

Sovereign Biopolitics: Cultivating Obedience and the Making of Docile Bodies in Seventeenth-Century *Nouvelle-France*

Abstract

Indigenous and settler colonial scholars have argued that dispossession of land was a—or even the—central tenet of settler colonialism. Yet less attention has been paid to dispossession of bodies that were intimately connected to land, which went hand in hand with dispossession of land. Put most bluntly, to populate Indigenous land requires the replacing of Indigenous bodies with settler ones, or incorporating Indigenous bodies into settler-colonial order(s). In this essay I explore how the ways in which settler-colonial founding in early seventeenth-century *Nouvelle-France* depended on management of Indigenous—especially Indigenous women’s—bodies. I argue and show that first, the material body was a central locus of power in early modern settler colonialism, and there was a specific gendered logic that intensified the regulation and management of Indigenous women’s bodies. Second, by tracing the changes brought on since early contact by colonial intervention and regulation to Indigenous practices, especially their gender and sexual practices, I argue that Indigenous women’s bodies were subjected to intense ideological control, and early modern French imperialism hinged on the control and violence against foreign—in this case Indigenous—women’s bodies. Engaging with Foucauldian biopolitical framework, I argue that sovereign power was not replaced by biopower in the eighteenth century; rather, settler sovereignty, from the early modern period on, had been biopolitical.

Sexual and gender violence against women's bodies is often taken to *symbolize* or serve as a metaphor for colonization as a whole, especially in the context of colonization of the 'New World.' On the one hand, Indigenous women still loom large in the mystifications of settler-colonial founding that attempt to mask the genocide and dispossession that continue until this day. Indigenous feminist theorist Maile Arvin (Kanaka Maoli) notes that as recently as 2018, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) declared that "Pocahontas didn't save John Smith. She saved America."¹ This bewildering statement is symptomatic of the ways in which Indigenous women continue to be posited as saviors of their colonizers and as complicit in the colonization of their own people and land. In his brilliant work that reconstructs a Native New World alongside European empires in North America, historian Michael Witgen (Anishinaabe) notes that native women such as La Malinche and Pocahontas "became metaphors that explained the fate of Native peoples in the context of the history of North America during and after the era of discovery," and "The children these women bear for the men bear for the men bringing civilization to the New World, the mixed-blood-meztizo/a, become a tangible, embodied signification of the fate of Native North America."² This reconstruction of how Indigenous women are portrayed and operating in hegemonic and prevalent discourses risks also enacting a subtle and problematic shift away from an examination of the fate of these women and their status as 'significations' and metaphors for colonization as a whole. Similarly, rape is often problematically used as a metaphor of colonization in both in academic and popular discourses.³

¹ Maile Arvin, "Colonizing Histories and Rebranding Pocahontas," *Truthout* (2018), <https://truthout.org/articles/colonizing-histories-and-rebranding-pocahontas/>. Pocahontas died in 1617 at the age of 22, long before the state known as "The United States of America" would come into being. For an Indigenous perspective on Pocahontas, see Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo), *Pocahontas: Medicine Woman, Spy, Entrepreneur, Diplomat* (New York: Harper One, 2004).

² Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 111.

³ See for example, Paul W Gates, *The Rape of Indian Lands* (New York: Arno Press, 1979). I want to clarify that this discourse is distinct from Indigenous feminists and eco-feminists' argument that violence against women and

Yet what if we do not see native women as metaphors of colonization, no matter how much explanatory power doing so assumes, but attend to the ways in which their lives, especially the corporeality of their bodies, *mattered* in the process of colonization and its settler-colonial present? What is lost if we take actual violence against Indigenous women's bodies only as metaphors? What if we take seriously the amplified status Pocahontas's material body played—and continues to play—in colonial imaginary as the actual vessel of settler-colonial founding? What if we do not elide the fact that the body of La Malinche, as the interpreter and the mother of Hernan Cortes' mixed-raced children, was the locus where violence and procreation took place at once? Does that enable us to examine settler-colonial founding differently? My answer is an affirmative one.

In this essay, I attend to and take seriously the corporality of Indigenous women's bodies, and demonstrate the ways in which it mattered *politically*. I contend that using violence and the disappearance of native women as a metaphor diverts us from examining the specific gendered and sexual logic of settler colonialism, as well as the actual colonial effects on the corporeality of native women. I do not take corporeality, or the materiality of bodies as simply given or inert, but examine the ways in which corporeality was constituted in historically and politically specific ways. That is, I examine the *materialization* of bodies through management, regulation, and cultivation. In a Butlerian vein, it means rethinking “materiality...as the effect of power, as power's most productive effect.”⁴ Following Butler, Maurizio Calbi has contended that there is

violence against nature/land is intimately connected in processes of colonization, as the latter does not metaphorize, elide, or normalize the gendered structural of colonial violence, but rather highlights and critiques it. Deborah Saidero, “Violence Against the Earth is Violence Against Women: The Rape Theme in Women's Eco-Narratives,” *Le Simplegadi* 15: 17 (2017), 263-273. I contend with this point and support it through this historically-oriented study.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, [1995]2004), xii.

no such a thing as ‘the body,’ but only particular constructions of the body.⁵ She especially emphasizes the historicity of the body and that constructions of the body always take place in specific relations of power.⁶ While I agree with and take up this feminist ethos, I believe that it is also necessary to pay attention to different understandings of the body, that is, different ways in which constructions of the body took place. It is notable that both Butler and Butlerians exclude the latter concern from their critical examinations. A decolonial investigation of the constructions and regulations of bodies, I contend, must break away with this tacit assumption that there is a monolithic understanding of the body, which translates to the unintentional erasure of Indigenous understanding(s) the body in settler-colonial contexts. Therefore, in this chapter I bring Indigenous understandings of the body into focus in my biopolitical analysis of settler colonial management and regulation of Indigenous, especially Indigenous women’s, bodies. It is in within competing, if not conflicting, understandings of the body that settlers and colonists sought to consolidate settler colonial rule by attempting to pacify and render Indigenous peoples’ bodies docile.

Witgen argues that contrary to Spanish and English colonization, “the French imagined a startlingly different New World,” one in which “Native peoples need not disappear; they might be reborn as the children of empire” and their French father.⁷ But this at once paternalistic and patriarchal logic, however, was not a universal one that affected all Indigenous peoples as such but differed greatly along gender and sex lines. I contend that if we specifically look at the interactions between the French empire and Indigenous women on Turtle island, we see that French settler colonialism shaped Indigenous women’s fate rather similarly to those affected by

⁵ Maurizio Calbi, *Approximate Bodies: Gender and Power in Early Modern Drama and Anatomy* (New York: Routledge, 2005), xiv.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁷ Michael Witgen, *An Infinity*, 112.

Spanish and English settler colonization. Within the seventeenth-century French imperial imaginary, the intimate link between imperial patriarchal sovereignty, and the female body, especially the body of the “barbarian” woman, was established and continued to be consolidated under Louis XIV’s direct control of *Nouvelle-France*.

This historical study supports many Indigenous and settler colonial studies feminist and queer theorists’ argument that heteropatriarchy is an intrinsic characteristic of settler colonialism and contributes to this still growing body of literature.⁸ I argue that the establishment of heteropatriarchy sought to sever the close relation between Indigenous women’s bodies to land, subjugate them under patriarchal and colonial authority and control, and subject them to routine violence. While the extent to which such sought-after effects were hard to determine, and it was certainly the case that Indigenous forms of landbody persisted and Indigenous women continued to hold considerable power in their societies, I contend that we have enough evidence to show that settler-colonial power centered and concentrated on the management and regulation of Indigenous women’s bodies.

If settler women’s bodies were trafficked but were deemed unsacrificeable, then Indigenous women’s bodies, in early modern colonialism, became sacrificeable in that the pacification and domestication of Indigenous women’s bodies were directly linked to successful settler-colonial founding. In such a process, Indigenous peoples’ understandings and bodily practices, especially in regard to gender and sexuality, were significantly altered and thwarted.

⁸ See for example, Jennifer Denetdale, “Securing Navajo National Boundaries: War, Patriotism, Tradition, and the Dine Marriage Act of 2005,” *Wacazo Sa Review* 24: 2 (Fall 2009): 131-148; Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Qwo-Li Driskill et. al, (eds.), *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2011); Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between US: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Audra Simpson, “The State is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty,” *Theory & Event* 19:4 (2016); Joanne Barkar (eds.), *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

Engaging with Indigenous story-telling, treaty-making, and spirituality, in the first part of the essay I distill distinct Indigenous understandings of land and body that reject the separation of them, and trace the ways in which settler colonial interventions affected and transformed such understandings and Indigenous peoples' bodily practices. I take up the term "landbody" recently devised by settler colonial and Indigenous scholars as I agree that it better captures the core of Indigenous philosophies, which guided and were lived in their early interactions with the French missionaries and colonists. I specifically locate Indigenous understandings of landbody that pertain to gender and women, namely, women as creators and primary caretakers of land. The close relationship between women and land, I argue, means that land dispossession and gender and sexual violence against Indigenous women were one and the same process.

In the second part of the essay, I examine the formative period of settler colonialism in New France from the 1630s to early eighteenth-century. I argue and show that first, the material body was a central locus of early modern settler colonialism, and there was a specific gendered logic that intensified the regulation and management of Indigenous women's bodies; second, the trope "sacrificeable woman" helps elucidate the ways in which Indigenous women's bodies were subjected to different ideological controls than settler women, and how early modern French imperialism hinged on the control and violence against foreign women's bodies. I trace the changes brought on since early contact by colonial intervention and regulation to Indigenous practices, especially their gender and sexual practices. I locate points and moments of clash, misunderstanding, and negotiation in the interaction between different understandings of the body and embodiment, gender and sexual norms and practices. By doing so, I show how Indigenous understandings of the body dynamically influenced their bodily practices, and how such practices reveal their distinct understandings of the body.

Land & Body? LandBody

In a recent symposium published in *Theory & Event* entitled “Landbody: Radical Native Commitments,” Dinana Rose, Robert Geroux, and Kennan Ferguson write: “‘Who are a people?’ and ‘What is land?’ may seem to be separate questions, but they are not,” as “Place is not a neutral backdrop, ‘where something happens.’ Connection to a specific land comprises a central component of indigenous being, a commitment to site specificity contrary to the current celebrations of migration, individualism, and cosmopolitanism. Land and body—both of them collective, both of them transformative—cannot therefore be separated.”⁹ At the same time, they point out that Indigenous philosophical traditions also emphasize the interconnectedness between humans, other animals, plants, and geographical features such as mountains and rivers, which they contend are still overlooked even though many in political theory and other disciplines have been aiming to theorize precisely such connections¹⁰ to critique the humanist assumptions and investments the field of political theory is deeply embedded in.

Indeed, Indigenous stories and story-telling, spiritual beliefs, treaty-making, and other social and political practices, all demonstrate an understanding that can best be captured in “landbody” that defies the separation of the two. The erasure or dismissal of Indigenous epistememes and knowledge, which Sarita Echavez See calls “knowledge *nullius*,” was part and parcel of settler colonial projects that have long ignored or downplayed Indigenous knowledge.¹¹ Moreover, *terra nullius* and knowledge *nullius* also erased and continue to erase Indigenous

⁹ Diana Rose, Robert Geroux, Kennan Ferguson, “LandBody: Radical Native Commitments,” *Theory & Event* 23: 4 (October 2020), 973.

¹⁰ Ibid, 973. Prominent examples are the new materialists and posthumanists who draw from diverse sources and traditions ranging from Spinoza to Deleuze.

¹¹ Sarita Echavez See, *The Filipino Primitive: Accumulation and Resistance in the American Museum* (New York: NYU Press, 2017).

peoples as political agents who were capable of acting politically; instead, they were and are posited as solely embodying—essentialist, static, and primitive—cultural authenticity. As a result, Indigenous understandings of the body—or landbody to be more precise—remain largely absent from debates and discussions on the development modern settler colonialism. As I will argue later, such erasure, by severing Indigenous peoples from their land, both enabled and masked sexual and gender violence against Indigenous women since the onset of settler colonization.

Within the tradition of Euro-American/Canadian political thought and philosophy, and popular political discourses, Indigenous spiritual and religious systems are routinely theorized as the most primitive and Indigenous peoples consequently are understood as the most primitive on the civilizational scale. In particular, thinkers as diverse as Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, and Claude Lévi-Strauss have meticulously attempted to show why Indigenous peoples and their religious beliefs are the most primitive.¹² They unequivocally take Indigenous peoples' religious and spiritual beliefs, especially those of Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island and Australia, as the most primitive and simplistic. They associate primitivity with totemic superstitions, animism, and the lack of social and political organization and complex social and political rules. Because many central maxims of Indigenous understandings of the body are elaborated in and through their religions and spirituality, denying the latter reality further diminishes the epistemological validity of the former.

Missionaries studied all aspects of Indigenous lives, including their spiritualities and religious practices, not for the sake of learning from them, but to grasp the spiritual and social

¹² Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1912]2001); Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* ([1913] 1960); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage* (Paris: Pion, 1962); *Le Cru et le Cuit* (Paris: Pion, 1964).

world of Indigenous peoples in order to figure out ways to convert them. Yet their recordings of these Stories and Indigenous peoples' spiritual beliefs and practices nonetheless reveal that they served as pivotal sources that guided Indigenous peoples' quotidian lives and spiritual lives. The Jesuits and Ursuline nuns in seventeenth-century New France did learn about Indigenous Creation Stories from Indigenous inhabitants they lived with, but they were only interested in them in order to get access to Indigenous' spiritual beliefs so that they could convert them. Moreover, as Micah True shows, the Jesuits attempted to make sense of these stories mainly through the Christian lens, rather than on their own terms.¹³ For them, the Anishinaabe or Wendat Creation Story was simply a distorted or erroneous version of the Christian myth.

As many Indigenous, settler colonial, and post-colonial scholars have argued, establishing the absolute and naturalized superiority of "Western" knowledge was a central justificatory scheme of modern colonialism, which went hand in hand with economic and materialist exploitation.¹⁴ In contemporary research, epistemic authority is only accorded to the 'West' and 'Western' and 'white' researchers, while Indigenous and other racialized/colonized peoples can—most often--only provide raw materials or be turned into objects of study. In Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori)'s words, Indigenous peoples are regarded as the "authentic, essentialist, deeply spiritual" Other that has no intellectual capacity.¹⁵ This is evident in the fact that while aspects of Indigenous lives have long been researched, Anishinaabe knowledge keeper Basil

¹³ Micah True, "Retelling Genesis: The Jesuit Relations and the Wendat Creation Myth," *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature* 34: 67 (2007), 465-484.

¹⁴ See for example, Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*; Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*;

¹⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 72-74.

Johnston points out that Indigenous peoples themselves are often posited as “incapable of meditating upon or grasping the abstract.”¹⁶

To understand and combat such erasure, I believe, entails both (re)constructing Indigenous philosophies, while also refuting and disrupting how they have been conceived in the history of philosophy and political thought. This is to say, the former also has critical power that is revealed when posed against the latter, and helps to contextualize Indigenous peoples’ response to settlers in the early period of settler-colonial founding. As many Indigenous scholars and knowledge keepers have shown, Indigenous story-telling and stories, ceremonial and ritual practices, as well as treaty-making, provide rich resources to distill Indigenous understandings of landbody. Indigenous scholars such as Basil Johnston (Anishinaabe) and John Borrows (Anishinaabe) have stated it is not only important for Indigenous peoples to learn about Indigenous stories, but also crucial that non-Indigenous peoples learn about them and reflect on the teachings of them as well.¹⁷ These stories, some sacred, others more ordinary and mundane, are not so mystical that they resist understanding. Anishinaabe literary scholar Gerald Vizenor, who compiled many Anishinaabe oral stories, puts it straightforwardly : “Stories are the eternal creation of liberation.”¹⁸ Haudenosaunee historian Susan M. Hill unequivocally states that the Haudenosaunee Creation Story serves as the basis for our understanding of the world and our place within it.¹⁹ Michi Sagiig Nishinabe scholar Leanne Simpson also argues, “Storytelling

¹⁶ Basil Johnston, “Is That All There Is? Tribal Literature,” in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, ed. Jill Doerfler, Nügaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Küwetinepinesik Start (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 4.

¹⁷ Basil Johnston wrote a series of works introducing Anishinaabe cultural and spiritual customs and teachings to the general public. John Borrows, as a legal scholar, emphasizes that it is pivotal that non-Native Canadians learn about Indigenous legal reasonings, and their treaty obligations. See John Borrows, *Law’s Indigenous Ethics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

¹⁸ Gerald Vizenor, *Summer in the Spring: Anishinaabe Lyric Poems and Stories, New Edition* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 9.

¹⁹ Susan M. Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 16.

becomes a space where we can escape the gaze and the cage of the Empire, even if it just for a few minutes;” moreover, oral storytelling is also an “important vehicle for the creation of free cognitive spaces because the physical act of gathering a group of people within our territories reinforces the web of relationships that stitch our communities together.”²⁰

Many Indigenous scholars have also challenged the rigid distinctions drawn between stories on the one hand, and laws, histories, and politics, on the other. Borrows, for example, argues that Indigenous stories *are* themselves law.²¹ He notes the indispensable importance of stories: “Anishinabek stories are relevant to the study of law. They give us knowledge of the earth that is impossible to get from other sources.”²² Keith Richotte Jr., in the same vein, uses the adoption of the 1932 Turtle Mountain Constitution as an example to demonstrate that historical events and political treaties and constitutions are best understood through story-telling, as stories, as doing so would allow them to remain relevant, “and would allow the personal and communal knowledge of those events to inform and guide the thinking of today’s tribal leaders and community members.”²³ Heidi Stark, similarly, often articulates Anishinaabe laws, treaties and political principles by telling stories of Nanabuzho, the beloved Anishinaabe trickster and cultural hero.²⁴

Through their various engagements with Indigenous stories and spiritual practices, Indigenous scholars have argued that their understandings of the body and land fundamentally differ from settler-colonial ones, including early modern European ones transported and

²⁰ Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011), 34.

²¹ John Borrows, *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

²² John Borrows, *Drawing out Law: A Spirit’s Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

²³ Keith Richotte, “Telling All of Our Stories: Reorienting the Legal and Political Events of the Anishinaabeg,” in *Centering Anishinabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories*, 381.

²⁴ See for example, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark, “Marked by Fire: Anishinaabe Articulations of Nationhood in Treaty Making with the United States and Canada,” *American Indian Quarterly* 36:2, (2012), 119-149; Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiiik Stark and Kekek Jason Stark, “Nenabuzho Goes Fishing: A Sovereignty Story,” *Daedalus* 147:2 (2018), 17-26.

embodied by missionaries, colonists, and settlers. Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Wendat Creation Stories similarly conceptualize the birth of their people and their nation as taking place at the same time through the same process, hinged on the fertility of a woman Creator(s)—Mature Flower and Zephyr in the Haudenosaunee story, Aataentsic in the Wendat one, Earth Mother in the Anishinaabe one. Meanwhile, the woman Creator is commonly said to be saved by animals, who also helped to fetch earth out of water and flood, so that the earth would become the living dryland of Indigenous peoples.²⁵

Indigenous rituals and ceremonies provide another meaningful source to demonstrate distinct Indigenous understandings of landbody. Historian Jon Parmenter and Michael Witgen, for example, focus on Indigenous ceremonies such as the Edge of the Woods and The Feast of the Dead, to show how land was crucial to forging and renewing friendship, peace-making, and establishing good relations.²⁶ Spatial mobility and movement were central to these rituals. At “Edge of the Woods,” a central part of Haudenosaunee Condolence Ceremony that mourned the death of a leader, visitors travelling a long way from other nations to a Haudenosaunee community were greeted and ritually cleansed before being escorted from the “forest” to the village, the place of residency. The Feast of the Dead, at which the Wendat took dead bodies out of their graves and brought them to a new location to reburied, was later on also borrowed by the Anishinaabe and the Dakotas. Treaty-making, which can be said to be the most important

²⁵ I consult a wide range of works that tell and reconstruct Indigenous Creation Stories written between the nineteenth to twentieth century. See David Cusick, *David Cusick's Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations* (1828); Lewis Henry Morgan, *The League of Ho-dé-no-sau-nee or Iroquois* (New York: MH Newman, 1851); JNB Hewitt, “Iroquois Cosmology, Part 1,” Annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution 21 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1903); Arthur Parker, *Seneca Myths and Folk Tales* (Buffalo, New York: Buffalo Historical Society, 1923); Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in Native American Mythology* (1951); Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal and Kingston, 1987); Gerald Vizenor, *Summer in the Spring: Anishinaabe Lyric Poems and Stories*, New Edition (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Theresa Smith, *The Island of the Anishnaabeg: Thunders and Water Monsters in the Traditional Ojibwe Life World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Basil Johnston, *The Manitou: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society, 1995); Susan Hill, *The Clay*;

²⁶ Jon Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods*; Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*.

political institution among Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, was often accompanied by such ceremonial and ritual practices. While Europeans saw treaties exclusively as written, static documents, Indigenous peoples understood treaty-making primarily as a practice that could only take place at the right time, which was why it often took them days of waiting and getting ready once they arrived at the meeting place to commence the process. This both puzzled and frustrated the French and later on US and Canadian delegates much.²⁷ Such is because Indigenous peoples, as many have pointed out, understood the entire treaty council deliberations and gift exchanges as treaty.²⁸ For them, “the council was an end in itself. What was important was the coming together in peace, smoking the pipe in common to pledge the truthfulness of all statements made, and the exchange of opinions....the council was the agreement.”²⁹ Treaty-making, in other words, denoted first and foremost embodied experiences and memories, especially in the pre and early contact period.

From Indigenous Creation Stories, ritual and ceremonial practices, as well as treaty-making practices, several distinct themes emerge that detail Indigenous understandings of the body and embodiment. First, we see the profound embodied interconnectedness of the cosmos, in which humans occupy a distinct yet not prominent or exceptional place. Birth and death form a circular movement rather than being conceived in starkly oppositional terms, as death is thought to bring regeneration and continuous nourishment. Humans, animals, plants, earth and sky, are all intimately connected and mutually dependent. In all of the stories, humans were the last to be created, which suggests their infancy and their

²⁷ Havard Gilles, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001); Colin G. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft: Treaties and Treaty Making in American Indian History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁸ Heidi Stark, “Respect, Responsibility, and Renewal: The Foundations of Anishinaabe Treaty Making with the United States and Canada,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 34:2 (2010), 149.

²⁹ Brian Slattery, “Making Sense of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights,” *Canadian Bar Review* 79:2 (2000), 208.

dependency on all life-forms that came before them. The primacy of plants and animals over humans is reflected in the simple fact that both animals and humans continue to rely on plants to survive. Animals were the ones that saved the falling woman and retrieved earth on which humans lived on. The individual human body, in other words, is not a bounded space or unit, but is both intimately connected with and forms a distinct part of the cosmic order. This is best exemplified by Nanabuzho. Half human and half god, his embodied being-in-the-world collapses the boundary between the two.

Second, we see that land provided the condition of possibility for human flourishing, not vice versa. The existence of land was not to be taken for granted. Nor did the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples understand themselves as owners of land. As Johnston testifies,

“It is not man who owns the land; it is land that owns man. And we, the Anishinabeg, were placed on this land. From beginning to end it nourishes us: it quenches our thirst, it shelters us, and we follow the order its seasons. It gives us freedom to come and go according to its nature and its extent—great freedom when the extent is large, less freedom when it is small. And when we die we are buried within the land that outlives us all. We belong to the land by birth, by need, and by affection.”³⁰

In other words, though this might be cliché to anyone who has any familiarity with Indigenous studies and/or contemporary Indigenous politics, it is worth emphasizing: Indigenous peoples’ relation to land—and everything the land sustains—is deeply embodied and affective. The Turtle’s Back is Indigenous land imbued with spiritual power and the potential of collective world-making. The body is conceived as closely related to land, to the extent that land primarily came into being through the materialization of bodies, as well as the embodied labor of various creations both in the sky world and the earth world. To be inhabitants of Turtle Island, as Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, or Wendat, is to be forever bound to these animals’ bodies and labor. These bodies are not

³⁰ Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Ceremonies*, 170.

only allegorical or heuristic devices that contain moral lessons; rather, the actual materiality of these bodily-beings is at stake. It was on the actual turtle's back that land started to grow; it was Mature Flower, Zephyry, and Aataentsic's—Women Creators in Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, or Wendat Creation Stories--embodied labor and their literal material bodies that nourished the earth on which future generations of human bodies continued to inhabit and grow. For this reason, rather than being the mute ground upon which human activities take place, the land itself is animate and actively participates in the lives of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Wendat peoples. It is imbued with transformative and sustaining power and potential. At the same time, humans are entrusted to take care of earth, not only for themselves, but for the interconnected cosmos to be in order.

This profound embodied relation to land does not, however, fix bodies to land. Mobility and migration are also central. Aside from Indigenous stories, Indigenous and ritual and ceremonial practices and treaty-making practices also illuminate this process well. While many, including Rose et. al. that I cited earlier in this chapter regard mobility and migration as essentially “western,” it is not hard to notice that travel and migration are prominent in Indigenous Creation stories and treaty-making practices. Indeed, Chickasaw literary scholar Jodi Byrd points out in *The Transit of Empire*, many tend to associate transit with diaspora studies and border crossings rather than a notion such as indignity, which is often taken as “rooted and static, located in a discrete place.”³¹ Yet by telling a migration story of the Chickasaws in search of a new homeland, she argues that migration is not antithetical to Indigenous sovereignty, for the latter is often articulated through the

³¹ Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xvi.

former.³² For the Eastern Woodlands peoples, similarly, it is through migration and free movement that new relationships are forged, and growth and transformations took place. This is reflected in the importance of hunting and seasonal migration, as well as ceremonies such as the Feast of the Dead and the Edge of the Woods, which all required routine extensive travel. As Jon Parmenter notes, Haudenosaunee mobility, which predated colonial contact and continued afterwards, “enabled successful Iroquois engagements with the pressures and opportunities generated by settler colonialism on the borders of their homeland,”³³ as it “not only embodied Iroquois values of hospitality and the attentiveness to renewals of reciprocal human relationships, it created a vital spatial contest for the exercise of Iroquois power.”³⁴ Michael Witgen similarly notes that the Feast of Dead Ceremony, in the seventeenth century, enabled the Anishinaabe people to form new alliances with other Indigenous Nations, which then “expand[ed] the physical and social world of the Anishinaabeg,”³⁵ reconfiguring their spatial order. The new alliance “possessed the ability to control the circulation of people, animal pelts, and trade goods throughout the heartland of North America.”³⁶

Being able to move freely within one’s territory marked by fluid yet clearly identifiable boundaries, and sharing it with friends and allies, we see, was—and still is—an indispensable part of Indigenous peoples’ embodied relation to land. This is also the guiding principle behind one of the most ancient treaties signed among Indigenous nations of this part of the world, known as the Dish with One Spoon.³⁷ In this regard, allowing

³² Ibid, xvi.

³³ Jon Parmenter, *The Edge*, xxvii.

³⁴ Ibid, xi.

³⁵ Michael Witgen, *An Infinity*, 31.

³⁶ Ibid, 32.

³⁷ The original Dish with One Spoon agreement can be dated back to the twelfth century. Later on, a peace treaty concluded during the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701 would use the same language in the same spirit. See Leanne

other nations and communities to move through your land, and sharing hunting territory with them, is as much asserting sovereignty as claiming exclusive proprietary relation to land. The latter is in fact precluded from Indigenous conceptions of land, which comes from the materialization of the first woman's--which is understood as Earth Mother's--body. Land is thus indivisible just as Earth Mother's body is indivisible. While each person has equal entitlement to Mother Earth's bountiful resources, no one can claim exclusive or private ownership to the mother's body. As Johnston bluntly states, "No man can possess his mother; no man can own the earth."³⁸ In turn, land itself is not conceived as inert matter, or the mute ground upon things unfold. Rather, formed through the materialization of bodies, land is an active force that dynamically participates in human and non-human's embodied activities in the world. To be embodied, then, is primarily to be attached to one's homeland and one's community living on the same land.

The third distinct theme of Indigenous understandings of landbody, which builds on the second point that I just discussed, is the prominence of women's material bodies and embodied labor, which are, again, commemorated and remembered rather than downplayed or erased. This is partly because women's bodies are conceived to be closer to land, as it was through their bodies and labor that land was materialized and continued to sustain human lives. In all of the stories, the embodied activity of giving birth was pivotal to the formation of the earth world and land on which humans came to inhabit. The

Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships," *Wicazo Sa Review* 23 (2), 29-42. Jose Antonio Brandao and William Starna, "The Treaties of 1701: A Triumph of Iroquois Diplomacy," *Ethnohistory* 43 (2): 209-244. Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

³⁸ Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 25. Here we see the stark difference between Indigenous understandings of land and body and the ways in which land and body were conceived in the history of modern European political thought, such as Locke's influential account in which he states that because the earth that is given by God to all in common is bountiful, once one mixes one's labour with land, he can thus claim ownership of it. Land, in other words, is divisible and can be owned individually. See John Locke, John Locke, *Second Treatises on Government* ([1689]1988), 291.

embodied nature of giving birth is amplified especially in the Haudenosaunee and Wendat stories, as we are reminded that it was through the body of Zephyr and Aataentsic that the twins came to the world and one ended up killing her. But Zephyr and Aataentsic's embodied labor and their bodies themselves were not rendered the obscure ground nor erased but were rather inherited and thus conceived as active forces that continued to participate in subsequent human activities. In this regard, the closeness women's bodies have to land signifies responsibility and demands continuous care. It is thus not surprising that in Indigenous societies and nations, women were the ones that attended and cultivated land, and undertook agricultural work, while men in general were engaged in hunting and warfare. Andehoua, a Wendat Chief, told the Jesuits that in their nation "it is the women who sow, plant, and cultivate the land, and prepare food for their husbands."³⁹

This gendered division of labor was, not surprisingly, so foreign to early modern Europeans that they could not make sense of Indigenous peoples as agricultural peoples. The fact that men spent most of their time hunting was taken by colonists to mean that Indigenous peoples were completely nomadic. When they sought to make Indigenous men cultivate land and become farmers, they were in fact shattering Indigenous gender relations. When they exclusively consulted male leaders about land transactions, they were taking power from women, who were the actual caretakers of land. Simultaneously severing female body from land and reducing them to empty land itself, as I will show later, were the central means in which settler colonial orders were erected. Indigenous conception of the female body, I have sought to show, drastically differs from settler

³⁹ JR 17, 9.1.

colonial management of bodies, which took female bodies as empty, virgin space for settler colonial order to be imprinted upon.

It is important to point out that Indigenous understandings of the body were *lived* in relation to each other, community, and land. Many missionaries (which were also pro-ethnographers), colonists, and non-Indigenous scholars were—and we can argue still are—invested in looking for pure origins of Indigenous knowledge and worldview that predated any contact. For them, any trace of hybridity or adaptation signifies an irretrievable loss of pure beginning. The hybrid element itself is isolated and then regarded as non-Indigenous. Hewitt, for example, states that “The correct and fundamental analysis must therefore seek by a wide comparison of materials to separate the accultural from the autochthonous product.”⁴⁰ By “accultural influences,” Hewitt is unequivocally referring to Christian and European colonial influences. For him and many others, if there is an element that is identifiably French, English, Dutch or Christian, it is un-Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, or Sirayan. But Indigenous understandings of landbody were not fixed or immutable beginnings nor discrete moments of founding or birth, but rather reflect and guide the dynamically changing reality of living peoples. Therefore, Indigenous understandings of landbody that grow from these Indigenous stories, ritual and ceremonial practices, as well treaty-making, are also dynamically developed and lived. They are active political forces that continued to be enacted in Indigenous social and political lives.

While missionaries were making progress in winning bodies and souls to Christ, Indigenous peoples nonetheless kept their religious and spiritual beliefs alive, even when many of them did convert to become Catholic, and became affiliated with the French. Instead of viewing any change or adaption as loss of cultural authenticity and purity of Indigenous peoples,

⁴⁰ JNB Hewitt, *Iroquois Cosmology*, 136.

I suggest it would be more fruitful if we see change brought on by interracial, intercultural, and interreligious interactions as Indigenous peoples' remaking of communities and re-self-fashioning. Instead of viewing them as passive sufferers who gradually lost control over their lives, their communities, and their territories, it makes more sense to see them as social and political agents and knowledge bearers who were making sense of their being-in-the-world in a changing world.

To Make Her “Docile as a Lamb:”⁴¹ Pacification and Regulation of Indigenous Women’s Bodies

The French missionaries and colonists of the seventeenth century did not shun from pronouncing that violence and corporeal punishment against Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous women, was a crucial means through which colonization took place. The pacification of Indigenous women’s bodies, in other words, were deemed essential to the settler-colonial enterprise, as they were the primary loci through which conversion and colonization took place. The prevalence of gender and sexual violence and the triumphant tone the Jesuits assume in describing them makes it clear that gender and sexual violence were both a normalized presence in the settler colony and had become an intelligible form of power and subjugation. Indigenous women were both corporeally subjugated through the sheer amount of force they had to bear with, and discursively subjugated because many, if not all, of them had recognized the authority and legitimacy of such violence—as just punishment of any of their “transgressions.” While submission to Jesuit authority and the patriarchal order that was in the making was not universal, it did undoubtedly cause considerable change in how gender and sexuality were organized in various Indigenous nations. Violence and the constant threat of it, along with the adoption of

⁴¹ JR 20, 165.

Christian moral doctrines, brought fundamental changes to Indigenous gender and sexual practices and norms, especially marriage.

Before systematic interactions with the Jesuits and the French, marriage was understood as loosely organized sexual unions that could easily be dissolved. For the Catholic Jesuits, such practices were neither legible nor tolerable. Conversion, for them, to a large degree entailed assuming Catholic and European marriage practices, which encountered tremendous degree of resistance in the early days of the Jesuit missions in New France. Le Jeune records Andehoua, a Wendat (Huron), discussing how the indissolubility of marriage posed great difficulties to people among his nation. Andehoua says,

“For we shall either marry, or we shall not; If we take a wife, at the first whim that seizes her, she will at once leave us, and then we are reduced to a wretched life seeing that it is women in our country who sow, plant, and cultivate the land, and prepare food for their husbands. To forego marriage among the Hurons is something which requires a chastity our country has never known. What shall we do then?”⁴²

It is clear that back then, for men to assume absolute control over Indigenous women’s bodies was neither possible nor intelligible, so much so that the chief had to ask what to do. From the *Jesuit Relations* we could see the tangible change brought by growing conversion to Catholicism, which appeared to be more appealing to Indigenous women as according to the Jesuits they were usually the ones the demonstrated exceptional devotion and piety that even put the French to shame.⁴³ Such piety, for the Jesuits, also essentially entailed submission to men, including male Jesuit authorities, their kinsmen, and men of their own nations. By the 1640s, a striking shift had already taken place. Such transformation was a shared impression among the Jesuits and the Ursulines. In the *Relations* of the 1640s, Le Jeune reports an incident in which a native woman fled her husband into the woods, not wishing to obey him. The husband went to look for her and

⁴² JR 17, 9.1.

⁴³ For example, JR 20,41, 44, 52, 55, 62.

allegedly came to ask the Jesuits once he found her, whether it would be enough to “chain her by one foot,” and make her starve for four days, as penance for her action.⁴⁴ The native men also allegedly accused the women for causing them misfortunes and chastised them for wishing to be “independent.” “Now know that you will obey your husbands, and you young people, if any fail to do so, we have concluded to give them nothing to eat.”⁴⁵

Marie also gives a detailed tale of an Indigenous woman who was sent to the Ursulines by her family who were Christians because she had married a pagan.⁴⁶ Their marriage was broken up, and after being instructed in the Christian faith for not very long, she wished not to see her husband again unless he came Christian as well, and took flight when she ran into him.⁴⁷ His rage and threat to kill her family did not make her change her mind and go back to him. She allegedly told the Ursulines: “I love obedience.”⁴⁸ She then willingly agreed to be whipped in public, in preparation of baptism.⁴⁹ Marie gave great details of the corporeal punishment she undergone, after which she went to the Jesuit de Quen to beg to be baptized and confessed that she was perfectly content about being whipped.⁵⁰ A few years later, in a letter to her son Claude Martin in Paris, Marie would characterize the transformation brought on my missionaries as one through which “wolves become lambs and beasts children of God.”⁵¹ Obedience to these religious authorities was cultivated through a violent process largely hinged on the body.

Corporeal punishment, we see, was the way in which subjection took place, so that colonial and

⁴⁴ JR 18, 107. Keren Anderson’s book, *Chain Her by One Foot: The Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth Century New France* (1991), took the title from this remark.

⁴⁵ JR 18, 107.

⁴⁶ Marie de L’Incarnation, *Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de L’Incarnation*, trans. & ed. Joyce Marshall (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967), 104 (1642).

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 104.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 105.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 105.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 106.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 133 (1644).

civilizing power was not only able to be exerted, but consented to and recognized as legitimate as such.

The contrast between the unruly, independent, and vicious Indigenous women in the earliest *JR* and the obedient, chastise, and pious converts in the later ones is stark. The actual practices and strategies the Jesuits pronounce reveal a quite uniformed and sustained strategy to subjugate Indigenous women's bodies and curtail their power both within the communities and their families. Most important of all is to make them good Christian wives that lead domesticated and pious lives. In the early *Relations*, Le Jeune specifically avows that, in converting young native girls so that they are

“brought up as Christian and then married to French men or baptized natives, will produce as many children from them as we shall desire. All will depend on our supporting them, giving them a dowry, helping them to get married. The little girls are dressed in the French fashion. They care no more for the native life than if they did not belong to their nation.”⁵²

Jérôme Lalemont, writing from the Huron Country in 1641, contends that the key to conversion and colonization is to “fix and confirm the marriages, which have no stability, and are broken more easily than the promises which children make to one another in France.”⁵³ We see that such beliefs were not shared by the Jesuits as a whole and were constantly enforced in all of the missions.⁵⁴

By 1640, less than a decade after the commencement of the Jesuit mission(s) in New France, the Jesuits had assumed total control of Indigenous converts' marriages, and those of some of the non-Christians as well. Even some of the non-Christians would come to them for

⁵² JR 15, 2.8

⁵³ JR 21, 135.

⁵⁴ Though the Jesuit mission in New France is often referred to as a whole, accurately speaking there were dozens of different missions established among different nations and at different places. The later *Relations* detail the establishment of missions among all five of the Haudenosaunee Nations, the Ottawas, and Nations further north and west of the French settlement in Quebec.

permission and help to marry.⁵⁵ Le Jeune accounts an incident in which a non-Christian man asked them to marry him and a woman who was also a non-Christian. The man allegedly said to Le Jeune, “you are my father.”⁵⁶ Though the degree of submission Indigenous peoples displayed to the Jesuits might be exaggerated to boost their “progress” to the French metropolitan readers, we can see that these outsiders had established themselves as authorities to regulate Indigenous marriages, and by extension Indigenous gender and sexual practices. They constantly interpellated them to emulate and embody Christian feminine virtues, such as modesty, docility, piety, innocence, and fearfulness (of punishment and authority),⁵⁷ by greatly valorizing those girls and young women who demonstrated what they interpreted as instances of such virtues. Women and girls, according to the Jesuits, were the most pious and devoted, and they constantly give numerous examples of particular women and girls who demonstrated exceptional piety. For them, other than religious fervour, piety primarily entailed embodying feminine virtues and feminine behavior that make them appropriate Christian wives, which was key to render Indigenous marriages permanent and indissoluble. This also normalized and even naturalized sexual and gendered violence against married women by their spouses. Corporeal punishment, in other words, became a means to contain Indigenous women’s bodies by rendering them docile. Women were to become obedient and domesticated Christian wives content with their cloistered lives.

⁵⁵ *JR* 18, 133; 179-183.

⁵⁶ *JR* 18, 133. Indigenous peoples understood the role of the father very differently from the French. While for the latter it meant patriarchal power and demanded submission and obedience, for Indigenous peoples the role of father was significantly less important the role of the mother. See Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*; Gunlog Fur, *A Nation of Women: Gender and the Colonial Encounters Among the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

⁵⁷ Examples of such interpellation abound in the *Relations*. See for example, *JR* 18, 169; *JR* 19, 39; *JR* 20, 127; *JR* 57.

Effectively, this meant that women's relation to land was to be significantly altered. As I have mentioned earlier, for Indigenous peoples of northeastern Turtle Island, cultivating land was exclusively women's work. Moreover, land itself is spiritually and philosophically intimately linked to women's bodies. By making marriages permanent and family units calculable, the Jesuits had another important goal, which was to make Indigenous peoples who were nomadic settle down and cultivate land.⁵⁸ This entailed making Indigenous men relying on agriculture instead of hunting for subsistence, and making agriculture their main endeavour in life. The Jesuits, of course, were aware that women were the ones who tended land in Indigenous societies, especially among the Wendat and Haudenosaunee, who were already sedentary.⁵⁹ Drastically transformed gender, sexual, and marriage norms meant that men and women's relation to land also shifted dramatically. Indigenous understandings of the body, embodiment and labour, just like their gender and sexual norms, were rendered as "savage" practices and old customs that ought to be abandoned.

The Jesuits and Ursuline sisters' efforts must have been considerably successful, as in the *Relations* and *Journals* after the 1650s, the "unruly" and "misbehaving" women, which they spent much time discussing, made no appearance in the pages. At the same time, Catholicism had since become an intrinsic part of the life-world of many Indigenous peoples native to this region. Having become docile, Indigenous women's were made less productive and unproductive—domesticated, which differs from the account Foucault gives in regard to how

⁵⁸ JR 18, 97.

⁵⁹ With ample archeological evidence, scholars have shown that the Haudenosaunee practiced horticulture and lived in semi-permanent residences—the longhouses. They would migrate every eight to twelve years once the soil became depleted. See Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The People of the Iroquois in the Era of European Colonization* (1992); Jon Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534-1702* (2015). The Wendat (Huron) people were also sedentary, before the Confederacy was decimated by Haudenosaunee raids in the 1660s. See Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (1987).

modern disciplinary capitalist regimes rendered bodies simultaneously docile and productive.⁶⁰ For Foucault, “discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same force (in political terms of obedience),” meaning that “disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.”⁶¹ Feminist Foucauldians have argued that the formation of docility intersected with gender to enact patriarchal domination and sexism. In Sandra Bartky’s words, “Foucault is blind to those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine.”⁶² She recognizes the production of gendered docility as a form of patriarchal domination, made possible through various gendered and gendering practices.⁶³ While I agree with observation, I contend that the production of gendered docility was also a central logic to settler colonial power that emerged in the early modern period, which is to say, it did not grow out European metropolitan politics but in colonial management and subjugation of Indigenous women’s bodies. In fact, Foucault does take into account the colonial context insofar as he regards the Quaker and Methodist missions in Philadelphia and the penal system developed therein as a site that crucially formed the genealogy of modern prison he develops through a long period of his career.⁶⁴ So it is not that Foucault overlooks the historical colonial context, as many have criticized him for until this day,⁶⁵ but that he elides the *political* context such penal practices grew out of, namely subjugation and violence against Indigenous peoples and erasure

⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 138.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 138.

⁶² Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,” in Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (eds.), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 132.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 132.

⁶⁴ See for example, Michel Foucault, *The Punitive Society*, lectures 5-6; *Discipline and Punish*.

⁶⁵ For some recent examples, see C. Heike Schotten, *Queer Terror: Life, Death, and Desire in the Settler Colony* (New York: Columbia University, 2018); Claire Cosquer, “Altering Absence: From Race to Empire in Reading of Foucault,” *Foucault Studies* 26 (June 2019), 1-20.

of Indigenous sovereignty.⁶⁶ As a result, the *political* stakes of how disciplinary power grew out of colonial governance, and more importantly affected—or even constituted—Indigenous peoples’ experiences, are missing from the commonly-told narrative. By centering on how disciplinary power grew out of early modern settler-colonial regulation of Indigenous women’s bodies, I precisely emphasize such political stakes. At the same time, my readings concur with Ann Laura Stoler’s—among many others’—claim that the meticulous management of body and sexuality emerged long before the end of the eighteenth-century, which is when Foucault dated it to.⁶⁷ Long before the material body became a central target of modern regimes of power in (western) Europe, Indigenous peoples’ bodies had already been subjected to tight control and management. Moreover, such management, as I have shown, is highly gendered and primarily concerned with drastically altering Indigenous women’s bodily comportment and embodied being-in-the-world.

Settler-colonial power and interventions both sought to and led to the intimate relation between women’s body and land being significantly thwarted. In this sense, settler sovereignty was from the beginning, and in principle, biopolitical. C. Heike Schotten argues that sovereignty is biopolitical through and through because it is what constitutes life as life—and its corollary, death as death—to begin with.⁶⁸ For her, settler sovereignty rests on a futurist temporality that relegates Indigenous peoples as “savages” who belong to the past and thus to death. While I agree with her general thesis, I believe that the overarching statement that associates Indigenous peoples with death exaggerates the efficacy of settler sovereignty and elides Indigenous peoples’ agency and resistance, while also masking the fact that settler sovereignty itself developed *in*

⁶⁶ The Quakers and Methodist missionaries primarily worked among the Lenape People in the 18th and 19th century. See Gunlog Fur, *A Nation of Women: Gender and the Colonial Encounters Among the Delaware Indians*.

⁶⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* (Duke: Duke University Press, 1995).

⁶⁸ C. Heike Schotten, *Queer Terror*, 32.

time, that is, it is both historical and temporal. What I have shown in this chapter makes it clear that the opposite of settler life is not necessarily death per se, but a form of biopolitical pacification and management of Indigenous peoples, especially women's, bodies. To establish and consolidate settler sovereignty in this early period, Indigenous peoples did not necessarily need to be relegated to death but were more generally needed to be pacified.

At the same time, there is certainly historical continuity that remained intact in the development of settler sovereignty. Though what I have discussed here seems categorically different from systematic dispossession and land theft that would later be enacted by settler states, I contend that the transformation of Indigenous women's embodiment is the precursor and the condition of possibility of systematic dispossession of Indigenous land which continues to this day. For land to be turned into property and sold to individual settlers to 'cultivate', its spiritual, philosophical, and embodied significance had to be erased. In other words, land—or Turtle Island—had to be made disenchanting so that it would be regarded nothing other than property. Doing so severed Indigenous peoples', especially Indigenous women's close relation to land. While land was to be evacuated of its deep spiritual and metaphysical power, Indigenous women's bodies were rendered pacified and domesticated. They were subjected to normalized pervasive violence that directly targeted their embodied being-in-the-world. Both of the colonial agents and Indigenous men that were emboldened by European patriarchal gender ideology saw corporeal violence as a normal and available means to contain and pacify Indigenous women's bodies. If the "traffic in women" is indeed, as feminist theorist Irigaray claims, the basis of "the society we know, our own culture"—presumably French culture--, then violence subjugation of Indigenous women, especially their bodies, is the very basis of settler colonial society, as well as the imperial vision which is part of "our"—French—culture.

This is by no means to suggest that Indigenous women were passive victims. As historians have shown, Indigenous women retained much power and used their Christianity in various different ways to benefit their kins and their peoples in the centuries to come. But the nature of power would be significantly changed.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, how they understood and interpreted their experiences remain obscure as they are always mediated by colonial narratives. We do not know in what ways Catholicism particularly appealed to Indigenous women, and what did it mean for them. Converting to Catholicism, also, does not always mean that they completely abandoned Indigenous beliefs, customs, and spirituality. The Jesuits often complained about this and regarded it as a sign of their lack of understanding of true faith. It is without doubt that Indigenous women found Catholicism meaning and incorporated Catholicism—much to the Jesuits’ dismay—into their lives. At the same time, Indigenous understandings of landbody persisted, and continued to guide Indigenous peoples’ embodied being-in-the-world, even when that world was considerably altered by Christianity and colonial intrusion.

Nonetheless, the rhetorical construction and political production of Indigenous women as docile and domesticated contributed to their disappearance in both Indigenous societies and public imaginary. They conveniently vanished from the French—and European-- intellectual imaginary by the early eighteenth-century, while the trope of “*les sauvages*” continue to be featured prominently by *philosophes* such as Voltaire and Rousseau and would decidedly be linked with masculinity. Voltaire’s *L’ingénu* (the Huron child of nature) and Rousseau’s “savages” who wander in the forests and live by their immediate desires are unambiguously

⁶⁹ Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (2001); Tracy Kenneth Morrison, *The Solidarity of Kin: Ethnohistory, Religious Studies, and the Algonkian-French Religious Encounter* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002); Neal Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012);

masculine.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, the few Indigenous persons of Turtle Island who set foot in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century were all men.⁷¹ The simultaneous rhetorical and political erasure of Indigenous women reinforce each other to oblivate the contemporaneous violence and regulation of Indigenous women's bodies and render them inconsequential.

Conclusion

In this essay I have traced the ways in which the various ways in which women's bodies were managed and regulated under the specific conditions of settler colonialism, while also attending to how they were not merely represented but constructed rhetorically in colonial archival materials. Paying particular attention to the formation of gender ideologies and norms that centered on Indigenous women's bodily comportment and embodiment, my central claim is that gender and sexuality are foundational structures of settler colonial power and governance. Through a feminist and decolonial reading of the colonial archival materials, I have shown that in early modern French imaginary and practices, Indigenous women's bodies were pacified, rendered docile, and to some extent disposable given the quotidian level of violence they were subjected to. I argue that dispossession of Indigenous women's bodies, which was simultaneously the dispossession of Indigenous understandings of land, was the condition of possibility of state-sanctioned systematic dispossession of Indigenous land.

This historical inquiry also sheds light on the continuous dispossession of Indigenous land and systematic violence against Indigenous women and gender non-conformist people in settler states, particularly on Turtle Island. It is no coincidence nor a mere "statistical overrepresentation" that Indigenous women are continuously murdered and made to disappear,

⁷⁰ Voltaire, *L'Ingénu* (Paris : Gallimard, 2004[1767]); Jean Jacques-Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Paris : Gallimard, 1965).

⁷¹ Kate Fullagar, *The Savage Visit: New World People and Popular Imperial Culture in Britain, 1710-1795* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

as in the ongoing plight known as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in contemporary Canada. It is also no coincidence that recovering Indigenous relations to land and of living *with* land is central to contemporary Indigenous resurgence movements and efforts to address sustained gender and sexual violence against Indigenous women. It is perhaps high time—especially for settlers-- to learn and remember Turtle Island as female body, to remember how Sky Woman, Zephyr, Aataentsic became Turtle Island.

If settler colonialism is fundamentally characterized by, in Patrick Wolfe’s words, the fact that “invasion is a structure, not an event,”⁷² what needs to be recognized and better accounted for is that gender and sexual violence is an intrinsic logic of that structure. Gender and sexual violence against Indigenous women, in other words, is not one of the many aspects of settler colonialism, but is a structuring principle of settler colonialism. We are still witnessing the devastating legacy and contemporary force of this structuring principle in settler-colonial states/empires today. Looking at its historical and political-theoretical origins in early modern times, I contend, can help us better grasp how deep-seated and well-entrenched gender and sexual violence against Indigenous women is to settler-colonial governance.

⁷² Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8: no. 4 (2006), 388.