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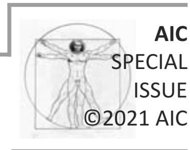

Introduction: Indigeneity, Redux

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Despite the damage—both physical and representational—inflicted on Indigenous communities across the world by colonial powers over centuries, recent decades have seen a resurgence in approaches to Indigeneity across a variety of fields, from History and Anthropology to Literature and Global Indigenous Studies. Terms such as "Natives," "Aboriginal," "Indigenous," or "First Nations" reflect the variety of contexts in which Indigeneity operates geographically, politically, philosophically, and literarily. In a contemporary climate of reconciliation between settler colonial nations and colonized Indigenous peoples, Indigenous writers and critics are at the forefront of the conversation. Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson asks a question which frames our understanding of contemporary Indigeneity and the stakes of its representation: "How can reconciliation succeed if the wrongs against Indigenous people continue to go on?"[1]

The call for papers issued in fall 2019—when the guest editor was embarking on a year-long of Fulbright scholar award at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iași, Romania. Determined to understand the scarcity of academic discourse on Indigeneity in (Eastern) European contexts, the call for contributions captured the questions of a pre-pandemic world, soon made even more visible and urgent by COVID-19. Since then, we have (re)learned that Indigenous, black, and brown communities worldwide have been disproportionately affected by the global pandemic.[2] Yet, we know that viral epidemics have plagued Indigenous communities for centuries; the lack of immunity to novel viruses brought to the Americas by settler colonists decimated close to 90% of the Indigenous population throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.[3] As Lorenzo Veracini has argued, while Indigenous people "disappear[ed] as a result of some sort of viral contagion," the settlers bacterially replaced them "as a result of superior efficiency" (2014: 627); settlers have thus obscured the ongoing effects of the intersections of racism and settler colonialism in Native communities. Despite these and many other odds, Indigenous nations have survived. A legacy of inequality, which has made Indigenous communities vulnerable to the impact of climate change and disease outbreaks like COVID-19—compounded by disruptions to land bases and infrastructure that made it impossible to meet basic needs (food, water, or shelter)—calls for a reexamination of Indigeneity as both an epistemic category and a category of identity, shaped by both coloniality and decolonial epistemologies and activism.[4]

Historically, the settler colonial project—still ongoing in nations such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—has led to both physical and cultural erasure of Indigenous communities. As historian Mahmood Mamdami noted in a recent study, "while nearly everyone in the United States would agree that Europeans settled on North American land that was at some point occupied by Indigenous people, virtually no one recognizes this process of settlement as

[1] Audra Simpson, *apud* Betty Ann Adams, "Reconciliation needs be more than permission to maintain status quo," *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, March 18, 2016. Available online: https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/reconciliation-needs-be-more-than-permission-to-maintain-status-quo-prof-says.

[2] "COVID-19's Growing Impact on Indigenous Communities Globally." *Cultural Survival*, April 9, 2020. Available online: https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/covid-19s-growing-impact-indigenous-communities-globally.

[3] "How COVID-19 is impacting indigenous peoples in the U.S." *The Nation*, May 13, 2020. Available online: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/how-covid-19-is-impacting-indigenous-peoples-in-the-u-s.

[4] "Indigenous Peoples." World Bank. Available online: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples.

an act of colonial subjugation that continues today" (2020: 37). Although in some communities it remains an aspiration rather than a recognized identity and reality, in others, the resurgence of Indigeneity and Indigenous nationhood and peoplehood frameworks offers models for further resilience and regeneration. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel offer the following paths to a resurgent Indigenous movement toward decolonization: "land is life," "language is power," "freedom is the other side of fear," "decolonize your diet," and "change happens one warrior at a time" (2005: 614). In the academy, Eva Marie Garroutte proposes the concept "radical Indigenism" as a model of Indigenous scholarship grounded in Indigenous community goals and aiming for decolonization from within (2003: 144), building on strong spiritual and cultural foundations.

Although the use of the concept Indigeneity in the context of First Peoples has a relatively short history, originating in anti- and decolonial struggles around the world in the 1990s, its relevance in a global context today is crucial to understanding not only the settler colonial past but also to envisioning an Indigenous future. In North America, Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel refer to Indigeneity as "an identity constructed, shaped, and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism." They define Indigeneity as a condition of being "Indigenous to the lands […], in contrast to and in contention with the colonial societies and states that have spread out from Europe and other centers of empire" (2005: 597). In this context, Indigeneity is place-based and fights against displacement and dispossession, markers of coloniality.

Over 370 million Indigenous people live around the world in more than 70 countries today (Steeves, 2018; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005: 599); for generations, many have faced the erasure or denial of their cultures and languages, dispossession, and other effects of colonialism on a daily basis. As Franz Fanon pointed out, the nefarious effects of colonialism include, among others, the writing of Indigenous history and representation: "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (1963: 210). As Alfred and Corntassel remind us, contemporary manifestations of imperialism "attempt to confine the expression of Indigenous peoples' right of self-determination to a set of domestic authorities operating within the constitutional framework of the state (as opposed to the right of having an autonomous and global standing) and actively seek to sever Indigenous links to their ancestral homelands" (2005: 603). This confinement is continuously challenged by self-determination and sovereignty movements throughout the world. In 2007, the United Nations General Assembly passed the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which emphasizes Indigenous people's rights to their lands, cultures, languages, self-determination, and equal rights of citizenship within nation states[5].

Although the terms vary with region and settler nation occupying their original lands, Indigenous peoples are those who belong to a place. Aboriginal people in Canada, for instance, include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; in the United States, we refer to Indigenous people using terms such as American Indian, Native American, Indigenous, Alaska Native, and Hawaiian/KānakaMaoli besides the more specific tribal national designations (such as Anishinaabe, Navajo, Oneida, etc.). In Spanish occupied regions, like Mexico, for instance, the term *indio* refers to the original people. According to Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice, the terms "Indigenous" or "The People" refer "specifically to the First Peoples of North America, the Aboriginal, American Indian, Native, Inuit, Métis, and otherwise identified peoples who remain in relation to the land, the ancestors, and the kinship networks, lifeways, and languages that originated in this hemisphere and continue in often besieged but always resilient forms" (2018: 6-7).

The continuous disavowal of Indigeneity by ongoing colonialism calls for decolonial action. Yet, in the words of Mamdami, "America can only begin to decolonize when it acknowledges that it is a colonial state" (2020: 98). Historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz sees in Indigeneity the possibility for "life after empire," when the treaties that the United States made with Indigenous nations are honored, the sacred sites are restored—and sacred items and bodies repatriated—

[5] For a persuasive interpretation of reparative progress in the context of Indigenizing self- determination, see Miranda Johnson, "Indigenizing Self-Determination at the United Nations."

and reparations "for the reconstruction and expansion of Native nations" are made. In this view of a future Indigeneity, education is key, as is "the full support and active participation of the descendants of settlers, enslaved Africans, and colonized Mexicans, as well as immigrant populations" (2014: 236). Mamdami adds to this list toward a decolonized Indigenous future by proposing an "end [to] the status of wardship [of Indigenous nations in the U.S.] by granting reservations themselves representation in both houses of Congress, abolishing the BIA, and democratizing tribal governance." Key to decolonization in the United States is "the rewriting of the American autobiography," according to Mamdami (2020: 100). This rewriting entails a rethinking and rewriting of American exceptionalism, both in historical and ongoing setter narratives. In his *Studies in Classic American Literature*, D.H. Lawrence describes the American fascination with Indigeneity as oppositional; on the one hand, by examining the work of eighteenth and nineteenth-century white, male writers—James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman—he notes their "desire to extirpate the Indian" and, simultaneously, "the contradictory desire to glorify him" (1923: 36). As Jace Weaver also reminds us, declaring Indigenous cultures "vanishing or extinct becomes a means in settler colonies of establishing an uneasy illusion of Indigeneity (Indigenousness) on the part of the colonizers" (2000/2005: 227).

The preservation of this illusion of Indigeneity is at the heart of empire. The continued racialization of Indigenous people in the United States, as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have argued, ensures "the ascendancy of white settlers as the true and rightful owners and occupiers of the land" (2012: 12-13). Maintaining this national mythology has been key to settler colonial domination and representations of Indigenous people as "subtractive;" for Tuck and Yang, "Native American is a racialization that portrays contemporary Indigenous generations to be less authentic, less Indigenous than every prior generation in order to ultimately phase out Indigenous claims to land and usher in settler claims to property" (12). Such ongoing erasures are part of the settler writing of the American autobiography—as Mamdami calls it—the story of national formation which continues to privilege American exceptionalism. Yet, bringing Indigeneity to the forefront of discussions of U.S. empire, as Chickasaw literary scholar Jodi Byrd has argued, "is a necessary intervention at this historical moment, precisely because it is through the elisions, erasures, enjambments, and repetitions of Indianness that one might see the stakes in decolonial, restorative justice tied to land, life, and grievability (2011: xiii).

Any discussion of Indigeneity needs to address the ongoing context of coloniality and its project of altering or assimilating, if not entirely dismantling, Indigenous communities across the globe. Indigeneity cannot be decoupled from a review of the colonial politics, policies, and practices that have historically worked to reinforce acculturation and the erasure of Indigenous identities and lifeways (Steeves, 2018). Ongoing extractive settler colonialism (as in, colonizers have never left the lands they settled) continue to encroach on Indigenous lands, communities, expressive cultures, and histories. Indigenous identities—global, communal, state-defined, and individual—are dynamic despite continuing legacies of colonialism (such as blood quantum, assimilation and domestication policies), and remain grounded in history, ceremony, language and land (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005: 609). Indigeneity in an ongoing settler colonial context of dispossession and extraction is both a project (surviving in a system aimed to dismantle it) and a call to action (thriving on their homelands and traditional cultures and ways of life). The future of Indigeneity rests in both dismantling the destructive ongoing consequences of settler colonialism and in incorporating the long-standing, place-based Indigenous systems of knowledge and governance into both the vision and praxis of what Alfred and Corntassel call a "resurgent" Indigenous future.

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When we issued the call for papers for this issue in 2019, we hoped that it would bring together the work of scholars working across several fields in Indigenous studies in Europe and beyond. We started with a relatively broad focus purposefully, hoping to create cross-disciplinary conversations in a European academic context on the past, present, and future representations of Indigeneity from various theoretical and methodological frameworks. We received submissions from

colleagues at European universities whose work centers on North and South American, Australian, and European archives.

The essays in this issue, written in English and Spanish, engage topics ranging from storytelling and felt experience in Deborah Miranda's *Bad Indians* to representations of Indigeneity in the works of Australian Aboriginal poets Paul Collis and Jeanine Leane, as well as North American Indigenous poet Wendy Rose. Several case studies examine specific instances of representing *Indigeneidad* in South America and Europe, such as representing Inca heritage in the writings of Peruvian writer Clorinda Matto de Turner or traces of Indigeneity in Spanish writer José Mallorquí's novels. The remaining essays offer a theoretical grounding across national and disciplinary borders, from representations of Indo-Iberian-African identity to visual representations of Indigeneity in an early twentieth-century silent film, *The Vanishing American* (1925). The guest editor is grateful to the the journal's editors and to the faculty in the Departments of English, Comparative Literature and Spanish, especially professors Ana-Maria Ştefan (Comparative Literature), Alina Ţiţei (Spanish), Veronica Popescu, and Codrin and Laura Cuţitaru (English), as well as the graduate students enrolled in her seminar on Indigenous Literature and Visual Culture during the 2019-2020 academic year she spent as a Fulbright Scholar at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iaşi, Romania. Many thanks also to Oneida scholar Kristina Ackley for her careful reading of the Introduction and for her ongoing support and friendship.

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