

The Pursuit of Rhetorical Sovereignty in Indigenous Futurisms



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The greatest technical problem facing the writer of scientific fiction is that of securing belief.

–James O. Bailey, *Pilgrims Through Space and Time*, 203.

Imagining potential futures, or alternative worlds in any time, is not merely an exercise of imagining; I assert it as an act of what Scott Lyons calls rhetorical sovereignty...

–Chelsea M. Vowel, *Where No Michif Has Gone Before*, 10.

I write this from Cession 180, the swath of so-called Northwestern Indiana from which the Neshnabék (Potawatomi) were expelled by force of arms not quite two centuries ago; I write as a settler with insufficient knowledge of Indigenous histories and cultures, an academic with much to learn. I hope not to have misrepresented the Cherokee, Ojibwe, Ohkay-Owingeh, Métis, Nishnaabeg, Dene, and Apache persons and peoples spoken of here. In view of a long history of struggles for sovereignty, I am propelled into thought by the phenomenon—both “new” and “not so new” (Dillon 2)—of Indigenous peoples reaching for the cultural “toolkit” (Doctorow) of science fiction, fantasy, and horror, fields in which they have been historically unwelcome. My sense is that while the very genre structures comprising the “toolkit” are also a “structure of settlement” (Warburton 34), the rhetoric of the fantastic affords them tools with which to pursue sovereignty.

Science fiction, writes Darko Suvin, is “a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment” (7-8). This influential definition, excluding fantasy and horror as inferior forms, has been contested on several grounds, not the least of which concerns its somewhat naïve empiricism. The question of who determines what “the author’s empirical environment” is, and therefore what is “strange” to it, becomes even more difficult in a settler colonial context, where colonial accounts of empirical truth are imposed over and against the accounts given by Indigenous people. All of this complicates our very understanding of what counts as science fiction at all. To give just one example, in Kai Minosh Pyle’s (Métis/Baawiting Nishnaabe) “How to Survive the Apocalypse for Native Girls” (2020), we are told the following explanatory story about how the apocalypse in question came to be:

We call that time the hungry years not just because people often went without enough food, but also because there was often another kind of hunger. The kind of hunger that causes people to do terrible things: wiindigo hunger.... Wiindigoog are more than just

cannibals. They are possessed by a hunger that only increases every time they try to fill it. That hunger can be for anything—food, drugs, sex, love, but most of all, power. (85)

Why does violently antisocial behavior (“terrible things”) need an explanation beyond ordinary hunger? Why are Wiindigoog an explanation rather than a thing-to-be-explained? These questions are perhaps better formulated as “for whom”: for whom is a complete breakdown of social norms in times of material want the expected outcome? For whom are Wiindigoog—once-human monsters with hearts of ice—simply another item to be found among an inventory of “the furniture of the universe” (Bensusan and Ribeiro Cardoso 287¹)? It is tempting to answer that a certain group, the “kinship-based” Northern Algonquians (a linguistic/cultural group which includes Pyle’s Nishnaabe family), is the collective subject for whom the Wiindigoog are a given, and that members of non-“kinship-based” societies, “modern” societies in which the social fabric is already rather tenuous, are the ones who are ready to accept the premise of social “apocalypse” without much further explanation. The late settler anthropologist David Graeber cautions against such an easy compartmentalization (51-53); it is quite possible one might encounter Nishnaabeg who regard Wiindigoog as mere legend or settlers who don’t find post-apocalyptic Mad Max scenarios credible. If it is not so easy to determine the whoms in question for either case, it is clearer that we are dealing with some fundamental questions about what counts as an “alternative” framework—in other words, a “heterocosm” (Stableford) or “secondary world” (Wolf)—and perhaps more importantly, what is the nature of the “primary world” in which the author and the readers are situated, of “reality” as such.

Like perhaps most definitions of interest, Suvin’s definition of SF is an attempt to set the terms for all future discussion of its subject—a largely successful attempt, in fact; even the micro-genre of critiques of Suvin bears ironic witness to the persuasiveness of its rhetoric. Scott Lyons speaks of a “rhetorical imperialism” which consists in “the ability of dominant powers to assert control of others by setting the terms of debate,” for “he who sets the terms sets the limits” (452). In contrast, Lyons defines “rhetorical sovereignty” as “the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires,” to exercise control over the parameters of the discourses in which they are involved (449). Where SF is concerned, Suvin has set the parameters of discussion in ways that immediately problematize a good deal of Indigenous futurist writing, in so far as Indigenous futurists often make reference not only to the future but to “old things that rumbled under the surface of the world,” as Adam Garnet Jones (Cree/Métis/Danish, 2020) puts it (41), often placing such pieces of ontological furniture as the Wiindigoog, ghosts, and spirits of all kinds on the same metaphysical ground as the more common furnishings of science fiction. The place that SF reserves for scientific knowledge as explanatory principle is shared by the wisdom of grandmothers, by oral traditions and visions. As Blaire Topash-Caldwell summarizes: “Indigenous science fiction privileges autochthonous, localized, and historically situated knowledge systems instead of Western science with its ties to the Enlightenment in Europe” (46). For Suvin, this would place these works in the category of the “subliterature of mystification,” presenting

“estrangement” without the rational, scientifically-grounded, materialist character of “cognition” (8-9).

My intention here is not to defend the claim of Indigenous futurisms to be considered as part of the genre of science fiction (or fantasy or horror, for that matter); rather, I want to look at how these futurisms have pushed not only at genre boundaries but also at ontological and epistemological boundaries. In particular, to borrow Farah Mendlesohn’s question, I want to see how this kind of transgression of colonial borders is effected *rhetorically*—how Indigenous futurist writers persuade skeptical readers from both settler and Native communities to “accept as normal” accounts of things which, to readers with cognitivist biases, appear “fantastical.” In short, I want to investigate how Indigenous futurist writings strive to assert their rhetorical sovereignty.

Rhetorics of Incredulity

The keenest pleasures of satire may be the moments at which one *disbelieves* — keenly, explicitly, and acutely.

–Joanna Russ, *To Write Like a Woman*, 18.

One of the most common rhetorical strategies employed by Indigenous futurists appears to sidestep questions of truth and reality altogether by what I will call *rhetorics of incredulity*, strategies such as satire and irony that serve to produce disbelief. As Kristina Baudemann notes, “the comic... is an often-overlooked structuring principle in North American Indigenous literatures” (84). Trickster figures such as the Cherokees’ Jistu, a rabbit who is always disguising himself as other animals to make mischief, personify this humorous streak. Drew Hayden Taylor’s (Cherokee) “Take Us to Your Chief” (2016) adopts the guise of settler SF while also undercutting its tropes in staging the encounter of benevolent aliens, the Kaaw Wiyaa, with a group of Ojibwe men on the rez, Teddy, Tarzan, and Cheemo—just three buddies intent on quietly sitting on couches, fishing and drinking beer. Their attitude toward the sudden arrival of extraterrestrials is not characterized by the “sense of wonder” canonized by settler SF, nor do their Ojibwe identities supply them with profound thoughts or words to match the solemnity of the occasion: one wonders whether the aliens’ unearthly appearance “must freak the girls out,” while another is reminded that he “[hasn’t] had calamari in a long time,” and a third ponders “[whether] that thing with calamari arms had farted” (140). The Chief to whose office the Kaaw Wiyaa are ultimately led is just a minor tribal bureaucrat, beneficiary of a “luxurious band office salar[y],” for whom the aliens constitute an unwanted hassle: he briefly wonders “if this was how the Beothuk and Mi’kmaq chiefs felt five hundred years ago,” but soon concludes that “[h]e’d better do something to get this thing out of the building before it triggered any lawsuits” (142-43). Hastily appointed as cultural ambassadors from Earth and ushered aboard the Kaaw Wiyaa starship, the three friends find that its interior has been revamped so as to make them “feel at home,” complete with beer and couches for fishing (144-46)—a happy ending, by their lights. “We should have done this years ago,” Cheemo reflects (146).

The comic rhetoric of Taylor's story is designed to achieve humor by reproducing a clichéd plot while subtracting from it all the lofty emotions (like "wonder") with which it is normally associated. The protagonists' responses to the irruption of a Suvinian *novum* in their midst all fail to match the occasion in an unexpected way, not unlike the reaction of Gogol's barber Ivan Yakovlevich to realizing that a customer's nose has inexplicably appeared in the bread his wife has baked for him—namely, to worry that this will get him in official trouble of some kind—or Kafka's deadpan announcement that his protagonist is now a bug. It's easy enough to see that Taylor is poking fun at the whole drama of the First Contact conceit, but at the same time, he is sabotaging romanticized versions of the *indian* as a noble people, stoic in the face of their own tragic "vanishing," etc. In both of these senses, the primary rhetorical strategy of "Take Us to Your Chief" targets the smug white liberal humanism of David Brin's "Dogma of Otherness," the supposed tolerance for the new and different that purportedly establishes the superiority of Western civilization.² Taylor denies settler readers the kind of Otherness that serves to confirm the colonial Same.

The expected (colonial) scenario invoked by "Take Us to Your Chief"—the vanishing Indian is saved by the superior technology of an alien race—is exploded, here, by the story's heroes: that is, not any of the human protagonists, but the bottles of beer that insouciantly occupy the story's foreground. In Daniel Heath Justice's words, within the tragic framework of a "deficit model" for which "'real' Indigenous peoples are always Other, always diminished, always the reduced shadow of our former greatness," beer would serve as a symbol of "deficit and loss"—the firewater that destroyed the once proud people, and so on (Moreton-Robinson xiii). Settler readers are not made to witness the expected scenes of inebriated disgrace (another sign of deficit); rather, beer is merely that which pleasantly passes time. The aimless, empty time of the three Ojibwe friends, marked by the leisurely consumption of one bottle after another, is a non-productive, non-progressive temporality that is only briefly troubled by First Contact: "Tarzan realized his beer was empty, and this was definitely a time for extra beer" (139). Beer gently annihilates seriousness: the silence of the three, which so intrigues the Kaaw Wiyaa ("If I may speak freely, what truly impressed us [was] your... ability to communicate without interacting verbally. Almost a form of telepathy" [144]), is not the silence of the Taciturn Indian, a sign of great wisdom and sorrow, but a refusal to produce signs, to reproduce the narrative of deficit, to participate in the history of colonial progress. Thus it is that the friends' first instinct, in the face of historic events unfolding at their fishing spot, is "to relocate to a less historic location" (139). The story's happy ending does not see the Natives (representing, no doubt, the past of the human race) elevated into a transcendent future, à la *Cocoon* or *Close Encounters*; it presents instead a return of the Same in the form of survivance (Vizenor 15). Native Americans, Cheemo reminds us, "have done this"—survived—for a long time. The non-historical temporality of Indigenous SF satire is the temporality of stubborn immovability.

A similarly anti-chronological animus animates Craig Strete's (Cherokee) signature work, "A Horse of a Different Technicolor" (1975). Unlike Taylor, who at least ironically honors the

narrative structure of the Freytag Pyramid, Strete's New Wave-style experimentalism eschews linear temporality altogether; the narrative, such as it is, jumps around with such frequency and violence that it presents a collage more than a montage. Rather than engage in the usual settler SF exercise of worldbuilding, Strete cuts up and radically *rearranges* images of worlds, at least one of which is an (unsystematically) imagined 2074 which is never over ("2074 happened twice," we are repeatedly told), others seemingly belonging to the 1974 in which the story is written, perhaps others representing an 1870s which is never over (and perhaps never began) (77, 82). Instead of providing us with any single unified narrative voice, Strete gives us a "playback" of multiple voices, none of which seems authoritative or trustworthy (77). In Gerald Vizenor's terms, it's unclear whether any of these voices are Natives (real presences); most seem to represent *indians*, empty simulacra, parodies of Hollywood and TV images (Vizenor 15; Baudemann 94). "[W]e made and remade every dream ever played and put them on the screen," one voice tells us, while another (?) performs the endless martyrdom of fake death ("I fell off horses so well... I always fell off horses so beautifully") before yet another colonial voice (?) who admonishes an indeterminate complainant to "[r]emember, you have your place with your race, and are taped accordingly" (81, 79, 78). "Take comfort that no one ever dies," a voice instructs us (?): "Although the original telecast has ceased, we promise you shall live on in reruns and syndication" (80). As each voice replaces the last in a "*precession of simulacra*," the procession of colonial time crashes to a halt (Baudrillard 1).

Strete's rhetoric aims not at Bailey's "suspension of disbelief" (203) but at the proliferation of disbelief; by repeatedly "playing back" images of Iron Eyes Cody³ and John Wayne films, he attempts to inoculate the reader against the spectacular, phantasmatic figure of the indian. Indeed, he seems to warn us against belief in his own identity: Strete's games with authorship (e.g., writing introductions to his collections signed by the names of Jorge Luis Borges and Salvador Dalí) do nothing to assuage the doubts that have been raised concerning Strete's claims to Cherokee identity (Baudemann 77). Could the strategies that Baudemann and I identify with Native American tricksterism be, in fact, the strategies of a white man "playing Indian"? As Philip Joseph Deloria reminds us, "[p]laying Indian did not fail to call fixed meanings—and sometimes meaning itself—into question" (184).

While it would be easy to place Strete in the canon of American postmodernists such as Donald Barthelme and Robert Coover, his interest in motivating readers to resist floating signifiers of Native American identity and history is perhaps even more reminiscent of Rebecca Roanhorse's (Ohkay-Owingeh/Black) "Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience"⁴. Unlike Strete, however, whose machineries of disbelief are designed to prevent anything like identification with a character, Roanhorse draws on one of the oldest and best-known rhetorical devices of fiction by placing the settler reader within an unfamiliar subject position: "You maintain a menu of a half dozen Experiences on your digital blackboard, but Vision Quest is the one the Tourists choose the most. That certainly makes your workday easy..." The second person voice interpellates "us" into Jesse Turnblatt, a.k.a. Jesse Trueblood, a Native VR actor whose job is to provide intimate but cinematic "Experiences" of Indianness to the clientele of Sedona Sweats. The daily grind of

reenacting the most worn-out clichés for “Tourists” to “Experience” at one remove is bad enough, but the day one customer demands “something more authentic”—a friendship with the “real” Jesse, with his “aging three-bedroom ranch and a student loan—a fatal mimetic process begins: it is as if, as the indian wannabe extracts more and more of Jesse’s Native essence, the more he comes to resemble Jesse, to the point of replacing him, taking away his job, his house, his wife, and his very identity. That is to say, the white settler intruder has done all this to “us,” the readers, in so far as the second person has worked its rhetorical magic on us. On the one hand, then, the story solicits our belief in this process of cultural vampirism; on the other hand, the culmination of that process issues in this performative irony: in effect, we have had an Authentic Indian Experience™. The story has successfully simulated the experience of dispossession, erasure, Removal, and as a result, we/Jesse feel “[t]hat same stretching sensation you get when you Relocate out of an Experience,” as if we/Jesse had been electronic phantoms all along.

Rhetorics of believing

As Basil Johnston (Anishinaabe) might remind us, *w’daeb-a-wae*, “a telling of the truth,” casts our voices and words only as far as vocabulary and perception allow.

–Grace L. Dillon, “Imagining Indigenous Futurisms”, 2.

The credence in and currency of spurious representations of Indigeneity, whether romanticized, degraded, or both, is one continuing problem; the discredit attributed to Indigenous self-representations is another. Many commentators have noted this problem in connection with the very genre definitions attributed to Indigenous Futurist works: insofar as “science fiction,” “fantasy,” and “horror” denote departures from ordinary realism, do we “run the risk of trivializing Native voices and communities, of reducing lived experiences to mere superstition” by labeling them as such (Spiers 53)? Grace L. Dillon objects to this reductive reading: “our ideas of body, mind, and spirit are true stories, not forms of fantasy” (qtd. in Vowel 6). Accordingly, the pursuit of rhetorical sovereignty may also entail a *rhetoric of believing*: that is, running the engines of satirical incredulity in reverse, aiming to produce a more traditional suspension of disbelief, to evoke another kind of “wonder.”

Richard Van Camp’s (Dogrib Tłı̨chǫ Dene) “Aliens” plays a sophisticated game of believing, beginning with his first paragraph:

I wanna tell you a beautiful story. And I’ve been waiting for somebody very special to tell it to. I guess it’s no secret now: the aliens or “Sky People” are here. We can see a ship way up high: its outline. No lights. It’s like a big, dark stone in the sky and most people just watch TV or Facebook now, waiting for something to happen. Some people call them “Obelisks.” Apparently, there’s one huge ship miles high over every continent and the oceans are boiling, gently, but no fish are dying. Just simmering, and scientists are saying that the oceans and rivers are being cleansed. It’s like the “Star People”—that’s what our Elders call them—are helping us. (20)

The “ship” in question is a mute presence, “dark” and motionless; it is effectively a technological “black box,” not unlike the Monolith in Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*. This places Van Camp’s novum beyond the understanding of reader and protagonist alike, where it is safe from questioning. The silent, inscrutable alien craft, familiar to us from innumerable films from *The Day the Earth Stood Still* to *Arrival*, is a piece of “off-the-shelf” imaginary, a borrowing from what Damien Broderick has named the “sf megatext” (xi): as readers come to it already “knowing” what this is (“it’s no secret,” indeed), it requires no special argument. Recasting Indigenous concepts of “Sky People” in terms of the science accepted by settler society (“aliens”) allows a settler reader to accommodate one with the other.

Van Camp allows us to believe, for a moment, that the “beautiful story” will be about these aliens, before shifting focus to his “quiet,” “gentle” friend, Jimmy from the hardware store in Fort Smith. “I guess you could say me and Jimmy are related in the medicine way,” the narrator tells us, explaining that

they say my grandfather pulled a hummingbird of fire out of a little boy’s mouth, from under his tongue. And he showed that little boy this little bird that had been living in his mouth. And he explained this was the reason that little boy couldn’t speak like other people, and this is why his voice kept locking. And hundreds of people saw this little hummingbird that my grandfather pulled out of this little boy’s mouth, and my ehtse let that little bird go... And my grandfather walked all the way back to that little boy, and he said, “Now speak.” That little boy started to speak... And that little boy never stuttered again. (21)

This magical event will not be the primary *novum* of the overall story, either, but it is framed as what Daniel Heath Justice prefers to call a “wonder”: “Wondrous things are *other* and *otherwise*; they’re outside the bounds of the everyday and mundane, perhaps unpredictable, but not necessarily alien...” It is a wonder presented in the matter-of-fact tone that W.R. Irwin calls “quiet assertion” (69), reducing its novelty by adding it to the ordinary inventory of ontological furniture. We have been put on notice: this world is a magical kind of world, a world where this is simply the kind of thing that happens from time to time.

But Van Camp’s assertion of rhetorical sovereignty is not yet exhausted. The bulk of the story is about a somewhat over-familiar process of heterosexual courtship, in which Jimmy shyly works up the nerve to ask out Shandra. The slot of *difficult-to-believe* is no longer occupied by aliens in the sky or mysterious hummingbirds living in young boys’ throats, but by the fact that Jimmy is interested in Shandra and not her more popular sister, Roberta (22-23). A certain accumulation of banal detail—steak and lobster, banter about the old days in elementary and how the town’s changed, etc.—grounds what we might otherwise read as the fantastic, estranging elements in the bedrock of the expected, the everyday, and the already-known. The alien craft is just another local “sight” that a couple on a date might drive out to see (25). (They decide not to: “Well, I gotta see your house. I wanna see how you decorate” [26].) No, the story’s true novum (another black

box) is the revelation Shandra conveys to her friends the morning after: “Jimmy’s different... he’s *beautiful*” (27-28). In other words, “he’s what the Crees say: Aayahkwew: neither man nor woman but both”; “two-spirited... or transgender, or both, or perhaps something we’ve never heard of before — even under these new skies” (28, 30). Jimmy is the *novum*, the wonder at the heart of the story. Van Camp’s efforts have all been aimed at persuading us to imagine a Native gender/sexual identity that is beyond what “we”—settler and Native alike—know.

Yet Van Camp’s story preserves a “deficit” of Indigenous knowledge in the figure of the “something we’ve never heard of before”—an internal non-knowledge that operates as a sign of possibility. Something similar is at work in the fiction of Darcie Little Badger. In “Nkásht Íí,” Little Badger invokes the authority of ancestors:

Great-grandmother taught me everything she knew about death before it took her.

Never sleep under a juniper tree. They grow between this world and the place below.

Bury the dead properly, lest their ghosts return.

A ghost is a terrible thing.

Someday, we will all be terrible things.

Great-grandmother, you were right.

All of these warnings are borne out by the narrative that follows, as Josie and Annie investigate the death of a man’s daughter near Willowbee, Texas. This death *has* a mundane explanation: father, mother, and daughter were all in a car crash, and only the father survived. However, this account is belied by a supernatural experience: the father testifies that the infant survived the crash, but was borne away by an “owl-woman” with the mother’s face. “There are legends...” Annie murmurs, “The kind my great-grandmother knew.”

Here, the invocation of the numinous (the force of which is carried by the ellipsis that follows Annie’s “there are legends...”) is abetted by a folkloric megatext: Native or settler, we have probably heard a story like this one. “Ghosts? Huh, maybe he met La Llorona,” Josie muses. “¿Dónde están mis hijos?... It’s possible, right?” And once again, the gravity of the known grounds the otherworldly: mundane details such as empty coffee cups, cell phones, bus rides, and Best Westerns undergird the *mysterium tremendum*. The gesture of the grieving father who reaches out to grip Annie’s shoulder prompts Josie to reach for her Mace—unnecessarily, in the event, yet the same pragmatic instinct also protects her from accepting the offer of a ride from a man⁵ who then drives his pickup truck off a bridge and “into the water... [without] caus[ing] a single ripple.” This is a universe in which, for instance, “karma” seems to operate (Josie and Annie are “paid” for their investigation by lucky lottery tickets), but also one in which the driver who pulls over to offer a ride to two young Native women may be not an ordinary predator but *something worse* (ominously, his sunglasses don’t reflect their faces...). “After dark, with its baby-killing

ghosts and doomed pickup truck drivers, Willowbee seemed unbearably creepy,” Josie reflects. The reader, too, is unsettled, as “autochthonous, localized, and historically situated knowledge systems” displace modern, Western ones. In such a so-called America, it’s best to expect the unexpected, to distrust the signage, and to listen instead to one’s Apache great-grandmother.

Kai Minosh Pyle draws the dystopian scenario of “How to Survive the Apocalypse for Native Girls” from the sf megatext, saving them much of the effort of justifying and explaining broad changes to society:

Shanay’s grandma is one of the best doctors, because she was trained both Anishinaabeway and in one of the old universities before the borders broke down. She likes to joke that it’s a good thing the apocalypse happened, because that way she didn’t have to pay off her student loans, which were apparently a thing that, like money, used to be a big problem for people. (82)

Retrospection (money “*used to be* a big problem”) makes the collapse of colonial governments and capitalism and the resumption of full tribal autonomy into a *fait accompli*, no longer a distant ideal but a self-evident response to practical problems. Kinship, *inawemaagan*, offers a ready-made local communism, so that, as Mark Fisher writes, the dystopian scenario affords a small space for utopian reimagining (2).

This defense of utopian imagination is opened to critical inspection, however, as the protagonist, Nigig, struggles to distinguish between emancipatory and oppressive inheritances, to know when what the Council says reflects internalized colonialism—in this case, anti-blackness and the colonization of genders and sexualities—more than any authentic tradition. Here, questions of sovereignty are complicated by legacies of self-hatred: despite the authority of Kinship, as a two-spirit girl, Nigig and her kind are despised by some of their kin. In a tense scene, she confronts a hostile Council member, a woman from the Eagle Clan, about her rejection of Nigig’s two-spirit friend Migizi (a name which, ironically, means “bald eagle” [Livesay and Nichols]):

“You can’t exile someone just because you don’t like them,” I said hotly. “Kinship—”

“Kinship is exactly the reason why that freak had to be gotten rid of,” she spat... “They’re dead, child. No one survives long outside the protective network of the Nation.” (89-90)

Nigig’s narrative, conveyed in sixteen “instructions” for how to survive the apocalypse, culminates in a recognition of others taking part in the internal struggle (“Maybe this, too, is Kinship”) and a final instruction: “I know now that the only way to survive the apocalypse is to make your own world” (94). All of Pyle’s rhetorical craft has been in support of this utopian call to self-recreation, to the assertion of another kind of (Indigiqueer) sovereignty.

Sovereignties

The concept of sovereignty, of course, is open to multiple, competing interpretations among Native activists and artists. It is interesting to note, in this inevitably too-brief survey, that Indigenous Futurist writings participating in rhetorics of incredulity, as I have termed them, seem the least disposed to raise questions about the nature of the Indigenous sovereignty that is being sought, and that those manifesting rhetorics of believing seem to do so more often. Is this simply an artifact of selection, since the most reflexive and complicating stories were drawn from anthologies of Indigiqueer writing? How do these rhetorics respond to different historically and/or culturally specific needs? These are questions for further scholarship. What seems more certain is that the enterprises of “mak[ing] your own world” imaginatively and politically are mutually implicated.

Notes

1. Translation mine (“o mobiliário do universo”).
2. “Perhaps,” Brin muses, “we ought to be proud of America as the prime promoter of a dogma of difference and choice” (91).
3. Cody is best remembered as the “crying Indian” from the Keep America Beautiful commercial that first ran on TV in 1971.
4. Roanhorse’s claims to Native American identity, too, have been subjected to scrutiny (Agoyo, Klingensmith-Parnell) ironically, in light of the story’s fierce critique of cultural appropriation.
5. The spectre of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) hovers over this page (Carnes, personal communication).

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