

Beyond the End: Indigenous Futurisms' Interventions in the Anthropocene



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Introduction

In *Walking the Clouds*, Grace Dillon refers to science fiction works produced by Indigenous authors as “Indigenous futurisms,” a growing movement that encompasses, inter alia, literature, films, and even video games. As indicated by its name, Indigenous futurisms is inspired by Afrofuturism, defined by Mark Dery as “speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture—and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future” (180). Similarly, for Dillon, Indigenous futurisms arise as a subversion of what she calls “reservation realisms” that often define expectations surrounding Indigenous literatures (2). Sometimes combining Indigenous sciences with recent scientific theory, sometimes exposing limitations of western sciences, this fiction, Dillon states, combines “sf theory and Native intellectualism, Indigenous scientific literacy, and western techno-cultural science, scientific possibilities enmeshed with Skin thinking” (2). As such, one characteristic of Indigenous futurisms, Dillon explains, is to posit Indigenous sciences “not just as complementary to a perceived western enlightenment but indeed integral to a refined twenty-first-century sensibility” (3). In fact, Indigenous interventions in science fiction could be perceived as a decolonising project, or better yet, as an *Indigenizing project*. Commenting on “Indigenizing processes” within Indigenous research, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that “Indigenizing” is anchored within “a politics of indigenous identity and indigenous cultural action” (245). Quoting M. Annette James, she explains that the process of “Indigenizing” is anchored in Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing to “counters the negative connotations” of “Indiginism” in “Third World countries, where it has become synonymous with the ‘primitive’, or with backwardness among superstitious peoples [sic]” (qtd. in Smith 245). Thus, the process of Indigenising science fiction is evident in Indigenous futurisms’ mobilisation and centralisation of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies alongside elements pertaining to mainstream science fiction.

This article proposes a trans-Indigenous reading of two Indigenous futurist novels that emanate from different Indigenous literary traditions: *Killer of Enemies*, written by the Abenaki writer and storyteller Joseph Bruchac, and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, written by the Palyku novelist, illustrator, and scholar Ambelin Kwaymullina. In *Trans-Indigenous*, Chadwick Allen states that a trans-Indigenous mode of reading is a methodology based on “*juxtapositions*” of different Indigenous artworks emanating from distinct Indigenous contexts (xvii, original italics). He explains that purposeful trans-Indigenous juxtapositions would “develop a version

of Indigenous literary studies that locates itself firmly in the specificity of the Indigenous local while remaining always cognizant of the complexity of the relevant Indigenous global” (xix). The first part of this article explores the narrative registers and aesthetic techniques employed by these authors to capture dystopic and anthropogenic futures resulting from the severing of bonds between humans, other-than-humans, and the land, a process initiated by colonialism and later exacerbated by extractive capitalism. The second section examines the novels’ potential in offering Indigenous visions beyond the Anthropocene and beyond “the end of the world.” Through their imaginative power and an assertion of Indigenous knowledge systems, these works of Indigenous futurisms reflect on Indigenous perspectives and views of personhood and kinship to imagine balanced futures beyond the apocalypse, tragedy, and annihilation.

Colonial Genocides, Colonial Ecocides

Killer of Enemies is set in a near future in what is now known as the United States of America. In this future characterized by major technological and genetic advances, a new form of governance emerges controlled by an authoritarian and repressive nomenclature composed of upgraded “human beings.” This cast implemented to their bodies all sort of techno-genetic implants by which they increased their senses. However, a global cataclysm occurs when a cloud from outer space settles on the planet, making all electronic devices obsolete and plunging the world into a neo steam-age. This “Silver Cloud,” as it is called in the novel, causes the death of many of these upgraded “humans” due to the failure of their electronic implants. In what is called “New America,” four members of this previous upper-class cast survive. Adamant to maintain their superior position, these four “Ones” establish a prison/workcamp ironically called “Haven” located in the Sonoran Desert where the lower-class survivors are provided with rudimentary sustenance and security from the outside world that is plagued by famine and water scarcity against their total servitude and obedience to the Ones. In addition, these lower-class survivors face the danger of being killed by genetically modified creatures created prior to the “Silver Cloud” apocalypse and which are now wandering freely in this post-apocalyptic world.

The novel is told from the first-person point of view of the main character and protagonist Lozen, an Apache teenager and member of the Chiricahua nation located in southwest America. Lozen lives with her family in Haven where they were forcibly removed after some of the Ones’ mercenaries and recruiters found their hidden village. There, she protects her family by accepting to be recruited by the Ones to kill the genetically modified creatures that were once kept in the “pleasure parks of the most powerful Ones” (2). Being a skilled warrior with a good grasp of firearms and the ability to sense the danger of the Gemods before they approach Haven, the Ones choose Lozen as their favorite “monster hunter” (11). Nevertheless, Lozen knows pertinently that the Ones are vicious and selfish and would not hesitate to eliminate her if they find out that she is too dangerous to be controlled. Therefore, she must feign loyalty and carry on doing her job while planning her family’s escape from Haven.

While *Killer of Enemies* is a work of Indigenous futurisms that depicts a post-apocalyptic future, the cultural and historical contexts that defines the protagonist's background are explicitly conveyed throughout the novel. Lozen's name is based on the historical figure of Lozen, a Chiricahua warrior and prophet who lived during the Apache wars (1849-1924). Indeed, the real Lozen fought alongside other important figures such as her brother Victorio and later with Geronimo. In the "Author's Note" of the novel, Bruchac writes: "Born around 1840, the first Lozen never married and died in 1890 in Alabama where the entire Chiricahua nation had been sent into exile by the United States government" (360). Throughout the novel, Lozen explicitly refers to the collective traumas that the Apache peoples endured during the American westward expansion and particularly during and after the Apache Wars, thus presenting a counternarrative to those Eurocentric historical accounts that portray colonisation as a benign civilising act or a heroic story of adventure and discovery. In addition, the novel aims at engaging non-Indigenous audiences by projecting these stories of contact, invasion, and subjugation to a narrative of futurity where the whole planet is under authoritarian and oppressive elites that remove, subjugate, and enslave any human being that does not pertain to their casts. As such, *Killer of Enemies* reflects what Dillon calls a storytelling tradition of "ironic Native giveaway" that positions readers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, within the "diasporic condition of Native peoples" (6).

The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf is set in a post-apocalyptic future during which earth is recovering from an ecological cataclysm called "The Reckoning" that resulted from a longstanding environmental crisis due to humanity's excessive pollution and resource extraction. "The Reckoning" left the humanity nearly extinct and caused the disappearance of separate continents giving birth to a single Pangaea-like continent that consisted of eight sophisticated cities ruled by elected representatives, yet they are all subject to a federal-like governing entity called the "Council of Primes" where each city is represented by a "Prime." The Council of Primes established a new system and passed a number of "Accords" to maintain the "Balance" and avoid "the pollution, the overcrowding, and the terrible disparity between rich and poor" that characterised the "old world" and led to the Reckoning (29). However, the most important change in this post-apocalyptic world is the birth of children endowed with superpowers: for example, Firestarters can start fires, Rumlbers can cause earthquakes, Menders can heal others, and Runners have a superhuman speed. These children with abilities are feared and hated by the rest of the population, as such the Council of Primes pass Citizenship Accords that distinguish the "normal" population from what is now called the "Illegals." The Citizenship Accords states that each fourteen-year old child must be tested by a government enforcer to determine if they have any superhuman ability. Citizen tattoos are granted for those who display no superhuman abilities or have benign powers that can be exploited for the government interests. In contrast, children with "dangerous" powers are forcibly removed from their parents and confined in detention centres for the sake of general "safety" and to maintain the "Balance." Indeed, the novel opens in Gull City's "Detention Centre 3" where the protagonist of the novel, Ashala Wolf, is imprisoned. Ashala is one of the children with abilities who were able to escape the Citizenship test. Being "Illegals" now in the eyes of the government, some of these children formed a group called "Tribe" and found refuge in a forest called the

“Firstwood” under the leadership of Ashala. As such, Ashala is hunted down and interrogated by Neville Rose, the Chief Administrator of the Centre, in an effort to make her divulge information about the Tribe.

The socio-political and historical dimensions on which *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* is grounded are subtly expressed and implicitly embedded into the text. Indeed, in the post-apocalyptic world depicted in the novel, what is known today as Australia no longer exists. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to discern parallels between this post-apocalyptic world and the historical and contemporary realities of the Indigenous peoples of Australia after the invasion and colonisation. In the novel, The Citizenship Accords that grant the government the power to assess children and subsequently remove and detain them in detention centres if they manifest any superpowers is reminiscent of the dark colonial and settler-colonial history of Australia and its treatment of Indigenous peoples. These accords echo the Aborigine Protection Act of 1909 by which the Australian settler-colonial state forcibly removed Aboriginal children from their families under the subterfuge of “neglect” from their Aboriginal parents. These children were placed under “the protection” of the government and were given for adoption to white families. Child removal in Australia lasted from the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1970s engendering what is known today as the collective trauma of the Stolen Generations. *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* conjures the traumatic legacies of the Stolen Generations and projects the colonial policies of child removal in Australia into a futuristic narrative, thereby addressing Australia’s historical amnesia towards its colonial past and its treatment of Indigenous peoples. Moreover, the novel succeeds in implicating non-Indigenous audiences in the story by abstaining from making any explicit reference to the historical and contemporary realities of “Australia.” The story of the novel creates a déjà vu effect with which Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences are invited to identify. Indeed, in “Non-Linear Modes of Narrative,” Annika Herb writes: “The reader is invited to become an active participant in coding meaning by applying their own understandings of the context and connections, creating an inter-subjective dialogue between reader and text, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowing.”

Although different in their approaches, Bruchac and Kyawmullina ground their respective novels upon significant socio-political and historical contexts to draw attention to the historical and contemporary realities of the Indigenous people within the settler-colonial states that encase them, and expresses the need for historical accountability and social justice from these settler-states societies that are yet to be achieved. In addition, while both *Killer of Enemies* and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* imagine worlds devastated by cataclysms, either of cosmic origin or of climatic nature, the authors’ depictions of the post-apocalyptic futures in the novels differ greatly. Indeed, as explained above, the post-Reckoning world portrayed in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* is characterised by a sense of “development” in the way in which resources are exploited and wealth is distributed according to the Accords passed by the Council of Primes in order to avoid another catastrophe. In contrast, the post-Silver Cloud world in *Killer of Enemies* is characterised by major regressions, thus contradicting the often-accepted idea that conceives the future and

modernity in terms of a continuous development of science and technology that would bring about new human conditions. Instead, the future is conceived in terms of a reverse process of development in which humanity plunges back into a neo-steam age.

Nevertheless, both novels seem to agree on the fact that apocalypse is the result of a failure of a global system due to humanity's longstanding abuse of nature and the environment, as well the misuse of technology. In "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene," settler scholar Heather Davis and Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd call for a re-evaluation of the start date of the Anthropocene by linking it to western colonisation, approaching it not as a distinct phase that begins in the twentieth century, but as a continuation and accumulation of colonial dispossessions, genocides, and ecocides (761). They argue that colonialism and settler colonialism "[were] always about changing the land, transforming the earth itself, including the creatures, the plants, the soil composition and the atmosphere. It was about moving and unearthing rocks and minerals. All of these acts were intimately tied to the project of erasure that is the imperative of settler colonialism" (770). The logic of the Anthropocene, they assert, resides in colonialism and contemporary petrocapiatalism's severing of the bonds between "humans and the soil, between plants and animals, between minerals and our bones" (770). This parallel between the Anthropocene and western colonialism highlights the different perspectives that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples tend to have regarding climate and environment crises, suggesting that Indigenous peoples are well acquainted with the Anthropocene and its repercussions. Indeed, in "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene," Potawatomi scholar Kyle P. Whyte argues that what constitutes non-Indigenous peoples' speculations about dystopic ecological futures are mostly a reality Indigenous peoples endured and continue to endure under colonial practices and policies (226). It is, therefore, important to note that when the Anthropocene is explored in works of Indigenous futurisms, it exceeds mere speculation.

Killer of Enemies provides several examples that depict the anthropogenic character of the future described in the novel. Lozen talks about the ways in which "[b]ack in the mid-twenty-first century [...] rivers had been poisoned by gold mining. [And] the great forests of giant trees had been clear cut", and how "anyone annoying our nation was blown up with unmanned drones and guided missiles" (168, 114). Yet, perhaps the most poignant anthropogenic example in the novel is the extinction of horses that, as Lozen puts it, "had their own apocalypse" before the Silver Cloud (111). In fact, what decimated horses is a disease called "equine pneumonia" that resulted from a biologically engineered "symbiotic microbe" inhaled by horses to make them stronger and faster on racetracks (110). She declares: "the symbiote mutated. It got faster. A year or two turned into a week. The infected lungs filled with blood, yellow mucus poured out of the horses' nostrils. And they died" (110-11). In addition, the disease becomes a pandemic spreading all around the world and "mov[ing] into other hooved domestic animals as well. Cows, sheep, even the semi-wild private herds of buffalos that still existed" (111). The advanced technological level reached by humanity in this futuristic world, however, cannot explain the Silver Cloud.

During one of her missions where she is sent by the Ones to kill a monster, Lozen encounters what she describes as an ancient being “who lives in the stories of not just my people but those of Indians all over the continent” (155). She declares: “All of our Native people have stories about him or his relatives. They’ve called him by many different names. Big Elder Brother, Sasquatch, Bigfoot. To us he was just Tall Hairy Man” (155). It is during another encounter with this being that Lozen now calls Hally that she finds answers about the origin of the Silver Cloud. Hally explains that his people walked the Earth long before humanity, and, like humans, advanced in knowledge and technology. He declares “*We, too, became powerful. We could fly. We could shape the courses of the rivers with the work of our thoughts, dig into the roots of the mountains, raise great structures up to the sky*” (304, original italics). This feeling of might made Hally’s people believe they were more worthy than other life forms, that they would even “*dream a way to rise up beyond the Life Giver*” (304, original italics). Yet, he adds, “*the Maker sent us a message. It came, a big light streaking across the sky. And there was a great explosion*” (304, original italics). Hally remarks that the cycle is repeating now, as humans “*were behaving as we did long ago. Your leaders believed they were wiser and stronger than Creation. They were crushing all other life on Earth beneath their weight*” (305, original italics). Excessive use of technology, he adds, creates an “*attractive field,*” drawing things from outer space (307, original italics). In the same way this attracted the “*meteor*” that destroyed nearly all of Hally’s people before humans inhabited the Earth, it now attracted the “*Silver Cloud*” (307, original italics). As such, the apocalypse in Bruchac’s novel responds to the ways in which humanity, specifically the planetary elites, use technology to control other life forms, fostering a dynamic of oppression on the land, the environment, and on human and other-than-human conditions.

Similarly, in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, the apocalypse called the “Reckoning” is caused by humanity’s abuse of the environment, making “the life-sustaining systems of the Earth collapse” (12). Ashala, born long after the Reckoning, has no clear idea of humanity’s relationship with the land and environment in the old world; she soon gets a glimpse, however, when she arrives at the Firstwood. After fleeing her house, Ashala, along with her friend Georgy, takes refuge in the Firstwood since government enforcers avoid it for fear of dangerous giant lizards, called the saurs, that emerged after the Reckoning. On their way, they are stopped by a saur and discover that they can communicate with humans. The saur informs Ashala that the trees of the Firstwood “grew from seeds that survived the great chaos. They carry within them the memories of their ancestors [...]. They do not forget what humans have done” (187). As such, if Ashala wants to live in the Firstwood, she must seek permission from the trees, and “whatever bargain you make with them, the saurs will ensure you keep it. And if the forest decides you must go, then we [saur] will finish you” (188-9). Ashala speaks directly to the trees, promising that if they can live among them, they “won’t eat any of the animals, or cut down any tree” (192). It is here that the trees share memories of the old world with Ashala: “Images poured into my mind, nightmarish pictures of things I’d never seen before. Strange vehicles with metal jaws, weird saws with teeth that roared, and humans, always more humans, cutting and hacking and slashing and killing” (193). While Ashala is unfamiliar with the images the trees share, readers can identify these as characteristics of

today's extractive capitalism. The Reckoning is, therefore, a direct consequence of the exacerbation of the utilitarian relationship that humanity has with nature and the environment.

Post-Apocalyptic Balance

The dystopic futures in both novels result from what Davis and Todd call the severed bonds between humans, other-than-humans, and the land, caused by colonialism and later exacerbated by extractive capitalism. While Indigenous peoples did face countless anthropogenic scenarios that unfolded alongside colonisation, Davis and Todd assert that they “contended with the end of their worlds, and continue to work to foster and tend to strong relationships to humans, other-than-humans, and land today” (773). As such, rather than conceiving of human liberation and salvation from the anthropogenic horrors of climate change within science and technology, they “call here for a tending once again to relations, to kin, to life, longing, and care” (775). This is what works of Indigenous futurisms advocate, offering artistic and activist interventions to the current anthropogenic realities. Indeed, in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* Daniel Heath Justice explains that, though works of Indigenous futurism present violence, cruelty, and suffering that ravage a world destroyed or on the verge of destruction by “settler colonialism’s limited sense of kinship and personhood,” it endeavours to expose the destructive racial logic of the state which affects both the human and other-than-human world (168-9). He argues that, when the state’s “[b]lood rhetorics” appear to be the cause of catastrophe in these works, an Indigenous vision of “reciprocal kinship becomes, if not a full solution, part of the return to wholeness. The broken world may be overturned, but another world awaits—or at least, its potential lies at the ready” (169). Indeed, the two novels do not simply paint a bleak picture of the future. Rather, through their imaginative power and assertion of Indigenous perspectives and views of personhood and kinship, they offer visions of a future beyond apocalypse, tragedy, and annihilation.

In *Killer of Enemies*, Lozen learns from an early age that human beings are but a small part of a greater creation, and that human life is not the only one that must be respected and protected. In *Our Stories Remember* Bruchac asserts that “all created things are regarded as being of equal importance. All things— not only humans and animals and plants, but even the winds, the waters, fire, and the stones— are living and sentient” (11). Speaking of her fear of snakes, Lozen recalls her father saying that there is no need to be afraid as “[t]he God of Life made [them], too. [They have] as much right to live as we humans” (130). This vision of personhood also applies to kinship. Lozen asserts the strong bond between her people and dogs, remembering her mom saying that “[o]ur dogs made us more human,” calling them “four-legged *allies*” (emphasis added, 225–6). Similarly, *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* reflects this vision of personhood and kinship with other-than human beings. In “A Land of Many Countries” Kwaymullina explains that when colonisers arrived to what is known today as “Australia,” they did not understand “that life in all its shapes watched them anxiously from the ground, the water; the sky; and there was not a single grain of sand beneath their feet that was not part of a thinking, breathing, loving land” (11). She states that the colonisers considered land an object, “not as grandmother, grandfather, mother, father, sister, brother and family” (11). In the novel, the Firstwood becomes a stronghold for

Ashala and her companions. The trees allow her to live there because the two recognise in each other the violence they are subjected to. Upon receiving the trees' memories, Ashala declares: "there is no reason. Do you hear me? There's no reason good enough to hurt my sister, or to kill a forest" (194). Indeed, Ashala asserts that the Firstwood "count as much as [her]," adding that "if anyone ever comes for you with machines or saws or axes or anything, they'll have to get through me first" (194). Here, Ashala affirms the personhood of the Firstwood, pledging to respect and protect it at the expense of her own life.

Commenting on personhood and kinship with the other-than-human, which is central to many Indigenous knowledge systems, Justice argues that in various Indigenous traditions being human is a learnt process achieved through respectful and meaningful affiliation to the land and kinship with the other-than-human (*WILM* 76). He writes: "The earth speaks in a multitude of voices, only some of which are human. [...] these plants, animals, stones, and other presences are our seen and unseen relatives, our neighbours, our friends or companions" (86). It is this expansive perspective on personhood, kinship, and life that leads both Lozen and Ashala to realise that their role in their respective worlds cannot be limited to protecting themselves, their families, and friends. Rather, they must devote their abilities to preserving all forms of life.

In *Killer of Enemies*, after hearing Hally's explanation of the origin of the Silver Cloud, Lozen corroborates it with stories that her mother used to recount, where many worlds before hers were destroyed "because of the misdeeds of humans or of Coyote, who is a sort of embodiment of all the craziest, most powerful and irrational aspects of humanity" (306). Lozen comes to understand the Silver Cloud as retribution to the imbalance caused by humanity's oppressions and destruction of other forms of life. She declares: "What we need to do is to find the balance again to make it right" (306, emphasis added). While Lozen escapes from Haven with her family, she states that she must return and fight the Ones, because "if they have their way, they and others like them will claw their way back to control the whole world" (293). Approaching Haven, Lozen finds herself on a mountain: the "Place Where Birds Flew. Just one ridge away from Haven" (315). Seeking a way down the mountain to avoid one of the Ones posted on the path to Haven, Lozen states that "[t]here's another, more precarious way" (328). She remembers her uncle advising her to not just "see the "mountain," rather "[b]e the mountain" (331). Far from being metaphorical or romantic, these words find concrete manifestation when Lozen starts descending the cliff: "I'm part of it," she states (331). The stones of the mountain, Lozen affirms, are as warm as "the skin of a living being" that as she touches, the feeling of weight disappears giving place "to immeasurable lightness" (331). She realises that this is "this mountain's spirit" that, as she holds, she begins "to know some of what it knows, feel the life that shimmers all over it, every plant, every insect and small animal. [...] And with the mountain's spirit helping [her], [she] take[s] a deep breath and move[s]" (331). Lozen acknowledges the sentience of the land, regarding it as alive from a physical and moral perspective. Reflecting on the land's ability to exert influence on human and the other-than-human beings, Vanessa Watts writes: "Our truth, not only Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee people but in a majority of Indigenous societies, conceives that we (humans) are made from the land; our

flesh is literally an extension of soil” (27). This conceptualisation that Watts calls “Place-Thought” is “based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts” (21). Lozen illustrates this concept of “Place-Thought” in the way her body becomes an extension of the mountain, whose spirit shares its thoughts and knowledge with her, strengthening her agency as she moves down the cliff with ease.

In the same way that the historical and socio-political contexts are not explicitly delineated in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, so is the cultural context that informs the protagonist’s identity and cultural heritage. Kwaymullina subtly and tactfully integrates epistemologies and knowledge systems of Aboriginal peoples into the text that the protagonist (re)visits simultaneously as the readers are introduced to them. This, according to Herb, reflects the author’s endeavour to centre Indigenous “knowledge in its own right, rather than in direct opposition to Western epistemologies.” Indeed, after hearing Ashala’s plea, the Firstwood responds to her and manifests its consent in its own way. Indeed, Ashala states that after uttering her words, “something started growing in the emptiness” making all forms of life within the Firstwood grow and flourish (195). Kwaymullina explains that Aboriginal peoples call their homelands “Countries,” and while “Australia” does not exist anymore in Ashala’s world, Kwaymullina states that “every landscape in The Tribe Series is inspired by one of the many biodiverse regions of Australia” (“Author’s Note,” *The Interrogation*). The significance of the concept of Country to Aboriginal peoples, however, exceeds the physical; Kwaymullina writes, “Country is not simply a geographical space. It is the whole of reality, a living story that forms and informs all existence. Country is alive, and more than alive—it is life itself” (“A Land” 12). Indeed, Ashala states that “beneath and within and between” the blooming life in the Firstwood “was a shining shape that was somehow the beginning and the end of everything. The glowing thing flowed around me, and my whole body hummed with life. I found myself shouting out, giving words to the joy and defiance of the Firstwood. ‘I live! We live! We survive!’” (195, emphasis added). Not only is the Firstwood sentient, but it also infuses life into everything that lives within it, including Ashala herself. Her words to the Firstwood convey the imperative of an interrelated existence. For Aboriginal peoples, Kwaymullina explains, the world as it is created by the Ancestor spirits consists of a “web of relationships” between all forms of life (“A Land” 13). She writes: “it is by maintaining and renewing the connections linking life together, that country—and so all of reality—is *balanced and sustained*.” (10, emphasis added).

The Balance is the driving force behind the events of *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*. The government considers children with abilities not only outside the Balance, but also a threat to it. Chief Administrator Neville Rose’s desire to destroy Ashala and the Tribe makes him break the Benign Technology Accords by developing an interrogation machine to question detainees about Ashala and the Tribe. Discovering this, Ashala declares that “everyone knew the dangers of advanced tech. It had isolated the people of the old world from nature, shielding them from the consequences of imbalance. [...] That was one of the reasons why we *had* Benign Technology Accords, to stop us from making the same mistakes” (288, original italics). Ashala realises that it is

not only herself and the Tribe that are in jeopardy, but also the Firstwood and all that lives within it. This, for her, constitutes the Balance. She declares: “I’d always heard about the Balance before that. But that was the first time I actually felt it. That was when I knew that there was something greater than all of us. Those trees, and the Tribe, and even the saurs – *that’s the heart of me. The essence of who I am*” (303, emphasis added). The Firstwood is Country for Ashala, defining her identity and giving meaning to her existence. She understands the Balance as that where all forms of life, human and other-than-human, are intimately bound and of equal importance. Offering herself to the enforcers as bait, she succeeds in stopping Neville Rose’s plan, freeing the detainees, and protecting the Firstwood.

Conclusion

Killer of Enemies and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* present Indigenous perspectives in which life, agency, and subjectivity exceed the category of the human, encompassing the-other-human and the land itself. In both novels, the apocalypse and the Anthropocene are approached as an imbalance in the bonds that tie these life forms together. The authors register what Davis and Todd call “ruptures and cleavages between land and flesh, story and law, human and more-than-human” caused by colonialism and extractive capitalism (755). Nevertheless, in both novels, the apocalypse is not the end of the world because, as Kwaymullina explains, “in an animate, interconnected existence, where everything has consciousness and agency, life is not easily overcome. Its nature is always to adapt, to change, to make itself anew—and in so doing, to remake all else” (“Author’s Note”). Both novels embody Indigenous perspectives and visions of land and environment, positing what Dillon calls “Indigenous scientific literacies” which are “sustainable practices used by Indigenous peoples over thousands of years to reenergize the natural environment while improving the interconnected relationships among all persons (animal, human, spirit, and even machine)” (7). In *Killer of Enemies*, Lozen’s source of survival and agency is largely informed by the history of her ancestors’ resistance who contended with their own apocalypse through their knowledge of the land and the environment that they regard as alive and sentient. In *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, Ashala and the Firstwood live in a harmony defined by mutual respect and protection. Indeed, Ashala understands that these bonds and relations are what define the Balance.

The novels’ assertion of Indigenous scientific literacies and their projection into futuristic narratives register a twofold objective that reflects the healing and decolonising processes of Indigenous futurisms. On the one hand, they offer Indigenous representations of Indigenous knowledge systems away from Western misconceptions that either consider these forms of knowledges primitive and inferior to Western epistemology and knowledge or romanticise them as pure fantasy and fabrication. In both novels, these Indigenous scientific literacies are not only relevant but define the identities and strengths of the protagonists. In addition, the projection of these knowledge systems to futuristic narratives reflects the authors’ endeavours to inscribe the presence of Indigenous peoples and their knowledges in humanity’s future. In “Coming to You from the Indigenous Future,” Danika Medak-Saltzman argues that Indigenous futuristic works

offer an imaginative potential which asserts the relevance and indispensability of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems to humanity's future, strengthening Indigenous communities as they "work to negotiate within and beyond settler colonial realities" (143). On the other hand, these novels contribute to discussions about the Anthropocene and the current global environmental challenges. They call for the importance of attending to Indigenous knowledge systems and environmental practices that, as Davis and Todd put it, constitute "a necessary political corrective, alongside the self-determination of other communities and societies violently impacted by the white supremacist, colonial, and capitalist logics instantiated in the origins of the Anthropocene" (763). *Killer of Enemies* and *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* are two such works of Indigenous futurisms that endeavour to imagine balanced futures beyond present dystopias and beyond the Indigenous-settler dichotomies, futures where "living together"—humans and other-than-humans—is a possibility, if not an imperative, for collective survival.

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