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EDITED BY SUSAN CASTILLO AND IVY SCHWEITZER

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## Reading for Indian Resistance

Bethany Ridgway Schneider

"In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." This ubiquitous and anonymous couplet describes the colonization of North and South America by Europeans as an easy rhyme between historical destiny and clear sailing into a vast spatial emptiness. The rhyme is not interrupted by mention of either the human populations or their land on the western side of the Atlantic and it never arrives at the island Columbus called San Salvador, or the Taino and Arawak people whom he met on that first journey. Rather, it suspends us in the time and space of the trajectory of discovery. Columbus' act of travel and the date in which he traveled stand alone; in the repetition of the doggerel the clock of "American" history is set and reset at "fourteen hundred and ninety-two" years after the birth of Jesus, thus drawing an easy line of connection between the Christian moment of origin and Columbus' three ships bobbing along on a bright blue sea. The act of reciting the verse – *repeating* the journey – connects its trajectory with the speaker, using the fictions of linear time to bypass the people Columbus named "Indians," their land and their history. The couplet's sing-song pedagogy avoids the history of Indian land, the Indian history of land, and the land of Indian history. It forms a model, in other words, through which we are taught never to reach questions of Native American presence, sovereignty, and survival in the so-called "New World."

Perhaps it is excessive to lay such a heavy burden of responsibility upon an anonymous verse, especially one almost always recited in self-conscious jest. But the sleight of hand performed by this impossibly compressed account, in which a linear narrative of European spatial destiny sidelines Native Americans, is a disappearing act against which anthologies of American literature – especially "early" American literature – have to struggle. How to collect and align in relatively consecutive order a series of documents written largely by Europeans obsessed with conquest of both Indian land and Indian people, *without* reifying the old, worn, but seemingly timeless notion of Native disappearance and voicelessness? How to present the comparatively small amount of transcribed, translated, and/or written Native American

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materials in such a way as to convey their vast diversity of language, culture, and experience? How to convey pre-Columbian Native American cultural production as dynamic rather than miasmically mythical? How to present post-Columbian Native American cultural production as more than simply reactive to European incursions and pressures? And how, most of all, to complicate that "Columbian" moment so that, on October 12, fourteen hundred and ninety two, more than two thousand diverse cultures and language groups don't instantly become "Indians," colorful and interchangeable extras whose job is to bring the popcorn and the violence to the Technicolor epic of America?

*The Literatures of Colonial America* (Castillo and Schweitzer 2001) has faced this challenge by including a range of Native American authors and by continuing to include Native American authors beyond the pre-Columbian section at the beginning. It is also an anthology that contextualizes Native American cultural production by revealing the extent of the colonizers' obsession with Indians; many of the pieces in this collection are *about* Indians, providing a portrait of exactly how much labor European invaders put into defining, inventing, and categorizing the figure of the Indian. A picture emerges of an enormous struggle underway in the "colonial" period not only over Indian land and resources, but also over Indian representation. It is a battle that is still very much underway, and the way that literatures by and about Native Americans are compiled and read continues to wage that war. An anthology that includes Indian voices at every turn is taking a stand, insisting that Native American claims to cultural and geographical sovereignty are read and analyzed rather than literally papered over. But the form of an anthology itself – a compilation, in linear order, of the literatures of a given geographical location – reminds us of what is at stake for Native Americans as authors, subjects, defenders, and creators of culture. Why are Native Americans and their literatures *compiled*? How? And what sorts of knowledge does that taxonomy produce? What kinds of counter-taxonomies are possible? Into what sort of *teleology* are Indian authors and subjects inserted? What is the effect of folding Indian voices into a linear trajectory, and what sorts of counter-teleologies are possible? What effects have Native American self-representation and representation by others had on cultural and *geographical* sovereignty? This essay argues that the excitements and limitations of the project of anthologizing – the ways in which questions of order, time, and space are caught up in that necessary and complicated activity of compilation – are in fact the fundamental stakes in Native American discursive resistance to the colonizers' narratives of conquest, discovery, and conversion.

Part of the challenge in anthologizing literature by and about Native Americans lies in the word "literature" itself. If we take it to mean single-authored written texts that correspond to specific publication dates, Native American "literature" quickly gets tricky. This is not simply because many American Indian cultures are centered on oral traditions which do not effectively translate into the written, easily historicized word. The problems have a more active root than the already monumental issues surrounding translation and transmission across oral and written traditions, namely

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the violent silencing of Native American voices and the destruction of Native American histories and texts that has been central to the colonial project. In order for a people to be indexed as historyless and landless, their claims to a past and to belonging must be either obliterated or effectively scrambled. All Native American voices have not been silenced and many Native American cultures have remained dynamic, present, and self-determining in spite of the enormous efforts ranging from genocidal violence to subtle cultural assaults that have been used against Indian people since before 1492. Demonstrating Native American survival and cultural dynamism through literature is essential and exciting. But the project of anthologizing the literatures of Native America alongside the American literatures of peoples originally from other continents is *also* the project of recording – using the conventions of linear time – the systematic silencing, scrambling, and destruction of Native American cultural production. Furthermore, reading for Indian resistance in early texts necessitates understanding that while the “colonial” status of European American countries has officially ended, the colonial status of Indian people has only *changed*. *The Literatures of Colonial America* brings us up to the end of the American Revolution and the end of a *British* colonial government in what is now the United States, and does so while interspersing Native American texts along the way. But national governments in the Western hemisphere remain, to this day, colonial governments, and Native American people are still colonized people.

One of the first actions of the Spanish colonizers in Mesoamerica was to destroy the libraries of the Mexicas (Aztecs), Mixtecs, and Mayans. Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, a Mexica nobleman writing around 1600, describes the destruction of the Texcoco library in the 1520s. The Spanish entirely emptied the library and set its thousands of books of history, poetry, and medical and calendar information on fire. The spectacle of the burning books caused many Mexicas to commit suicide. The Spanish, shocked by the Mexicas’ response, were unable to keep them from jumping from buildings or hanging themselves from trees. Were the suicides “protest”? Were they “resistance”? Were they a way of expressing and experiencing the profundity of the violence? And why were the Spanish shocked? What sort of response did they expect? The burning of the library was a performance by the Spanish, intended to show the watching Mexicas that this body of knowledge was not true and that this was an end to Mexica sovereignty. The Spanish, who had the geopolitical power to destroy the library, intended to replace the hole its loss left in the culture with their truth: that of Christianity. The Spanish were operating under the logic of salvation whereby the individual can, through (violent) revelation, change and be saved. Whatever complex meanings the Mexica suicides may carry, they were a counter-performance, rejecting the mandate that would centuries later be described as “kill the Indian and save the man.” Rather than experience the destruction of the library as an enforced enactment of revelation and conversion, the Mexicas who committed suicide chose to destroy themselves as the books were destroyed, confounding the narrative of salvation by not allowing the Spanish to separate the Indian from Indian culture.

Many who survived the Spanish invasion also worked to subvert the Spanish narrative of conquest. In spite of the loss of their books, the Mesoamerican nations kept as much of their poetry and calendrical and historical knowledge as possible dynamically alive through oral transmission. See, for example, the excerpt from the *Popol Vuh* (Castillo and Schweitzer 2001: 19–20), the sacred book of the Quiché Maya, reconstructed from memory after its destruction. The Mexica and Mayan calendrical information was especially threatening to the Spanish, since it encompasses the “conquest” into complex cycles of change and return, thus folding Spanish presence into a cyclical whole that undoes both the rupture necessary for a linear teleology of salvation and the assurance of the eternal victory of the colonist. See, for example, the excerpts from the Mayan *Chilam Balam*, a book of prophecy that incorporates conversion to Christianity into the Mayan cycles of return, thus shattering the concept of linear time necessary to the narrative of salvation (Castillo and Schweitzer 2001: 20–2).

In their destruction of the Axtec, Mixtec, and Mayan libraries the Spanish were actually creating and choosing an archive – an anthology, if you will – of Mesoamerican literature. The Spanish spared 22 pre-“conquest” Mesoamerican books, chosen for their compliance with Spanish notions of truth and history. These remaining books have been cut and rebound to resemble European book forms and linear reading practices, and written over by Spanish commentators. If we can recognize the destruction of Native literature as violent colonial representation, how should we see the relationship between burning books written by Indians and writing books about Indians? The construction of colonial representation of Indians is a partner to the destruction of Indian representation. The paucity of texts by Native Americans and the intentional destruction of Native American languages and oral traditions correspond with the enormous number of texts written about Indians by colonists.

Native American cultures with no libraries to burn have complex histories and ways of knowing that were as threatening as the great libraries of Mesoamerica to the trajectory of the narrative of discovery. And cultures whose literatures were not contained in libraries available for torching proved just as slippery in colonial hands, their self-representations as difficult to line up and force to march in time. Louis Hennepin was a Belgian friar of the Recollect order, born in 1626. He accompanied La Salle on his first journey to the Mississippi River in 1679, was separated from the large exploratory party, and ended up being captured by and spending the winter of 1680–1 with the Lakota, where one family ceremonially “adopted” him. In 1683, back in Europe, Hennepin published *The Description of Louisiana* and its appendix, “The Manners of the Indians,” a document that goes into abundant, sometimes dismissive, sometimes sympathetic detail about Lakota culture and also serves as an analysis of what might be necessary for the overthrow of that culture and the claiming of Lakota land. The Lakota have a rich history, which includes stories of the origin of people in general, and the Lakota Nation specifically. Nevertheless, Hennepin responded to the culture he encountered by denying them any self-knowledge, any conception of their own past. “I am no longer surprised at the

avowal of our historians," he writes, "that they cannot tell how the Indian country has been populated, since the inhabitants, who ought to be the best informed, know nothing about it themselves." He blames this perceived ignorance on illiteracy:

If, in Europe, we were like them deprived of writing, and if we had not the use of that ingenious art, which brings the dead back to life, and recalls past times and which preserves for us an eternal memory of all things, we should not be less ignorant than they. (Castillo and Schweitzer 2001: 189)

Hennepin follows this self-congratulation with a fascinating admission:

It is true that they recount some things about their origin; but when you ask whether what they say about it is true, they answer that they know nothing about it, that they would not assure us of it, and that they believe them to be stories of their old men, to which they do not give much credit. (Ibid)

Hennepin gives the Lakota the capacity to speak their own history, and then puts into the Lakota's mouths the dismissal of the very history they speak, thus staging the division of Native Americans from their own history and land as a voluntary abdication.

But if this is a staged scene of Native American self-abnegation, it is also a scene of Native American refusal of a European narrative. These Lakota informants refuse to defend, or accredit, the stories they tell: "they would not," Hennepin tells us, "assure us of it." They reject, in other words, the ethnographic economy of the explorer's desire to conquer history and culture as well as geography. Hennepin is shocked and frustrated that the Lakota won't stand up for their version, shocked because he cannot imagine a culture that would deny its own claim to a linear narrative of presence and possession, and frustrated because he needs the Lakota to assert their truth so that he can discount it in favor of his own. In fact, by refusing to grant their own stories the status of monolithic, monotheistic truth and by opening up the possibility of multiple realities, the Lakota could well be defending a far more complicated relationship of cultural production to geography, time, and belonging than Hennepin can imagine.

Hennepin's interlocutors do talk. They do tell their stories. And then they seemingly casually deny those stories any power that Hennepin might recognize, namely, "truth." The Lakota's refusal confounds the colonizer's desire to see Indian culture in its "untouched" form and then to redirect that culture, to convert it and set it upon the colonizer's narrative path. Can we say that the Lakota's proleptic discounting of their own stories' truth is a sort of textual terrorism? An assertion of the capacity of oral traditions to undermine written? An extinguishing of the power of word-for-word repetition and the pedagogy of "truth" that attaches to that repetition? A refusal of the easy rhyme between, say, "In sixteen hundred and seventy-nine" and "LaSalle said 'the Mississippi is mine?'" The rhyme between linear narrative and geographical conquest gets told, retold, and enjoys and incites its own retelling.

But can that rhyme be booby-trapped through the denial of knowledge, through shrugging off the imperial, imperious mantle of truth? Present-day Indian writers like Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa) and Thomas King (Cherokee) have theorized and enacted the possibility of exploding that rhyme through, for example, reiterative and looped narrative structures and trickster-driven interventions into the conventions of linear truth. Hennepin's story shows that these are tactics that have had efficacy all along, for the Lakota in particular and for Native Americans in general.

Hennepin goes further in describing his frustration with the Lakota in a section of his appendix entitled "Indifference of the Indians" (Castillo and Schweitzer 2001: 192), showing Native Americans again eviscerating French truth through deed as well as word:

They have so great an indifference for all things that there is nothing like it under heaven. They take great complacency in hearing all that is said to them seriously, and in all that they are made to do. If we say to them: "Pray to God, brother, with me," they pray and they repeat word for word all the prayers you teach them. "Kneel down," they kneel. "Take off your hat," they take it off. "Be silent," they cease to speak. "Do not smoke," they stop smoking. If one says to them: "Listen to me," they listen calmly. When we give them pictures, a crucifix or breads [*sic*], they use them as adornments just as if they were jewelry and array themselves in them, as though they were wampum. If I should say to them: "To-morrow is the day of prayer," they say, "Niaova." "See, that is right." If I said to them: "Do not get drunk," they answered: "There, that is right, I am willing." Yet the moment they receive drink from the French or Dutch, these latter never refusing them liquor for furs, they inevitably get drunk. (Ibid: 191)

The Mexicas destroy their bodies in the face of the destruction of their books, and the Lakota agree to enact the colonizer's truth, then refuse to make that enactment permanent. It is useful to read the Lakota's agreeable but impermanent bodily actions alongside the permanent refusal of the Mexicas who kill themselves while seeing their books burn. The Mexicas' suicide is a passionately active form of resistance to the colonizer's insistence on the truth of their narrative and the falsity of the Indians'. It refuses even the possibility of conversion to a different narrative and teleology. It insists that bodies of knowledge and bodies of people die together. The violence of the Mexicas' response is, on the surface, very different than the so-called "indifference" response of the Lakota to Hennepin, but each is responding to European incursions into cultural production, and each circumvents the linear narrative of conversion, diverting the use to which the European wants to put Indian "literature." And by "literature," let us be clear that we are also talking about "order." A great deal of Hennepin's anxiety over the behavior of the Lakota has to do with their refusal to change permanently. They happily engage in a bodily performance of complicity in a given moment: praying, giving up drink, stopping smoking, all of which leads the French to think that they are making *progress* in changing Indian culture. But the Native Americans' refusal to maintain that performance across time bypasses the use to which the French want to put Indian narrative and cultural performance. Both the

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Mexica and the Lakota responses to European cultural editing make a performative intervention into the colonizers' teleology of discovery and conquest. The Mexicas and the Lakota reject the coopting of their literature – either in its destruction or its reiteration by whites – for the construction of European linear narrative. They disrupt, in other words, the archiving by Europeans of Indian self-knowledge.

The Lakota who adopted Hennepin put it best, though Hennepin again characterizes their intervention into his narrative structure of truth as "indifference."

On the part of the Indians the first obstacle to their Faith is the indifference which they feel for everything. When we relate to them the history of our Creation, and the mysteries of the Christian religion, they tell us that we are right and then they relate their fables and when we reply that what they say is not true they retort that they agreed to what we said and that it is not showing sense to interrupt a man when he is speaking and to tell him that he lies. "This is all very well," they say, "for your countrymen; for them it is as you say, but not for us, who belong to another nation" (Ibid: 193)

The Lakota insist that truth adheres differently to people of different civic, geographic, and cultural formations. Hennepin, driven by the goal of global conversion of humankind to Christianity, cannot accept the possibility of plural truths, nor can he accept the Lakota understanding of "nation" as an indissoluble if dynamic connection between culture, people, and land – an indissolubility that is, itself, a truth he cannot comprehend. Given that difference in all its various meanings is what is at stake in this encounter, it is interesting that Hennepin consistently calls the Lakota's complex capacity for multiple truths "indifference," which is the same word in the original French. Does he actually want the Lakota to be "different," that is to say, opposed, to what he says? This is remarkable, given that his end desire is for their conversion. But, in fact, Indian resistance is exactly what Hennepin requires. In order for conversion to occur, there must first be opposition, a "difference" that does not allow for its other, a "difference" that claims exclusive truth status. The Lakota do articulate their otherness, but also insist that, because they are of another nation, their truth makes no difference to the truth of the European. This is a vision of truth – a theory of literature, if you will – that protects Native cultural, political, and geographical sovereignty. It rejects the archival impulse that would allow Hennepin to use the difference he looks for as fuel for a European version of the past and the future. Hennepin can find no purchase in the Lakota's version of difference and therefore cannot stage the drama of revelation as the necessary precursor to conversion.

The Spanish who burn the Texcoco library and the Belgian friar adopted by the Lakota each experience surprise in the face of Indian refusal to participate in the teleology of discovery and salvation. But the sensation felt by the colonizer, the experience of total non-understanding in the face of Native American resistance, is in one very important sense immaterial. It does not lead to changed behavior, nor does it alter the narrative of conquest. The Indian refusals do not change either the colonizer's addiction to the colonizing narrative or the colonizer's drive to inscribe

that narrative onto bodies and geographies. The Spanish do not put out the fire and rebuild the library. Hennepin, when he is refused the truth of the stories he hears, immediately turns to another Lakota origin story and shows how it is a version of the "true" biblical story of Cain and Abel. This allows him to suggest that the Indians "are . . . of Jewish origin," a common theory at the time. The notion that the Indians are a lost tribe of Israel and that their origin stories can prove this *in spite* of the Lakota's own abdication of responsibility for those stories leads Hennepin to the so-called truth that really matters to him. The Indians, like the ancient Israelites, "have no fixed and settled abode" (ibid: 189). They come, like the Europeans, from the Old World, but unlike the Europeans they are nomadic. Hennepin uses his linear narrative of both history and travel to argue that neither Indian origin nor cultural practice gives them any more claim to sovereignty in the land than Europeans. In fact, under the logic that farmers make property through labor, Indians' so-called nomadic ways give them less claim to sovereignty.

These Mexica and Lakota examples can serve as bookends to a broad spectrum of Indian discursive and performative resistance to the colonizers' variously violent ways of destroying and discounting Native American cultural production. But if we name this wide spectrum "resistance," it is crucial that we then interrogate the value placed on reading for resistance. There are many lessons to be learned from Ixtlilxochitl's and Hennepin's accounts, among them exciting glimpses of Indian intervention into the machinery of colonialist discourse. But it is also crucial to realize that desiring to read for and collate Indian resistance might itself be a troubling desire. Hennepin *seeks* resistance from Indians – he wants them to put up their fists and defend their stories. That they refuse to offer him overt resistance momentarily disappoints and confuses him, but in the end matters not a jot to his project. He marches on with his articulation of white belonging and Indian rootlessness anyway. Which is not to say that resistance is futile or that looking for it is wrong. It is to say that looking for the resistant Indian is not *de facto* a counter-colonial move. The resistance of an Indian can merely give the satisfaction of seeing the Indian, making him visible, requiring that struggle for survival is legible. Indian resistance can be another name for white comfort: if the resistant Indian can be recorded *at least*, the logic goes, *there is the trace*. It is, however, a counter-colonial move to read from the principle that Native American culture and cultural production continues even and especially when the Indian is off-screen.

The colonized come to know the colonizers better than the colonizers know themselves, and Hennepin's winter with the Lakota and the conversations they shared taught the Lakota about French "indifference," too. Today, the Lakota, along with most other Native American nations, continue to face a powerful desire for conversion in their non-Native interlocutors. Now, as often as not, that desire for conversion is turned around. This time the desire is on the part of the traveler himself to convert, to become Indian through the practice of an often quickly learned hodge-podge of Indian religious ritual. What happens to our reading practice if we read Hennepin's encounter with the Lakota as an instance in the Lakota history of discursively resisting

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the narrative of conversion, rather than as an instance in the history of French colonization? What happens if we read it as an instance when the Lakota exercised and honed discursive resistance to invading narrative desire *for* Indianness, a desire that continues to wander across Indian country and continues to want to be adopted into Indian families and to sit and talk with Indians and hear Indian stories of origin? Perhaps part of the challenge in reading for Indian resistance does lie in reading in ways that seem ahistorical, and in ways that rearrange the arcs of what our histories ask us to read for. Perhaps we need to focus on – in this instance – Lakota persistence and cultural dynamism, rather than merely looking at the Lakota in the instances when they play sidekick to the European narrative.

Another challenge lies in seeing as resistant – or at least as non-traitorous – Native American voices that are either entirely silent or that seem complicit. That implied opposite of resistance, complicity, has damned many Native Americans in the eyes of those looking only for the Indian who stands obviously and defiantly against cultural and spatial incursion. Many of these contested figures are women, raising the question of how gendered our readings of resistance are, and how complicated resistance becomes in the face of the sexual politics of colonization. La Malinche, Cortés' slave, concubine, lover, and translator, facilitated Spanish rule and violence; she also facilitated negotiation in the face of genocide. Her child fathered by Cortés is often called "the first Mexican." Is she a resistant figure? A foundational figure? A heroic figure? Pocahontas, who appears first in John Smith's *second* version of *The Generall History of Virginia*, has stood for generations as the figure of the willing woman and Christian convert through whose actions and body Virginian land passed to white hands. Was Pocahontas a bargaining chip between her father and the Virginian colonists? Was she a convert to English culture as well as Christianity? Can/should she be resuscitated as an agent figure? Kateri Tekakwitha was a Mohawk convert to Catholicism whose extreme self-flagellation and early death catapulted her into a contested bid for sainthood. Should we read her conversion as in conversation with Mohawk or French Catholic cultural mandates? How do we read the fact that her extreme Catholic practice discomfited her priests and incorporated Native American worldviews and rituals into Catholic religious ritual? Do we see a woman insisting that Catholicism change to accommodate Native American religious practice and that it be able to performatively encompass the enormity of Native American dispossession and loss?

What does it mean to convert – as each of the above figures did – to the colonizer's religion? What does it mean to serve as a translator and interlocutor – as each of the above figures did – between colonizer and colonized? What does it mean to have children – as two of the above figures did – with the colonizer? Who are those children and what are their places in the discursive contest between colonizer and colonized? The terms that all of these questions raise are curiously binary in nature and remarkably interchangeable – was this Indian woman *defending* her culture or *betraying* it? Was she resistant or complicit? These binaries repeatedly disallow Indian cultures to be in transition. The fact that these questions are often construed over, through, and across Indian women's bodies and their mixed race children shows that

what a simplistic fixation on Indian resistance does not allow is the complexity and dynamism of Native American cultural change, production, and survival – Indians are either compromising and dying off or they are defending and dying in the act.

The complexities that these questions raise are not usually what we mean when we think about resistance. Resistance is a word that implies a dialectic relationship with an invading force, and asks us to always look back, away from the subject seen to be resistant, to the invading force. We ask: did resistance work, or did it fail? Such a dialectic continues to drive a linear narrative in which Indian voices serve as punctuation to a Euro-American literary juggernaut. Reading for Indian resistance in an anthology of American literature demands that the reader be on her toes. For what meaning is she reading, and why? The Indian speaking or acting out against oppression holds a strange fascination that can be sentimental and sadistic in the same moment. The stoic Indian suffering silently in the face of incursion, the savage Indian indiscriminately gobbling up humans, the Indian weeping over the destruction of the environment, the pleading Indian begging to be allowed to disappear over the horizon, bereft of land, family, culture . . . the list goes on and is as endless as it is familiar. Representations of Indian resistance are ubiquitous and lead easily to a pleasing and limply benevolent sort of nostalgic sympathy.

Perhaps the most counterintuitive lesson to be gleaned from Ixtlilxochitl and Hennepin, then, is that looking for, finding, and analyzing Native American “resistance” has repeatedly been a colonialist project. Therefore, collecting and organizing literatures by and about Native Americans reveals and reenacts that colonialist discourse even as it critiques it. Colonists – and we must extend that term to include the present day – have looked for Indian resistance and have experienced a wide range of emotions upon finding it, from violent and genocidal retaliation, to shocked self-righteousness, to a nostalgic and weepy sympathy. Whatever the response, the colonizers’ reaction to Indian resistance is rarely to change their own colonizing goal. Judging Native American resistance by its efficacy against colonial practice led very quickly to the mistake of painting the history of Native American resistance as a series of lost wars – with “exceptions” like the Pueblo Rebellion and the Battle of Little Bighorn serving to strengthen the overall teleology of noble and predestined defeat. Figuring the Indian as resistant has been central to the efficacy and terrifying longevity of such stereotypes as, to continue the list begun above, the Indian princess, the drudge like “squaw,” the drunken chief, the last of the race . . . etc. The fact is, the figure of the resisting Indian – that favorite stock character of so many American literatures – has been and remains profoundly useful to the colonial project.

Writing in 1666 for an English audience of potential emigrants, many of whom would come as indentured servants, George Alsop sets out to describe a single Native American Nation, the Susquehannock, beginning with an admission that there are many hundreds of Native American Nations and that they differ enormously from one another. He makes this admission only to dismiss the possibility of accuracy. He admits that his facetious and caustic description – which includes cannibalism and child-sacrifice – is largely fictional:

That it would be a most intricate and laborious trouble, to run (with a description) through the several Nations of Indians here in America, considering the innumerable-ness and diversities of them that dwell on this vast and unmeasured Continent: But rather then I'll be altogether silent, I shall do like the Painter in the Comedy, who being to limne out the Pourtraiture of the Furies, as they severally appeared, set himself behind a Pillar, and between fright and amazement, drew them by guess. (Castillo and Schweitzer 2001: 218)

This is as honest a portrait as any of the attraction and usefulness of the fictional figure of the Indian, specifically the Indian as a murderous, resistant fiend. Alsop's is a bloodcurdling fantasy of a nation of 7-foot tall warriors steeped in the gore of little children, and he employs it – as others would for generations to follow – to make the geography of Maryland *attractive* to settlers. It is a story that “limns” the Indians as resistive to an extreme – murderous, terrible, and forbidding. And yet – amazingly – this is a story told to merrily hail white folks to come and be emigrants to this land. It doesn't scare them off. It doesn't matter whether the Indians are passive, eager, homicidal, sexy, ugly, smart, stupid . . . any representation at all will do. As long as there *are* Indians, the land must exist and be available.

Alsop's emphasis upon representation itself shows us that this colonial writer, at least, understands that the invention of “the other” as a foil to the “self” is an invention. There are “real” Indians, he argues, with real cultures and languages that differ from one another. But attempting to represent *those* Indians is far too much trouble and what Alsop knows and reveals in his discussion of the mechanics (pillars and curtains) of representation is that what is important for potential immigrants to know about Indians is simply that they are there. He could try for accuracy or he could make up an easy fiction – the only thing that is not an option is to “be altogether silent.” In talking about the New World you have to talk about Indians, but they don't have to be real. So long as Indians, divided from time and space and set adrift in representation, locate the story for the white reader/subject but are themselves radically dislocated and unlocatable, they are useful, whether they are handing the colonists turkeys or eating the colonists' children.

The trajectory of European discovery through empty space and towards a destiny has consistently been triangulated with the human figure of the Indian. The Indian waits on the shore to be either complicit or resisting, friendly or unfriendly, good or bad, savage or civilized, noble or dissolute. The Indian locates the story (*here I am discovering a New World and these Indians prove that I am here and not just pretending in my back garden*) and keeps it interesting (*observe them in their strange habits and beliefs*), but – very importantly – the Indian also remains figurative, an example, never a specific. The Indian, in other words, grounds the story of European colonization for the colonial reader/subject, but is never, himself, grounded. The trick for the colonial observer, whether writing or reading about Indians or listening to or reading or burning Indian cultural production, is always to keep the juggling balls of space, time, and Indians in the air, never touching, never lining up to show the coordinates