SANANDO LOS EMBRUJOS: UN ANÁLISIS DEL DISCURSO DEL DOLOR EN LA POESÍA DE DOS ESPÍRITUS

Healing the Hauntings: A Discourse Analysis of Grief in Two-Spirit Poetry

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a discourse analysis of two poems selected from the book *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature* (Driskill et al., 2011b) to explore the concept of grief in Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous poetry. It analyzes the diction, voice, formality, themes, metaphors, similes, personification, and the use of repetition the authors utilize to represent grief and discover the social, cultural, and political realities and discursive practices behind the poems. It concludes that through their expression of grief, the poets highlight the emergence and endurance of a community and people who will continue to fight for survival and the right to live in peace and harmony outside of colonial gender and sexual binaries. Both poems engage with a continuing sense of Two-Spirit identity that call forth new generations of Queer Indigenous/Two-Spirit people while remembering their history and the Elders who came before to heal personal and historical trauma often through connection with nature, their ancestors, and spirituality.
Key words: Indigenous literatures, two-spirit, queer indigenous, poetry, grief.

RESUMEN

Este artículo proporciona un análisis del discurso de dos poemas seleccionados del libro *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature* (Driskill et al., 2011b) para explorar el concepto de duelo en la poesía indígena Two-Spirit/Queer. Analiza la dicción, la voz, la formalidad, los temas, las metáforas, los símiles, la personificación y el uso de la repetición que utilizan los autores para representar el duelo y descubrir las realidades sociales, culturales y políticas y las prácticas discursivas detrás de los poemas. Se concluye que, a través de su expresión de dolor, los poetas destacan el surgimiento y la perdurabilidad de una comunidad y un pueblo que seguirán luchando por la supervivencia y el derecho a vivir en paz y armonía fuera de los binomios sexuales y de género coloniales. Ambos poemas se relacionan con un sentido continuo de identidad de dos espíritus que llama a nuevas generaciones de indígenas *queer*/personas de dos espíritus mientras recuerdan su historia y a los ancianos que vinieron antes para sanar traumas personales e históricos, a menudo a través de la conexión con la naturaleza, sus antepasados y la espiritualidad.
Palabras clave: literaturas indígenas, biespíritu, indígena *queer*, poesía, duelo.

1. Introduction

In 2021, in Saskatchewan, Canada, the government uncovered 751 unmarked graves of Indigenous children stolen from their families and forced into Canada's residential school system. This followed the unearthing of the remains of 215 children in British Columbia earlier the same year (BBC, 2021), which Indigenous peoples in North America have fought for recognition for decades. Due to these devastating uncoverings, the first U.S. Indigenous Interior Secretary, Deb

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DOI: https://doi.org//10.15517/rk.v47i3.57323
Recepción: 20/3/2023 Aceptación: 4/7/2023

Haaland, launched a similar investigation in the United States which unearthed at least 53 separate burial sites for Native American children with numbers growing in both countries (U.S. Department of Interior, 2021). Death, mourning, and cultural genocide are not new for Indigenous populations in North America. This state-legislated genocide illustrates one of the atrocities enacted upon Native peoples in Canada and the United States. In these schools, the settler-colonialists taught Indigenous children that practicing their religions meant eternal damnation, forbade their languages, and treated any expression of gender or sexuality outside of Christianity's binary conceptualization as an abomination. The settler-state attempted to eradicate all traditional understandings of gender and sexual diversity unique to the different Indigenous cultures and populations while institutionalizing Eurocentric homophobia, transphobia and patriarchal ideals that still haunt Queer Indigenous peoples today (Driskill et al., 2011a).

Hauntings from the past are not new for Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous peoples: from hate crimes, discrimination, pathologization, the indifference to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and alcoholism, drug abuse, mental health problems and suicide that plague both Indigenous and Queer communities, the patriarchal colonial settler-state has supported the continual erasure of both Queer and Indigenous existence. Nevertheless, as Laguna poet Paula Gunn Allen affirmed in her poem "Some like indians endure," one of the poems explored in this paper,: "like indians dykes / are supposed to die out / or forget / or drink all the time / or shatter / go away / to nowhere" yet "they don't anyway—even / though the worst happens / they remember and they / stay" (Driskill, 2011b, p. 24). While she is specifically referencing "dykes" and "indians," survival and resistance are not new for Native nor Queer communities and less so for Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous people.

This paper utilizes discourse analysis to explore how Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous authors use poetry to grieve a profound loss due to settler-colonialism while simultaneously reclaiming their sacred and honored place on this Earth. Through their poetry, the Two-Spirit/Native Queer authors recover stolen agency and construct new social identities interwoven with their spiritual understandings and the experiences of their ancestors. The grief expressed in the Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous poetry functions as a reaffirmation of Queer and Indigenous

lives despite efforts to remove their existence by the settler-state. The authors mourn this deep loss and represent Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous lives outside of colonial gender and sexual binaries to heal this pain often through connection with nature, their ancestors, and spirituality.

2. Methodology

This paper provides a discourse analysis of two poems selected from the first section "Dreams/Ancestors" of the book *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature* (Driskill et al., 2011b) to explore the concept of grief in Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous poetry. The two self-identified Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous authors represent different genders/sexualities, heritages, and years of publication to offer a range of Two-Spirit poetry which carries a strong connection through grief: "Some like Indians endure" (written in 1981) by Laguna poet Paula Gunn Allen, first published in a compilation of her life's work, *Life is a Fatal Disease* (1997), and "Chantway for F.C." by Cherokee Asegi author Qwo-Li Driskill in their first published book of poetry, *Walking with Ghosts* (2005). Paula Gunn Allen transcended this world in 2008 and was one of the foundational Indigenous lesbian/bisexual authors (who later also identified as Two-Spirit) in the 1980s, and Qwo-Li Driskill is currently one of the leading voices in Two-Spirit poetry, literature, and Indigenous Queer theory today. This paper analyses poetry from this book since it was the first collection of specifically Two-Spirit literature since the coining of the term in 1990 in Winnipeg at the Third Annual Inter-Tribal Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American conference (Driskill et al, 2011b, p. 5). The poems originate from the section "Dreams/Ancestors," the first of four sections, as this section offers a vision of the difficult and transformative knowledges of Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous peoples who came before (Driskill et al., 2011b, p. 8). The first poem begins the section "Dreams/Ancestors" to serve as a tribute to Two-Spirit Elders, and the second poem ends the section to honor a young Two-Spirit life lost too soon but through community activism and art his life could "[finish] in beauty" (Driskill et al., 2011b, p.73). As such, this section conjures the past, present, and future in its examination of grief within Two-Spirit identity.

This paper analyzes the diction, voice, formality, themes, metaphors, similes, personification, and the use of repetition the authors utilize to represent grief and discover the social realities and discursive practices behind the poems. It strives to honor the methodological turn towards Indigenous knowledge (Smith, 1999) in all its multiplicity and complexity to intervene against the authority of colonial knowledge by centering the words of the Two-Spirit authors themselves, yet I, myself, am a Costa Rican American lesbian/non-binary person and do not write from an Indigenous or Two-Spirit positionality but rather as an ally (Driskill et al., 2011a.). The paper examines how two different Two-Spirit poets have written about their place in the world and the need for change to provide a more viable future through their own self-expression and representation. Through discourse analysis, the paper endeavors to understand how these poets speak about Two-Spirit identity and to examine the contextual field their poetry arises from including the resistance to colonial power manifestations and ideologies. Hence, this analysis explores the relationship between expressions of Two-Spirit grief and the social, cultural, and political power structures that surround grief and the significance this may have on identity construction.

3. Literature Review

Artists have voiced grief through literature in most geopolitical realities and traditions around the world. Utilizing art to express the grief, sorrow, and mourning along with their counterparts of joy, pleasure, and celebration reflects the depth of human emotion and remains as constant as birth and death themselves. The poetry analyzed in this paper represents both extremities; nevertheless, grief assumes a particular meaning within the context of Two-Spirit poetry. Thus, this literature review provides a brief overview of grief in North America Indigenous communities, a history of Queer Indigenous/Two-Spirit literature including the work of both poets considered in this analysis, the significance of the book *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature,* and Queer Indigenous literature currently (Driskill et al., 2011b). It does not attempt to offer a comprehensive representation of Two-Spirit literature but

provides context to situate this paper and demonstrate how this paper can contribute to research on Two Spirit/Queer Indigenous works.

Indigenous peoples have traditionally used storytelling as well as other oral traditions and ceremonies to process grief communally within a circular understanding of life and death which binds all relationships on this Earth (Dennis, 2021). For instance, White Hat (2012) discusses how the Lakota people participate in specific ceremonies involving the entire community to grieve a life and teach members how to continue living in a positive way and celebrate the lost life so the deceased may move on to the Spirit World without reservation. Similarly, a beautiful Papago legend tells how the Creator added the silent yet colorful butterfly to this Earth to balance the grief humanity must experience (Caduto & Bruchac, 1991, p. 83). The Creator in the story knew that grief must remain in balance yet considering the history of grief for Indigenous peoples in North America, there is a long way to arrive at the collective healing needed to restore balance: communal grief and open acknowledgement, like the poetry in this paper, offer a start. As the foundational Sioux theorist Deloria Jr. explains in his book *God is Red* (1973), the historical trauma of the settler-state which violently forced Indigenous peoples off their ancestral lands and the continual enactment of laws that promoted institutionalized and cultural genocide, marginalization, death, and the destruction of the Earth still overwhelm and haunt North American Indigenous realities. This grief is yet compounded for Queer Indigenous/Two-Spirit peoples often making it difficult to even mourn their stolen identity or name the victimization and shame they have experienced. Poetry carries disenfranchised grief that sounds like a prayer/song in the wind, sometimes subtle like the butterfly's silent flight that ripples color and joy through the Earth with the hope that, like in the Papago legend, balance will be restored once again. The strength of these poems and the public grief expressed by Two-Spirit peoples enables collective healing and agency. Their writing is a both an individual and collective curative ritual, an act of creation and celebration of Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous lives.

While poets within almost all traditions carefully chose the words and language to construct layers of meaning, within many Indigenous oral traditions, stories and poetry often include multiple stories/poems within each word. As Laguna author Leslie Silko (1981) explains,

a particular word within a story, or in this case within a poem, can carry another entire story often known within Indigenous communities. Thus, Native American poetry often weaves language like a spider web creating poems within another poem. The telling of stories or the writing of poetry will include the audience and the listeners (or readers) and constructs identity invoking participation from the community itself through their telling (p. 55). Likewise, Silko (1981) writes that her community often tells painful stories to give perspective. She writes: "If others have done it before, it cannot be so terrible. If others have endured, so can we" (Silko, 1981, p.56). Like the butterfly story of Papago people, Silko recalls a story from her Aunt Susie that Laguna people often tell during challenging times about a distraught child who drowns herself in a lake and a grieving mother who then spreads the girl's clothes in the same lake. Her clothes miraculously change into beautiful red, white, blue, and yellow butterflies which remind her people of hope and beauty to hold them through sadness (pp. 57-59). She also explains that the repetition of ideas in these stories act like a map: they tell people where they have been, where they are now, and where they are going. Through the boundlessness of language, words can invoke the distance between time and space calling forth the memory of those yet to be born and those who have already passed over. Likewise, Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al. (2011) discuss the "devastating collective, intergenerational massive group trauma" as well as the "compounding discrimination, racism, and oppression" that can affect "emotional responses to collective trauma and losses among Indigenous Peoples" (pp. 284-285). They explain different tribes, cultures and regions experience and address the wounds differently, but to heal the unresolved grief of historical trauma and loss, society and the communities themselves must address it and not view it negatively or as a disease. However, if suppressed or left ungrieved, it can further compound into destructive patterns and behaviors that may devour the self and communities bringing forth more grief. Thus, active grieving reaffirms life. When groups have experienced historical trauma, grieving helps heal the collective loss. Poetry can help Two-Spirit people build resiliency, reclaim their identity, and embrace the mystery of existence.

Much anthropological research done previously on Queer Indigenous people, before the self-identification of Two-Spirt and the methodological turn towards "Indigenous

Methodologies" (Smith, 1999), still used the term *berdache*: a derogatory label used by settler-colonialists to document the practices of Indigenous "sexual and gender deviants" (Driskill et al., 2011a, p. 11). Later in the 1980s, authors such a Walter Williams in *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in America in Indian Culture* (1986) wrote about gender diversity in Indigenous tribes admiringly and critiqued the Western culture's rejection of these practices. Yet until the coining of the term *Two-Spirit* in the nineties, the representation of diverse understandings of gender and sexuality in Indigenous communities were relegated to the language of the colonial settler-state except for the few written records based on Indigenous languages and cultures. LGBTQ+ Indigenous activists wanted to displace this anthropological discourse and the pejorative term *berdache* with a word that better represented their realities and Queer Indigenous identities interwoven with spiritual and ancestral connections: hence, *Two-Spirit* was born from this intention. The book *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (Jacobs et al., 1997) was the first collective work that utilized the new term, yet Driskill et al. (2011a) claim that this book still marginalized Indigenous knowledges, activism, and methodologies by centering non-Native anthropological investigations: in a sense, Two-Spirit simply served as a replacement of the term *berdache* without the necessary ideological shift and application of Indigenous methodologies the new terminology required..

Nevertheless, beyond anthropological studies, Native Queer and Two-Spirit people have been actively expressing themselves through creative works such as short stories, novels, and poetry profusely since the 1980s. Native women, both Queer and straight, began publishing literary works that represented their intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality that mainstream feminism often excluded. They continue in the traditions of many women of color, notably Chicana and African American writers, as well as lesbian authors who had historically been excluded in conceptualizations of "woman" as middle-class, white, and heterosexual. For instance, *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian Women* (1983), edited by Beth Grant from the Mohawk Nation, was the first collection of Indigenous women's writing and included writing from both Native straight and lesbian authors. *Sovereign Erotics* (2011b) cites this book as an example of "creative resistance" from Two-Spirit Elders and part of the continued

legacy and nurturance for emerging Two-Spirit writers (p. 3). While Brant could not be located to be included in *Sovereign Erotics* (2011b), the collection pointedly begins with the poem "Some like Indians Endure" by Laguna author Paula Allen Gunn, who was included in Brant's anthology *A Gathering of Spirit* (1983): thus, she represents another lesbian/bisexual/Two-Spirit Elder who paved the way for Two-Spirit writing today (p. 8). Allen's novel *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* (1983) included the first LGBTQ2+ Indigenous female protagonist, and scholars still consider her book *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986) a foundational piece of Indigenous Feminist writing. In 1997, Allen published a collection of over 30 years of her own poetry, *Life Is a Fatal Disease: Collected Poems 1962-1995* (1997), which includes the poem analyzed here. By beginning with her poetry, *Sovereign Erotics* (2011b) emphasizes the continuation of Two-Spirit writing and honors Two-Spirit Elders within the tradition.

While *A Gathering of Spirit* (1983) represented a foundational feminist perspective within Indigenous women's writings and included lesbian/Two-Spirit authors, in 1988, the Gay American Indians (GAI) released the first anthology of specifically LGBTQ Indigenous literature, *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology* (1988). Until *Sovereign Erotics* (2011b), *Living the Spirit* (1988) was the only collection focused entirely on LGBTQ2S+ Indigenous literature. Driskill et al. published *Sovereign Erotics* (2011b) to serve as a guide and provide role models for Two-Spirit/Queer people so they would be less alone in their journey while paying homage to earlier generations of Queer Native artists and activists (p. 1). Driskill (2004) coined the term "sovereign erotic" in their article "Stolen from Our Bodies First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic", which they later exemplified through this literary collection. They define "sovereign exotic" as "an erotic wholeness healed and/or healing from the historical trauma that First Nations people continue to survive, rooted within the histories, traditions, and resistance struggles of our nations" (p. 51). Using the word "erotic," Driskill invokes Audre Lorde's inspirational article "The Uses of the Erotic" (1984) which reclaims the erotic as a creative and generative life force against patriarchal and colonial violence for women, particularly women of color. In addition, Qwo-Li Driskill published *Sovereign*

Erotics (2011b) the same year as the book *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* (2011a), which provides essays examining Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous lives, identities, and communities through Indigenous and Queer centered approaches and methodologies. Driskill has also published two collections of their own poetry: *Walking with Ghosts: Poems* (2005), from which the poem analyzed in this paper originates, and *Asegi Stories: Cherokee Queer and Two-Spirit Memory* (2016), a 2017 Lambda Literary Award finalist. Driskill's writing passes on Two-Spirit legacies to the next generations while also representing a generation that came into being due to the work and activism of the Two-Spirit Elders who cleared the path for them.

Since the publication of *Sovereign Erotics* (2011b), Two-Spirit authors have continued writing and expressing their realties via literature and poetry including the creation of new identities and new literary styles. For instance, Joshua Whitehead writes cyber-punk influenced poetry in the book *Full Metal Indigiqueer* (2017). Many Indigenous youth today claim both Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer identities. As Whitehead explains:

> I go by both two-spirit and Indigiqueer. One to pay homage to where I come from, from Winnipeg, being kind of the birthplace of two-spirit in 1990. But I also think of Indigiqueer as the forward moving momentum for two-spiritness" (CBC/Radio Canada, 2017, par. 5).

This forward moving thinking, an important part of the Two-Spirit poetry analyzed in this paper, is a critical part of Indigenous futurism and Indigenous speculative fiction, a relatively new field of Native American literature. This can be seen in the third collection of Two-Spirit, and now Indigiqueer, literature, *Love Beyond Body Space and Time: A Two-Spirit Journey* (Nicholson, 2016) followed by the latest Two-Spirit/Indigiqueer anthology, *Love after the End; An Anthology of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction* (Whitehead, 2020). Hence, the world of Two-Spirit, Native Queer, and Indigiqueer literature continues expanding and changing as do the identities themselves.

Younger generations may express the concept of grief differently with new conceptualizations of space and time within Indigenous futurism/speculative fiction based on

their lived realities. While exploring the concept of grief in all the literary works included (and not included) in this review would undoubtedly uncover a much broader analysis of its role in the construction of Two-Spirit identities, this paper provides an initial analysis of two poems that can exemplify different moments in the history of Two-Spirit literature: one poem written by a Two-Spirit Elder woman, Paula Allen Gunn, and a poem written earlier in the career of a current gender non-binary Two-Spirit author and poet, Qwo-Li Driskill. This paper posits that within Two-Spirit literature, grief plays a prominent role as it allows people to honor those who cleared the way for Two-Spirit identity and activism despite the harrowing realities they faced. Likewise, grief serves as a form of healing and resistance offering hope for a better world for Two-Spirit people in the future.

4. Theoretical Foundations

4.1 Discourse Analysis

As discourse analyst Jäger (2001) claims, knowledge construction can mold social reality (p. 33); Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous poetry, as a discursive practice, likewise, acts as an exercise of power affecting social realities by challenging and resisting dominant discourses (Jäger, 2001). While the dominant discourses, ideologies, and knowledge/power constructions of the settler-state have caused much of the grief expressed in the poems, the collective mourning by Two-Spirit authors creates space for the transmutation of this grief within a new identity with ancestral roots. The discourse of settler Christianity purported to teach universal and immutable truths, yet Two-Spirit poetry refutes these claims and proves their temporality in space and time by critiquing the discourses that historically tried to silence and invisibilize them (Jäger, 2001)Through their poetry, the authors claim agency as subjects to represent their collective and individual identity through their choice of themes, diction, repetition, similes, metaphors, imagery, and other poetic conventions and techniques (or their breakage from them). As such, this paper analyzes the "collective symbolism" or the "repertoire of images" in the emergence of a new "social reality" and "political landscape" (Jäger, 2001, p. 35). This written power/knowledge production "conveyed by active people" or Two-Spirit/Queer Indigenous people, shapes political reality,

including non-discursive realities of Two-Spirit people (Jäger, 2001, p. 37). The two poets weave their discourse into existing discourses (i.e., the institutionalized imposition of the English language, the conventions of poetry and Western academia, etc.…) to create meaning through their lives and realities and offer a more viable future for themselves and future generations while honoring and asking for guidance from those who came before. Likewise, Keith Moxey (1994) claims that language is endowed with ideological significance and demonstrates the intricacy of the reality that surrounds it. Furthermore, he claims signs reveal the movement between representation and reality which can be seen in these poems' publication (Moxey, 1994, p. 43). Thus, this paper argues that the poetry by Two-Spirit authors create their own signification to underline and develop ideological frameworks in defiance of the status quo inscribed by the settler-state which can be better understood by examining the language employed by the authors and how they relate to the societal realities around their production.

4.2 Queer Indigenous/Two-Spirit

This paper uses both the terms *Two-Spirit* and *Queer Indigenous* (and acknowledges *Indigiqueer* but does not employ it as this term came into popularity after these poems were published) to respect diverse identifications. All three terms carry vastly different histories and significations; an Indigenous person from the LGBTQ2S+ community may identify with all, one or two, or none of terms. Nevertheless, each highlights an oppositional identity, invokes subject agency, and honors the duality of being both Indigenous and part of the LGBTQ+ community. Nevertheless, *Two-Spirit*, while diverse in its usage and not claimed by all LGBTQ+ Native people, signifies a "queer" Native identity through differentiation from the non-Native terminology of LGBTQ+ community. Indigenous LGBTQ+ scholars and activists coined the term to celebrate the intersection of dual identities, Native and Queer, and to define this identity in their own terms and based on their own experiences. While some Indigenous people dismiss or critique the term as a pan-Indian/tribal/national erasure of the diversity of the distinct genders, sexualities,

and identities expressed in many Indigenous languages and cultures[1](Driskill et al., 2011a, p. 5), others view it as a reclamation of traditional Native concepts from diverse Native languages that carry shared historical experiences, realities, and political identities. As an identity, it opposes the historically oppressive institutionalized power/discourse of the settler-state: residential schools, laws outlawing same-sex love and gender diversity, pre-settler colonization and the discourses of those political moments. Likewise, through the usage of *Two-Spirit*, Indigenous Queer people claim agency as constructors of knowledge and reverse the subject/agent dichotomy of the anthropological and pejorative term *berdache*. Like queer, *Two-Spirit* acknowledges the limits of identity while allowing for shifting identification that carries the past, present, and future simultaneously. It allows for the reclamation of the sacred role of Two-Spirit people within Indigenous communities which contradicts the historically homophobic discourse of the settler-state (i.e., unnatural, sinful, an abomination, heathen, among others) that enables the future imaginings of a community. As mentioned, language both creates and reflects the constantly changing realities of identity including the emergence of the new identity of Indigiqueer which reflects the identity constructions of younger generations and their artistic expressions often more geared towards future imaginings.

Judith Butler, in her book *Bodies that Matter* (1993), revealed how "queer" moved from a performative insult against "homosexuals" to its reclamation as an oppositional identity infused with political ideology. It has also been employed to refer to something that is "odd" and as an umbrella term for several identities within the LGBTQ2S+ community. Likewise, homosexual men and women claimed "gay" which meant "happy" to celebrate how people could be both joyful and proud of their same-sex attraction, which North America settler societies often viewed as undesirable, sad, and diseased. *Two-Spirit*, unlike these terms, falls outside the language of the settler-state in that this term did not have a previous signification in English. Thus, it *does* something with language: it creates the conditions for its own naming that allowed for collective activism and the production of literature produced under its sign. Furthermore, it includes an

[1] The were over 150 different ways in various indigenous languages in North America to describe gender diverse and LGBTQ2S+ peoples prior to settler contact (Robinson, 2019).

Indigenous spiritual element within its identity (a reclamation of Indigenous spirituality that many times acknowledged and/or honored LGBTQ+ people) which is not included in other "queer" identities such as gay, lesbian, transsexual, and homosexual precisely because of the discourses of their creation: pathologizing medical and psychological discourses and that of the Christian settler church/state. As such**,** Two-Spirit poetry functions as a performative act that propagates an idea, an identity, and resistance to state-sanctioned violence. Yet unlike the performatives analyzed by Austin (1962), the performatives created through Two-Spirit poetry are not inscribed by state power (i.e., the power of state recognition in a marriage ceremony or to "sentence" someone to a period of incarceration). Those who hold less symbolic power in a society almost always produce "unhappy" utterances according to Austin's analysis (p. 14). Nevertheless, even "unhappy" utterances *do* things with words through their resistance to discursive power enacted by the state: in this case, the collective utterances from the positionally of Two-Spirit identity united a diverse group of people through shared experiences who can now demand the rights and recognition previously denied to them by the same discourses that excluded/invisibilized/pathologized them.

In addition, the poetry's use of grief resists Two-Spirit melancholia, or ungrieved loss, inscribed by the settler-state, creating space for the public grieving needed for collective survival and healing (Butler, 1993). The poetry performs grief as an act of resistance: its utterances contradict their current erasure in discursive and non-discursive realities such as the prohibition of both speaking of queerness, race/ethnicity, and the naming of state violence in the current political climate of the United States, for instance. Furthermore, it rebels against the discourses of the state, academia, and the LGBTQ+ community which have historically excluded Two-Spirit existence while also challenging perceptions of Two-Spirit people within Native cultures, nations, and communities who may have been affected by the hate propagated by the discourse of the settler state. In addition, this public expression of grief has opened space for future imaginings that we are already seeing through new expressions of identity, for example, Indigiqueer, and the current production of Indigenous futurism and speculative fiction.

5. Poem Analysis

5.1 Overview

The poems "Some Like Indians Endure" and "Chantway for F.C." (Driskill, 2011b) explore grief resulting from racial sexual/gendered injustices inflicted upon North American Indigenous peoples by the ideologies of the settler-state. Yet, through their poems, these two authors (Allen, 2011; Driskill 2011c) reveal how Two-Spirit people have continued to transform and emerge from this grief by sourcing beauty from unbearable pain. They offer their poems to resist and clear a path to more viable futures.

"Some like Indians Endure" (Allen, 2011) compares "indians" and "dykes" to reveal how both have survived despite attempted annihilation by a patriarchal settler-state. Yet no matter how the homophobic settler-state tries to erase their existence, "indians" and "dykes" keep the idea of themselves and their communities alive with nature both a witness and symbol of their resilience. By utilizing the colloquial term "indian," Allen speaks to Native American peoples as an Indigenous woman within the community. Native Americans often use the term "Indian" informally among themselves, yet the term also carries the history of settler-colonialism and the oppressive laws and institutions which removed them from their lands and imposed genocidal policies after the settler colonialists arrived on Turtle Island believing they had reached India. The American Indian Movement (AIM) in the late sixties reclaimed the term "Indian" with ethnic, political, and sovereign pride. Yet when an outsider uses the term, it can often carry the racial bias and historical trauma of the settler-state. Likewise, "dyke" (shortened from "bulldyke") originated as a homophobic slur against working class masculine lesbians in the 1950s, but in the seventies, lesbians reclaimed the term as a form of empowerment and rebellion. As a young lesbian who ventured outside of a small homophobic town for the first time in search of belonging, I felt my first connection to a sense of home within a dyke community much like Allen describes. As lesbian spaces and rights become more at risk in the U.S., as does Native American sovereignty, it is imperative we keep the idea of "dykes" and "indians" alive and fight for their continued endurance as communities.

The poem "Chantway for F.C." pays homage to Fred Martinez, a 16-year-old Navajo teenager who was brutally killed in Colorado in 2001 for being a Two-Spirit person. His mother said that Martinez often described himself/themself[2] with the Navajo word "nadleehi" which helped him/them find comfort in his/their gender identity despite the bullying he/they faced (Nibley, 2010). His/their murderer was not charged with a hate crime and has already been released from prison. Driskill offers the poem as a Chantway, a Navajo curative/blessing ritual and ceremony, to honor his/their young life and provide healing in his/their community. The poem is divided into five parts, with each section metaphorically representing one night in a five-night Chantway ritual. Driskill uses stunning natural imagery as an offering to Martinez's young "nadleehi" warrior life and spirit. Its lyrical nature evokes intense emotions which call forth the depth of this heartbreaking and senseless crime and the symbolic strength to help his/their community move forward and create meaning through the tragedy. Driskill elevates his/their memory and life with brilliant and exquisite care in which, through the ceremony of a Chantway, the community can emerge refortified and empowered to create a world in which Two-Spirit lives will not be sacrificed to racist and homophobic ideologies but will be honored and upheld as sacred.

This discourse analysis explores the concept of grief by looking at how the authors employ grammatical person, verb tenses, capitalization, simile, metaphors and personification, and the repetition of words and concepts in their poetry. Examining the authors' choice of language exposes aspects of Two-Spirit identity construction in its relationship to grief and the context of the poems' production.

5.2 Use of Voice, Perspective, and Grammatical Person

Both poems begin using first person confessional voice to insert the author's own voice into the poetry. Hence, in both poems, the persona, speaker, and author form an intricate

[2] Since Martinez described himself/themselves as gender non-binary, but the articles and sources I have found use masculine pronouns, I have decided to include both throughout this text to respect the sources as well as his/their self-described dualistic masculine/feminine Two-Spirit identity.

connection. Yet both authors also shift their use of pronouns and, thus, their relationship with the reader and the pain, grief, and violence described in each poem.

In "Some like Indians Endure," Allen (2011) begins the poem in the first-person singular writing: "**i** [3] have it in my mind that / dykes are indians" (p. 21). The speaker highlights her own subjective position: this idea exists in *her* mind but not all "dykes" or "indians" will necessarily agree. She implies her membership in both groups but does not explicitly state it. The only other lines in which she uses first person, she writes: "but **i** don't know / about what was so longago / and it's now that dykes / make **me** think / **i'm** with indians / when **i'm** with dykes" (p. 21, 24). In this excerpt, she reiterates her partial perspective and offers her idealistic understanding of both groups in the past: believers in "caringsharing" who "rode horses / and sang to the moon" (p. 21). The persona admits her lack of complete understanding about both "dykes" and "indians" from before but moves to the pain she has witnessed currently uniting "dykes" and "indians" in the present. Yet in the poem, the speaker distances herself grammatically from both groups using third person plural: she expresses "i" only four times yet refers to "dykes" and "indians" as "they" around twenty times. The use of third person separates the persona, a member of both communities, from the grief described and depicts her as an outsider observing the shared pain. Yet she employs two other transitory changes in voice: "you" and "we." In the middle of the poem, she briefly switches to "you" bringing the reader into the narrative: "but the idea which / once **you** have it / **you** can't be taken / for somebody else" (p. 22). She continues, "like indians **you** can be / stubborn / the idea might move **you** on / ponydrag behind / taking all **your** loves and / children maybe downstream" (p. 22). Here, the persona implicates the reader with her shift of the grammatical person: you, the reader, stubbornly and rightly hold onto this "idea" as it forces you to relocate and lose your loved ones. In these two stanzas, the reader can infer that Allen creates the poem for Indigenous and lesbian readers while the persona later unites with them using first-person plural: "the place **we** live now / is idea" (p. 22). The author includes "we" three times

[3] All emphasis (underline and bold) in the poetry in the analysis is mine to bring attention to the words or phrases being examined.

throughout the poem in which she reiterates the theme of the endurance: "**we** never go away / even if **we're** always / leaving" and an "idea about **ourselves** is all / **we** own" (p. 24). She uses first-person plural sparingly to highlight the staying power ideas for both "indians" and "dykes," but when discussing painful lived experiences and grief mentioned in much of the poem, the persona grammatically separates herself from the poem by using third person plural.

On the contrary to this separation of the persona and grief, in "Chantway for F.C.," Driskill (2011c) opens the poem with "from the heavy debris of loss / **we** emerge" (p. 71) immediately forging a connection of unity through grief between the persona and the reader. Likewise, they finish Part I of the poem writing: "**We** emerge in beauty / **You** will be our song" echoing a community lost in the depth of sorrow but together rising to the surface of this unimaginable pain (p. 71). Unlike Allen's poem which uses "you" to implicate the reader, each time Driskill refers to "you", they refer to the spirit of Fred Martinez for whom they dedicate the poem. The speaker refers to Martinez by the pronouns "you" and "your" fifteen times throughout the poem and "we" and "our" nine times referring to the collective speaker: the persona and the readers. As the readers, "we," his queer, Native, Two-Spirit and ally community, hold a ceremony, or Chantway, for our lost companion's life. We live our grief as we adorn Martinez with all the precious offerings of this Earth. Nevertheless, the persona extends an exception to the singular "you" and "your" referring to all Two-Spirit people who have lost their lives. They write, "**We** count preciousness daily / hold **you** as warriors / brothers / sisters / Hold **you** / with words and breath" (p. 73). Here the readers hold Two-Spirit people in prayer/ritual as creators and reclaimers of identity bound with Fred Martinez's spirit and the fight for existence. The persona, likewise, only momentarily uses first person singular in the first half of Part II, stating: "Grief pulls **me** down" while describing the space of grief and repeating the line "There **I** wander" four times and ending with "There **I** return" (pp. 71-72). In this part, the persona shares their personal journey with grief to later "return" to the collective persona in first person plural. In the last section V, the poem shifts from the active voice used throughout the poem to a passive voice construction in the final two lines. The speaker closes the ceremony: "**It is finished** in beauty / **It is finished** in beauty" (p. 73). This switch from active verbs performed by the persona and readers to a

distancing passive structure demonstrates the finality of the poem and Martinez's journey of transcendence. Martinez' life now ends in harmony adorned with elegant offerings of love from the Earth and his community as he/they pass to the Spirit realm.

5.3 Verb Tenses

The verb tenses the speakers use reveal how they see time frames within identity construction and grief. For instance, in "Some like Indians Endure," Allen (2011) makes use of clear and deliberate shifts in verb tenses; nevertheless, she employs the present simple throughout most of the poem but employs the past tense in particular circumstances where the speaker recalls or speculates upon the past. For instance, after stating in present that this is her idea of the connection between "dykes" and "indians", the persona states her perception of their commonalties in the past: "they **used to** live as tribes / they **owned** tribal land / it **was called** the earth / they **were massacred** /… / they always **came back**" (p. 21). The use of the past simple implies that these ideas no longer hold true: the "caringsharing" and singing to the moon have changed, one can infer, due to the "massacres" she describes (p. 21). She, then, makes a deliberate shift back to the present and begins to discuss the many connections between the two identities she currently observes: "they **bear / witness bitterly,**" "**reach** / and **hold,**" and "**live** every day / with despair laughin" (p. 21). She provides only one more line in the past tense about stolen identity and land saying that "whiteman" and "daddy", "**took** all the rest" also referring to previous trauma (p. 22). Yet in she also employs the present perfect tense briefly to connect the effect of earlier colonization on the present day: "they**'ve occupied** all / the rest / **colonized** it" (p. 24). The rest of the poem characterizes the positive and negative aspects of both communities in their survival in the present time frame: remembering and uncovering, dying, surviving, and doing terrible things to each other while maintaining their connection with each other and nature. The poem interjects one line in the future conditional as a warning: "dykes" and "indians" are expected "to remember what **will happen** / if they **don't** [die off]" but then shifts quickly back into the present stating, "they **don't** anyway…/ they **remember** and they / **stay**" (p. 24). In this line "dykes" and "indians" maintain their history and identities with each reading. Thus, we can

see that the predominant use of the present tense represents the fortitude of the groups she describes which remains as the poem continues to be read and engages readers in the present time frame advancing the endurance of the communities.

Likewise, in "Chantway for F.C.," the persona expresses themselves mostly in present simple because the poem functions as a curative rite that happens in the moment of each reading: it is always happening within the present time frame to keep Martinez's memory alive and push us forward as a community of readers: Two-Spirit, Indigenous peoples, and allies. The speaker recites illustrative, sensorial, and vivid verbs as performative gestures reaffirming Two-Spirit existence: "anoint," "feast," "hunger," "listen," "incant," "spiral," "rock," "sprout," "hurl," "shade," "count," "hold," "rise," "mimic," "sew," "adorn," "brush," and "braid" (Driskill, 2011c, pp. 71-73). The reader performs these actions along with the persona during the Chantway for Martinez. As I will discuss later, many Indigenous languages, including Navajo, center verbs in their grammatical structures as movement and animacy better reflect naturalistic worldviews (Young, 2000; Kimmerer, 2013). In this poem, while written in English, the verbs involve the readers in the action of the poem and provide the life-force and movement for the nouns and adjectives. While the poem is predominately in the present time frame, Driskill (2011c) includes the future tense twice, both instances mirroring the other: "You **will be** our song" (p. 71) in the first part of the poem which initiates the ritual and "We **will be** your breath / We **will be** your song" as the ceremony/poem concludes (p. 73). The circular nature of these lines reminds the readers of their interdependence and promise to each other in the present and future: to keep living and fighting for light and beauty through all the hate and destruction. The use of the future at the beginning and ending of the poem, framing the rest of the ritual in the present tense, evokes the continuity of hope while acknowledging and grieving the past and Martinez lost life and looks towards a kinder future for Two-Spirit peoples.

5.4 Capitalization, Style, and Formality

While similar in their use of verb tenses, the two poems differ radically in their uses of the conventions of language, style, and formality. In "Some Like Indians Endure," Allen (2011)

rejects traditional conventions of capitalization to signal the beginning of a new idea or reference a proper noun. In fact, she rejects capitalization throughout the entire poem including the pronoun "i" or the proper noun "indian": thus, the lack of capitalization stresses the sameness of every word without giving more importance to proper nouns nor the persona of the poem. Likewise, the poem does not separate ideas into discrete phrases through capitalization, but rather employs enjambment, or the continuation of a phrase onto the next line, where she separates the ideas stressing the importance of certain phrases or words through an unusual division of phrases: "so it gets important to know / about ideas and / to remember or uncover / the past / and how the people / traveled." (p. 23). These pauses and divisions created through enjambment affect the rhythm of the free verse poem producing a choppy and sincere tone. Both the lack of punctuation and enjambment give the poem an intimate feeling like she is whispering a secret to her readers ("dykes," "indians," and allies) while breaking the conventions of white heterosexual patriarchy. Likewise, her grammar uses standard conventions of English, but the language is simple, informal and without pretense. Like in spoken English, she uses contractions such as "they're", "i'm" and "don't" which invoke the intimacy of the oral traditions of Laguna peoples and the parallels between "dykes" and "indians." Through her simple language and lack of standard punctuation, Allen forms familiarity with her readers inviting us into the poem.

In contrast, "Chantway for F.C." uses standard rules of capitalization, grammar and carefully considered diction and division of lines to construct a more formal, lyric poem, but the poem also uses these conventions to invite the readers' participation. The rhythm flows like a prayer/ritual with very considered spacing which coincides with each breath, breath that honors the spirit of F.C. Martinez: "We will sew you a gown of white shells / threaded with yellow zigzag lightning / adorn you with black clouds / brush blue corn pollen across your lips / braid thunder through your hair" (Driskill, 2011c, p. 73). This use of convention and formality is vital to the enactment of a ceremony as it creates order from chaos. The structure, rules, and rituals of a ceremony hold the attendees and keep them safe both physically and spiritually: they function as a container for the energy being invoked. The persona's deployment of precise descriptive language creates a solemn, serene, and adoring tribute to Martinez. It generates a space for the

reader to grieve in the safety of the structure of Chantway without outside noise from the breakage of convention. Instead, it encourages the reader to focus on the words of the poem itself and the clear rhythmic and spatial division of ideas and to know exactly when to breathe in a palpable and natural flow.

5.5 Simile, Metaphor, and the Personification of Nature

In both poems, metaphor, simile, and the personification of nature permeate the entire works. For example, "Some like Indians Endure" compares "dykes" and "indians" which she sometimes characterizes as a metaphor ("dykes are indians") and other times as simile ("so dykes / are like indians") (Allen, 2011, pp. 21, 23). In this comparison, Allen bonds "dykes" and "indians" but distances herself from both groups by using the third person: still, the grief both groups suffer functions as the foundation of the comparison and acts as a bridge between the two subjugated and alienated communities. This bridging of identities characterizes the writing of feminists and lesbians of color during Second Wave feminism which can be exemplified by the foundation text *This Bridge called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Color* (1981) published the same year as this poem. In their writing, Chicana women and other women of color refused to select of only one aspect of identity as Allen refuses in the poem. The poem, then, forges a missing connection between both communities and Allen's own identity: it creates identity and highlights how identities intersect.

Furthermore, Allen (2011) uses what settler-colonial literary analysis characterizes as metaphor and the personification of nature to symbolize the survival of both communities. For instance, she uses the metaphor of "the persistent stubborn grass" to describe both communities since no one can eradicate them: they resist and return to "spit in the eye of death" (pp. 22, 24). Likewise, she personifies Nature and the Earth as collaborators ensuring the endurance of "dykes" and "indians" as "the earth hides them" from death and oppression (p. 22). Not only does the Earth hide "dykes" and "indians", but the Cosmos also witnesses their history and holds their memories so that they never fade away: she writes "because the moon remembers / because so does the sun / because the stars / remember" (p. 24). While these lines may read like a metaphor

and personification in the knowledge taught by the Western settler-state, in many Native languages, all nature is imbued with life and Spirit. Like the butterfly, nature quite literally heals the spirit and is not separate from or in a different classification than humanity: thus, personification cannot exist within this worldview. For instance, Kimmerer (2013) claims that scientific language and English in general objectify the natural world through a grammatical omission that excludes an important aspect of spirit/life: she explains that in Western science we do not name what we cannot see including "unseen energies that animate everything" (p. 46). Thus, the English language lacks the grammaticality to describe and signify the animacy of such "objects" such as rocks, water, mountains, the sun, the moon, and the stars, which are considered lifeless. Yet many Indigenous languages, like the Potawatomi language Kimmerer reflects upon, are imbued with different forms and structures for the living world and the lifeless. For instance, discussing of the usage of verbs and the language of animacy, she writes:

> A bay is only a noun if water is *dead*. When *bay* is a noun, it is defined by humans, trapped between its shores and contained by the word. But the verb wiikwegamaa – to be a bay- releases the water from the bondage and lets it live…. To be a hill, to be a sandy beach, to be a Saturday, all are possible verbs where everything is alive. (Kimmerer, 2013, pp. 46-47)

Thus, when the authors employ "personification" and "metaphor" based on the Western settler states' understanding of these terms, for the authors, this language may not be figurative and metaphorical but purely descriptive. Thus, through the animacy of nature, the poems provide hope and the renewal of Spirit. Likewise, the concept of an "idea" is also personified: the "idea" literally "[moves] you on" (p. 22). This "idea" and the collective memory of both groups and Nature will ensure their survival as the settler-state has never been able to quell either community's sense of self.

Much in the same way, in "Chantway for F.C." metaphor, or the animacy of nature, plays a prominent role throughout the poem. In fact, the entire poem acts as a ceremony and is a metaphor in a sense, but as life itself is also understood as a ceremony for many Native peoples, the metaphor is quite literal. As we understand this "poetic" language from Indigenous

worldviews, one can begin to see the separation between metaphor and reality is not so easily deciphered. As such, one can read this as metaphor or as simple descriptive language of spiritual dimensions: "Our muscles are rainbows / Spiral galaxies around you / Rock your lost flesh / Bare you up open-palmed / Sacred" (Driskill, 2011c, p. 72). Here humans, galaxies, and nature unite in the ritual honoring of the spirit of Martinez. Likewise, one can also read the bloodshed and fertility of the land figuratively or as a description of the correlations between life, death, and rebirth, in this case, at the expense of Two-Spirit lives: "Our homelands grow fertile / from our blood / sprout abundance / feed multitudes / while we daily count our disappeared" (Driskill, 2011c, p. 72). Finally, while the speaker uses words and the animacy of nature to empower the community, they also lament the impotence of words and metaphors to protect against violence and death with simile: "What are words / that can't block blows / shade you from sun's white light / like large merciful wings" (p. 72). Nevertheless, notwithstanding the violence and the frustration expressed at the seeming futility of language, the speaker ultimately claims the power of language and metaphor to hold those lost through violence "with words and breath" (p. 73). Finally, Driskill personifies grief itself as they explore their own emotional journey: they write "grief pulls me down canyon walls"; the emotion physically drags the persona into the depths of an imaginary material realm where they can explore and feel the grief and honor its presence (p. 71). In sum, as the rules of English, institutionally imposed upon Native peoples, lack forms to express some concepts in each tribe's/community's/Nation's worldview, the authors creatively communicate their ideas and remain true to their conceptualizations of Nature often through figurative language.

5.6 Repetition of words and concepts

Finally, both poems repeat language and concepts related to grief and healing in the construction of Two-Spirit identity and community. In "Some like Indians Endure," Allen (2011) repeats the ways both "indians" and "dykes" have faced death and elimination from the patriarchal settler-state as "they were massacred" and "massacred again" (p. 21). Likewise, she says both "know all about dying" and "are supposed to die out" (pp. 23-24). In fact, most of the poem

references lost spaces and identities and the consequences of living with violence and pain. Yet despite all the brutality referenced, she offers the repetition of "an idea" to provide hope and emphasize the perseverance of both communities as an idea "hangs in there" and "endures" (pp. 22-23). Thus, through repetition of words and concepts, she connects nature, ideas, "dykes" and "indians" in their capacity for survival as a foundational basis of the discourse and creation of Two-Spirit identity. Similarly, "Chantway for F.C." also echoes the reality of violence against Two-Spirit people and reiterates the theme of resilience. Driskill (2011c) mentions the mutually supporting conceptions of "breath" and "song" on four occasions. They position the readers as the continuance of breath and song for those no longer able to use these gifts. They, likewise, repeat "There I wander" four times referring to the physicality of the experience of grief: nevertheless, they also repeat the concepts of rising up and emergence from this grief, where Two-Spirit people and Martinez's communities, family, and friends must use their breath and song to finish Martinez' story "in beauty," which they also repeat in three lines. Thus, the return from the world of grief, just like the endurance of an idea and nature, signifies the survival of an identity and a people(s).

6. Conclusion

In sum, through discourse analysis, readers can find significant commonalities as well as variations between the two poems written over twenty years apart. Allen wrote "Some like Indians Endure" as gay and lesbian Native identities were first emerging. Her poem represents the work, literature, activism, and community building of Queer Indigenous Elders that helped lead the way for the creation of Two-Spirit identity. On the other hand, "Chantway for F.C." represents Two-Spirit poetry after a keen sense of community had already been forged, yet the poem also highlights the vulnerability still felt within the community today. Likewise, they engage noticeably clear differences in style. For instance, Allen writes informally as whispering a secret while Driskill employs complex diction and structure like that of a formal ceremony. Similarly, Allen's poem distances the poem's persona from the grief, pain, and suffering experienced by the two groups, but the same grief also serves as a bridge for the construction of her own as well as

Two-Spirit identity. On the contrary, Driskill's poem unites the persona with the reader throughout and calls for the community to emerge together from the grief of this tragic loss of life and instill it with meaning and beauty. Nevertheless, the poems also resonate with each other in many ways. For instance, both poems use a performative use of present tense, bringing active mourning and grief into each reading. Likewise, both poems employ metaphor and personification through a unification/animacy of nature and Spirit that reflects many Indigenous languages and spiritual beliefs. Finally, through their expression of grief, both poets highlight the emergence and endurance of a community and people who will continue to fight for survival and the right to live in peace and harmony. Both engage with a continuing sense of Two-Spirit identity that already calls forth new generations of Queer Indigenous/Two-Spirit people who can carry on the creation of identity and literary traditions while remembering their history and the Elders who came before.

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