Indigenous literary tradition in Canada – as, to a certain extent, were *Prison of Grass* and *Bobbi Lee*. There are of course other such texts that I have not discussed in this thesis, perhaps most notably Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*.

S1. Polemic and Overcoming in *Bobbi Lee's* Reception

In some part, the existing criticism on *Bobbi Lee* falls into the pattern I traced in the last chapter, relegating it to a polemical moment of oppositional politics in Indigenous literary history. Bataille and Sands dismiss it as a strident work, especially in comparison to *Halfbreed* (Beard 122); Marta Dvorak scathingly criticizes it for remaining in the realm of the "merely sociological" and wonders why "the writers waging war on harassment, violence, and despair" do not "enter the domain of literature" (Dvorak 1995: 24); and Penny Petrone claims that it is a book of ugly and hostile content that "bristles with shrill revolutionary rhetoric and the diction of industrial warfare that spare neither reader nor author embarrassment" (Petrone 118). These reactions (although possessing differently gendered connotations, especially in the case of the charge of "shrillness") are in keeping with aforementioned dismissals of *Prison of Grass* as over-politicized, insufficiently literary, and potentially disclosive of dangerous pathology, and serve to obscure more than they illuminate about the dynamics of the text. In the last chapter, I argued that much of the anti-colonial potential of Howard Adams's book resides precisely in the way it provokes such reactions, resisting in its very form and structure positive interpretations that could function to stabilize the text and integrate it into liberal and colonial norms and discourses. In this regard, Adams can be said to *insist* upon misunderstanding and miscommunication, rather than allowing for any kind of restoration of unified understanding that would pave over contradictions and positions of opposition and ultimately reinscribe the integration of Indigenous people into fundamentally inequitable colonial structures and institutions. But whereas *Prison of Grass's* 1989 reprint does nothing to soften or blunt the original text's posture of resistance,⁴⁵ the

⁴⁵ Indeed, this decision on Adams's part significantly informed the charge that his anger and expressiveness were obsolete or at least increasingly unproductive. Critics (such as Richling and Neal McLeod) remarked upon the minimal edits Adams had made, wondering how he could see so little change in the situation of Indigenous people in Canada over the course of the last fifteen years. Adams, for his part, had updated the statistics on the living conditions of Indigenous people (which had themselves barely changed) and little else. From the point of view of undercutting facile narratives of restoration and reconciliation, perhaps little else was needed; yet this choice does him no favours in terms of defusing charges that his work was "merely" polemic.

reprint of *Bobbi Lee* seems concerned not with staking out absolute objection and difference but with the profound necessity of communication and understanding. Maracle has recently said that the question she heard most often in the years following *Bobbi Lee*'s publication, from settlers confounded by the book's "ugly and hostile" content and tone, was "Are you going to drive us all into the sea?" (Maracle 2015). This question's implicit logic of irreconcilable, essential difference, opposition, and inevitable violence as constituting the underlying truth of the relationship between Indigenous people and settlers is explored in the *Bobbi Lee* reprint, which opens with a provocative reflection upon one of the most ugly and hostile confrontations between an Indigenous nation and the colonial state in recent memory. Indeed, this question, and the tensions between it and Maracle's italicized insistence that "the life of Bobbi Lee is about why we must talk" (Maracle 11), will frame and serve as a basis for my analysis of Maracle's representational and narrative strategies and the specific ways they inform the political potential of the reprint.

A considerable body of criticism has taken shape around the 1990 reprint and the relationship between the original and the later texts. Yet much of this criticism, which participates in an intersectional feminist project and speaks to the "appropriation of voice" debates that played out on the Canadian literary scene during the late 1980s (Warley), simplifies this relationship to one of recantation and disavowal of the original text's critique: the Women's Press reprint is represented as Maracle's statement that the original text of *Bobbi Lee* was not "really" her own. This criticism tends to pivot on the new Prologue, a two-page statement on the book's development in collaboration with Donald Barnett, chairman of the Liberation Support Movement (LSM), a Vancouver-based Marxist-Leninist organization. *Bobbi Lee* was initially developed as an "as-told-to" between Maracle and Barnett. The fraught process of their collaboration resulted in a vexed half-autobiography of omissions, partial truths, and absent presences, wherein, Maracle claims, "the voice that reached the paper was Don's, the information

alone was [hers]" (Maracle 19). Critics like Warley and McCall have picked up on this statement to read the 1990 reprint as a complete disavowal of the earlier text as ethnographic, patriarchal, and fundamentally colonial. These readings serve the important function of demonstrating how *Bobbi Lee* speaks to a larger history of "so much white male narcissism" (Maracle 20) in progressive movement-building in Canada, reproducing colonial hierarchies and foreclosing upon possibilities for genuine decolonization or even communication across the lines of difference (of gender, race, or Indigeneity). Yet this body of criticism's focus on the Prologue to the exclusion of the introductory chapter and epilogue misrepresents the shape and emphasis of the text as a whole and may thereby be continuous with earlier and more explicitly dismissive appraisals of *Bobbi Lee*'s text itself. The Women's Press reprint in 1990 frames the text not only with the Prologue – an implicit response to the dedication to Don Barnett that had formerly prefaced the text – but also with a longer opening chapter titled "Oka Peace Camp – September 9, 1990," as well as with a 42-page Epilogue covering some of the prospective subjects of the unwritten *Volume Two* of *Bobbi Lee*, and which Maracle describes as "the final pages [she] will ever write about Bobbi" (201).⁴⁶ Excessive attention upon the complexities of the Prologue may have the ultimately patronizing effect of disavowing the original text as the romantic fictionalization of a Marxist ideologue who "needed to have an 'oppressed' subject whom the revolution could 'save,'" (Warley) – in effect enabling the sanitization of the politics of the reprint (and Maracle's concurrent and later work) and relegating the threat of militancy to a bygone historical moment, embodied by the long-dead leader of a long-defunct Marxist organization. On the contrary, Maracle's choice to open the book with a longer added chapter reflecting upon the Oka Crisis suggests an ongoing engagement with and commentary upon

⁴⁶ I will make reference to this quite episodic epilogue section in this reading – especially its final pages, which reprise the key themes of the opening chapter on Oka – but I will not focus upon it at length. It would be interesting to read this autobiographical section, framed as "about" the figure of Bobbi, with and against Maracle's larger work *I Am Woman*, written almost contemporaneously but without the same association with the earlier autobiography.

precisely the sort of subject matter that led to the problematic construction of the original text as insufficiently literary and excessively polemical, angry, and hostile. This decision also complicates the troubling construction of the *Bobbi Lee* reprint as analogous to *Halfbreed*'s final chapter – as the proclamation of a therapeutic, personal overcoming of trauma and adversity, assimilable to a colonial, neoliberal logic of the individual success story.

To pursue and draw out a relationship between the original and the reprint irreducible to this progressive logic of overcoming, but nevertheless registering and responding to changes in Canada's political and ideological terrain in the intervening fifteen years, I will consider the opening chapter on Oka and Maracle's reflections from the early 1990s on Indigenous literature and decolonization alongside a recuperative reading of the original text as an Indigenous autobiography. Crystal Kurzen has suggested that more recent autobiographical work produced "outside of Western generic conventions often emerges out of a marginalized population's call for a larger social awareness on the part of the dominant culture" (Kurzen 211) and works to reconceptualize conventional notions of subjectivity and the self according to a framework of fluidity and collectivity. I will explore how *Bobbi Lee* prefigures this project both in its challenges to autobiographical convention and in its sustained engagement with the dominant culture and the terms and conditions of its social awareness, arguing that Maracle's representation of Bobbi's life engages with liberal and individualist conventions as fraught with slippages, palpably irresolved and, perhaps, irresolvable within the paradigm of Western autobiography. This reading will build on Laura J. Beard's important but cursory commentary on how the text can be understood as continuous with Maracle's later work, which is grounded in a more explicitly Salish paradigm, poetic, and epistemology – principally in its frustration of western narrative expectations (Beard 131), its conscious positioning of individual life story in the context of ongoing struggles over land and sovereignty (132), and its concern with the ways in which women's bodies become sites of production and reproduction of colonial violence

(133). For both Beard and Dian Million, the autobiographies of Indigenous women in particular are to be understood as important disclosures of social distress and violence irreducible to narratives of individual, personal pathology (Million 2009: 56). Certainly, to challenge the construction of the *Bobbi Lee* reprint as a form of personal therapy – as the disavowal and overcoming of the original text's pathological/polemical subjectivity – is to restore the text's radical critique. Comparable to that of Adams and of other 70s Red Power dissidents, this critique unsparingly identifies colonial violence as the condition of possibility of settler-colonial society as such, whatever gestures it makes toward benevolent reconciliation, integration, or assimilation. Yet Maracle's text, unique in its historical position and its explicit orientation in 1990 toward settler readers, ultimately models a political practice and subjectivity that challenges colonial binaries between social/political integration and isolation – between the collective or political and the individual or personal – by suggesting and conceptualizing a set of terms for dialogue and unity apart from and against dominant colonial expectations that Indigenous people disavow, overcome, or stabilize their "polemical" critique of the settler-colonial society, with all the "unproductive" affective intensity and even the tactics of militant resistance that it may imply, in order to be heard or listened to. Where Campbell and Adams argued, each in their own way, against entering into negotiation with organs of the colonial *state* on its terms and conditions – disarmament and deradicalization foremost among them – Maracle in 1990 more fundamentally decenters the state, emphasizing and thematizing hopes for dialogue, negotiation, and alliance with settler-colonial *society* against a shared foe.

Restoring *Bobbi Lee* to the history and theorization of this broader political project also opens up an interpretation of Maracle's persistent emphasis as a writer upon subjective transformation that resists reinscription in liberal frameworks substituting the subjective or metaphorical decolonization of enlightened individuals for systemic change. The original text of *Bobbi Lee* emanates from a moment when the profound desire of Indigenous activists for a

united revolutionary movement in Canada was complicated both by the apparent complacency of the vast majority of the Canadian working class and by the hollowness and homogenizing abstraction of the unity, however revolutionary in rhetoric, taken up by an Indigenous politics of recognition and its representatives.⁴⁷ I will argue that Maracle's text suggests without yet realizing the necessity and urgency of genuine dialogue and unity, of anti-colonial relationality and solidarity constituted upon mutual recognition of difference outside of the supposedly neutral terms of liberal subjectivity. The irresolution remarked upon by Beard permeates and structures Maracle's representation of Bobbi, from her inchoate sense of alienation, to her activist desire to do something useful in terms irreducible to capitalist productivity, to her recurrent cynicism and aloofness in the personal relationships the narrative foregrounds. A careful reading of places in the book where this vexed striving is tonally or narratively signalled suggests that the absence or suppression of a language that does not presuppose the subjugation of colonized peoples underlies and informs this irresolution. The text thereby suggests the central *political* importance of developing a language as a fluid anti-colonial medium for dialogue and solidarity, an argument which speaks resonantly to pressing concerns of Maracle's later theoretical and literary work and, indeed, contemporary challenges to the assimilation of Indigenous resistance to settler-colonial interpretation and narrative.

S2. Maracle's "spiritual hope" for Canadians

Within the field of literature in Canada, Maracle has been among the most important thinkers on colonialism and on how Indigenous literature can participate in the project of not only

⁴⁷ In previous chapters, I discussed how the abstract unities and categories defined in the Indian Act and other pieces of colonial legislature were wholeheartedly taken up by the politics of recognition. Red Power activists, I have suggested, experienced unity of this sort as homogenizing, monolithic, defined through exclusion. Above all they were exclusionary to Indigenous women, whose political interests in challenging sexist provisions of the Indian Act were often deferred for the sake of strategic unity in negotiation (see Suzack 2005). In my previous chapter, I considered how Adams's emphasis on concrete embodiment and lived experience allow him to imply the possibility of a unity in process of becoming, rather than of static, abstract being. This theme is omnipresent in Maracle's work, as indeed in that of many feminists of colour, whose participation in progressive movements often made them all too familiar with the ways in which homogenizing identity categories, propounded in the name of a politics of liberation, can function to reproduce the erasure and silencing of the most marginalized and oppressed.

subverting, resisting, or challenging it, but in fact actively ending it. Insofar as my aim is to build a nuanced reading of the relation between Maracle's influential theory and practice of anti-colonial literature and the politics of Red Power embodied by *Bobbi Lee*, I want to start by briefly explicating some of her statements and writings from the early 90s, when Maracle was first coming onto the literary and theoretical scene and when Indigenous literature in Canada definitively emerged as a vital field of critical discussion and scholarship. I have suggested that the 1990 reprint can be understood as a retelling rather than as a rejection of the original text – a renewal of *Bobbi Lee's* story in conscious light of the ongoing and sometimes deepening hostility between Indigenous people and settlers in Canada, tensions erupting with events like the Oka crisis and definitively giving the lie to the 70s' premature narratives of Indigenous people's integration into and reconciliation with the Canadian mosaic. In this context, to focus upon Maracle's own theorization of literature's anti-colonial possibilities is not necessarily to contradict her own later caution against inappropriate autobiographical gestures in scholarship:

In the study of literature, Western instructors often pose the question, “What was the author thinking, doing, intending?” Salish thinkers and philosophers (orators) regard such questions as invasive, and do not grant themselves the right to ask them, much less answer, in the absence of the author. Such questions are meaningless in terms of the function of story in our society. The point of hearing (and now reading) story is to study it in and of itself, to examine the context in which it is told, to understand the obstacles to being that it presents, and then to see ourselves through the story, that is, transform ourselves in accordance with our agreement with and understanding of the story. (Maracle 2007: 55)

Here Maracle suggests that a primary goal of literary study ought to be subjective transformation of the reader implicated personally in the act of study, rather than a potentially endless – and ethically irresponsible – speculation upon the character, design, and inner life of the absent writer. This passage provides an interpretive key to *Bobbi Lee*, shifting emphasis decisively away from the psychology or pathology of the young Lee Maracle supposedly "behind" the character of Bobbi or even the older Lee Maracle supposedly disavowing her younger self's

politics, persona, and publication, and diverting it instead toward what the text *does* – toward what "obstacles to being" it presents to the reader in light of the (two) context(s) in which it is told. Given such a critical point of access, the retelling of *Bobbi Lee's* story for 1990 entails rejecting the notion that it is primarily a story from and for a "polemical moment" of simplistic opposition and protest that progressive literary historians like Penny Petrone and even Thomas King could safely relegate to a distant, defunct past.

The theme of subjective transformation, profoundly political in a settler-colonial context wherein the majority of the population is not dispossessed but the beneficiary of dispossession, runs through Maracle's later works and constitutes a recurring concern of her theoretical work. In "The 'Post-colonial' Imagination," she writes of the emancipatory capacity of literature in Canada – by Indigenous writers as well as other authors – to "[reconceive] humanity not as statistics but as creative sacred beings capable of change and transformation, capable of bringing dreams from conception to birth and transformation" (Maracle 1992: 206). The necessity of transformative change is informed by Maracle's resolve, against contemporaneous post-colonial histories, that there has been no meaningful break with the history of colonial violence:

Unless I was sleeping during the revolution, we have not had a change in our condition, at least not the Indigenous people of this land. Post-colonialism presumes we have resolved the colonial condition, at least in the field of literature. Even here we are still a classical colony. (205)

At the same time, however, Maracle does not follow Howard Adams in characterizing colonialism as intrinsic to Canada as such, essential to it as the underlying truth of an occupying foreign entity and its state structures. In a 1993 interview, she suggests that "'Canada' means village or community, and I've taken the spirit of that, the spirit of community, the spirit of Canada to heart. I really do love this country [...] I still have to have some sort of spiritual hope for it" (Interview with Kelly, 1993). This sentiment has led to Maracle's categorization in the same school of Canadian political thinkers as John Ralston Saul, who holds that the underlying

principle or idea of Canada is an Indigenous one and that the denial or misapprehension of this shared founding myth is at the root of national ambiguity and, ultimately, dysfunction (Saul 3). Although I will argue that the *Bobbi Lee* reprint sets up a somewhat different set of terms and fundamentally complicates the problematic exceptionalism latent in Saul's view,⁴⁸ Maracle's work nevertheless seems to agree with him in placing the onus of the reproduction of colonialism first and foremost upon individuals, rather than upon state structures. This paradigm can have the unintended effect of embedding anti-colonial work into a liberal, individualist, and reformist framework and privileging subjective transformation as the crucial site of intervention in colonial violence; however, a close reading of *Bobbi Lee* suggests that it can also open up space for a radical politics that does not subordinate the "subjective" elements of personal ethics and relationality to the conventionally political realms of movement-building and systemic critique. In other words, although Maracle rejects the fundamentally de-politicizing (or, perhaps, post-political) auspices of postcolonial criticism and holds instead to the necessity of qualitative political transformation (i.e. revolution) and literature's participation within it, she simultaneously refuses to privilege political processes as conventionally understood, with their emphasis on the pragmatic assessment of objective conditions and how things "really are" – on being, in effect – as sufficient agents of systemic change as such. Instead, the work of telling her experience as it is lived, felt, and dreamed takes on a key role in a transformative project of *becoming*, constituting new modes of anti-colonial relationality – forms of reciprocity, of mutual

⁴⁸ In Saul's framework, the spirit or essence of Canada is something to be desired, something lost that is to be restored. This paradigm, so easily tethered to a nationalist politics, need not be understood at a high, philosophical level of abstraction; it functioned concretely just last year to galvanize Indigenous voters in unprecedented numbers to oust Harper in favour of Justin Trudeau and the liberal party, which positioned itself – and has positioned itself since – as the party for restoration of the real Canada, a Canada of benevolent multiculturalism and of reconciliation. Hayden King and Shiri Pasterniak have recently cautioned against this position as Saul expresses it: "The obvious prescriptive features of [Saul's work]—directed at Canadians—is to reverse course and get back to a sort of innate Canadian exceptionalism. Ultimately, this means any transformation in the relationship will be relatively superficial because nothing fundamental about the country's institutions really needs to change. The implication for indigenous peoples then might simply be a future under a kinder, gentler settler colonialism."

recognition and understanding across the lines of irreducible difference, and of meeting and sharing, the fostering of which structures her poetic practice:

From inside this dreamspace comes my language coloured by my need for you to see me – really see me. The heart and spirit under my skin animate my need to carve images of myself on the panes of your books, never to be forgotten. Inspired by my need to experience oneness with you at the crest of an arc of our mutual construction in a language we both understand, I build my end of this arc, word by word, dream by dream. (207)

This practice, a corollary to Maracle's political (and) literary theory, is echoed in Emma Larocque's recent argument that the most important political function of Indigenous literature in the context of ongoing colonialism is the humanization of Indigenous people (LaRocque 2010: 147) – which ought not be interpreted in a humanist light to mean recognizing Indigenous people as individual (neo)liberal subjects vested with human rights, but can instead imply something much more like Maracle's vision of building emancipatory relations in which "this meeting place, this oneness does not negate the existence of both our worlds [but] presupposes the harmony of both [...and] invites sharing between them."

In light of this powerful vision of the transformative potentialities of literature that enables genuine mutual recognition and understanding, *Bobbi Lee* is anomalous within Maracle's body of work, a seeming testament to the failure of constituting a meeting and sharing place through language. The narrator is evasive throughout, often adopting a clinical, jaded tone and positioning herself in terms of alienation, distance, and apathy; her engagements with the reader tend to evoke hostility, aggressiveness, and implicit accusation. The original text provides neither closure nor conciliation and seems almost (in keeping with an anti-revisionist Marxist understanding of the colonial capitalist state) to insist upon impending civil war. In the opening chapter on Oka, Maracle reflects upon just such an impasse, writing directly from what appears to be the very eve of armed conflict. The next section will consider how the Oka chapter allows Maracle to position the story she is (re)telling as neither therapeutic resolution nor bitter

manifesto, but in a liminal irresolution that invites from the reader investment in a missing figure of becoming or transformation. Without insisting upon some redemptive tide of armed struggle or violent confrontation, Maracle traces outbreaks of violence back to the routine operations of the settler-colonial state and society, refusing to disavow – or prescribe overcoming of – the anger, pain, and trauma that ultimately not only engender but often necessitate forms of militant resistance. In this regard, a close reading of the opening chapter can help to guide a reading of *Bobbi Lee's* overall narrative structure and trajectory that unpacks political and anti-colonial implications of what Beard has called its frustration of reader expectations. It can also further illuminate how this "hostile" text has the potential to function to invite settler audiences into positive, productive, and transformative dialogue on resistance, unity, and peace. In other words, its very hostility, via the affective insecurity and uneasiness it inspires, can galvanize processes of self-examination and, ultimately, the erosion of colonial hegemony.

S3. The Oka Crisis, colonial violence, and settler unease

Bobbi Lee was formerly intended to be a work in two volumes, as the original text's ending *in medias res* suggests. The reprint does not so much complete this work as draw out, partially through analogy to the resistance at Oka, the pedagogic and transformative anti-colonial potential of the text's irresolution as an unease that challenges the complacency and self-congratulation of settler audiences. Early chapters describe a young Bobbi's experiences of racist and sexist oppression and of exploitation as a labourer, emphasizing not only her subjection to systems of authority but also her intuitive and often violent resistance to them, especially to her irascible, racist father. Indeed, when Bobbi's family life is discussed at all, it is almost always in the context of conflict, acrimony, and abuse (in contradistinction to *Halfbreed*). Similarly, minimal narrative attention is paid to her Indigeneity and to the specific effects of settler-colonialism as a naturalized system of oppression in her life (in contradistinction to *Prison of Grass*). Alienated and bored with city life, Bobbi takes to drifting and living a hippie lifestyle,

consistently described in a jaded, cynical, and world-weary tone. She drifts in and out of several relationships of convenience, [picks up] and kicks several drug habits, and feels increasingly alienated and dehumanized until she finally returns to Vancouver and comes out of "the real bad period" she'd been in (118). Soon after, the book swerves for the first time into its chronicle of Maracle's political engagement with an explicit evocation of "this Howard Adams, a half-breed from Saskatchewan who [...] had started a militant mass organization called the Saskatchewan Native Action Committee [...] Joan said he was a Red Power advocate and sounded pretty interesting" (132). Most of the rest of the book covers her involvement and engagement with the militant and revolutionary Native Association for Red Power (NARP) and positions her as increasingly mediating – and negotiating, almost always uneasily – her earlier practice of highly individuated resistance and dissent with a more collective and politicized organizational structure. The unease of this negotiation is narratively concretized in her (personal and political) relationship with another activist, the Sto:lo revolutionary Marxist Ray Thom, with whom she regularly and dramatically clashes in an ongoing debate about the potential of the white working class in Canada as the primary agent of emancipation for Indigenous people and for society as a whole. In this later section, Bobbi, Ray, and NARP participate in direct actions on both sides of the border, coordinate with other radical Indigenous people – including traditionalists, generally dismissed by Bobbi as overly focused on culture and history rather than improving the material conditions of life (197) – and are continuously subject to repression and harassment from police and from reactionaries and racists opposed to their political work.⁴⁹ The text ends abruptly as Ray and a pregnant Bobbi return to the city after some time spent in rural BC. Bobbi's pregnancy, her relationship with Ray, their debate concerning revolutionary strategy in settler-

⁴⁹ This should not imply that Maracle positions Red Power as defeated solely through repressive force. In one of the epilogue chapters, she reflects openly on the divide-and-conquer processes of co-optation through government funding and integration critiqued by Campbell and Adams: "The tactics of the movement were usurped by the growing presence of the government funded organizations. Fewer people came out to the demonstrations organized by Red Power militants. They began to look like fringe fanatics" (219).

colonial conditions, her orientation toward traditionalism and her own direction in life going forward – whether or not to dedicate herself wholly to militant political work – remain, to the end of the book, unresolved and uneasy.

This unease and indetermination constitutes an effective literary strategy in its invitation to active engagement as well as an important political move toward foregrounding and interrupting the invisibilization of colonial cycles of violence and the resultant stigmatization of Indigenous resistance as source of, rather than response to, discord and tension. Beard has already appraised this indetermination as a strength of Maracle's writing, frustrating Western desires for closure and resolution and leaving lessons to be drawn by the story's listeners, who, as Maracle herself states, "are drawn into the dilemma and are expected at some point in their lives to actively work themselves out of it" (Beard 131). This understanding of Maracle's practice of storytelling takes on an explicitly political and collective dimension in Maracle's affirmation that the (settler) reader must take the book as a point of departure for uneasy introspection, self-criticism, and, ultimately, active and protracted engagement in struggle against dehumanization, racism, and colonialism (240-241). If a common reaction to the dilemma Bobbi Lee presented among settlers was abdication of individual responsibility and even resentment at the indictment levelled against them,⁵⁰ Maracle's firm but gentle insistence upon the necessity for readers to "transform [themselves] in accordance with [their] agreement with and understanding of the story" speaks to the need for dialogue constituted upon a different set of terms:

I have bent my back to this plough for some decades now. It is Canada's turn. In my life, look for your complicit silence, look for the inequity between yourself and others [...] Don't come to us saying, 'what can we do to help' and expect us not to laugh heartily. You need help. (241).

⁵⁰ One form this resentment takes is the angry reaction of settlers to reminders of the colonial past and present and calls for decolonization: *why are you making us feel guilty for that over which we have no control?* In this case, settler abdication of accountability for colonial violence is closely tied to settler feelings of (political) disempowerment and inability to galvanize broad-based systemic change (or, at the least, the latter becomes an alibi for the former). One can detect such frustration, alongside no small (if surprising) measure of acknowledgement of Indigenous anger and grievance, in the response: "are you going to drive us all into the sea?"

This statement encapsulates a logic of sovereignty in that it rejects the external policing of Indigenous agency – with all its well-worn colonial mechanisms of individuation and pathologization – by shifting the onus of responsibility and accountability for colonial violence in both its everyday and its most visible forms onto settlers. It involves a wholesale dismissal or rejection of a certain kind of dialogue, premised upon paternalism and inequity as well as the implicit threat of the colonial relation – the possibility that help may yet be withheld if oppressed people do not solicit it correctly, if they break with the terms, norms, and expectations of colonial institutions and structures and become what colonial hegemony represents as "fringe fanatics." At the same time, it need not be parsed as a threat in kind, a necessary prompt to combative responses and escalations in violence. Instead, as the Oka prologue implies, it intimates without yet initiating a possibility of a different kind of dialogue, more fundamentally a dialogue of equal parties weaving a place in common in (spite of) unequal systemic conditions.

As Beard has pointed out, the chapter "Oka Peace Camp – September 9, 1990" that opens the *Bobbi Lee* reprint situates the story of *Bobbi Lee* in a highly contemporary context of struggles over land, sovereignty, and resistance to Canadian colonialism (132). Yet a close reading of the reflections that follow suggests that Maracle is more concerned in this case with providing an alternative interpretive key for "reading" instances of Indigenous resistance as such than with the concrete specifics of the Mohawk struggle for self-determination. In the opening tableau, Maracle positions herself "in the crowd," her sense of sympathy and support for the Mohawk cause hardening into a kind of "stubborn ancient rage" that may yet take expression in pushing the crisis to its realization (5). In this scene, this sentiment is gendered contrary to the commonplace that the rejection of nonviolent methods of protest and resistance is tied to (toxic) masculinity: instead, "the women" are the ones unilaterally "[arguing] for marching into the arms of the police." Initially, then, Indigenous women as a collective visibly occupy the position of advocates of violence, even seemingly senseless violence. This orientation seems to radically

contradict the Epilogue, in which Maracle discusses the embodied wisdom and "ancient intelligence" of Indigenous women in a context where this wisdom is life-giving and productive, rather than destructive (204). Yet the relationship between a situated knowledge oriented toward the lives of future generations and a clarion call for open violence comes into clearer sight as Maracle's internal monologue unfolds, suggesting that this fraught tableau is not primarily a prelude to violence but its dramatic culmination:

We all know to march would be disaster. Many people will be hurt, possibly killed. "Don't tell us we haven't been hurt," and I start thinking of my dead brother, my dead brother-in-law, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, most young, some childless. And I find myself preparing for death, preparing to leave my children motherless because it feels like maybe bloodletting is what this country needs. Maybe if we just let the road to Oka run red with the blood of women, someone in this country will see the death and destruction this country has wrought on us. (6)

With the intervention "Don't tell us we haven't been hurt" – which might be Maracle's own statement, or a statement from one of the women interrupting her internal monologue – the paragraph shifts from consideration of the inevitable violence of open confrontation to a reflection upon the systemic and often invisible violence that proceeds as a natural(ized) part of colonially imposed poverty, dispossession, marginalization, and oppression.⁵¹ This shift also marks a larger change in how Oka can be understood – not as an exceptional and lamentable rupture in a progressive history of reconciliation, but as a disclosive moment of heightened visibility in a 400-year cycle of colonial violence, "of colonial battering." It is notable that Maracle herself is not the one in this scene pleading "poetically" to de-escalate the situation and avert bloodshed; instead, she is silent, an observer, coming to position herself in this paragraph as a member of the group of women prepared and indeed determined to pursue militant action to disclose the otherwise invisibilized violence of Canadian colonialism. In this regard, far from

⁵¹ Indeed, in this passage Maracle evokes the colonial situation in terms that hauntingly echo Howard Adams's depiction of a colonial war on Indigenous people that has never ended – especially his affirmation that his mother's "death at 52 meant a violent death" (Adams 125).

suggesting a renunciation of the will to militant action of the activist Bobbi Lee as defunct, Maracle's reprint insists upon the contemporary persistence of both the overt colonial violence and the will to resistance – especially among Indigenous women, who bear the brunt of the violence – that structure the original text. Indeed, the narrative which it sets up at the outset is cyclical rather than developmental or progressive: a cycle "of the colonial state pressing on our villages, taking life after life" that marks the continuity between 1975 and 1990.

As in the case of *Prison of Grass*, the problem of this cycle of violence is palpably and explicitly left unresolved, in the text of *Bobbi Lee*, in the Epilogue which closes upon that challenge – or even simmering threat – to the reader, and in the Oka chapter. Maracle closes this chapter on Oka in underlining this point and maintaining the instability and volatility of the positions of opposition in the opening tableau, recollecting that although "We did not shed our blood on the streets of Oka[,] no surrender was negotiated" (11). Like Adams, she evokes instead an uncertain, uneasy period of ceasefire – a situation wherein dialogue is not only or primarily an end in itself, but in which it must be structured by the political necessity of "[talking] – from a position of wholeness, completeness – about building a sustainable movement in the country that will lead all of us to justice and peace." In the context of Maracle's aforementioned "spiritual hope" for this country, the "crisis" at Oka is read as a glimpse not solely or primarily of colonial violence as the essential truth of Canadian colonialism, waiting to burst forth in open conflict, but of a positive possibility for transformative change, of "justice and peace" conditional upon community, reciprocity, and dialogue. Indeed, it becomes an opportunity to witness love, togetherness, and solidarity with present, past, and future generations – "aunts, uncles, cousins, friends" as well as children. This more (inter)personal and less conventionally political invisibility is implicated in the violence of state repression when Maracle suddenly and "absurdly" finds herself transported from the moment of high tension at the Oka peace camp to a conversation with Daphne Marlatt, in which the latter betrays a notion of the death rate of

Indigenous people as incidental rather than – as "all those statistics" suggest – as systemic, a legacy of violent deaths resultant from centuries of "colonial battering." This prompts Maracle to reflect upon "whether Canadians can truly see us. See that we truly do love one another" (6). There is an intimation in this exchange of what underlies, or accompanies, Maracle's need for "you to see me, really see me" through her writing: the necessity of establishing terms of recognition apart from those mediated by the colonial state, in which Indigenous people's resistance, necessarily coded by the state as violent or dangerous, is understood as structured by love and solidarity and not to be relinquished as a prerequisite to productive dialogue toward a shared aim of peace.⁵²

In other words, an event like Oka can be disclosive and transformative not primarily in the sense that it shows Canada the horror of what it has done,⁵³ but in that it shows simultaneously the extent and deep-rootedness of colonial violence *and* the extent to which Indigenous people are willing to go to ensure a genuinely emancipatory future. In this sense, it functions both as disclosure and as invitation to the settler reader, reversing the terms of a colonial hegemony that historically positions Indigenous people as generously and benevolently invited into the structures and institutions of settler-colonial society. Maracle's poetics here, without ceding the uneasy but just position of ceasefire, steer instead toward the constitution of a conjoined "We/they," comprising unity but also (grammatically marked) difference, irreducible to abstract categories of recognition and comprising Indigenous people but also settler Canadians who "want peace and solidarity, with each other, with all people and with the earth" (10). This section may also illuminate what Maracle intends by her "spiritual hope for Canada" and how it differs from Saul's brand of Canadian exceptionalism, as she explicitly affirms that there is no

⁵² There is a curious echo in Maracle's reflections on love of Howard Adams's insistence that "every day this cultural genocide is killing people and destroying love" – the erasure of love, in both cases, is understood as integral rather than incidental to the operations of colonialism.

⁵³ These terms, indeed, may result in nothing more than the sorts of reactions *Halfbreed* inspired in the 70s – the liberal guilt of "the hand that trembles at what it has done" – which are anything but transformative and leave the paternalistic, colonial positions of witness to and subject of violence entirely unchanged.

peace in "this country" and notably refuses to name Canada throughout the chapter, instead repeating "this country" with the regularity of a curse. At the same time, she does repeatedly name *Canadians*, Canadians who benefit "when we stand up to say enough" (8), Canadians who are increasingly critically conscious that Indigenous people are "less than sovereign peoples in [their] homelands," and still further, the vast majority of Canadians whose class interests diverge radically from the state that claims them as its subjects:

The racist structure of this society only thinly veils the class structure. The reality of this country is that many Canadians are having a hard time, financially. Poverty lurks in the living rooms of two million citizens. The homeless are increasing geometrically in urban centres and they are predominantly white. (9)

In their implication of a shared material interest in opposing the Canadian capitalist-colonial state – in spite of the appearance, haunting the original text of *Bobbi Lee*, that the primary contradiction or hostility in Canadian society must be between Indigenous people and settlers – these lines recall both Maria Campbell's call for unity against "our common enemy" and Howard Adams's hope for solidarity or support from the white working class, a hope which had to recede into the future with the co-optation of Canada's unions (Adams 181). In 1990, however, Maracle suggests that with events like Oka laying bare the hollowness and hypocrisy of Canada's recognition of Indigenous people, such a solidarity is increasingly an actuality in the process of becoming, rather than just an abstract hope or theoretical necessity (10). This does not imply a developmental history in the sense that Canada is successfully "reconciling" with Indigenous peoples; it suggests instead that the hegemony that crowded out Red Power militants in the 70s did not and will not succeed in suppressing radical anti-colonial possibilities outside of the parameters of the colonial state and its legality. It proposes a counter-narrative in light of ongoing colonial violence that contextualizes Maracle's understanding of an ethically and politically transformative role for Indigenous literature: a relational humanization that allows "crises" like Oka or like the text of *Bobbi Lee* to serve not as reentrenchments of hostility and

difference but rather as invitations into the holistic "We/they" of a "meeting place, [a] oneness [that] does not negate the existence of both our worlds [but...] invites sharing between them."

Finally, Maracle describes *Bobbi Lee* as a book "about why we must talk" – not the dialogue itself, not the meeting place itself, but an evocation of the material *necessity* of the dialogue and the meeting place, not only as desirable but also as politically urgent. The distinction is important. Whereas Maracle can be seen talking from a position of wholeness and completeness in many of her other works, grounded in Salish intellectual tradition and informed explicitly by the task of humanization, the protagonist of *Bobbi Lee* is described as twisted out of shape (230) and the text closes with some explicit reflections upon Bobbi's ongoing "confusion, subjectivism and scepticism" (197). With this explicit framing, *Bobbi Lee* maintains a certain liminality and incompleteness as a text of suggestion and implication of transformative anti-colonial possibilities, rather than of their realization and actualization. Although this may be taken for a weakness of the text, a tangible mark of its aesthetic or formal incompleteness, it may also inform *Bobbi Lee's* specific anti-colonial potentialities according to a logic of refusal similar to that which I tracked through *Prison of Grass* in the previous chapter. Just as the Oka crisis represents a singularly provocative event in Canadian history because the disclosive upwelling of violence that would precipitate a serious escalation in struggle and conflict was ultimately averted (or, perhaps, deferred), *Bobbi Lee* does not relinquish the note of unease and irresolution in its trajectory. The two represent analogous and complementary catalysts for dialogue and ongoing anti-colonial work insofar as neither a single outpouring of violence nor a single story functions as an intake valve to release the pressure and tension of the settler-colonial condition. The onus for revolutionary change is placed not upon being and event but upon becoming and process – a process of solidarity-building and reciprocity that Maracle suggests, against colonial binaries, is all at once individual, structural, personal, and political. *Bobbi Lee* thus maintains a singular but important emphasis on impediments to solidarity or, as Maracle puts it in the

introduction, distortions of meaning and understanding (7) that seem in 1975 to foreclose upon (but simultaneously – from the vantage of 1990 and afterward – to leave live and open-ended) possibilities for dialogue toward a shared vision of peace. In the remaining pages, I will consider several ways in which the text yearns for and makes palpable the necessity of genuinely humanizing dialogue and genuinely emancipatory movement-building, while nevertheless insisting upon its almost insurmountable difficulty in conditions of alienation, exploitation, and colonization, especially when colonized people are not heard or seen at the intersections of oppression, exploitation, and dispossession in their heterogenous lived experiences. The conventions of autobiography continually give way to disclosures of the fundamentally relational character of Bobbi's alienation and of the irresolution of her narrative – how these are bound up in the ways she is denied access to her collective, familial, historical, and linguistic identity, the vast history of colonial erasure of Indigenous (women's) experience and expression, and the obstacles this history presents to the constitution of a movement or agent of emancipation in a settler-colonial context. In conjunction with the Oka chapter, this discussion upon the breakdown of communication, dialogue, and hope can help to illuminate the later Maracle's emphasis as a poet and as a theorist upon the intensely political nature of seeing and being seen – not through a humanist lens as an neoliberal individual with rights, but as a relational being bound up in ties of both kinship and solidarity. Approached from this angle – with *this* account of "why we must talk" – her work as an author can be productively understood as responding to one of the crucial problems that haunted the progressive movements she saw rise and fall: that "we could all have the same set of political principles and not be able to work together" (221).

S4. Hope for unfinished stories: dialogue, solidarity, and liberation

I have already argued that the mid-70s period of the Indigenous movement in Canada can be characterized by the stark contradiction between a dominant ideology of resurgence, revitalization, and newly coordinated Indigenous unity, represented in particular in the

representative reformist orgs like the newly-founded Assembly of First Nations (AFN), and the defeat and phasing-out of Red Power militants who, in spite of their affirmative visions of a more fundamentally decolonized and liberated society, were increasingly depicted as pathological, narrowly individualistic, and self-interested. In this broader context, *Bobbi Lee* can be understood as a representation of the possibilities and vexations of a political practice and subjectivity defined in terms of concrete relationality, against both the hollow, abstract unities of representative politics (which necessarily bury internal difference under the construction of a monolithic interest and futurity) *and* the relativism and individualism of "overcomings" of political and collective contexts and discourses as such. These revolutionary possibilities – vexed by defeat during the decline of the Red Power period as they confronted the complexity and specificity of a settler-colonial context and the repressive and ideological devices that reproduce it – are charted throughout *Bobbi Lee*, through its tone and trajectory as well as its representation of Bobbi's activist experience, her introspection and alienation, her three relationships, and the incomplete and unrequited dialogues, political and personal, with the men in her life. That they are often foreclosed upon by colonially structured understandings and models of personal and political relationality ultimately suggests a crucial political role for Indigenous literature in articulating embodied experience and difference and building ties of recognition, attentiveness, and solidarity where they have otherwise too often, and to lasting detriment, been presumed.

The depth of Bobbi's sense of alienation throughout the text has often been commented upon by critics, who have in more recent years rightly linked it to the inescapably social distress of her experience of poverty, marginalization, racism, and dispossession. However, this emphasis has also obscured the shape of the text in at least two regards: first, in that it has framed Bobbi's alienation in the individualized terms of existential longing, of alienation from her own humanity and identity (Beard 131); and second, in that it has pictured Bobbi as a passive and inward-turning agent, caught up more in futile, thwarted, and unproductive affect than in political

organizing and movement-building in resistance to cycles of colonial violence. Both of these trends reinscribe distinctions between personal and political work and allow for criticism to reproduce the neoliberal logic of overcoming disempowerment in achieving a stabilized and productive individual subjectivity. Yet although Bobbi spends much of the narrative seeking to be useful and productive in a certain sense, Maracle's use of a discourse of existential alienation allows her to define this aim *against* normative expectations of socially useful labour. In Toronto, Bobbi reflects upon "the uselessness of her existence" and her desire to do "something [...] to leave [her] mark, to be useful to other people" apart from the "empty" and "useless" drudgery of "[working] for money" (97). The persistently utilitarian language in this passage – and, indeed, in much of the text – allows Maracle to position Bobbi as aspiring to productivity apart from its hegemonic forms in individual success and achievement in the workplace. In the absence of relations that would realize such productivity (as a usefulness-to-others), and holding determinedly to an individualist philosophy expressed in the mantra "I just have to be concerned with me, control my own existence" (100), Bobbi hits the lowest point of dehumanization (105). By contrast, her engagement in NARP organizing and increasing dedication to activism for Indigenous people coincides with the resurfacing of long-buried emotions. Directly after a long chapter on Bobbi's participation in a land occupation, and directly preceding her participation in street patrols in downtown Vancouver and her agitation against local residential schools, Bobbi experiences a cathartic meeting with her hospitalized mother during which "Something just broke loose inside [her] and [she] felt upset about everything" (155).⁵⁴ Yet even though Bobbi's activist productivity is linked explicitly to the restoration of relations and ties – most palpably during the significant narrative arc of Bobbi's personal and political relationship to Ray

⁵⁴ This scene, in its cathartic upwelling of long-suppressed tears and frustration at a hospitalized mother's bedside – an abjection of colonial violence previously internalized and invisible – echoes the autobiographical passage in *Prison of Grass* on the death of Howard Adams's mother.

– she does not ever quite overcome the problem of "relating to people on a human level – just being decent to them, including Ray" (160). Although Maracle's narration occasionally pinpoints this unwillingness or inability to enter into reciprocal relations as a fault of Bobbi's character, of her "confusion, subjectivism and scepticism" (197), it remains a point of palpable irresolution and anxiety to the end of the text. By turning now to Maracle's representation of Bobbi's relationships, we can consider how social distress and colonial violence manifest in the text without reinscribing the pathologization of Bobbi as an individual and foreclosing upon the text's transformative potentialities in rethinking dialogue, solidarity, and relationality outside of dehumanizing colonial binaries. This discussion suggests a different way of understanding the text's supposed inability to overcome alienation in terms of relations and dialogues that might yet be actualized rather than of a personal assumption of stable and productive subjectivity.⁵⁵

Maracle's representation of Bobbi's romantic liaisons suggests potential and hope for reciprocity that is persistently thwarted by the invisibilized inequity and violence underwriting interpersonal relations in a settler-colonial context – a problem that is revisited with more and more explicitly political consequences until it finally reaches a more abstract level of universality in Bobbi's ongoing dialogue with Ray about how acrimonious relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people preclude the revolutionary unity they both seek. Yet Bobbi's failed dialogue with her first romantic partner Lorenzo, a working-class Latino man intensely concerned with exploitation, systemic racism, and the violence of American imperialism on the world stage (63), already suggests that the atomization and individuation of neoliberal subjectivity functions to preclude dialogue and solidarity across heterogenous axes of oppression and difference. Lorenzo's personality appeals to Bobbi in its classical existentialism, suggesting

⁵⁵ This productivity can also be understood in terms of how Maracle's trajectory as an artist is sometimes narrated – the later Maracle's mature work "successfully" realizing the artistic and creative potential that *Bobbi Lee*, a text mired in unproductive and inward-turning bitterness, could not attain.

the possibility of an authenticity that goes beyond the barriers, artifice, and cynicism of everyday life:

Lorenzo was getting into some existentialism [...] He talked a lot of philosophy, or at least used the words, and was sort of utopian. He was also an artist and painted a lot... also thought about a lot of things. He seemed more real to me than other guys I'd known – less superficial. You know, sometimes a person seems more genuine than regular people when they're living in a world of unreality. They're not realistic, but their dreams seem real and sincere. (65)

These lines break somewhat with the impersonal, jaded, and factual tone of most of the narration, suggesting that Bobbi is drawn to Lorenzo's proclivity for breaking with the drudgery and alienation of normative definitions of productivity and pragmatism, an individualizing paradigm in which "any real or deep discontent [...] you just kept inside or maybe went to church and confessed about" (64). But although Maracle aligns Lorenzo with the cultivation of a dreamspace and intimates, against isolation and alienation, the possibility of the kind of communication and reciprocity that she later describes as genuine humanization, his dynamic with Bobbi ultimately remains one-sided and does not realize this promise: "He talked and I listened; not too much dialogue." Lorenzo appeals to her for being "more serious about life [and thinking] about it more," and even helps to assuage some of the cynicism she has arrived at through her own lived experience (65), but something – an ambiguous combination of his readiness to talk without doing much listening, and her unwillingness or inability to participate in his "world of unreality" – hinders the possibility of *mutual* construction, of a dreamspace that accommodates both of them. Bobbi's alienation manifests here in part in her refusal to reconcile the cynicism and wariness derived from her lived experiences of oppression and exploitation with the will to vision or dream a different reality.

Yet the facile expectation that Bobbi overcome her guarded pessimism (and, by extension, bracket her lived experience) so as to participate in an ostensibly emancipatory dialogue comes to be complicated by increasing acknowledgment of an invisibilized history of

colonial violence and systemic constraints upon Indigenous expression and identity during her relationship with Doug, an activist and musician heavily involved with the Black Liberation Front of Canada (93). This relationship coincides with both Bobbi's politicization and the apex of her sense of alienation and dehumanization: "My relationship with Doug was kind of strange; it was never a reciprocal relationship. Doug would always try to get me to talk with him, to form some kind of deep relationship, but I'd just cut him off, or cut myself off, at a certain point. If I didn't want to talk, I didn't talk" (98). These last lines resonate hauntingly in light of the statement with which Maracle underlines the reprint, that Bobbi's life is about "why we *must* talk," from a position of wholeness and completeness. In this relationship, by contrast, Bobbi is described multiple times in terms of embodied fragmentation or even corporeal diminishment, as an "appendage" of Doug both politically – following him to rallies but still largely disinterested in politics, in spite of her increasingly politicized consciousness of systemic racism through "all the hassles and racist crap [they] had to take from the cops" (93) – and in their personal relationship (98). At this juncture, Maracle's sudden narrative deployment of an Indigenous language⁵⁶ suggests that Bobbi's diminishment is partly a function of colonially imposed alienation from a mode of expression that would allow her to articulate her lived experience as an Indigenous woman. Directly after the discussion of the failure of reciprocity in her relationship with Doug, an apparent non sequitur transition leads to the first mention of a specific Indigenous language in the text: Maracle relates Bobbi's friendship with Jamaican George, a man of both Jamaican and Cree background who speaks fluent Cree, and who teaches Bobbi a few songs that the two of them sing while Doug plays guitar (99). In this context, Maracle registers in passing that "[she] could remember hearing a lot of Cree from the time [she] was a young kid but

⁵⁶ I do not intend here to imply any interchangeability or identity between disparate Indigenous languages, but to register the complexities of Maracle's own understanding of her Indigeneity. As mentioned above, in 1975, Maracle understood herself as Cree-Metis on her mother's side; since 1985, she has identified more often with her Coast Salish identity on her father's side.

[she] couldn't speak it." This implicit sense of alienation from her Indigeneity, Bobbi's ambiguous inability or refusal to engage in reciprocal dialogue with Doug, and her existential sense of atomized, individuated isolation, the sense that in order to survive "[she] just [has] to be concerned with [herself]" (100) and disavow relations both of kinship and of solidarity, come to a confluence soon afterward in another disclosive scene which, like the passage on Lorenzo, briefly breaks with the world-weary tone of the narration. In an otherwise affirmative scene of cultural exchange – a party of Doug's friends, a diverse group of oppressed, marginalized, and exploited nationalities, all "telling jokes and singing songs that were peculiar to [their] particular cultures" (101) – Bobbi suddenly and acutely experiences her alienation from her own Indigeneity as an impediment to her participation in the gathering:

I knew only one Cree song well enough to sing and was embarrassed when I sang it. Not because I didn't like the song or was ashamed of it but because I was such a lousy singer. You see, to be a Cree singer traditionally required years of training [...] So there was real status to being a Cree singer and I couldn't do any justice to it at all – wasn't even a full Cree and didn't speak more than a few words of the language.

Bobbi's reticence to participate in the gathering cannot be separated from the violent erasure of Indigeneity that is the historical precondition of the Canadian settler-colonial state as such. Whereas Doug's friends at the multicultural gathering can trace their roots, their histories, their languages, and their identities to an *elsewhere*, Bobbi exists in a context where her history has been rewritten, her language suppressed, and her identity redefined as an integral part of the ideological and literal construction of the settler-colonial state. The genocide, cultural or otherwise, that these processes constitute make themselves explicitly manifest in Bobbi's life only in these rare passages, where the dehumanizing alienation that Bobbi avows throughout the text is articulated not as an individual alienation from liberal categories of subjectivity and identity, but as an alienation from a model of relational being. For Bobbi, as an Indigenous woman in ongoing settler-colonial conditions, to speak to her lived, embodied experience from a

holistic position of wholeness and completeness and engage in reciprocal dialogue requires more than the stabilization of mature individual subjectivity and integration into social reality normally afforded by the liberal tropes of autobiography and personal narrative. It demands a much more far-reaching and systemic transformation, indeed a reconfiguration of the terms of social reality and dialogue as such. In other words, the affective difficulty and unease engendered by colonial violence and disseminated across multiple axes of settler-colonial society, as a society in which settlers far outnumber Indigenous people, constitute not reasons we fundamentally cannot talk, but reasons we *must*. This dialogue, Maracle suggests, must take place not on the reductive and inadequate terms of (neo)liberal and individualizing political structures, institutions, or subjectivities, but on terms that do not demand of Indigenous people that they disavow or overcome nominally unproductive affects or, indeed, an ostensibly *counter*-productive will to (militant) resistance.

The visioning of a dialogue, a movement, a social reality that is at once radically and essentially different and yet nevertheless unified and integrated is treated most explicitly in the dialogue between Bobbi and her last and most narratively significant partner, the Sto:lo Marxist Ray Thom, concerning whether the white working class, the overwhelming majority of the Canadian population, could ever be an agent of emancipation for the whole of settler-colonial society, including Indigenous people. In this relationship and dialogue, Bobbi's personal posture and practice of refusal to participate in erasive, homogenizing unity, however emancipatory in concept or intent, is unpacked in its political repercussions and implications. Bobbi, Ray, and other NARP organizers of this period are captivated by utopian visions of the integrated society a revolutionary movement might be able to constitute, "[dreaming] of treed streets, beautiful cities in which its citizenry was not alienated, not afraid of one another, but social" (220). Yet it is only in the 1990 Epilogue that Maracle goes so far as to vision such a liberated futurity, whereas the original text refuses to break with a narrative tone of jaded cynicism, frustrated silence, and,

indeed, social alienation and hostility. As in her relationship with Lorenzo, Bobbi acutely experiences a disjunction between her lived experience and the ideal of a shared utopian vision espoused by those around her. When Ray insists that "the Canadian working class [is] going to lead the struggle" and claims "that working class solidarity against capitalism somehow [prevents] white workers from being affected by racism," Bobbi reacts viscerally, getting "pretty wrought up" (145) as she cites instances from her own life of racist and gendered violence on the part of white working-class men (146). The narrative Ray is forwarding, adopted from leftists in other, non-Indigenous organizations, "[runs] counter to all [her] experience," which he dismisses solely by insisting that these divisions "have been brought about by capitalism" (146). Ray thus positions unity against capitalism as a point of departure, a presupposition and underlying truth of both Indigenous and working-class experience, obscured and distorted (although he does not specify how) by capitalism. As a result, he inevitably frames Bobbi's experience of oppression, her lived and embodied knowledge that there is no such concrete and actual (as opposed to abstract and theoretical) unity and that the relationship as it stands is more often one of oppressor and oppressed, as itself a distortion or distraction from this underlying truth, a subjective mistake to be overcome and disavowed. Bobbi's experience, and the posture of refusal and resistance which it engenders, effectively constitutes her as a problematic subject for a politics aspiring to unity, leading Ray to argue "that I was a racist and being subjective" (160). Maracle's insistence that "my experience made it impossible for me to think about Canadian or American workers liberating Indians and humanizing the system. It was still a very subjective thing for me" (196) presents a fundamental challenge to the orthodox Marxist-Leninist analytic of objective reality, of material conditions and relations of production, which would seem in Canada not only to mechanistically entail or presuppose unity and solidarity between the white working class and Indigenous people but also to reject out of hand the *strategic* possibility of Indigenous people

(who presently constitute 5% of the population) at the vanguard of a movement for emancipation.

While this way of positioning Bobbi's dialogue with Ray seems to disclose something of the "third-worldist" Marxist politics and strategy of Don Barnett and the LSM, Maracle's narrative leaves live possibilities for a political practice that does not reinscribe the prioritization of nominally objective and properly political factors over and against the subjective, personal, and individual. As Bobbi moves toward an explicit articulation of her long, lived experience of oppression, she rejects the dogmatism of Ray's hope for the white working class with the fatalistic determination "that the revolutionary proletariat of today is mainly in the super-exploited Third World and not in Canada and other rich capitalist countries." This proposition, itself partaking of the discourse of objective conditions and static, essentialized being, evinces the third-worldist conclusions of organizations like Don Barnett's, which view the white working class in the imperialist countries of the western world as an inherently irredeemable "labour aristocracy" without significant revolutionary potential and which argue for the complete redirection of leftist focus to solidarity with colonized peoples abroad and, especially, in the internal colonies of those countries (Nash 96).⁵⁷ Even as Bobbi eventually inclines away from Ray's orthodox Leninist faith in the working class and his presupposition of a unity that does not exist in actuality – very much at the expense of unruly subjects like Bobbi, who insist upon the inescapably political significance of their lived experiences of oppression – Maracle's representation of Bobbi's relationships does not leave unproblematized the presupposition of objective and essential difference, of inevitable and inescapable hostility, at the heart of third-worldism. A missing figure persists between the elision of Bobbi's unique experience,

⁵⁷ It should be noted here that although the Marxist terminology is rarely encountered today, the strategic position that third-worldism represents – that revolution is impossible in an advanced capitalist country and that the political and ideological parameters defined by liberal democracy hold totalizing hegemony at history's present junction, such that parliamentary reform is the only viable avenue for progressive or anti-colonial social change – is altogether commonplace in Canada today, for leftists, Indigenous movements, and the broader population alike.

expression, and identity in settler-colonial society's ostensibly neutral and liberal institutions and structures and the tentative, tenuous longing for genuine reciprocity and dialogue that structures Bobbi's alienation, activism, and relationships. This figure can productively be situated in relation to Maracle's later theorization of subjective transformation as the ongoing process of becoming that would realize and actualize, rather than presuppose, the mutual construction of a liberated futurity.

In the context of the pressure upon dissenting figures like Bobbi to disavow and overcome affective and political expressions of resistance, Maracle's later emphasis on subjective transformation in and through literature can be seen not as an inappropriate importation into the realm of the properly political, but as an explicit articulation of the necessity for subjective transformation and reconstitution that *always* underpins the work of movement-building and political organizing. However, it is a counter-articulation in that Maracle insists upon the necessity of subjective transformation not for the most marginalized and oppressed, whose lived experiences trouble and complicate hasty utopian visions of unity and revitalization, but for the vast majority that constitutes the dominant current in society. This reversal of terms, constituting a very different set of conditions to be met before genuine dialogue toward peace and justice can proceed, allows us to return at last to the question of guilt-ridden settler Canadians who approached Maracle after reading *Bobbi Lee*: "are you going to drive us all into the sea?" In the absence of a meeting place, in the absence of any trace of hope for the Canadian masses, the question need not be understood as disingenuous; the fatalism of a third-worldist view would seem to leave only hostility, the recurrence of crises like Oka, as the truth of Canada, the truth of the colonial cycle. Yet the 1990 reprint implies another interpretive possibility, neither the presumption of unity that Ray espouses nor the presumption of hostility that settlers took from the original text: the possibility, rapidly receding into the future during the 70s but emerging with new clarity and hope in the 90s with events like Oka disrupting settler complacency and

Indigenous writers increasingly articulating their experiences from places of wholeness and completeness, of an actual unity that is not presupposed, not taken for a neutral description of the world as it "objectively" is, but constituted. In 1990, Maracle couches the relationship between Indigenous people and Canadians, if not the Canadian state, in terms of spiritual hope and the possibility of a "We/they" that neither demands that Indigenous liberation proceed according to terms and parameters set by settler Canadians *nor* positions the interests of Indigenous people in revolutionary change as fundamentally at odds with the interests and subjectivity of settlers. In this regard, the 1990 edition of *Bobbi Lee* resolves the original text's vexed, unfinished rumination on fatalism in a new emphasis on subjective transformation, on the constitution of a genuine dialogue between Indigenous people and settler Canadians, not about reconciliation on the terms of the colonial-capitalist state but earnestly "about building a sustainable movement in the country that will lead all of us to justice and peace" (11). In this project, moreover, Maracle suggests that it is the struggle of Indigenous people, and Indigenous women in particular, that possesses the logic of universal emancipation:

The state is more than aware that to satisfy the demand of a single Native reserve is to have to satisfy the demands of all of us. The state is also aware that to meet our demands for a decent life would mean upgrading the lives of thousands upon thousands of single white Canadian mothers, and thousands upon thousands of working poor. (9)

With this reversal of the relationship between Indigenous people and settler Canadians, such that the liberation of the latter from exploitation and immiseration is bound up with the struggle of the former for a decent life, Maracle suggests one possible role of Indigenous literature in a *settler-colonial* context specifically: by exposing colonial violence as the invisible precondition of settler life and contextualizing Indigenous resistance within a longer history of Indigenous humanity under systematic attack, to constitute and actualize a space for dialogue and unity that does not require people who have been oppressed and colonized to surrender or overcome either the "unproductive" affects or the will to resistance that mainstream discourse enlists to

pathologize and individuate, alienate and obscure, divide and conquer. In effecting a transformation that allows for the possibility of genuine dialogue, genuine oneness not presupposed but earned, built "word by word, dream by dream," Indigenous literature – for Maracle, the telling and representation of her experience as an Indigenous woman in particular – has the potential to constitute in actuality the unity, solidarity, and reciprocity that it cannot yet presuppose, opening up and widening ruptures in the cycle of colonial violence not as individuals escape or transcend it, but as the circle of genuine dialogue on constituting the movement for justice in an integrated society expands and expands.

I have suggested that the reprint of *Bobbi Lee* allows Maracle an opportunity to retroactively engage with and comment upon the original text in light of political and literary possibilities in Canada after Oka, a watershed moment in the broader Canadian public's apprehension of colonial violence and Indigenous people's resolve to resist it, militantly when necessary. Whereas corporate media "overwhelmingly represented [the Oka crisis] as a 'law and order' issue fundamentally undermined by Indigenous peoples' uncontrollable anger and resentment" (Coulthard 116), Maracle's reprint opens up transformative possibilities of bearing witness to Indigenous critique and resistance (literary and otherwise) that go beyond personal and individual guilt or presumption of inherent and inevitable hostility. Drawing upon the experiences and vexed hopes of the Red Power period, *Bobbi Lee* in 1990 suggests ways in which scenes of resistance might open up not only a recognition of settler implication in colonial violence, but also constitute an invitation into dialogue, a shared meeting-place enabling the becoming of revolutionary unity apart from the mediation and centering of the colonial-capitalist state. In this regard, Maracle's reprint of *Bobbi Lee* occupies a peculiar place in the history of Indigenous literature in Canada. It simultaneously issues from and comments upon a moment when Indigenous literature had not yet fully emerged into the public sphere, marking this emergence not as a teleological progression, and certainly not as a qualitative development from

grassroots, collective political engagement and agitation to individualized acts of agency and resistance, but rather as an emergence of a new and transformative set of possibilities that might in some part fulfill the unrequited hopes of the Red Power period in Canada, a period that defined itself in its opposition and resistance to an increasingly hegemonic path of state-sanctioned reformism in Indigenous politics. The anti-colonial liminality of *Bobbi Lee* consists, then, in a simultaneous refusal to be assimilated to colonial institutions, structures, and narratives and open-ended invitation to dialogue, collaboration, and the weaving of a space in common – suggesting revolutionary possibilities which, while remaining politically dormant in the 1970s, may become live again with the increased visibility of Indigenous literary expression and resistance in later decades and on into the present day.

Conclusion

In this section, I want to very briefly remark upon several patterns I have explored in this thesis and some further avenues for study they may open up. I will start, however, by registering a few limitations encountered in the course of this project. In each chapter, there was a persistent tugging between the specifics and particulars of the texts themselves – insofar as texts can be bracketed from their contexts, intertexts, and paratexts – and the more general political and historical paradigms informing my discussion. My commitment to a previously underappreciated and ignored context (in this case, that of political history and the history of Indigenous movements) may at times – and especially in the third chapter, which is also bound up in the complex and somewhat underexplored political and literary context of the early 90s – have somewhat confined or limited my discussion of the texts. In emphasizing the parities and continuities between the early 70s and contemporaneity in relations between Indigenous people and Canada as well as in Indigenous movement-building, I have necessarily downplayed historical ruptures and difference. This too has limited the strength and scope of my analysis. For instance, I have not considered *Halfbreed* in relation to Maria Campbell's later multi-media practice of storytelling, although such a consideration might lay emphasis on a more tempered approach to anti-colonialism akin to Maracle's practice in the 1990 *Bobbi Lee*; I have not duly considered the underlying dynamics of what even sympathetic and progressive commentators like Neal McLeod, Emma LaRocque, and Dian Million have critiqued in the intensity of Howard Adams's approach to counter-history and anti-colonial theory; and I have not gone very far toward considering *Bobbi Lee* in relation to Maracle's other work on decolonization (especially within the field of literature as a specific terrain to be decolonized) or Sto:lo intellectual tradition.

For the most part, I have not engaged in these discussions because they were subsidiary to the argument that I wanted to make about the Red Power period in Canada, how it has been underappreciated if not misrepresented for its importance to the histories of literature and/as anti-

colonial struggle, and how its problematics and insights speak meaningfully to present conditions.⁵⁸ But taking up some of these complications might have textured the persistent utopianism of elements of the thesis – in particular, of the occasionally one-sided emphasis on the ethical necessity of understanding Indigenous militancy, polemic, and resistance according to a set of coordinates radically different from those of the dominant society and paradigm. The insistence upon an anti-colonial interpretive key as such – upon principles sometimes at arm's length from actualities – may at times lead the thesis to leave unanswered questions about more specific operations and possibilities for interrupting or complicating colonial scripts and narratives and disrupting settler subjectivity. These absences are most palpable in the third chapter, which might have spoken more directly to a 90s moment when Indigenous literatures were increasingly innovative in realizing and actualizing some of the hopes of the Red Power period, exploring previously unexpected disruptions, widening gaps in colonial narratives, and reasserting resistance.

Over the course of this project, I have gradually steered away from what I had initially intended as the explicit motor of the project, a critical engagement with the discipline that would explore the complicated relationship between individual critical/scholarly freedom and collective responsibility in a settler-colonial context. I have argued that colonial logics structured practices of literary production and criticism in the 70s and onward – an uncontroversial argument within the field – but have also attempted to explore in fairly precise and concrete terms, with reference to specific political processes and movements, how and why these practices can be understood to have advanced settler-colonialism. This particular attempt at thinking about ways in which

⁵⁸ I should also register that there are a number of other texts from this period that more than warrant critical and analytic revisitations. Harold Cardinal's *The Unjust Society* and George Manuel's *The Fourth World* (1974) are the most notable examples, although their voices is considerably more moderate than those of the three militants I have considered. Cree lawyer William Wuttunnee's *Ruffled Feathers* (1971) would be still more interesting to counterpose to the texts I have considered, as he too criticizes the representative orgs and their leaders (including Cardinal and Manuel), but from a conservative and pro-assimilation standpoint. Two other texts with a political orientation more in line with Red Power, meanwhile, would be Vern Harper's *Following the Red Path* (1979) and Emma LaRocque's *Defeathering the Indian* (1975).

literary criticism can serve to advance settler-colonialism – i.e. processes of assimilation, dispossession, and genocide, cultural or otherwise – was not presupposed at project's outset but developed and shaped by my readings of the Red Power writers. Their texts may at first seem half-suited to this purpose. While they certainly critique in blistering terms a colonial situation that had not improved and that did not seem to be improving in spite of bombastic rhetoric from the upper echelons of government and of bureaucratic negotiation, they do not engage in open critiques or deconstructions of models of narrative, literature and literary criticism, or dominant discourse (with the possible exception of Howard Adams). But my contention throughout this project has been that these texts, in concretizing Red Power critiques in a literary form and narrative construction, effectively opened up dialogues of a new sort, dialogues between Indigenous writers and non-Indigenous literary critics that, while hardly central to political processes, have much to disclose about settler-colonialism and resistance. I have argued that these dialogues between critics and texts allow for and indeed invite a reading of Red Power for its critiques of literary criticism and/as settler-colonialism.

Yet while I have attempted to register this critique strongly throughout the thesis, I have not ultimately said as much about contemporary and historical institutions of literary criticism and Canadian literature as I had originally intended. I have only touched upon the complex tensions of accountability and ethical responsibility for literary critics in a settler-colonial context, and attempted for my own part to engage in a critical practice cognizant of actual contemporary movements and the threats that they face both from the state and from much of the dominant society. Instead of pursuing this path further, I have attempted to restore not only these texts' critiques but their positive potentialities and contributions in what Adams might refer to as a dignified history, the remarkable and inspiring history of Indigenous resistance to and struggle against Canadian colonialism – a resistance which, while often typified (explicitly by dominant discourse and implicitly by literary scholarship and criticism) by bitterness, resentment, or

nostalgia, has been structured and informed by expansive hopes and possibilities for futurity and future generations. This shift of terms may invite further reevaluations of literary history in Canada – whether of Indigenous written expressions excluded from the domain of the properly literary or cultural for political reasons, or, from a more critical if not polemical angle, of settler literatures that can be more proactively addressed as literatures of settlement.

The other major concern of this thesis is the relationship between Indigenous literature and literary study and anti-colonial movement-building. This theorization has been largely exploratory, emerging in obverse to the ways in which literary criticism has historically participated in the colonial work of *dividing* movements, simultaneously exacerbating contradictions at the grassroots level and eliding differences within the "default" or "neutral" unity posited by or amenable to the state. Against these processes, Indigenous literature in general and autobiography in particular has been explored as building cross-cultural affiliations and opening up new networks of metaphorical kinship; as constituting a uniquely unassimilable medium for radical exposure of colonial logics and paradigms woven through the mainstream discourses of settler-colonial society; and as positing a space for the imagining and building of a revolutionary anti-colonial counter-hegemony and movement, an alternate dialogue oriented toward decolonization rather than absolution of settler guilt. To build this particular theorization further might entail engaging more explicitly and proactively at the level of community engagement and embedding the relatively abstract critique I have modelled in the context of contemporary Indigenous movements and struggles. Locally, for instance, the ongoing Algonquin struggle against Windmill's development of the Zibi condos at the sacred site of Asinabka might invite ethical scholarly engagement – both at the level of critical discourse analysis of Windmill's overtures to reconciliation and consultation and at the level of considering the positive vision, so far from polemical criticism or bitter negation, that the struggle explicitly and implicitly upholds and models in the context of Algonquin literary, cultural, and intellectual

traditions. Furthermore, this thesis and the critique it develops is integrally shaped by the concrete circumstances of the writers it explores. As self-identified Metis activists without any legislative assurance, however limited, of their traditional territories and landbases, their concerns necessarily lead more in the direction of questions of racism, assimilation, and intergenerational violence as part of the reproduction of colonialism. Although the questions of land and dispossession are omnipresent and central, they are not theoretically foregrounded in the way that they might be by writers from other nations. The project is inevitably conditioned by this emphasis, and further research, while building upon the unique insights into integration and resistance that a largely Metis or non-status perspective opens up, might expand and nuance our consideration of literature and/as anti-colonial struggle.

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