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# Indigenous Literary Arts in the German Studies Curriculum: Centering Otherwise

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Yá'át'ééh. Tódich'í'nii éinishli dóó Kinya'aanii báshishchíín. Tsalagi (Tsídii) éí da shichei dóó Táchii'nii éí da shinálí.

Good evening. Out of respect for my relatives and ancestors, I introduced myself in Diné Bizaad (the Navajo language) per Diné protocol that recognizes Clan relations, which Dr. Kosta translated.<sup>1</sup> Ahéhee', thank you, Barbara for your generous introduction. I also want to thank Drs. Carrie Smith, Damani Partridge, and Eli Ruben as well as GSA President Dr. Sara F. Hall and Executive Director Dr. Margaret Menninger for extending an invite to be one of this year's featured speakers. You have been gracious hosts and *ich bedanke mich recht herzlich*.

Though I left German Studies in 2010, the skills I gained to be a critical literary scholar transcend disciplines. I teach and research in the areas of Indigenous literary arts and Indigenous film studies as an associate professor of Indigenous Studies at McMaster University, which is situated on the homelands of the Haudenosaunee and Mississauga and protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum covenant. The core reason why the discipline of Indigenous Studies exists is to improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples and communities.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Indigenous Studies necessitates actionable reciprocity.<sup>3</sup> I have frequently been approached to collaborate on projects or to be a consultant for the betterment of non-Indigenous departments and entities. The language of improvement and betterment resonates with Diné centered-teachings of becoming hózhó, which I translate as: coming to a state of wellness, beauty, balance, peace, and harmony.

The GSA organizing committee was enthusiastically receptive that I present a keynote on my areas of specialization, as opposed to engaging in extractivism. One of the harsh realities for many Indigenous scholars north of the Medicine Line—especially since 2015, when ninety-four calls to action were set forth by the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission—is that our scholarship has been overlooked in favor of prescriptive “how to” talks: for example, how to be a good ally, how to incorporate Indigenous content with respect and not be appropriative, or how to respond to anti-Indigenous racism.<sup>4</sup> It is timely that the GSA meets on the heels of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which was September 30th, to “center otherwise.”

My center is informed by Indigenous literary arts, respecting protocols, honoring Indigenous homelands, and enacting reciprocity. My aim is *not* to advance de-curricularizing German Studies, but to enrich it by advocating for the inclusion of Indigenous-authored stories originally published in English as travelogues, speeches, novels, poetry, or other literary works that are then translated into German. I also introduce visual media: one television show that celebrates Indigenous and Jewish identities and presence as a way to center otherwise and I end with a brief analysis of one scene from a major motion picture that extends the German Studies understanding of coming to terms with the past.

Centering otherwise is not new.<sup>5</sup> In the summer semester of 2014, I taught an International Field School that focused on “Indigenous & European storytellers.”<sup>6</sup> I bridged Indigenous orature with German folklore by way of the essay: “Aryan Elements in Indian Mythology” (n.d.) by James Owen Dorsey and James Mooney that compared three Omaha fairy tales with four Grimm’s fairy tales.<sup>7</sup> We interrogated how the role of women, and cautionary tales and stereotypes of Otherness, evolved into the Grimm’s *Children and Household Tales* (1812). I am a staunch advocate for experiential learning, so after two weeks of eight-hour days in the classroom, eighteen students and I flew to Germany and traveled the famous Deutsche Märchenstraße (German Fairy Tale Route). This was one early attempt for me to center otherwise. Markus Hallensleben—in reflecting on his professorial responsibilities to disrupt scholarship, research, and teaching by centering relational approaches to land—puts it this way, “Rather than reiterating Eurocentric notions of artwork, authorship, culture, education, text, literature, media, theatre, society and politics, [he is] looking at Indigenous ‘Storywork’ as a collaborative narrative approach to decolonizing knowledge transfer within European Studies.”<sup>8</sup>

Priscilla Layne’s “Decolonizing German Studies While Dissecting Race in the American Classroom” centers and celebrates Black voices, experiences, excellence, and presence in the German Studies curriculum.<sup>9</sup> Layne introduces a first-year seminar course she created called “Germany and the Black Diaspora,” which is “divided into four historical periods: Colonialism, Weimar/Nazi Germany, Postwar, and Postunification.”<sup>10</sup> Her chronological approach has guided my thinking, but I adjust the organizational periods to reflect Indigenous voices, contexts, and stories. All texts should be braided with the teaching of the historiography of Turtle Island (North America).<sup>11</sup> Adapting Layne’s approach demonstrates how feasible it would

be to incorporate and celebrate Indigenous literary arts in German language and literature classrooms.

Layne's course begins with the German colonial period (1884–1920). I would begin with a novel that is set during pre-colonization yet was written in the 1940s by Yankton Dakota author Ella Cara Deloria (1889–1971). *Waterlily* is one of the best fictional—albeit informed by factual—accounts of pre-reservation and pre-contact Dakota life. It was posthumously published in 1988 and was translated as *Waterlily* in 2020 by Frank Elstner and Uta Millner.

Returning to Layne's chronology, the late nineteenth century was a tumultuous time on Turtle Island, where the crude treatment of the earth, waters, and humans for labour, entertainment, or possession was at its height. Teaching the contextual history of this period introduces students to the active colonization and First Nations and Métis resistance north of the Medicine Line, as well as contemporary events south of the Medicine Line such as aggressive federal policies that enacted forced removals (like the Trail of Tears or the Navajo Long Walk) and the Indian Appropriations Act of 1851 (when reservations were implemented). The long nineteenth century was a time of ongoing Indigenous resistance to the dispossession of Turtle Island homelands through countless "Indian wars." Some Indigenous survivors who participated in battles became entertainers and traveled abroad with various wild west shows. Others journeyed to share their gift of oratory, reflecting a burgeoning cosmopolitan Indigeneity. I would center a unit that could be called "From Nineteenth Century Warriors to Entertainers" to introduce some of this material.

Anishinaabe author and activist George Copway (1818–1869) left his homelands, which were occupied as British North America, and traveled abroad in 1850.<sup>12</sup> He documented and published his experiences as *Running Sketches of Men and Places in England, France, Germany, Belgium, and Scotland* (1851). Originally from Rice Lake, Ontario, "Copway's name was subsequently splashed across newspapers in England, France, and Germany. He met Prince Frederick, the future German emperor, while leaving the congress, then traveled to Heidelberg, Wiesbaden, Düsseldorf, and Cologne, where he had an audience with leading German intellectuals."<sup>13</sup> A course that studies German newspapers could have a sustained focus on such events, centering the narratives of transatlantic Indigeneities.

Frank Usbeck, lead curator for the American collection at the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, wrote:

When chief Edward Two-Two and his troupe of 20 Lakota-Sioux arrived at the Dresden train station in 1913 to work for the local circus Sarrasani, factories and schools closed for the day, and over one hundred thousand people gathered only to watch the unloading of the baggage and procession to the hotel. Two-Two, who

died soon thereafter, asked to be buried in Dresden where his tomb is a special attraction of the local Catholic cemetery until this day.<sup>14</sup>

Two-Two's story of being abandoned and left to die in Europe is not the sole account, as such a story is the basis of Blackfeet/A'aniin author James Welch's 2000 novel *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. It was translated to German by Sibylle Schmidt in 2001 as *Mahpiya heißt Himmel*. Set in southern France, the historical novel offers a view of cosmopolitan Indigeneity at the turn of the twentieth century. Another novel that depicts an Indigenous traveler abroad is *Garden in the Dunes* (1999) by Laguna writer Leslie Marmon Silko. It is translated as *Gärten in der Wüste* (2000) by Bettina Münch.

The next unit Layne covers is the Weimar Republic (1918–1933) and Nazi Germany (1933–1945). This is a time on Turtle Island that is the height of aggressive policies of assimilation and cultural genocide through, for example, Indian Residential Schools (IRS) north of the Medicine Line and boarding schools south of the Medicine Line. Yankton Dakota author Zitkala-Ša, later known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin (1876–1938), wrote a sharp critique of her boarding school education in *American Indian Stories* (1921). It was translated by Frank Elstner and Ulrich Grafe in 2015 as *Roter Vogel erzählt: Die Geschichten einer Dakota* (2015). Richard Wagamese, Anishinaabe, published *Indian Horse* in 2012, which recounts IRS atrocities during the 1950s and 1960s. The novel was translated by Ingo Herzke in 2021 as *Der gefrorene Himmel*. Herzke also translated other works by Wagamese, including *Medicine Walk* (2014), published as *Das weite Herz des Landes* (2020) and *Keeper'n Me* (1994) published as *Der Flug des Raben* (2021).

Layne's categorization of "Postwar" can be maintained to illustrate and center the voices and presence of postwar Indigenous veterans. N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa) and Silko published post-World War II novels; both remain core texts of Indigenous literatures. Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* came out in 1968, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1969. Jeannie Ebner translated it in 1971 as *Haus aus Dämmerung*, and it was further translated and published as *Haus aus Morgendämmerung* in 1988 by Jochen Eggert. Silko's post-World War II novel *Ceremony* appeared in 1977 and was translated as *Gestohlenes Land wird ihre Herzen fressen* (1992) by Ana Maria Brock. Momaday's and Silko's novels focus on protagonists who struggle as civilians upon their return from the war. Both authors published subsequent works that do not focus on postwar topics but are foundational Indigenous literary works: Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) was translated by Peter Baum in 1991 as *Der Weg zum Regenbogen* (1991). Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) was published as *Almanach der Toten* (1994) and translated by Bettina Münch. Esteemed Anishinaabe author Louise Erdrich wrote a post-World War I novel, *The Master Butchers Singing Club* (2003). It is translated as *Der Gesang des Fidelis Waldvogel* (2004) by Renate Orth-Guttmann. Also by Orth-Guttmann is a two-part television movie adap-

tion *Der Club der singenden Metzger* that appeared on ARD in 2019. Here, Erdrich shifts her usual lens of focussing on Indigenous experiences and families to that of focussing on a German immigrant family, the Waldvogels. *Master Butchers* begins in Germany after World War I but primarily takes place in Argus, North Dakota, and returns to Europe in the end, when Fidelis Waldvogel's sons serve on two opposing sides in World War II.

While there are several works of Indigenous-authored fiction in translation, Métis author, filmmaker, scholar, and Elder Maria Campbell wrote *Halfbreed*, which was published in 1973, and celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2023. The memoir traces her life stories of love, kinship, strength, hardship, and endurance beginning in the 1940s. *Halfbreed* was translated by Roswitha McCoppin as *Cheechum's Enkelin: Autobiographie einer kanadischen Halbindianerin* in 1983.

In 1985, Jeannette Armstrong who is Sylix (Okanagan) and a citizen of the Pent-icton First Nation, published *Slash*. The setting also spans the 1950s and 60s, leading up to the era of Red Power (1970s) and translated with the same title in 1997 by Ojibwe activist, writer, and filmmaker Audrey Huntley. Huntley also translated *Wilder Reis: Poetische Texte* (1997), which is a compilation of select writings by Chrystos (Menominee). Also taking place in the 1970s is Inuk author, singer, and performing artist Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* (2018), translated in German as *Eisfuchs* by Anke Caroline Burger in 2020. In a Deutsche Welle article, "How Indigenous [Writers] Enrich Canadian Literature," a problematic title that nullifies the field of Indigenous literary arts, Elizabeth Grenier describes Tagaq's novel as reflective of Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice's conceptualization of Wonderworks.<sup>15</sup> While Grenier identifies Tagaq's novel as a recent example of Wonderworks, the 1984 best-selling novel *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich, (re-released in 1993) stands out as one that blends Anishinaabe orality, historicity, and speculative fiction. The acclaimed book was translated as *Liebeszauber* (2019) by Helga Pfetsch.

Layne ends her seminar with a focus on Black voices in a postunified Germany. As I think about this time, I recall my introduction to Germany. I landed in the summer of 1990, in the honeymoon period of the fall of the Berlin Wall and partook in the celebration of the *Wiedervereinigung* (German reunification) on October 3, 1990. I was in Hamburg at the Alster with thousands of others and I clearly remember that the energy of this historic moment was palpable. I made an international phone call to my New Mexico relatives from an Alster telephone booth to exclaim what I was experiencing and witnessing. Leading up to the *Wiedervereinigung*, there was a seventy-eight-day siege at Kanehsatake, in Quebec, reminding the world of ongoing Indigenous resistance to paracolonialism. A reader-friendly introduction to this and other resistance movements is found in *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book* (2010) by Gord Hill from the Kwakwaka'wakw nation in British Columbia. It was translated in 2013 as *Indigener Widerstand* by Katja Cronauer.

The period after the 1990s is a rich literary period that centers Indigenous voices, and contemporary accounts of Indigenous lives flourish. You can peruse publications on the website of an Erlangen self-proclaimed bookworm, Ellen Schüler, who has compiled a list of mostly Indigenous authored books translated in German and French.<sup>16</sup> Some of the authors listed on Schüler's site are not Indigenous, and therefore you must do your due diligence to ensure you are teaching legitimate Indigenous authors. There are ongoing situations where people have fraudulently claimed Indigenous identity. When non-Indigenous authors, creatives, or academics have built successful careers on false self-identification, claiming to be Indigenous, they take opportunities away from Indigenous People, which is not only a betrayal, but also a supremacist act of erasure. Furthermore, books *about* Indigenous Peoples, written by non-Indigenous authors do not qualify as Indigenous literary arts.

In 1996, Tłı̨chǫ Dene author Richard Van Camp's novel *The Lesser Blessed* (1996) was published to wide acclaim. In 2000, it was translated as *Die ohne Segen sind* by Ulrich Plenzdorf. In 2001, it won the prestigious Jugendliteraturpreis (youth literature prize) in the Young Adult Literature section, acknowledging its importance in both Indigenous and German literary arts. Plenzdorf subsequently translated a selection of Van Camp's book of short stories *Angel Wing Splash Pattern* (2002) to create an ostensible sequel. Plenzdorf's reinvention of Van Camp's work resulted in the novel *Dreckige Engel* in 2004. It was, according to the late scholar of Indigenous literatures, Renate Eigenbrod, a devious act of "imperialist transgression," because Plenzdorf cherry picked and completely deviated from Van Camp's short stories without Van Camp's knowledge.<sup>17</sup> Eigenbrod's scathing critique of Plenzdorf's appropriation of Van Camp's works is the only sustained scholarly engagement with Indigenous literatures translated to German, though Martina Seifert identified "Van Camp [a]s one of the few voices from inside Native communities that have found their way into German children's and youth literature."<sup>18</sup> When Eigenbrod died unexpectedly in 2014, her family requested that in lieu of flowers, mourners were directed to send monetary contributions to either "Oxfam Canada, the Renate Eigenbrod Bursary for Indigenous Graduate Students at the University of Manitoba, or the Aboriginal Writers Collective."<sup>19</sup> This is active reciprocity that models what it means to do work for the betterment of Indigenous lives and communities.

Despite Eigenbrod's nuanced critique of *Dreckige Engel*, it premiered as a 56-minute *Hörspiel* (podcast) on February 21, 2008.<sup>20</sup> The *Hörspiel* excludes contextual information that would be necessary for deeper engagement and understanding of the original intent of Van Camp's works. For example, there is mention of the Indigenous love for basketball. This is an opportune time for instructors to expand upon why the game of basketball is meaningful to Indigenous communities. Additionally, the *Hörspiel* utters the names of different First Nations' bands, as well as comments on the Inuit. These communities are mentioned without expanding on who they are,

where they live, and why they are important to the story. As such, this is an invitation for instructors to fill these gaps to engage in deeper learning and knowledge building.

I introduce Van Camp's works in translation as both invitation and cautionary tale. I invite you all, as experts in German Studies, to read, review, and incorporate Indigenous literatures into your German language and literature classes with care and respect. When Seifert wrote about the "literary imports for children and young adults from Canada," she grouped them "into three major categories: adventure and outdoor survival stories, stories about Canada's Native peoples, and realistic animal stories."<sup>21</sup> While she highlighted Van Camp's works, her categorization exposes a bias that Indigeneity is an object, and that Indigenous authors are without agency. This is particularly egregious as she couches us as Canada's possession: "Canada's Native peoples." We are not Canada's or the United States' "Native peoples." In preparation for this work, I encourage you to read Gregory Younging's 2018 *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and About Indigenous Peoples*, as well as *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (2018) by Daniel Heath Justice to unlearn and learn.<sup>22</sup>

There is a great void in scholarly discourse on the translated texts I recommend. This is where you come in. I do not know how true to the original any of these translations are. I do not know what is lost in translation or what has been *eingedeutscht* or colored by Indianthusiasm. It is my call to action to you to do this work: read the originals, then read the translations, then write and publish reviews. The scholarship on translating texts, on the impossibility of translating, and on untranslatable texts is rich and plentiful. Should everything be accessible? While I would love for learners to be exposed to Diné authored works like poet laureates Luci Tapahonso and Laura Tohe, I am not convinced translations to German will capture our epistemes that are anchored in the Diné language. Maintaining original Diné languages in translation is critical. It's the genius and craft of a translator to then articulate meaning. I would love to see Diné bizaad and other Indigenous language concepts as instrumental to non-Indigenous understandings of the world around them. I maintain that concentrated review and critique of Indigenous literatures in German translation benefits Indigenous communities as they privilege our voices, experiences, and worldviews while also muffling the oft cited and harmful works by non-Indigenous writers.

From Schüler's website, I have selected a few works that have made waves on Turtle Island. I embrace the descriptor Turtle Island to refer to North America, because there is a danger in upholding colonial borders that have divided Indigenous families and communities. For example, literature written by Blackfoot, Haudenosaunee, Cree, Anishinaabe, or Métis writers straddles the Medicine Line up in the north, while down south writing by any of the seven Indigenous communities that include the O'odham, Yaqui/Yoeme, and Kickapoo span across nation-states. While borders have severed communities, they also demarcate differences (in how we self-identify, as outlined in endnote three, and how superpowers have legislated Indigenous



lives). Therefore, it is important to know historical, political, and cultural contexts and nuances that nation state borders have created for Indigenous Peoples on both sides of the Medicine Line.

Contemporary Indigenous writing (after 2000) is prolific, and I extend Layne's chronology to include "Indigenous Literary Presence and Futurisms" as a way to end a course on centering otherwise. Here is a brief chronological list of recent German translations. Cree author and lawyer, Tracey Lindberg's *Birdie* (2015) was translated by Karolin Viseneber and Gesine Schröder as *Birdie* in 2020. Red River Métis writer Katherena Vermette's *The Break* (2016) was translated in 2019 by Kathrin Razum as *Was in jener Nacht geschah* (2019). Also published in German translation in 2019 is *Dort Dort* (translated by Hannes Meyer). Originally written by Cheyenne and Arapaho author Tommy Orange, *There There* (2018) is an award-winning novel, peppered throughout with several literary allusions to "German high literary" culture.<sup>23</sup> Georgian Bay Métis author Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* (2017), translated as *Die Traumdiebe* in 2020 by Stefanie Frida Lemke. White Earth citizen Marcie Rendon's 2017 novel *Murder on the Red River* takes place in the 1970s and was translated by Laudan & Szelinski as *Am roten Fluss* (2017). Oji/Cree author Joshua Whitehead's 2018 *Johnny Appleseed* (2018) was translated by Andreas Diesel under the same title in 2020. Louise Erdrich's *The Night Watchman* (2020) was published as *Der Nachtwächter* in 2023 and translated by Gesine Schröder.

In addition to fiction in translation, there are non-fiction books that are significant to Indigenous Studies. Dene scholar Glen Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014) is translated as *Rote Haut, weiße Masken: Gegen die koloniale Politik der Anerkennung* (2020) by Michael Schiffmann. Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (2020) is published as *Geflochtenes Süßgras: Die Weisheit der Pflanzen* (2021) and translated by Elsbeth Ranke.

Muskogee Creek and Ashkenazi Jewish writer Emily Bowen Cohen's *Two Tribes* (2023) is a graphic novel. While not in German translation, it can be a way to introduce learners to English content that bridges Indigenous and Jewish identities, which is relevant for German Studies courses. As language revitalization is a priority for Cohen, she writes and creates in Muscogee and Hebrew, and is learning Yiddish.<sup>24</sup> Celebrating Indigenous and Jewish presence is a nascent area of study and pedagogy.<sup>25</sup>

As the 2023 GSA met in Tiohtià:ke (the place currently known as Montreal), it is pertinent to introduce a six-episode television series called *Little Bird*, another example of celebrating Indigenous and Jewish identities and presence. The series showrunner is Jennifer Podemski, who is Anishinaabe enrolled with Muscowpetung First Nation and Ashkenazi Jewish. Her grandfather, Joseph Podemski, was a holocaust survivor from Lodz, Poland. The episodes are directed by Blackfoot and Sámi filmmaker Elle-Majja Tailfeathers and Heiltsuk and Mohawk filmmaker Zoe Hopkins.

Hannah Moscovitch and Jeremy Podeswa, both descendants of holocaust survivors, worked in collaboration with them. *Little Bird* is based on true events known as the Sixties Scoop, whose effects continue through the present-time. As Ilana Zackon writes in a review of the series: “Moscovitch wasn’t aware of the Sixties Scoop, but now believes it has to be spoken about, in order to heal trauma. A grandchild of Holocaust survivors, she sees similarities in the communities’ experiences.”<sup>26</sup> The term Sixties Scoop was coined by Patrick Johnson to illustrate how “from 1951 to 1991, between 20,000 and 40,000 First Nation, Métis and Inuit children”<sup>27</sup> were apprehended “from their families [and communities] into the child welfare system [and placed up for adoption] by non-Indigenous families.”<sup>28</sup> Each episode ends with the text, “Today there are more Indigenous children in custody than ever before,” which is called the Millennial Scoop. Rivka Campbell, a Black Jewish founder of Jews of Colour Canada, interviewed Podemski on her podcast *Rivkush*.<sup>29</sup> Podemski told her that through the Jewish child family services in Montreal, families learned of a program called Adopt Indian and Métis (AIM), which started in Regina, Saskatchewan. AIM issued a catalogue of children available for adoption. Nakuset, a Cree woman whose life story helped inspire the creation of the primary character, “was taken from her family in Manitoba and adopted into a Jewish home in Montreal.”<sup>30</sup> Reportedly there were twenty-eight First Nation and Métis children adopted and raised in Montreal. In addition to providing source material, Nakuset was one of two consultants for the series—the other was Dr. Raven Sinclair, who is Cree, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux, and a member of the George Gordon First Nation.

The primary character is named Bezhig Little Bird. When she was five years old, Bezhig was scooped from Long Pine Reserve, Saskatchewan, torn from her parents, separated from her twin brother and two other siblings, and eventually adopted by the Rosenblums. The adoptive mother Golda—a holocaust survivor—renamed Bezhig to Esther “in honour of [her] sister [who was] lost in Poland during the Holocaust.”<sup>31</sup> Esther Rosenblum was raised with love by the Rosenblums in the affluence of Westmount in Montreal. Episode one opens with a Jewish family celebration, where they toast Esther and her new fiancé in Yiddish with “Sei Gesund!”<sup>32</sup>

As an adult, Esther seeks answers to her storied past as a Sixties Scoop survivor; a past that was unknown to Golda and reflected on the small screen, which most Canadians also do not know about. Bezhig’s unique characterization centers Indigenous and Jewish stories that “executive producer Christina Fon is especially proud of.” Fon explains, “When Esther is going through her journey, she’s a Jewish woman going to find her Indigenous family. To bridge those two things together within her, . . . we’ve never seen that. . . . So the beautiful part is that we’re bridging those two cultures together within that character.”<sup>33</sup> While only episodes one, four, and six directly interweave and celebrate Bezhig’s Indigenous and Jewish identities (two unique cultural, historical, political, and spiritual identities), *Little Bird* can be

taught to highlight these very intersections. The adult character of Bezbig/Esther is played by Darla Contois, who is Cree and Saulteaux. Contois's father "was part of the Scoop," which prompted her to explain: "every Indigenous person in this country was affected by the Sixties Scoop or by residential schools. There is not one of us who hasn't been affected."<sup>34</sup> The show, which US viewers can watch on PBS, Apple TV, and Amazon Prime, was created from love about love: love for Indigenous and Jewish existence.<sup>35</sup> Showrunner Jennifer Podemski expressed it best: "I am a person who is deeply immersed in multilayered identity being Jewish, having a dad who was born in Israel. . . . My grandmother and grandfather on my mother's side are residential school survivors. At the center of this I am a storyteller immersed in the cultures that make up my identity."<sup>36</sup> These intersections form an interweaving of survivors' stories—similar stories are also at the heart of the 2022 historical feature film *Bones of Crows* by Dene and Métis filmmaker Marie Clements.

Scenes from *Bones of Crows* invite critical discussion about German complicity in Turtle Island settler colonial dominance that resulted in genocidal acts. The opening scene, for example, squarely frames a mountain of bison skulls. Perched atop these skulls is a crow. The German concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) could transcend continents because the German Empire was complicit in the American bison genocide, which is a direct link to the starvation of Indigenous Peoples and livelihoods.

The slaughter changed everything. It happened in two waves. The first came slowly: European settlers brought cattle with them, and those animals competed for land with the wild bison. The second started in the 1870s, after German leather-makers created technology that allowed bison hides to be tanned more efficiently and economically. During 1871 and 1872, an average of 5,000 bison were killed every day, as thousands of hunters poured onto the plains. The slaughter continued until 1889, when only about 85 free-ranging bison remained.<sup>37</sup>

M. Scott Taylor's research into the nineteenth-century economic boom at the expense and near extinction of the buffalo uncovered that German technology was cheap, commercial, and highly profitable, with hide exports in 1871 totalling 100,00 dollars and skyrocketing to over 500,000 dollars in 1874.<sup>38</sup> Not only that, but there is no evidence that settlers on Turtle Island knew how to process hides, but Indigenous Peoples did and continue to do so. Taylor observes, "While natives commonly tanned the thick-haired buffalo hides taken in winter months into buffalo robes, their process was laborious and required ingredients from buffalo themselves (the brain, liver, and fat or tallow)."<sup>39</sup> So, while Indigenous Peoples maintain this method for tanning hides today, making us culturally rich, it was the settlers, slaughterers,

and Europeans who were capitalizing off bison, and the bones from these bodies are displayed in the opening shot. Clements's film opens with this powerful scene that is informed by historical narratives and temporalities to highlight the real-life cruel and inhumane treatment doled out by settlers. These historic events are often not taught and fall under the greater umbrella of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. During the nineteenth century, when the aforementioned wild west shows as well as cross-pond travel were rampant, German museums acquired Indigenous cultural material items that remain in their inventory. These should be repatriated. In the current climate of reconciliation, the truths of atrocities must be learned and redressed before reconciliation can be possible. Indigenous people have increasingly abandoned the rhetoric of reconciliation, preferring *reconciliation*, or "transformative critical social action."<sup>40</sup> In this contemporary moment, there is a responsibility to think about *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in a local, Turtle Island, context. It has been eight years since the most recent iteration of coming to terms with Canada's past has been implemented vis-à-vis the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and ninety-four calls to action. The 2022 Yellowhead Institute "Status Update" reported that of the ninety-four calls to action, only two were completed in 2022. "In total, thirteen Calls have been completed. At this rate, it will take forty-two years, or until 2065, to complete all the Calls to Action."<sup>41</sup> To move from inaction is to recognize and acknowledge Turtle Island atrocities and to act, to redress, to restore; to come a state of hózhó.

I only offered one example from *Bones of Crows* that speaks to advancing *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* for redress and restoration. There are other moments in the film (like when the young Aline Spears is mandated to play Bach for the church leadership) that one could analyze. *Bones of Crows* is a film that rejects a narrative of "Indigenous deficiency," it educates on the long trajectory of residential schooling, while also highlighting Indigenous thriving: our brilliance and bravery through the arts, recognizing Cree Code Talkers, confronting abusers in positions of authority, caretaking for loved ones with kindness, hope, and joy, all demonstrating perseverance.<sup>42</sup> Perseverance is the name of Aline's younger sister who succumbs to a statistic: she is one of the thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG). The film invites viewers to advance their position on coming to terms with the past.

In our introduction to the special edition of *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* (2019), I wrote: "What distinguishes Indigenous Studies from German Studies are relationships: community and kin and nurturing them beyond the academy to benefit Indigenous Peoples and restore Indigeneity that continues to endure into the future."<sup>43</sup> While I maintain this, I invite you to be brave and integrate Indigenous literary arts into your curricula with respect, rigour, and reciprocity. Think about how your actions will directly benefit the lives of Indigenous Peoples.

## Notes

1. The keynote commenced with Dr. Barbara Kosta (University of Arizona), who introduced me by my four Clans. I am Bitter Water (maternal grandmother), born for Towering House (paternal grandmother). I am Bird Clan from the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma (maternal grandfather), and Red Running through the Water (paternal grandfather).
2. Originally published as *Custer Dies for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 103. In 1969, as Native American / American Indian departments and programming were gaining traction in the United States, Dakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. wrote *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988) wherein he addresses, "Anthropologists and Other Friends." Because extractive disciplines like Anthropology do not put Indigenous Peoples' lives and health as their reason for existence, Deloria asked: "The question for Indian people, and the ultimate question for Americans is: What effect will it [these books and texts] have over the lives of [Indigenous] people?" (99).
3. I use the term *Indigenous* throughout to refer to a collective of peoples that include Native Americans, American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives (currently in the United States), as well as First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in what is currently Canada. When applicable, I will reference distinct Nations, like Diné or Dakota, for example. Cherokee scholar, Daniel Heath Justice writes in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018), "The capital 'I' is important here, as it affirms a distinctive political status of peoplehood, rather than describing an exploitable commodity, like an 'indigenous plant' or a 'native mammal.' The proper noun affirms the status of a subject with agency, not an object with a particular quality" (6). Similarly, the journal *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education, & Society* writes, "By spelling 'indigenous' with a lower case 'i' we un/knowingly reproduce dominant writing traditions that seek to minimize and subjugate Indigenous knowledges and people." See <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/about/submissions>.
4. The Medicine Line refers to the international border that currently divides Canada and the United States. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission "provided those directly or indirectly affected by the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools system with an opportunity to share their stories and experiences." See <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525>. In 2015, they published their final report, which included 94 calls to action, [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf).
5. See Deborah Madsen, "Out of the Melting Pot, Into the Nationalist Fires: Native American Literary Studies in Europe," *American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2011): 353–71.
6. At Mount Royal University (MRU) there are study abroad opportunities, whereby professors offer MRU courses and travel with students internationally (sometimes locally). These are not exchange programs. See [https://www.mtroyal.ca/ProgramsCourses/FacultiesSchoolsCentres/InternationalEducation/InternationalOpportunities/inter\\_field\\_studytours.htm](https://www.mtroyal.ca/ProgramsCourses/FacultiesSchoolsCentres/InternationalEducation/InternationalOpportunities/inter_field_studytours.htm).
7. The manuscript (MS 1312) is listed "undated," though Frank Usbeck cites it as published in 1890. See James Owen Dorsey and James Mooney, "Aryan Elements in Indian Mythology." Box 67, MS 1312 in *Guide to MS 4800 James O. Dorsey Papers, circa 1870–1956, bulk 1870–1895* by Lorain Wang, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, 2014.
8. Jo-ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Jo-ann Archibald, Jenny Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo, editors, *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology* (London: Zed Books, 2019); Markus Hallensleben, "Polylogues at the Intersections Series: (Re)imagining a 'Good Life' As a Settler Scholar: How Can We Decolonize and Indigenize European Studies Through Indigenous Storywork?" *Convivial Thinking*, October 1, 2022, <https://convivialthinking.org/index.php/2022/10/01/polylogues-at-the-intersections-series-reimagining-a-good-life-as-a-settler-scholar-how-can-we-decolonize-and-indigenize-european-studies-through-indigenous-storywork/>.
9. Priscilla Layne, "Decolonizing German Studies While Dissecting Race in the American Classroom," in *Diversity and Decolonization in German Studies*, ed. Regine Criser and Ervin Malakaj (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 83–100.

10. Layne, "Decolonizing German Studies," 87.
11. I prefer Turtle Island over the North American Continent, as it is inclusive, eliminating nation state borders. See <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/turtle-island>.
12. The creation of Canada did not happen until 1867.
13. Thomas W. Krause, "Mapping Native Moderns: Europe and Space in the Native American Novel" (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 2021), 13, [https://shareok.org/bitstream/handle/11244/329516/2021\\_Krause\\_Thomas\\_Dissertation.pdf?sequence=8&isAllowed=y](https://shareok.org/bitstream/handle/11244/329516/2021_Krause_Thomas_Dissertation.pdf?sequence=8&isAllowed=y).
14. Frank Usbeck, "Learning from 'Tribal Ancestors': How the Nazis Used Indian Imagery to Promote A 'Holistic' Understanding of Nature Among Germans," *ELOHI: Peuples Indigènes Et Environment*. Presses Universitaires Bordeaux, (2013): 45–60, here 45. Usbeck's quote references Rudolf Conrad's "Mutual Fascination. Indians in Dresden and Leipzig," in *Indians and Europe. An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays*, edited by Colin G. Calloway, Gerd Gemünden, and Susanne Zantop (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 455–73.
15. Elizabeth Grenier, "Wie Indigene Kanadas Literatur bereichern," *Deutsche Welle*. October 14, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/de/frankfurter-buchmesse-2020-gastland-kanada-indigene-literatur/a-55260777>.
16. Ellen Schüler, "Bücher indigener Schriftsteller aus Nordamerika in deutscher und/oder französischer Übersetzung," <https://kotat.de/buecher.html>.
17. Renate Eigenbrod, "Transplanting Indigenous Literature: A Trajectory of Understanding," *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien* 30, no. 1 (2010): 86–100, here 87.
18. Martina Seifert, "Selecting Canadiana for the Young: The German Translation of English Canadian Children's Literature," in *Translating Canada: Charting the Institutions and Influences of Cultural Transfer: Canadian Writing in Germany*, ed. Reingard M. Nischik and Luise Von Flotow-Evans (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2007), 219–42, here 226.
19. Obituary for Dr. Renate Eigenbrod at the University of Manitoba website, accessed December 30, 2023, [https://umanitoba.ca/centres/creative\\_culture/media/Renate\\_passing.htm](https://umanitoba.ca/centres/creative_culture/media/Renate_passing.htm).
20. Richard van Camp, *Dreckige Engel*, Hörspiel, WDR, 2008, <https://archive.org/details/dreckige-engel>.
21. Seifert, "Selecting Canadiana," 220.
22. Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and About Indigenous Peoples* (Edmonton: Brush Education, 2018); Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018).
23. Ahéhee' Sara F. Hall, President of the GSA, for bringing this to my attention.
24. "Intersections of Identity: The Jewish Indigenous Experience," *Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust*, June 13, 2022, <https://mjhnyc.org/blog/intersections-of-identity-the-jewish-indigenous-experience/>.
25. David S. Koffman dedicated a chapter to this. See "The Unsettling of Canadian Jewish History: Towards a Tangled History of Jewish-Indigenous Encounters," in *No Better Home? Jews, Canada, and the Sense of Belonging*, ed. David S Koffman, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 81–113.
26. Ilana Zackon, "'Little Bird' Called on Jewish and Indigenous Writers and Actors to Tell the Story of a Child Caught in the Sixties Scoop," *The Canadian Jewish News*, May 24, 2023, <https://thecjn.ca/arts/little-bird-called-on-jewish-and-indigenous-writers-and-actors-to-tell-the-story-of-a-child-caught-in-the-sixties-scoop/>.
27. Debra Yeo, "They Woke Up with Four Kids. By the End of the Day, They Had One. Inside the Devastating New 'Sixties Scoop' Drama 'Little Bird,'" *The Toronto Star*, May 25, 2023, updated July 19, 2023, [https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/television/they-woke-up-with-four-kids-by-the-end-of-the-day-they-had-one/article\\_d2acb83-beab-5650-bbf5-12439e7f9ddc.html](https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/television/they-woke-up-with-four-kids-by-the-end-of-the-day-they-had-one/article_d2acb83-beab-5650-bbf5-12439e7f9ddc.html).
28. Zackon, "Little Bird."
29. Rivka Campbell, "How Jennifer Podemski Blends Jewish and Indigenous Generational Trauma in Her New TV Show 'Little Bird,'" *Rivkush Podcast, The Canadian Jewish News*, May 28, 2023, <https://thecjn.ca/podcasts/how-jennifer-podemski-blends-jewish-and-indigenous-generational-trauma-in-her-new-tv-show-little-bird/>.

30. Zackon, "Little Bird."
31. Regan Treewater, "'Little Bird' Thoughtfully Explores Identity, Self-Definition and the Sixties Scoop," *Alberta Jewish News*, June 15, 2023, <https://albertajewishnews.com/little-bird-thoughtfully-explores-identity-self-definition-and-the-sixties-scoop/>.
32. Madison Jackson explains, "Yiddish is actually more closely related to German and Slavic languages than it is to Hebrew," it is "a language which originated in Europe, in the Rhineland (the loosely defined area of Western Germany), over 800 years ago, eventually spreading to eastern and central Europe," in "What is the Difference Between Yiddish and Hebrew?," *Go Abroad Online*, January 29, 2020, <https://www.goabroad.com/articles/language-study-abroad/what-is-the-difference-between-yiddish-and-hebrew>.
33. Zackon, "Little Bird."
34. Yeo, "They Woke Up with Four Kids."
35. See also Evelyn Frick, "For Jewish Indigenous actress Sarah Podemski, It's a Miracle Just to Exist," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 12, 2021, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/for-jewish-indigenous-actress-sarah-podemski-its-a-miracle-just-to-exist-681707#>.
36. Treewater, "'Little Bird' Thoughtfully Explores Identity."
37. Katharine Gammon, "Bison Slaughter's Destructive Legacy for Native Americans," *Inside Science*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.insidescience.org/news/bison-slaughter's-destructive-legacy-native-americans>.
38. M. Scott Taylor, "Buffalo Hunt: International Trade and the Virtual Extinction of the North American Bison," *American Economic Review* 101 (2011): 3162–95, here 3182.
39. Taylor, "Buffalo Hunt," 3168.
40. Sandra Styres, "Reconciliation: Reconciling Contestation in the Academy," *Power & Education* 12, no. 2 (2020): 157–72, here 157.
41. Eva Jewel and Ian Mosby, eds., *Calls To Action Accountability: A 2022 Status Update On Reconciliation* (Toronto: Yellowhead Institute, 2022), 5.
42. Narratives of "Indigenous deficiency" comes from Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, 2. On Code Talkers: "In World War II, the United States depended heavily on Native American Languages to turn the tide of the war, many Native American soldiers from over twenty tribes were Code Talkers, including the Assiniboin [sic], Cherokee, Cheyenne, Choctaw, Comanche, Cree, Crow, Fox, Hopi, Kiowa, Menominee, Navajo, Ojibwe, Oneida, Osage, Pawnee, Sauk, Seminole, and the Sioux." Kauffman and Associates, Inc. "Native Language Revitalization," Bureau of Indian Affairs, Literature Review, August 2023, 44, [https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/in-line-files/bia\\_native\\_american\\_revitalization\\_lit\\_review\\_draft\\_08182023.pdf](https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/in-line-files/bia_native_american_revitalization_lit_review_draft_08182023.pdf).
43. Renae Watchman, Carrie Smith, and Markus Stock, "Building Transdisciplinary Relationships: Indigenous and German Studies," *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 55, no. 4 (2019): 309–27, here 316.