

Towards an Alternative Poetics of Space: Intersections of the Feminine and the Environmental in Recent North American Indigenous Fiction in English

This project aims to explore the intersections of space, environment, and femininity as represented in twenty-first-century fiction written in English by Indigenous women writers from Canada and the United States. I propose the following research hypotheses: (1) all the selected narratives establish a crucial relationship between Indigenous women and the environment, emphasizing that they are both most vulnerable to colonial exploitation; (2) the selected Indigenous fiction, by exploring interlocking forms of oppression, provides an alternative to colonial mappings of space. The project will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the affinities between environmental issues and Indigenous women's condition in settler colonial states, e.g. Canada and the United States? How are they represented in the selected fiction?
- (2) How do Indigenous women writers refer to current issues related to the environmental deterioration and precarious feminine condition in their writing?
- (3) How do the dynamics between women and the environment depicted in the selected texts alter and contest dominant mappings?
- (4) How do changes in landscapes, such as urbanization and industrial development, impact Indigenous women's lives in the selected texts?
- (5) How does the recent fiction by Aboriginal women locate environmental and women's issues within the Indigenous decolonial politics?

The project's corpus consists of *Monkey Beach* (2000), *Son of a Trickster* (2017), and *Trickster Drift* (2019) by Eden Robinson, *Birdie* (2015) by Tracey Lindberg, *The Break* (2016) by Katherena Vermette, *Future Home of the Living God* (2017) and *The Night Watchman* (2020) by Louise Erdrich, *The Marrow Thieves* (2017) and *Empire of Wild* (2019) by Cherie Dimaline, and *In the Night of Memory* (2019) by Linda LeGarde Grover. Despite their growing popularity in Canada and the United States, the selected texts have not yet collected a substantial body of literary criticism. This project attempts to correct this omission.

The project's methodology draws from several fields of study, including Indigenous studies, feminism, environmental humanities, and human geography. Such a method of analysis allows an interdisciplinary approach to problems of space, femininity, and the environment in the selected fiction

The contemporary socio-economic situation in Canada and the United States renders the problems addressed by the project more pertinent than ever. Progressing climate change and the emergence of a new geological era, the Anthropocene, shape contemporary imaginations and prompt the search for more sustainable, alternative approaches to the environment. At the same time, the extent of violence towards Indigenous women, highlighted by the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) movement, impacts mainstream sensibilities. Contemporary Indigenous women writers from Canada and the United States comment on these important issues and their voice should not be overlooked. Therefore, this project aims to offer a systematic and comparative study of recent Aboriginal women's fiction.

Research results will be disseminated in the form of conference papers, a series of journal articles in English, and a monograph. They might be of interest not only for literary scholars, but also for educators and researchers in the field of Indigenous studies, environmental humanities, and women's studies.