Mapping the Transnational in Contemporary Native American Fiction: Silko and Welch

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Girl, I say, it is dangerous to be a woman of two countries.

——Linda Hogan, *Seeing through the Sun*

Especially given the recent surge in nationalisms around the globe, the transnational has increasingly been embraced as a valuable, productive lens for examining US literary texts, as a spate of recent anthologies and special issues attest. Revisiting the terrain of the 2012 *JTAS* Special Forum, "Charting Transnational Native American Studies," this essay argues that transnationalism is an important "analytical category" for understanding Native American literature; and further, that a consideration of Native American texts is indispensable to the "transnational turn" in Americanist literary scholarship.[1] This is not only because Native American and other indigenous peoples are the "legatees […] of the world's longest and most fraught engagement with globalization in its harshest forms, colonialism." Native American texts also effect compelling forms of national "*disengagement*" and "the inheritance of a 'transnational' cultural space" because of the long history of Native tribal sovereignty.[2] Challenging the stereotypical alignment of indigenous peoples with a fixity of identity and what Bill Ashcroft calls "the most static form of emplacement,"[3] transnational approaches illuminate often occluded aspects of tribal lives and cultures, alerting us to ways Native American literature "has been globalized from its inception."[4] And since the idea of the transnational *does not dispense with the idea of the nation* but rather occasions a "questioning of nation [as well as] alternative formations to the nation," it is particularly relevant to Native American literary studies.[5] This is because, Robert Warrior and others note, the discourse of nationalism remains "a primary vehicle for fueling Indigenous imaginations": "Because Native peoples continue to have political

status as nations, at least in the US and Canada, [Native scholars] remain committed to framing and developing our work as members of our respective nations." [6] Contending that this special forum's critical (re)assessment of global and transnational dimensions of US literature is incomplete without an examination of Native American materials, this essay argues that Native American literary texts engage the transnational in three ways: affirming "America" as transnational cultural space from its inception by staging ways Native cultures "*dis-identif[y]* with the nation"; affirming the transnational complexity of Native cultures (sometimes called "hybridity" by scholars of Native American literature); and registering Pan-Indian and indigenous transnationalisms vitally alive in the present moment. [7]

This essay advances these claims through readings of two recent historical novels by major Native American novelists: Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* (2000) and James Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (2001). Both novels are set in the late nineteenth century, a critical period in Native American history, especially in the American West; and both novels map complex itineraries for Native American characters who travel abroad, specifically between the US and Europe. Rewriting late–nineteenth century historical scripts of the "closing" of the frontier and the "vanishing" of Native American tribes and cultures, the novels script Native American transnationalism as diaspora, imagining Native American adaptation and what Native critic Gerald Vizenor calls "survivance" (survival and resistance) across global space. [8] Mapping the transnational through travel, the novels at once track forms of Atlantic exchange central to the history of colonization, empire, and slavery (including the circulation of indigenous peoples in what Jace Weaver calls the "Red Atlantic") while dialectically envisioning liberatory, transformative possibilities of transnational encounter and affiliation. [9] Silko aligns transnational encounter with global transindigeneity, imagining a genealogy for contemporary mobilizations of global Indigeneity such as the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2006 and emphasizing the "possibilities that transnationalism creates for indigenous feminism," while Welch uses the form of the transnational bildungsroman to make visible tribal processes of cultural adaptation and transnational dimensions of tribal culture at "home." [10] Both texts affirm ways that transnational forms of cultural exchange and affiliation do not negate indigeneity, but have been put to use to serve the tribal aims of Native peoples.

Silko's long, complex *Gardens in the Dunes* centers on a young protagonist, Indigo, one of the last survivors of a fictional Colorado River tribe known as the Salt Lizards; the novel's title refers to the Salt Lizards' spring-fed tribal home, where they grow a variety of vegetables and flowers. As we shall see, gardening and plants are central motifs in the novel, enabling Silko to engage interlinks between landscape production (what Derek Walcott calls "colonized vegetation"), biopiracy, and empire, and to elaborate the novel's powerfully feminist, ecopoetic message. [11] Indigo and her sister are captured by soldiers and sent to an Indian boarding school in southern California; Indigo escapes and befriends a young white couple, Hattie and Edward

Palmer, who invite the girl to live with them. The Palmers bring Indigo on a journey to the East Coast and then across the Atlantic to England and Italy. The narrative subversively rewrites the nineteenth-century "Grand Tour," a ritual experience of continental travel for wealthy British and American young men and, later, middle-class women and families, detailing the experience of European travel for a young Native woman. Silko has stated in interviews that Hattie's character was inspired by the life of Margaret Fuller, an American Transcendentalist who moved to Italy during the Risorgimento, married an Italian, and died abroad, suggesting Silko's broad interest in literary histories of nineteenth-century transatlantic exchange.[12] But I focus here on how Silko's novel assimilates transnationalism to Native ways of knowing: in particular, the novel uses the motif of the garden to forge a transnational, cosmopolitan and—for Silko—*feminine* consciousness that is at once cultural and ecological. When visiting gardens in England and Italy, Indigo and Hattie discover archaeological traces of a pre-Christian, pagan spiritual past that is mother-and nature-centered—they discover "old stones" and carvings from the Celtic past before the "invasion of the Romans" in Bath, and in Lucca stones, pottery, and "female fertility figures" from the "old European cultures"; these relics reflect a sacralization of female reproductivity and sexuality that Indigo links to Native American beliefs and practices.[13] Indeed, what Native theorist Paula Gunn Allen describes as a feminine embrace of the land central to Laguna Pueblo cosmologies is everywhere apparent in this novel. During visits to European cities while on book tour, Silko was struck by the resilience of paganism and the links between what she calls "indigenous Europeans" and Native Americans: "As hard as Christianity tried to wipe it out, and tried to break that connection between the Europeans and the earth, and the plants and animals—even though they've been broken from it longer than the indigenous people of the Americas or Africa—that connection won't break completely."[14]

Indigo's host in Bath, Hattie's Aunt Bronwyn, especially exhibits what Silko depicts as a Native sense of kinship with the natural world. Aunt Brownyn's habit of speaking with her animals reminds Indigo of an old Navajo woman's trickster stories, "about long ago when … humans and animals still spoke the same language."[15] Brownyn's animal sympathies extend to plant life: Bronwyn is an "avid follower of the theories of Gustav Fechner, who believed plants have souls and human beings exist only to be […] transformed into glorious new plant[s]"—recalling Indigo's grandmother's practice of speaking affectionately to seeds, welcoming the life they will become, and dying intention to be buried under her beloved apricot tree and thus to "go again, alive as ever" (240, 51–52). Aunt Bronwyn's attunement to the aliveness of nature extends to stones: The ancient, Celtic hill forts and stone circles, which housed the "good folk," were animate—"this is the land of the stones that dance and walk after midnight"—though many people forget their spiritual power.[16] Such views express an indigenous worldview sometimes described as holistic—an understanding that the whole world is alive—that contrasts with the dichotomous thinking and opposition between the "animate" and "inanimate" characterizing Western ways of

knowing; the Western worldview invites, Silko emphasizes, both violence and capitalist exploitation, while the indigenous view is especially affirmed through spiritual themes promoted in the novel.[17] These indigenous beliefs are discredited in the modern, scientific world—a scientist by training, Edward, for one, dismisses them—but the old ways persist; and for Indigo, travel is a lesson in cultural survival, a recovery of indigenous routes and roots. While the Romans built over the old Celtic settlements and sacred sites, those sites remain; an archaeological excavation the travelers visit reveal Celtic ruins beneath the Roman baths. The past lives on not only in material objects, such as the animate stones, but also in practices and rituals, embodied performances that reiterate what Bronwyn calls "the ways of the old ones"—affirming a vision of performance as cultural memory that informs much contemporary Native writing (261). Aunt Brownyn is part of the "antiquary Rescue Committee," "defenders of old trees and stones"; she relates how, despite "persecution," "dairy keepers spilled a bit of milk for the fairies [...] and on [August 1] a few [of us] still gathered around fires on nearby hilltops until dawn, though the church tried to outlaw such practices centuries before" (241, 261). Here, as elsewhere, the novel links the history of European indigenous practices to suppressed Native American spiritual practices like the Ghost Dance, practices recollected and kept alive through literary inscription. This circuit of feminine indigeneity is imaginatively enacted through Indigo's transatlantic travels. Visiting gardens in England and Italy, Indigo is frequently reminded of her home in the "garden in the dunes," and she collects seeds as souvenirs, a pragmatic hobby grounded in her early training for survival (especially her grandmother's instruction in seed-gathering) and respect for the earth (176). Seeds become a significant, resonant metaphor in Silko's novel: *Gardens* once attests to "the work of [...] nurturing seeds [as] a mainstay of Indigenous cultures" and the importance of seed collection and preservation, especially by women, in contemporary Native communities while strikingly transnationalizing those practices.[18] Seeds allow Indigo to reflect on the importance of transnational movement and migration in the history of human as well as plant and animal life; they become a vehicle for what eco-critics call "planetary consciousness." Indigo's travels inscribe Silko's version of eco-cosmopolitanism, defined by Ursula K. Heise as "an attempt to envision individuals and groups as part of planetary 'imagined communities' of both human and nonhuman kinds."[19] As Indigo recognizes, seeds are "among the greatest travelers of all" (*Gardens* 291).

Silko's canny use of this metaphor highlights the etymological definition of diaspora as the spreading of seeds, while foregrounding the history of what Richard Grove calls "green imperialism"—the centrality of plant biota as thoroughly as mineral wealth to the history of colonization, empire, and transatlantic exchange.[20] Aunt Bronwyn refers to this history directly, invoking a botanical version of the Red Atlantic while presenting another gloss on the indigenous "origins" of European cultures; Bronwyn tells Indigo: "Your people ... the American Indians, gave the world so many vegetables, fruits, and flowers—corn, tomatoes, potatoes, chilies, peanuts, coffee,

chocolate, pineapple, bananas, and of course, tobacco."[21] That "gift" depended, of course, on a reality of violence and enforced labor: "Algonkian Indians had to show English colonists how to cultivate corn [and] Inca had to perform the same service with potatoes for Spanish conquistadors."[22] Hattie's husband Edward profits from this ongoing history of imperial appropriation and global exchange; he is a "plant hunter" hired by companies to locate rare and valuable plants—including orchids from the Amazon and citron from Corsica—and bring them home for propagation and sale; when he spies Guatemalan orchids in pallets on the New Orleans docks, he immediately "imagine[s] the ads in magazines" (371). As in *Ceremony*, Silko depicts the devastation wrought by mining on Native lands—Edward eventually buys a meteor site with Hattie's money and turns to minerals as vehicles of capitalist commodification—, but *Gardens* especially emphasizes the extraction of plant resources, gesturing towards contemporary Native struggles against the biopiracy of agro-corporations such as Monsanto and using metaphors of a bleeding earth to figure imperial violence.[23] Bodies and land are conflated in Silko's history of colonization, which entails violence especially visited on female bodies and the female landscape.[24] Indeed, sexual violence against women, both Native and white, is omnipresent in the text, and is figuratively linked to the land's exploitation; while the garden itself is a site of female sexual power, fecundity, and healing. Edward's commercial efforts to "collect samples of local and regional agriculture," since the "natives might possess unknown medicinal plants with commercial potential or a new variety of citrus of a new source for rubber," are opposed to a "red Atlantic" countercirculation of seeds that Indigo transports home to the indigenous garden in the sand dunes.[25] In its circulations of bodies and biota, the narrative internationalizes the narrative of "homing in," of return to the reservation that William Bevis identifies as the most important plot in Native fiction in the post 1970–era of the Native American Renaissance. This homecoming from Europe to the Sand Dunes seems an inscription of restitution—like the tribal repatriation of human remains and cultural artifacts now legitimated under US law—as well as *survivance*, asserting the resilient generativity of Native land, culture, and women.[26] Near the end of the novel an old Mojave woman claims, "we will outlast them. We always have" (462).

Silko thus crafts two versions of the "Red Atlantic." On the one hand, she envisions the transatlantic through a series of spiritual/cultural parallels among indigenous groups on both sides of the Atlantic, parallels that transatlantic travel enables its characters to discover and the text to track. Silko forges an empathetic bond between Indigo and European women gardeners, a gynocentric sensibility grounded in the landscape and female fertility and generativity—a mythopoetic associated with second wave cultural feminism that is presented here as indigenous, "decolonial" epistemology. At the same time, Silko envisions the transatlantic as a politicized, layered setting of a history of exchanges, especially the triangle trade between Africa, Europe and the New World; and in this instance, the Red Atlantic and the Black Atlantic are inseparable and overlapping. The novel repeatedly calls attention

to the links between the enforced labor and sexual slavery of African Americans and Native Americans, and makes emphatically visible the violence used to control black and red bodies. Hattie too is twice a victim of sexual assault, and this shared vulnerability to white male violence and its effort to control female sexuality, is important to the novel's image of feminist political solidarity. Importantly, plants—especially the cash crops of slavery, such as cotton, tobacco, sugar, rice, and of course *indigo*—were crucial to this political history of the transatlantic and Silko makes that history visible. In mapping transatlantic space through the circulation of bodies and biota, Silko's text reimagines time. If colonialism and empire are yoked to ideologies of temporal progress, Silko imagines time as simultaneity as well as cyclical return—in the words of one character, time's sequencing "disappeared with the white man."[27] The destabilization of boundaries of space and time are linked. In an interview with Ellen Arnold while drafting *Gardens in the Dunes*, Silko notes that she "was trying … to get rid of this idea of nationality, borderlines, and drawing lines in terms of time and saying, oh well, that was back then."[28] In one version of this reiterative temporality, the novel concludes with a return to the Garden of the Dunes in Arizona. In this garden "sanctuary," Silko imagines a transracial indigeneity, where the overlapping histories of the Black and Red Atlantic bear fruit in the New World. Indigo joins her sister, who has partnered with an African American man named Big Candy (he himself is part Indian) and has borne a son (the boy is called "grandfather," again suggesting a cyclical temporality, a return of the ancestors) whom the sisters will raise together. Notably the seeds from her travels that Indigo is most excited to grow are black gladiolus, a species originally "from Africa" though "they'd undergone a great many changes by the hybridizers" (245). These plant hybrids are a metaphor for a generative hybridity, one that resists what Vizenor calls the "artifactualization" of Native identities and cultures, and their new world cultivation is a resonant image of hope and futurity.[29]

In bringing together these two versions of the "Red Atlantic" and placing them in dialogue, the text enacts the kind of critical cosmopolitanism—simultaneously animating and critiquing possibilities of cosmopolitan conviviality—that Walter Mignolo has forcefully called for.[30] Indeed, in framing its eco-cosmopolitan vision, one of the most radical things about Silko's novel is its refusal of a colonial epistemology predicated on binary oppositions between mind and body, self and other. Mapping Indigo's various migrations to realize what Heise calls a "sense of place and sense of planet," Silko's text enacts what Mignolo terms "border thinking," an epistemology "ingrained […] in the body." Since "the suppression of sensing and the body and of its geo-historical location" made it possible for the epistemologies that grounded capitalist and imperialist modernity to "claim universality," "delinking from" those ideologies requires a form of "thinking geo-and body-politically" that Mignolo calls "world sensing," a species of "dwelling and thinking in the borders of local histories confronting global designs."[31] Such forms of dwelling and thinking are for Silko—as for Mignolo—opposed to the epistemological designs and ecological violence of global capitalism. They are also localized in a concentrated way in the Southwest—a

politically-charged "borderland" and crucial site, in all of Silko's work, for the generativity of border thinking. Eric Gary Anderson understands the Southwest as a "site of migration and encounter long before the arrival of Euro-Americans," a "place where 'alien' forces (social, cultural, racial, colonial, nuclear, and otherwise) have been set in motion toward, across, through, around, and away from each other for many centuries."[32] In Silko's novel, not only do we see the sedimented history of the presence of different European invaders, but also intertwined encounters of Native peoples, movements of different Indian groups through the landscape.[33] A. LaVonne Ruoff explains that Laguna Pueblo origin stories describe a series of tribal migrations, including intermingling of migrating tribes; one result of all of these encounters is a hybridity engendered by intercultural exchange and kinship alliance.[34] In Silko's *Gardens*—as in *Ceremony*—such encounters are culturally generative and crucial to healing and resistance. Silko highlights the role of sexuality in creating cosmopolitan solidarities. Counter to "the laws of white people: men and women don't touch unless they are husband and wife," the "old-time Sand Lizard people believed sex with strangers was advantageous because it created a happy atmosphere to benefit commerce and exchange with strangers … [B]abies born from these unions were named 'friend,' 'peace,' and 'unity'" and were loved "just as fiercely" as all Sand Lizard babies (191, 218). Despite European colonial efforts to "desexualize" indigenous daily life and "remake Native societies according to European ideals,"[35] the Sand Lizards affirm the power of sexuality to foster novel forms of alliance and planetary kinship. When Indigo describes a statue of Medusa she had seen in Europe, Sister Salt recalls the fluid sexuality of trickster stories: "Grandma Fleet always said humans were capable of sex with anything and on rare occasions … strange creatures were born" (455).

In Silko's text, spirituality is indispensable to this "world-sensing," cosmopolitan knowledge.[36] Suppression of this knowledge has been, Silko makes clear, a central task of Christian church "fathers" and the forms of domination Christianity has anchored, in both Europe and America.[37] But the novel especially highlights the Ghost Dance as site of "traveling culture" and border knowledge. *Gardens* opens and closes with performances of the Ghost Dance on a riverbank south of Needles, suggesting a reiterative, cyclical temporality of spiritual memory tied to the land. Embodying a dynamic, syncretic fusion of Christian and Native belief, the Ghost Dance enacts spiritual knowledge as decolonial truth. In Silko's novel—as in historical events—the Ghost Dance draws on the Messianism of Mormonism and derives from the teachings of a Paiute prophet named Wovoka. Wovoka claimed to have had a vision of Jesus, who told him that proper performance of the Dance would call up the spirits of the dead to fight on behalf of the people, make the white colonists leave, and promote peace, prosperity, and unity among Native Americans. He also taught that Jesus was being reincarnated on earth in 1892, and that the people would reunite with their ancestors in the other world. In Silko's version, the people dance to "bring the Messiah … who would bring with him all their beloved family members and friends

who had moved on the spirit world after the hunger and the sadness got to be too much for them" (26). During the Dance Indigo feels the spirits of the ancestors "all around her, cradling her, loving her" (28). Summoning the Messiah's presence enlivens the planet: while "the invaders made the Earth get old and want to die," when the Messiah arrives, "the Earth announced her labor; the ground must shudder and heave before she could be reborn" (26, 30). In Silko's text, the Messiah's *Mother* is granted a prominent role while the Ghost Dance, localized in the Southwest, is largely a feminine gathering. It is also transindigenous, drawing together different tribes in a shared practice. As a Paiute man explains, in the "presence of the Messiah and the Holy Mother, there was only one language spoken—the language of love—which all people understand … because we are all the children of Mother Earth" (32).

Silko's Messiah (and his family) are necessarily peripatetic, healing with love the damage wrought by global systems of imperial domination and capitalist destruction. In *Gardens*, as in *Almanac of the Dead*, a patriarchal system of empire, slavery, and ecological domination dialectically generates global (counter)forces of transnational solidarity and transformation.[38] Indigo realizes in Europe that "the Messiah and his family" need to "travel most of the time," because "so many cruel and greedy people did damage" in "so many places" that only the Messiah and Mother of God "could repair" (455–56). The Ghost Dance Messiah travels on a global journey (469). Traveling east in the novel—in the direction of the birthplace of Christianity—Indigo follows in his footsteps: "the Messiah and his followers visited the east and returned; she would too" (197). Seeing the face of the Blessed Mother on a wall in Corsica, Indigo feels "excitement all over her body," sensing the Messiah's presence (318). The novel ends with a ceremony of the Ghost Dance on the riverbank south of Needles, but the ceremony is broken up by white officers before the Messiah's return. Silko's conclusion is ambiguous; the sisters return to the garden, but the old rattlesnake who was the garden spring's resident spirit has been "slaughtered" by "strangers," and the apricot trees above grandmother's grave have been chopped down (476). Still when springtime comes the stump of an apricot tree grows "green leafy shoots," and "Old Snake's beautiful daughter move[s] back home" (476–77). This is by no means a euphoric homecoming, but optimistic nonetheless.

James Welch's quite different historical novel, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, recounts the European travels of his Oglala Sioux protagonist, Charging Elk, who joins Buffalo Bill's Wild West for the Show's European tour. Left behind in a hospital in Marseilles during an influenza epidemic, then stranded because taken for dead, Charging Elk struggles to survive in urban France, eventually marrying a young French woman, Nathalie Gazier, and, at the end of the novel, planning to raise his unborn child in France. Envisioning homes for Charging Elk on two continents, the novel complexly reimagines both Oglala Lakota identity and the meaning of "home" in diasporic terms. In important ways the novel anticipates the mid-twentieth century history of Native urbanization and dispersal from the reservation, while staging that history abroad.[39] Structured loosely as a bildungsroman and set in Marseilles and the small town of

Agen, although offering glimpses of Charging Elk's early years in South Dakota through flashbacks, Welch's text follows more closely than Silko's the complexities of his Native character's subjectivity and experiences, detailing the social and emotional difficulties of travel and transnational encounter—including painful experiences of racial prejudice and feelings of "invisibility," loneliness, and alienation--and the nuances of his slow, sixteen-year adaptation to French life. Like Silko, Welch redirects the narrative of what Bevis call "homing in," reconstructing "home" and "identity" in transnational terms. [40]

The novel frames Charging Elk's story with milestones in late-nineteenth century Lakota history. The novel opens with a scene less than one year after the "fight with the longknives on the Greasy Grass"—the defeat of Custer at the battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876—when Charging Elk, eleven years old, witnesses the surrender of his tribe, led by Crazy Horse, to the American military at Fort Robinson on May 6, 1877, four months before Crazy Horse's death. [41] He experiences his tribe's forced relocation to the Pine Ridge Agency, and he spends a year at an Agency school before "at thirteen winters" running off with his friend Strikes Plenty to a sacred place in the badlands called the Stronghold, the location of the Sun Dance and "a long tall grassy butte with sheer cliffs on three sides that could be easily defended" (14). Charging Elk leaves for Europe in 1889, two years after passage of the Dawes Act, but he learns, through dreams, of the Ghost Dance and subsequent massacre at Wounded Knee that occur at the Stronghold in 1890 (though he only learns how to correctly interpret those dreams and "remember" these events in the company of other Lakota at the novel's end). Those Lakota inform him of Indian boarding schools where students learn "how to cut off [our] hair, how to wear clothes just like [whites]," how to use "proper" manners and be "smart—just like them," and are beaten or punished if they speak Lakota, sing Lakota songs, or practice their religion (432). This tribal story of violence, cultural destruction, and forced assimilation frames Charging Elk's travels. His experience of cultural adaptation in France contrapuntally evokes this collective narrative of tribal loss and transformation. However, unlike *Gardens in the Dunes*, where the past is localized in a particular place (the Sand Lizard gardens persist, if transformed), in Welch's *Heartsong* there is no physical homecoming, no gesture of physical return. In the resource-rich plains, Native Americans were displaced from tribal lands more violently than in the arid Southwest. As the beautiful documentary, *Hopi: Songs of The Fourth World*, explains, continuous tribal settlement in the Southwest has been maintained for millennia, along with traditional desert gardening practices. [42] In Welch's novel, tribal culture is envisioned as portable; "home" is maintained through imagination and memory.

More explicitly than Silko, Welch underscores the *politics* of transnational mobility, how migration and belonging are unequally distributed according to citizenship rights and status. In particular, the novel highlights how the contested legal concept of tribal sovereignty complicates citizenship and national affiliation. First charged with "*vagabondage*" by the French for leaving the hospital during

treatmentand denominated "the original [American] citizen" by Buffalo Bill, Charging Elk, American officials insist, as a Lakota, "is not a citizen of the United States [and] does not have a valid passport."[43] Relegated to a state of legal limbo, he languishes in prison for years and cannot return to Pine Ridge. The novel highlights while unsettling the difference between travel by choice and travel by force. Charging Elk's European travel—sponsored by a white man, Buffalo Bill, and fueled by white desire for consumption of a reified image of Indianness—is in some ways a reaction to the forced relocation of the Lakota from sacred land of the Black Hills (*Paha Sapa*) to the Pine Ridge reservation and the carceral enclosure of his people. Thrice incarcerated in France, his experiences in Europe recollect rather than negate that tribal history of carceral enclosure. Notably, the novel opposes the unimpeded circulation of commodities with the restricted mobility of racialized persons: Welch repeatedly notes that the American vice-consul in Marseilles who is Charging Elk's diplomatic contact is more concerned with fostering international trade than with the plight of an abandoned Lakota. Deemed stateless and without a passport, Charging Elk at one point envies the Marseille soap, "famous the world over," easily crossing the Atlantic in search of consumers while he himself cannot return home (262).

On the one hand, Welch explicitly ties the transnational to economic globalization, and charts forms of economic exploitation—the commodification of racialized bodies, labor, and cultures—that have defined globalization's colonial and imperial history. In centering on Buffalo Bill's show, the novel offers a forceful commentary on the commodification of Native American culture, the fascination with Native American artifacts—and "artifactualized," reified cultural forms such as the Wild West Show—that has accompanied empire's genocidal history. Welch expressly invokes 1893, the official date of the "closing of the frontier" and the end of the US Indian wars, as initiating a new transnationalism in an era of US imperial expansion. While working as a union dockworker, Charging Elk's fellow workers protest the 1898 invasion of Cuba and the Philippines "for no reason" and threaten to "refus[e] to unload American goods"—Americans are the "new Romans" aiming to conquer through trade—suggesting a possible political affinity or solidarity based on a shared critique of US imperialism, and joining Charging Elk as "a group of men who looked out for each other" on the basis of a globalization "from below," not narrow nationalist ties (419–20, 294, 416). Charging Elk's urban experiences in France foster these transnational affiliations, especially with other racialized and colonial subjects. After seeing "black men [for the first time] in Paris and New York" and called a "black Indian" because of his dark complexion by other performers in Buffalo Bill's troupe, Charging Elk identifies with other "dark-skinned" immigrants, especially North Africans and Turks, and in Marseilles he is most comfortable living in the immigrant neighborhood.[44] He also feels at home in the dockworkers' union (another version of the "red Atlantic"); its homosocial, class-based solidarity with other men reminds him of tribal life.

But the transnational is also aimed at challenging ethnic essentialism and demonstrating, as Scott Lyons affirms, that tribal cultures have been "products of long histories of globalization and its transnational institutions and signifying structures, like Catholicism and the English language."[45] That history is initially equated with cultural devastation, lived by Charging Elk as a history of loss. As in his earlier novel *Fools Crow* (another male coming-of-age text), Welch situates Charging Elk's narrative at a particular moment in time: at stake is a certain model of Plains masculinity, tied to the horse and buffalo economy. Although he had once "been proud to be an Oglala," after their surrender at Fort Robinson "there was no fight left in them" and his pride gives way to shame (11, 1). Watching the Oglala march to the Red Cloud Agency, their horses rounded up and herded away, eleven-year-old Charging Elk "didn't know … what would become of" his people (3). After Crazy Horse's death the Oglala are relocated to Pine Ridge, but Charging Elk and Strikes Plenty "ran away" to the Stronghold. Living apart from the tribe, Charging Elk at thirteen defines his identity in opposition to his people's forced "assimilation" to white ways, which he interprets as a cultural genocide that matches the violent destruction of his people. The "great war chief" Red Cloud has become "a reservation Indian" who "took his orders from white chiefs," and "There was nothing left at home. The American bosses were making the *ikce wicasa* plant potatoes and corn. What kind of life was that for the people who ran the buffaloes?" (2, 29). He is especially "ashamed" to see his father, once a respected warrior, reduced to "sitting idly in his little shack, drinking the black medicine and sometimes telling the holy beads" (17). Vowing to "always live in the old way" and deeming themselves safeguards of tradition, Charging Elk and Strikes Plenty remain at the Stronghold for nine years "hunting game, exploring, learning and continuing the old ways with the help of two old medicine people" (67, 14). Welch subtly criticizes their endeavor, indicating that the pair "lose touch" with familial and tribal bonds vital to Native identities and cultures: they "lived a strange life together for eleven winters—no family, no other friends …. Consequently, Charging Elk had felt uncomfortable around families, especially children" (36, 164). As in *Fools Crow*, the rigid repudiation of adaptation ossifies tribal cultures and reifies a certain model of masculinity. However, just as we recognize that the horse was introduced to Plains tribes by the Spanish, we see that the young men's stance disavows those "histories of globalization" that have shaped Native cultures. Notably the Prologue's depiction of the march to Red Cloud Agency ends with Charging Elk's recollection of the people's song: "the people around him began to sing…. It was a peace song they were singing, but to the boy it sounded more like a victory song … [and] now he was singing…. The whole valley was alive with the peace song. It was a song the boy would not forget for the rest of his life" (3–4). The resilience and resonance of that song is indeed the "meaning" of Welch's *Heartsong*—and the substance of the novel is that Charging Elk comes to "know … what would become of" his people (3).

Initially clinging to what Ulla Haselstein calls "the nostalgic image of the warrior," Charging Elk decides to join Buffalo Bill's troupe to project that image on the

global stage, while the homosocial bonds among the performers reprise the fraternal solidarity of the Stronghold.[46] But Charging Elk is chosen for the Show because he matches "white men's vision" of "what an Indian should look like" (38). Although he is "proud to display … the old ways" (52), his act of "playing Indian" unsettles rather than shores up Oglala identity and Charging Elk's transnational travel effects indigeneity's "disidentification with the nation" across global space. The Show joins him to a trans-indigenous group of Plains tribes—though most are Lakota, mainly Oglala—and he befriends reservation Indians "who didn't seem so weak after all" (49, 70). All are "fascinated by the country they passed through" and some slowly acclimate to French life (124). Charging Elk's transnational transformation is bodily, and sensory: he dresses in *wasichu* clothing such as that worn by reservation Indians at Pine Ridge (55); he learns to enjoy fish though initially disgusted by the idea (65, 197); he adjusts to urban smells versus the "clean air of the plains" (195). His transformation is speeded by transnational intimacies. He first meets a young French missionary, Sandine, who teaches him French phrases and gives him a picture of Christ. He later befriends socialist journalist Martin St-Cyr who is moved by the "*peau rouge*" and aims to tell Charging Elk's story and secure his freedom. Charging Elk believes that "Wakan Tanka had sent [St.-Cyr] to help him" (106). He is taken in by a French host family, the Soulas. Charging Elk works at the family's fish market and especially bonds with the two Soulas children, who think of Charging Elk "as a human being," not "some strange object or wild animal to be stared at, perhaps to be feared" (166). The boy, Mathias, teaches him French (163) and how to mark time on a Calendar (184). Although Charging Elk is "homesick" he comes to feel "almost comfortable being himself among these people": "His heart was not here; nor was it there, at the Stronghold. It was somewhere he could not name right now" (184, 169, 235–36).

Charging Elk eventually moves out of the Soulas's home and falls in love with a prostitute, Marie, mistaking her for someone who "might learn to listen for the words beneath his thick accent" (185). But the relationship ends in tragedy when she is pressured by a powerful male client to allow him to drug and sexually assault Charging Elk, who awakens during the act and kills his assailant, thus seeming to become the violent savage he was expected to perform in the Show. Convicted of murder, he is again imprisoned. At an especially dark point, Charging Elk dreams of the Ghost Dance and subsequent massacre at Wounded Knee, concluding that his people have disappeared: "now the circle was broken and the people had been dying in flesh and spirit.… The Evil that the *wasichus* brought was everywhere" (297). But Charging Elk survives, and after three years he is chosen to work in the prison garden. Although he had repudiated farm life on the Agency as cultural annihilation ("What kind of life was that for the people who ran the buffaloes?"), agricultural labor in prison is an instrument of survival rather than destruction: "All the hard work beneath a blazing sun or a chilling rain blocked out any despair that he would remain in La Tombe until they carried him out for burial" (29, 357). Freed from prison when abruptly "reclassified as a political prisoner and … granted a pardon by the Republic of France,"

he is hired by a French orchardist, Vincent Gazier, and falls in love with and eventually marries Gazier's daughter Nathalie. [47] Their intimacy deepens Charging Elk's transcultural understanding: his French has improved sufficiently so that he can tell stories of his life in South Dakota for the first time (387). Nathalie's father reluctantly agrees, and the couple marry. Though Charging Elk does not convert, he critically reflects on his earlier stance towards those like his father who had embraced Catholicism: "It was the first time he had ever been in a *wasichu* church, and it didn't seem to be a bad place. He thought of the times he had gotten angry with his parents and other Lakotas for going to the white man's church, and he shook his head in … stupefied wonderment. Those days were … in another life altogether" (383). His transnational union with Nathalie effects this transformation; that union also cites the "relatively high Lakota/Euro-American intermarriage rate" on the Pine Ridge reservation since its establishment, many with men of French descent.[48] Ironically it is as a transnational diasporic migrant, in community with other migrants, that he is able to identify with, and accept, what Lyons calls the "multicultural" identity and history of his tribal group.[49]

In the novel's beautiful final pages, Welch crafts an episode that makes explicit how Charging Elk's "assimilation" to French life enables reconciliation with his tribal collective: twenty years after Charging Elk was left behind in Marseilles, the Buffalo Bill Show returns, and Charging Elk attends as a spectator and meets with his people. That encounter enables Charging Elk to claim kinship with his tribe, and to understand transnational adaptation as survivance. Welch writes, "[m]ost of the Indians he watched were Lakotas—Oglalas, Hunkpapas, Brulés—and they were alive. He had seen them. His dream had been wrong."[50] Charging Elk's conversation with a young Lakota performer, Joseph, representative of his younger self, especially helps him see how globalization fuels not only the circulation of commodities (including the commodified "Indianness" of the Wild West show), but also enlivening indigenous encounters. The novel embraces a transnational ethic of survivance and transformation. Charging Elk's living has continued in France and while he learns from Joseph that his people are now required by law to speak English, attend Boarding School and abandon the old ways he had embraced as a young man, he also learns that his dream of his people's genocidal disappearance is wrong—the Oglala have survived, and cultural adaptation has defined that survival. Against an imperialist narrative of Native disappearance and a fetishized performance of Indianness trapped in the past, Welch offers a narrative of transnational cultural change and a diasporic dispersal of indigeneity across the globe. At the same time, that dispersal attests to what Appiah calls "rooted cosmopolitanism." Charging Elk remains Oglala, although he decides to remain in France. While his contact with the Lakota make him "feel as though a part of him which has been missing for many years has come home," and one performer tells him "[y]ou are Lakota, wherever you might go. You are one of us always," he declares to Joseph, "this is my home now . . . I have a wife. Soon I will have a child" (435, 436–37). The novel ends with Charging Elk walking home to his French wife, sure that "the

Moon of the Falling Leaves would light his way"—a resonant affirmation of transculturality as well as the abiding, vitalizing presence of Charging Elk's Native worldview (438).

Notes

[1] Hsinya Huang et al., "Special Forum: Charting Transnational American Studies," *JTAS* 4, no. 1 (2012).

[2] Sheldon I. Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 623.

[3] Bill Ashcroft, "Australian Transnation," *Southerly* 71 (2011): 26.

[4] Scott Lyons, "Introduction," *The World, the Text, and the Indian: Global Dimensions of Native American Literature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017), 1.

[5] Yogita Goyal, "Introduction: The Transnational Turn," in *Cambridge Companion to Transnational American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 7.

[6] Robert Warrior, "Native American Scholarship and the Transnational Turn," *Cultural Studies Review* 15 (2009): 126.

[7] Ashcroft, "Australian Transnation," 26.

[8] See Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

[9] According to Weaver (*The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000–1927* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014]), Native Americans, "far from being marginal to the Atlantic experience, were, in fact, as central as Africans. Native resources, ideas, and peoples traveled the Atlantic with regularity and became among the most basic defining components of Atlantic cultural exchange" (17). The travels of Silko and Welch's Native characters recollect earlier itineraries in the "Red Atlantic': those of Native American slaves transported by Spain, France and Britain and sometimes back again; Native seamen, whose prominence in whaling crews in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is captured in the fiction of Herman Melville; and Native diplomats. The novels enable us to glimpse the rich history of Native Americans as actors in what Weaver calls "the transoceanic story."

[10] Shari M. Huhndorf, *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 22, 13.

[11] Qtd. in Elaine Savory, "Toward a Caribbean Ecopoetics," in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment,* ed. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 81.

[12] Ellen Arnold, "Listening to the Spirits: An Interview with Leslie Marmon Silko," *Studies in American Indian Literature* 10, no. 3, Series 2 (1998): 6. James is also an important influence: Silko explains, "without the stories and novels of Henry James, I quite likely would not have written *Gardens in the Dunes*." Leslie Marmon Silko, "Delight: An Appreciation of Henry James," *The Henry James Review* 33, no. 3 (2012): 206.

[13] Leslie Marmon Silko, *Gardens in the Dunes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 280.

[14] Arnold, "Listening to the Spirits," 6.

[15] Silko, *Gardens*, 250.

[16] Silko, *Gardens*, 237. This account evokes the tribal "magic" of petroglyphs that Silko describes in her essays. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of Spirit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 28–29.

[17] The text counters what Donald Worster describes as a Christian imperialism that "stripped from nature all spiritual qualities and rigidly distanced it from human feelings—promoting a view of creation as a mechanical contrivance." *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 29.

[18] Winona LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 191.

[19] Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

[20] See Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[21] Silko, *Gardens*, 244. Silko's focus on the botanical basis of the "Red Atlantic" is historically salient; as Weaver notes, "[t]oday, almost half of the world's table vegetables originated in this hemisphere and were cultivated and eaten by the indigenes of the Americas" (*The Red Atlantic*, 14–15).

[22] Weaver, *Red Atlantic*, 15.

[23] On seed patents, see LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred*, 153–201.

[24] Like other eco-feminists, Silko foregrounds what Heise and others call "parallels between the oppression and exploitation of women and that of the natural world." "Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn in American Studies," *American Literary History* 20, no. 1–2 (2008): 384.

[25] Silko, *Gardens*, 86. Registering the epidemic of sexual violence against indigenous women as an urgent focus of transnational feminist activism, the novel highlights what Huhndorf calls the "imposition of patriarchy" and sexual control of women as "a crucial and under-analyzed dimension of European colonization of the Americas." "Afterword," in *The World, the Text, and the Indian: Global Dimensions of Native American Literature*, ed. Scott Lyons. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017), 290.

[26] See William Bevis, "Native American Novels: Homing In," in *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*, ed. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 580–620, and Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*.

[27] Silko, *Gardens*, 312.

[28] Arnold, "Listening to the Spirits," 9.

[29] Vizenor. *Manifest Manners*.

[30] See Walter D. Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000), 721–48.

[31] Walter D. Mignolo, "Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)Coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience," *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 3 (2011): 274–77.

[32] Eric Gary Anderson, *American Indian Literature and the Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 4.

[33] Silko anchors this in her own experiences at Laguna: "the indigenous people welcomed the newcomers. They didn't draw lines … [T]he old folks would say … all of those who love the earth and want to do this are welcome. That's the old, old way. That attitude about nationalism comes in much later." Arnold, "Listening to the Spirits," 10.

[34]The Laguna tribe itself "came southward from the Mesa Verde region," periodically moved about this southerly region, invited other clans to join them at Old Laguna, and then, in the late 1600s, was joined by "immigrants [who] came chiefly from Zia, Cochiti, and Domingo, but a few came from Jemez, Zuni, and Hopi." Over time, Navajos married into the tribe, and Spanish colonizers came through. A. LaVonne Ruoff, "Ritual and Renewal: Keres Tradition in Leslie Silko's 'Yellow Woman,'" in Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of Spirit*, 70.

[35] Huhndorf, "Afterword," 290.

[36] For Silko the New World especially fosters what Mignolo calls "diversality" through the vitality of cultural contact: "Early on, the Spaniards hadn't been there giving religious instruction for more than five years before all the people got in tune with the Christian spirits, the Christian saints, and took them right in.… That's what happens in the Americas, because it's all inclusive, it excludes nothing. You come here, you'll never be the same again.… It's changed by being on this very soil, on this continent." Arnold, "Listening to the Spirits," 25.

[37] This is acutely evident in Hattie's narrative. While the only female graduate student at the Harvard Divinity School, Hattie had written a thesis on "the equal status accorded the feminine principle" in the gnostic gospels and the role of the "female spiritual principle in the early Church"—views considered heretical at Harvard though reclaimed through Hattie's relationship with Indigo. Silko, *Gardens*, 99–100.

[38] On transnationalism and *Almanac*, with a focus on what Silko terms "tribal internationalism," see Huhndorf, *Mapping*, 140–71.

[39] On this history, see Ronald A. Janke, "Populations, Reservations, and Federal Indian Policy," in *Handbook of Native American Literature*, ed. Andrew Wiget (New York: Garland, 1996), 155–73. The novel locates the urban as site of Pan-Indian trans-indigeneity as well as the repository of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call a "proletarian internationalism" that anticipates the rise of the global "multitude"; *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 49.

[40] In particular, Welch's text emphasizes the value of what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls a "rooted cosmopolitanism" for Native peoples; "Cosmopolitan Patriots," *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (1997): 617–39. On the import of Appiah's concept for Native American literature, see Arnold Krupat, "Nationalism, Transnationalism, Trans-Indigenism, Cosmopolitanism: Four Perspectives on Native American Literatures," *Journal of Ethnic American Literature* 3 (2013): 5–63.

[41] Welch, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (New York: Anchor, 2000), 11.

[42] *Hopi*: *Songs of the Fourth World* (directed by Pat Ferrero, 1983; 58 min.).

[43] Welch, *Heartsong*, 79, 114, 114. The character of Charging Elk himself is grounded in history; Welch was inspired to write *Heartsong* by Pierre Falaise, a Frenchman who approached him at a reading claiming to be the grandson of a Wild West performer who remained in France; and Charging Elk's story evokes perhaps more fully the famous narrative of Black Elk (who makes a brief appearance in Welch's novel), which recounts memories of Little Big Horn, Wounded Knee, and Black Elk's tour of Europe with Buffalo Bill. On Falaise, see Lois M. Welch, "On Researching Marseilles," in *Companion to James Welch's The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, ed. Arnold Krupat (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 44–57.

[44] Welch, *Heartsong*, 41, 70. On wage labor as a "contact zone between Indian and non-Indian communities and cultures," especially since the late nineteenth century, see Alice Littlefield and Martha C. Knack, eds., *Native Americans and Wage Labor: Ethnohistorical Perspectives* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 3. Challenging portrayals of Native Americans as "isolated within the walls of boarding schools and the boundaries of reservations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," Kevin Whalen examines how wage work—fostered, for example, by vocational and job placement programs at federal Indian boarding schools—brought Native peoples into cities and promoted contact "with a diverse body of workers from across the globe." *Native Students at Work: American Indian Labor and Sherman Institute's Outing Program, 1900–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 66.

[45] Lyons, "Introduction," 6.

[46] Ulla Haselstein, "Ghost Dance Literature: Spectrality in James Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging Elk,*" in *Companion to James Welch's* The Heartsong of Charging Elk, ed. Arnold Krupat (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 96.

[47] Welch, *Heartsong*, 361.Welch is Blackfeet and Gros Ventre, from the Northern Plains, a region where the presence of the French—through the Fur trade—was pronounced. Charging Elk's border crossing to France (and his political alliance with French workers against US

expansionism) evokes the crossings of the Sioux to Canada during wartime and their trade with the French-speaking Metis tribe to secure weaponry.

[48] Akim D. Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), 31.

[49] Lyons, "Introduction," 13.

[50] Welch, *Heartsong*, 427.

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