

Charting Comparative Indigenous Traditions

CHADWICK ALLEN

For two decades or more, we have seemed just on the verge of developing a truly comparative Native American and Indigenous literary studies. Imagining this near possibility, we conceive future scholarly projects in diverse, sometimes multidirectional, even multidimensional forms. Most readily, we conceive such projects within and across a multitribal Native North America and its manifold Indigenous survivances (to borrow Gerald Vizenor's term for survival as active presence); typically, that means explorations within and across the predominantly English-speaking settler nation-states of the United States and Canada, with (only) occasional forays into Indigenous Mexico. Bilingual scholars can conceive projects more expansively within and across tribal, national, and colonial contingencies of a larger Turtle Island known as the Western Hemisphere. Some of us imagine projects expanding further west into the vast routes and complex networks of Oceania's sea of islands (to borrow Epeli Hau'ofa's term for an inclusive understanding of the Pacific and its diverse peoples). And some of us imagine crossing Indigenous affinities and distinctions within what are now the predominantly anglophone settler nation-states of not only the United States and Canada but also Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand; or aspiring toward conceptions of an Indigenous "global" that expand to include multilingual destinations within and across northern Europe, parts of Asia, and parts of the Middle East and Africa. Others explore new opportunities for Indigenous self-representation within and across diverse mediascapes – the alphabetic and the visual, but also the sonic and the tactile – within and across technologies and artistic traditions, cyberspace, and built environments. But always we seem to be laying a groundwork, building a foundation, setting a stage for an anticipated *next* generation of scholars sufficiently motivated and adequately prepared to move these and

other “comparative” projects forward and to fully center the Indigenous within broader critical discourses.

Thus far, ideas about the comparative, the global, or the trans-Indigenous remain tangential to the mainstream of Native American literary studies, especially as practiced within US institutions. At best, such ideas are understood as possible supplements to the “real” work of scholarship focused on particular Indigenous authors or texts, particular tribes or nations, particular theoretical or methodological approaches, and so forth; sometimes, such ideas are questioned as possible threats to the vital work of documenting and supporting particular Native American political, intellectual, and artistic sovereignties. As I and others have argued elsewhere, part of the problem is the academy’s pervasive and largely unquestioned conception of *comparison*, which, despite shelves of theory and decades of practical experience to the contrary, continues to imagine scholars occupying idealized, “objective” positions in relation to the literary, artistic, and/or cultural objects they place into productive conversations. Another challenge is the conventional organization of advanced training in specific literatures, languages, arts, and cultures, especially within research-intensive universities in the United States, which continues to work against the kinds of broad preparation necessary for comparative, global, or trans-Indigenous approaches. As long as these limited horizons of possibility remain the norm, our work will remain largely if not exclusively within the confines of the settler nation-state and the colonial imaginary. Only when comparative, global, and trans-Indigenous approaches become fundamental to the work of Native American and Indigenous literary studies will we be able to think outside the asymmetrical power relations and rigid hierarchies of the Indigenous–settler binary.¹

In what follows, I offer examples of comparative, global, and/or trans-Indigenous reading practices already within the realm of the possible. I begin with an extended contextualization and “literary” analysis of a work of carving, painting, inlay, and assemblage, along with this sculpture’s paratextual signage – a juxtaposition of explanatory, pictorial, and poetic texts – and its specific installation within the space of an academic and public museum. Building from this sustained attention to a complex work of multimedia Indigenous art, I suggest a range of possible comparative, global, and/or trans-Indigenous projects based in engagements with alphabetic literatures. Both the sculptural and the alphabetic examples expose ways in which the

¹ Elsewhere I examine in some depth potential relationships among ideas about “transnational” and “trans-Indigenous” studies. See Allen (2012b, 2014, 2017b).

work of contemporary artists and writers elucidates neither Indigenous stasis nor Indigenous isolation – as colonial stereotypes continue to assert – but rather Indigenous connections to wider worlds, often in multiple ways simultaneously, and often explicitly within processes of real and imagined travel. In these examples, artists and writers center the Indigenous in their works in terms of the cultures, histories, and aesthetics they reference and engage, but also in the very conceptions of space, place, movement, and time their works evoke and, indeed, enact.

Movements in Place: Fred Graham Sings the Trans-Indigenous

Although scholarship in Native American and Indigenous literary studies typically engages print texts produced within alphabetic literatures written primarily in English, many scholars find inspiration in other Indigenous arts practices and in thinking across Indigenous understandings of aesthetics. In the introduction to *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*, for instance, I perform a close reading of the inspiring mixed-media sculpture *Whakamutunga (Metamorphosis)* by acclaimed Maori artist Fred Graham (Ngati Koroki). Carved and assembled in 2005, the piece was featured in the 2006 trans-Indigenous exhibit *Manawa – Pacific Heartbeat: A Celebration of Contemporary Maori and Northwest Coast Art* staged at the Spirit Wrestler Gallery in Vancouver, Canada. Through artistic abstraction, Graham records a personal and professional history of decades of trans-Oceanic travel that enabled multiple interactions, on both sides of the Pacific, with Native American artists from the Northwest Coast of Canada and the United States. The piece also suggests the generative possibilities of multiple Indigenous juxtapositions within a single work: Graham's figure of a diving whale enacts processes of literal and symbolic transformations – from Northwest Coast American Indian to New Zealand Maori form and design – as day crosses to night and as the diving figure crosses the Earth's equator to traverse and connect an Indigenous Pacific.²

Graham's choice of the whale as transformative figure for Indigenous travel and the cultural connections and artistic collaborations it enables was not without precedent in 2006. A decade earlier, in 1996, Graham had assembled a similarly evocative figure, also marked with a bilingual title, *Te Waiata O Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (Song of the Pacific Ocean)*. This larger, freestanding sculpture

² See Allen (2012a, xxii–xxvi).

was commissioned by the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, located on the University of Washington campus in Seattle, to welcome visitors to the museum's permanent exhibit *Pacific Voices: Worlds within Our Community*. The exhibit celebrates broad connections among diverse Pacific peoples from the Americas, Oceania, and Asia who currently reside in the Puget Sound region and traditional Coast Salish territories of the Seattle metropolitan area. Similar to his 2006 piece, Graham's 1996 sculpture exemplifies the possibilities of trans-Indigenous artistic abstraction: a condensed figure for and concentrated presentation of complex ideas about Indigenous-to-Indigenous encounters, exchanges, and collaborations produced outside fixed, stereotypical colonial binaries of evolving settlers versus static natives, cosmopolitan centers versus isolated peripheries, or major international arts traditions versus minor traditions of local craft.

Entering the Burke Museum through its main doors, viewers descend a flight of stairs to access the *Pacific Voices* exhibit located on the lower level. A world map extends the length of the large wall immediately to the right; notably, the expansive blue of the Pacific Ocean, rather than the green of the North American continent, is positioned at center. A series of evenly spaced vertical poles stand before this painted map, with a series of black-and-white photographs of Oceanic and Asian peoples fixed to the poles, exemplifying Hau'ofa's conception of a sea of islands inhabited by diverse but connected peoples (see fig. 24.1). Immediately to the left, under the heading "Who Are We?", signage mounted on a narrow exhibit wall announces:

We are people of the Pacific.
 Our ancestors come from around this ocean;
 We and our children live near Seattle today.
 We each have a different history, so we tell different stories,
 But we all value
 our languages and stories,
 our teachers,
 our ceremonies.
 These are the sources of our cultures.
 They make us unique and give us a sense of our identity.
 Come learn about what makes us who we are.

Based on its approximately six-foot height, black color, torpedo shape, and prominent dorsal fin, viewers grasp that Graham's sculpture represents the abstracted figure of a whale. Moving closer, viewers see that the large, projecting fin is carved in shallow relief with curving, ovoid figures in the distinctly Northwest Coast tradition of formline. At this closer distance,



Figure 24.1 Long view of Graham sculpture and world map. *Pacific Voices* exhibit, Burke Museum. Photograph by Chadwick Allen.

viewers also see that the three-dimensional sculpture is not singular, but rather a composite figure consisting of two torpedo-shaped, carved pieces of wood. These pieces potentially fit together, like the top and bottom of a carved box or other container. The top of this container is the striking figure of the whale with the carved dorsal fin, painted black; behind it, offset several inches to the right, the bottom of this container is a carved canoe – in Graham’s Maori tradition, a *waka* (a term that can refer to any kind of “vessel”). Understood in relation to the canoe, the whale’s triangular fin may reference the triangular sails of Oceanic voyaging. The two roughly six-foot pieces stand upright in a round wood base. Positioned about a foot behind the sculpture, the narrow exhibit wall displays three small signs, mounted inconspicuously to the far right, but primarily serves as a backdrop for the figures’ shadows.

Despite the exhibit wall, visitors can walk three-quarters of the way around the figures, allowing views from behind and thus allowing confirmation that the canoe features a narrow vertical gap cut through its hull. The wooden canoe is simultaneously a slit drum: a musical instrument found neither on

the Northwest Coast nor in Aotearoa, but prominent in other parts of Oceania, such as Samoa and Tonga. Examining the gap again from the concave inside of the hull, viewers note, first, that Graham has painted the inside of the slit white and, second, that he has carved and also painted white an elongated figure of a *koru*, an unfurling fern frond or spiral, that begins at the canoe's bow (the apex of the slit drum) and extends along the right gunwale. Linked by the white paint to the slit, this *koru*, a distinctive feature of Maori carving and decoration, may also represent the abstracted figure of a spiraling conch shell, prominent as a musical instrument – a shell trumpet – across many Oceanic cultures. Viewing the gap once again from the convex underside of the canoe/drum/trumpet, viewers also look into the concave interior of the whale, and from this vantage viewers see that, on either side of the whale's hollow center, Graham has carved into the wood a series of thin vertical lines, suggesting the whale's filtering baleen. Viewers also see that, similar to the slit cut down the center of the canoe hull, Graham has drilled a series of holes down the center of the whale. Moving around to the whale's painted back, viewers now note that, in addition to a blowhole positioned at the top of its head, above the dorsal fin, the whale features a series of four additional holes positioned in a line down the center of its back, below the fin. Just as the canoe is simultaneously a slit drum and shell trumpet, the torpedo-shaped whale is simultaneously a flute – perhaps a Maori *koauau* or *putorino*, perhaps a Native American flute, perhaps both. Viewers also note additional carving and painting on the interiors of the bottom/stern of both the whale/flute and canoe/drum/shell. At the bottom of the whale, below the lines of baleen, Graham has carved a Y-shaped, fluked tail; this tail forms the bottom of the narrow hollow that traces the whale's vertical spine and then opens into a larger, triangular hollow at the whale's head – forming the figure of a canoe paddle in the concave space of the whale's wood interior. Below the grip of this interior paddle, Graham has carved and painted customary figures from Northwest Coast formline that echo and extend those on the dorsal fin, a black ovoid above a red V-shape – perhaps suggesting a beaked mouth and an eye. At the facing stern of the canoe, below the elongated white tail of the *koru* and cut slit of the drum, Graham has carved a stylized figure of a human face, painted black with distinctly Maori full-facial moko (tattooing) (fig. 24.2).³

³ Graham's paint palette of black, red, and white can suggest either Maori or Northwest Coast traditions, or both.



Figure 24.2 Middle view of Graham sculpture, shadows, and signage. *Pacific Voices* exhibit, Burke Museum. Photograph by Chadwick Allen.

I describe Graham's sculpture at this level of detail to indicate how the composite figure requires multiple views – how visitors must move their eyes and bodies around the installation – in order to see its full complexity and interpret its potential meanings. Up close, viewed and reviewed from multiple angles, Graham's abstract figure is revealed to be more than it first appears when encountered at a distance and framed by the world map, photos, and initial signage.

The sculpture's own signage, announcing its bilingual title, is relatively small, requiring readers to stand close. The installation also includes a small black-and-white photo of Graham in the act of *whakairo*, carving with mallet and chisel, and a brief poem written by Graham, "Pacific Voices," both mounted on the narrow exhibit wall behind the composite figure. The poem – which might be understood as a song or chant – reads in full:

Voices – sounds – singing chanting
Pacific sounds – volcanoes, sea wind
Human voices communication between people.
Human voices singing and chanting
accompanied by

conch shell – Hawai'i
 flute – Aotearoa
 drums from hollowed out log – Tonga and Samoa
 drums stretched animal skin – North America
 Voices: communication: canoe
 A common communicator between the
 northern hemisphere and southern
 hemisphere – the whale.

Exploring the power of human voices and their relationships to other forms of Oceanic communication, and situating these multiple voices between worlds below (volcanoes) and above (sea wind), the poem both clarifies and complements potential meanings of Graham's sculpture. The circular wood base, for instance, is more than functional: it signifies as the stretched hide of a Native American drum, yet another voiced instrument. The midpoint of the thirteen-line poem falls at line seven, "flute – Aotearoa." Although Graham's Maori perspective is centered by this poetic fulcrum, with six lines above balanced by six lines below, the poem's notable punctuation – the eight elongated dashes and two amplifying colons, dispersed across lines one, two, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, and thirteen – simultaneously emphasizes connections *across* the Pacific. Anchored in Aotearoa, Graham's poem, like his sculpture, is structurally linked to Hawai'i, to Tonga and Samoa, to North America. In line ten, Graham places the set of colons – symbols used in alphabetic writing and in the abstract language of mathematics to denote relationships – to explicitly connect human communication (those diverse *Pacific Voices*) to the movement of the "canoe," a technology deployed by Indigenous peoples across the vast Pacific Ocean. Similar to human voices, canoes transport meaning across distances. In line thirteen, Graham explicitly connects the communicative technology of the canoe to the communicative figure of the whale, another symbol of movement that crosses the Pacific, and specifically of movement that is cyclical and migratory, that crosses and re-crosses, and thus links Northern and Southern hemispheres. Graham's poem illustrates how human voices and technologies anchored in Aotearoa are linked not only to other human voices and technologies located across the Pacific but also to their other-than-human kin. The final dash that links "hemisphere" to "the whale" – perhaps implying "whale's" near-homographic pun, "whole" – suggests Graham's figures are two halves of an elongated sphere, two halves of a microcosm and complete (Indigenous) world.

In the 2014 retrospective of his life and work, *Fred Graham: Creator of Forms / Te Tohunga Auaha*, written by Maria De Jong in collaboration with the artist, Graham states, "There are many different ways we communicate in the

Pacific, through songs and drums; whales communicate with each other as they travel between the northern and southern hemispheres” (82). Whales model communication in and as travel. In his commentary, Graham also offers insight into one of the more ambiguous details of his sculpture: “The painted face [on the interior stern of the canoe] refers to Paikea’s journey to Aotearoa on the back of a whale” (83). Paikea is the illustrious Polynesian ancestor known as the Whale Rider. When his waka is destroyed at sea, Paikea is rescued by a whale, which assists him in completing his journey and becoming a founding ancestor for East Coast Maori. Here we might recall that Graham has carved the absent presence of a canoe paddle into the interior of his whale, indicating the creature’s guiding and propulsive roles in Paikea’s transformation. We might further note that, from a Maori perspective, Paikea’s whale is also a *taniwha*, a water-based, shape-shifting protector and guardian spirit. Graham’s comments emphasize communication and travel, and they link human technologies to both natural and spiritual worlds.

An additional detail of Graham’s sculpture, demonstrating yet another technique of Pacific arts, draws similar attention, although it is not mentioned in either the poem or the commentary. Set in the back of the whale’s painted head are eight round inlays of iridescent paua shell (a cousin to abalone). Paua evokes the deep waters of the Pacific; moreover, paua inlay features prominently in Maori carving, often gifting eyes to human and spiritual figures portrayed on meeting houses, gateways, and waka (containers and canoes). Against the black background of the whale’s rounded, convex head, the light-catching circles signify bright stars twinkling in the night sky, and thus they evoke the central role played by stars and constellations in Oceanic systems of navigation. In fact, the five inlaid circles set to the right of the whale’s blowhole have been configured as the primary stars of the Southern Cross, the constellation most associated with the southern sky. As viewers move from right to left around the convex body of the whale, similar to Oceanic voyagers traveling south to north, the constellation becomes less discernible; other identifications, however, become increasingly legible. Four of the stars, for instance, realign as the bowl of the Big Dipper, the handle of which becomes visible in two circles of inlay that trail below and further to the left of the whale’s blowhole. Although the Big Dipper rides low on the horizon in the Southern Hemisphere and appears upside-down (it is more commonly known as the Plow), it features prominently in the northern sky, where it rides high. From this vantage, viewers’ eyes are also drawn to a single circle of inlay positioned above and to the left of the blowhole,



Figure 24.3 Close-up of paua shell inlay on back of whale's head and painted koru on canoe gunwale. Photograph by Chadwick Allen.

near the top of the whale's torpedo-shaped head, which suggests Polaris, the Northern Hemisphere's orienting North Star (see fig. 24.3). Graham's sculpture activates the movements of viewers, in other words, to simulate the experiences of Oceanic voyagers, for whom the night sky shifts, transitions, and transforms as *waka* traverse the Pacific's trans-hemispheric expanse. Viewers familiar with Oceanic cultures may contemplate, too, that in addition to guiding lights for navigation, stars signify the eyes of guiding ancestors.

Taken together, these elements point up the importance of the precise installation and siting of Graham's sculpture within the exhibit space of the museum. Upon first approach, viewers see only an abstracted but still mimetic figure, a generic whale in conversation with the vast Pacific Ocean and its diverse peoples. It is only when viewers physically shift position, altering the distance and angle of their visual perspective, that the complexity of Graham's composite figure is revealed: the Northwest Coast whale is also a *waka*, simultaneously a container (a *waka huia*, an often elaborately carved and inlaid container for *taonga*, prized possessions) and a vessel (an ocean-voyaging canoe), but it is also a "voiced" instrument – a drum, a flute, a shell

trumpet – and a navigational sky chart related to embodied stories of ancestral migrations (the Whale Rider) and contemporary journeys (Graham's visits to North America, his hosting of Native American artists in Aotearoa). The positioning of the sculpture before an exhibit wall, rather than within open space where it would be visible from all sides and every angle, along with the effects of directed lighting, means that it casts crisp, upright shadows that parallel the torpedo shapes of the composite figure. Like other features of the sculpture, these shadows invite changing interpretations as viewers move toward and around the installation and engage its signage: a fleet of migrating waka riding the ocean's surface; a pod of migrating whales riding deep currents below; a gathering of forces that cross human, other-than-human, and spiritual dimensions; the simultaneous presence of manifold meanings that cross, re-cross, and connect Oceanic geographies, histories, and living cultures.

Te Waiata O Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (Song of the Pacific Ocean) is intended to be encountered in motion. Its detailed perception, its nuanced understanding requires embodied and imaginative movement. Its accompanying poem/song/chant – rather than prose account, legend, or glossary – amplifies interpretive possibilities without resolving ambiguities or suggesting their exhaustion. The installation seeds rather than forecloses meaning and complication. In its juxtapositions of carving, painting, and inlay, and in its strategic siting and purposeful plays with exteriors and interiors, light and shadow, Graham's sculpture deploys Maori, Oceanic, and Native North American methods for encoding and transferring knowledge. In its design and assemblage, *Te Waiata O Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (Song of the Pacific Ocean)* enacts multiple ideas of the trans-Indigenous and enables their multiple experience.

Places (and People) in Travel: Making Indigenous Literary Studies More Global

Graham's multimedia composite figure invites trans-Indigenous reading in relation to both space and time. *Where* the piece is physically sited and *how* it interacts with its immediate environment matters. The specific events that prompted its creation in Aotearoa and its installation in the Burke Museum in Seattle in 1996 matter. The physical, psychological, and emotional experiences of movement required of viewers who wish to comprehend the figure in its complexity matter. And so on. Other installations, at different locations or in different historical moments, will produce different possibilities for the

production of meaning. I make this remark not merely as a hypothetical. As I write in early 2018, construction is underway for a significantly larger, state-of-the-art home for the 16 million objects in the Burke's collections. The new, glass-and-sustainable-wood siding, high-tech Burke, located adjacent to the current brick-and-mortar museum, is projected to welcome visitors in 2019, at which point the older, more conventional building, opened in 1962, will be demolished. The Burke's director and curators assure me that *Te Waiata O Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa* (*Song of the Pacific Ocean*) will find a home in one of the new Burke's light-filled spaces, but details of the galleries have yet to be fully determined. Whatever final decisions are made, one thing is certain: my own and other viewers' encounters with Graham's composite figure, within the 1962 structural environment and 1996 conceptual moment of the original *Pacific Voices* exhibit, will no longer be possible.⁴

Comparative, global, and/or trans-Indigenous approaches to reading alphabetic texts must acknowledge not only the potential for Indigenous juxtapositions within and across individual works of literature, but also the similar contingencies of space and time that necessarily affect analysis and interpretation. Site-specific, event-based approaches, for instance, might similarly turn to the 1990s to highlight the first large-scale gatherings of Indigenous writers held in the United States. In July 1992, during the year of the Columbus Quincentenary observations in Europe and the Americas, over 350 Indigenous writers gathered for four days on the University of Oklahoma campus in Norman to participate in "Returning the Gift: A Festival of North American Native Writers." The series of performances, workshops, and informal exchanges resulted in an anthology of poetry and prose, also titled *Returning the Gift* (1994), edited and introduced by writer and publisher Joseph Bruchac (Abenaki) with a preface by writer and University of Oklahoma professor of American Indian Studies Geary Hobson (Quapaw/Cherokee), published by University of Arizona Press with the support of the

⁴ An update from 2019: the new Burke opened with a great fanfare on Indigenous Peoples' Day in October. I am happy to report that Graham's piece occupies a pivotal position at the center of the new permanent gallery called "Culture Is Living." New signage, which I was invited to help write, reads: "Relationships Span the Globe / Te Waiata O Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (Song of the Pacific Ocean), a carving by Maori artist Fred Graham, emphasizes ancient and ongoing relationships among peoples of Oceania and the Northwest Coast. The whale is a fellow traveler and, like the canoe, a prominent cultural symbol that connects communities across vast distances. / Move around the sculpture and look closely at its many details. It is both a Northwest Coast whale and an ocean-voyaging canoe. It is also a 'voiced' instrument – a drum, a flute, a shell trumpet – and a navigational sky chart." I plan to write a follow-up essay about how Graham's piece produces meaning in its new installation.

Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures. The anthology features work by no less than ninety-one Indigenous authors. The literary festival and its groundbreaking anthology garnered renewed attention in 2017, when the twenty-fifth anniversary of “Returning the Gift” was celebrated over the Columbus Day weekend in October, again on the University of Oklahoma campus. Many original participants returned to share classic and new works; these esteemed elders were joined by a host of younger writers, scholars, and students.

Since the 1992 gathering emphasized “North America” in its title, it is not surprising that participants hailed from both the continental United States and Canada. Also in attendance, however, was a small but significant number of Mayan writers from Mexico and Guatemala, their travel to Oklahoma enabled by Victor Montejo, a Tzutujil Mayan writer who had lived in the United States since 1982 and who served on the “Returning the Gift” steering committee. In his preface to the anthology, Hobson notes that the Mayans were heartily welcomed, their work and their presence celebrated by the other Native writers (Bruchac 1994, xxvi). Even less expected, perhaps, were Quechua from Peru, as were Indigenous writers from other parts of Latin America, including Cuba and Panama. And at least one writer attended from the islands of Hawai‘i, linking the “North American” gathering not only to Central and South America but also to Oceania – marking the festival and the subsequent anthology explicitly trans-Indigenous.

While any number of pieces from the anthology can be linked to Graham’s sculpture in terms of their enactments of the trans-Indigenous, two works stand out in particular: a poem by well-known Kanaka Maoli (Hawai‘ian) writer, scholar, and activist Haunani-Kay Trask, titled to honor the festival in Oklahoma, “Returning the Gift,” and a short story by Canadian First Nations writer Jordan Wheeler (Cree/Anishinaabe/Assiniboine), titled to emphasize the exoticism of his Canadian protagonist’s experience of Aotearoa, “Volcano and Kiwi.” Similar to Graham’s composite figure, these works emerge explicitly from itineraries of trans-Indigenous travel, and each brings diverse Indigenous individuals and traditions into significant contact and exchange.

Trask dedicates “Returning the Gift” to celebrated Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan, who participated in the festival and contributed to the anthology, and whose Indigenous nation was among those forcibly removed to what is now Oklahoma, beginning in the 1830s. Across the four parts of the poem, Trask’s Hawai‘ian speaker relates her visit to “burnt” Oklahoma – a Choctaw word meaning “red earth people” – “an ocean and a half a continent away” from her island “home” (289). In part one, after establishing this felt distance, the

speaker enacts a form of trans-Indigenous exchange when she acknowledges the presence of another “poet’s voice” and quotes lines from Hogan’s then-unpublished poem “Naming the Animals” (subsequently published in *The Book of Medicines*). Although Trask does not include a citation, she quotes the lines accurately; punctuation makes the act of honoring explicit. Trask shifts emphasis, however, by rendering Hogan’s two lines as three, creating an additional break at the evocative word “edge” and drawing attention to the stark contrast of the prepositional phrases that follow. Without altering content, Trask revises semantic, structural, and emotional stress:

a poet’s voice crosses
 red clay canyons “at the edge
 of a savage country
 of law and order.”
 hope in a time of genocide. (1994, 289)⁵

Moreover, Trask’s speaker designates this other “poet’s voice” – Hogan’s quoted lines – a source of “hope” against “genocide.”

In part two, the speaker meditates on details of Oklahoma’s violent history. She lists, in particular, Indigenous nations “of Chiricahua Apache/ Chickasaw, Comanche, Cherokee,” embedding Hogan’s nation among those with names ending in “-che” and “-kee” to rhyme with “immense *tragedy* in a land / of *discovery*” (emphasis added). In part three, the speaker names one of the locations of such tragedy, Fort Sill, where the Apache leader Geronimo was “imprisoned by conquest,” as well as individuals and groups who sacrificed their freedom or their lives to colonizing forces, not only “Geronimo . . . buried in exile” but “Kiowa chiefs / singing their death songs into massacre” and “unsung warriors from disappeared nations” (Trask 1994, 289, 290). In part four, the speaker contrasts the “maple and oak” she encounters in present-day Oklahoma, their leaves fluttering in the “dry hot wind,” with the vital fruit trees of her homeland. She brings the piece to closure by revealing the significance of the poem’s – and the occasion’s – title:

no scarlet mango or crusted
 breadfruit for my Hawaiian
 eyes, only a dark wet stain
 on Indian earth, returning
 the gift of song and sorrow. (290)

⁵ In Hogan’s (1993, 40) published version, the lines read: “at the edge of a savage country / of law and order.”

In Polynesian cultures, tears cried in mourning are a “gift” both to the deceased and to those left behind, part of the ritual of grieving necessary for healing. The “dark . . . stain” on “Indian earth” is a metaphor for traumatic histories, but the fact that this earth is “wet” with tears from “Hawaiian / eyes” indicates the possibility of sustenance and renewal. At the tragic site of the first North American gathering of Indigenous writers, “wet . . . Indian earth” indicates the possibility of sustenance and renewal that is explicitly trans-Indigenous.

Wheeler’s “Volcano and Kiwi” appears deceptively simple at first glance but, similar to Graham’s composite figure, it reveals multiple layers of trans-Indigenous complexity upon closer, multi-angled inspection. And similar to Trask’s four-part poem, the story is built around an itinerary of trans-Indigenous travel and connection. The first-person narrator, a Cree and Irish mixed-blood estranged for the past “eight months” from the mother of his son, leaves Canada to attend a conference in Aotearoa New Zealand (Wheeler 1994, 315). While there, he has a brief romantic encounter with a Maori woman, who serves as something of a spiritual guide and trickster (her name Reesa derives from the Latin *risa*, “laughter”) and, remarkably, he is struck not once but twice by lightning: cosmic signs that propel him back to his homeland and, it turns out, growing family. At story’s end, upon his return to Canada and reunion with his partner, he learns that she has been pregnant and has just given birth to their second child, a daughter. The strong implication is that it has been the psychic force of this unborn daughter that has compelled the narrator to return to productive community. Space does not allow a full reading, but one point stands out as especially salient. Wheeler presents his narrator’s itinerary and his story’s narrative trajectory simultaneously in settler and Indigenous terms, creating a double coding. Within dominant geopolitics, the narrator travels from Canada to New Zealand and back to Canada. Within Indigenous perspectives, he travels from Kanata (an Iroquoian word meaning “village” or “settlement”) to Aotearoa (the Maori word for New Zealand, which translates as Land of the Long White Cloud) and back to Kanata. It is Kanata, not Canada, that “calls” him home; at story’s end, to commemorate his journey, he names his new daughter Reesa Kanata. More abstractly, this double-coded itinerary can be viewed as moving from the “local” Indigenous to the “global” Indigenous and back to the “local.” Neither movement and travel nor connection and exchange alienate the narrator from his particular Indigenous identity; on the contrary, the trans-Indigenous strengthens his significant ties to culture, homeland, and community.

Other comparative, global, or trans-Indigenous approaches might build from additional events in Indigenous publishing. We might return, for instance, to the first book of poems published by an Indigenous author in Australia, Kath Walker's *We Are Going*. In 1964, Walker harnessed the familiar conventions of British and white Australian poetry to articulate the complexities of Aboriginal experience under the conditions of an ongoing settler colonialism. Her remarkable achievement, moreover, was to defy expectations of a timeless "tradition" of Aboriginal song and story and, instead, to give voice to Indigenous experience in its modern forms and expressions – however awkward or infelicitous they may have seemed to her critics – and to expose the scandal of the Australian local through an awareness and through a vocabulary defiantly international in its scope. Walker's achievement warrants sustained analysis on its own and within its particular local and national contexts, but it can also be read within a series of generative juxtapositions, which reveal broader contexts of a globally significant, trans-Indigenous 1964. In addition to *We Are Going*, Indigenous first publications from 1964 include Hone Tuwhare's *No Ordinary Sun*, the first book of poems published by a Maori author in Aotearoa New Zealand, and Gerald Vizenor's *Raising the Moon Vines: Original Haiku in English*, the first book of poems published by a contemporary Native American author in the United States (although Vizenor had self-published an earlier volume of haiku in 1962).⁶

More recent achievements in Indigenous publishing include the much-anticipated completion of Chamorro poet Craig Santos Perez's award-winning poetic sequence *from unincorporated territory* (2008, 2010, 2014, and 2017). Similar to Walker's first book published in 1964, Perez's innovative, four-book sequence, centered in the multiple colonial histories of Guam, can be productively analyzed within multiple local as well as national and international contexts. Additional interpretations become possible, however, when the books are juxtaposed with other achievements in Indigenous long-form poetry. A series of genre-based juxtapositions might follow an itinerary that begins by placing Perez's *from unincorporated territory* in conversation with Acoma poet Simon Ortiz's similarly titled *from Sand Creek*, moves to Maori poet Robert Sullivan's similarly Oceanic-focused *Star Waka*, then to Cherokee, Huron, and Creek poet Allison Hedge Coke's similarly braided and performance-based *Blood Run*. And then continues to move.

⁶ See Allen (2017a).

Strong examples of the wide-ranging intellectual possibilities of trans-Indigenous literary studies can be found in the October 2014 special issue of *Theatre Journal*, edited by Ric Knowles, focused on “Trans-Indigenous Performance,” and in the award-winning Summer 2016 special issue of *Biography*, guest edited by Alice Te Punga Somerville (Maori), Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), and Noelani Arista (Hawai‘ian), focused on “Indigenous Conversations about Biography.” The latter features eight substantive essays plus sixteen response pieces by a total of twenty-four Indigenous scholars and artists, working in diverse disciplines and associated with the continental United States, Canada, Hawai‘i, Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and Fiji. We have barely begun to imagine these and other kinds of purposeful Indigenous juxtapositions, which prioritize reading *across* and *through* multiple, diverse, and distinct Indigenous texts and contexts, rather than endlessly re-centering the colonial legacies and Indigenous–settler binaries of particular nation-states. Opportunities for reading abound. When we center our work in Indigenous methodologies and conversations, Indigenous histories and cultures, Indigenous technologies and performances, we both reveal and illuminate complex worlds of past, present, and future Indigenous presence.

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