

# PIPELINES, MINES, AND DAMS: INDIGENOUS LITERARY WATER ECOLOGIES AND THE FIGHT FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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- 54 The vital spirit of water links human cultures, stories, and families to our nonhuman animal relations. In his 2006 world water study *When the Rivers Run Dry*, Fred Pearce states, “Most of the world’s population currently lives where there is a history of guaranteed water. That is not by chance. Humans require reliable and predictable water in order to flourish. Modern, highly engineered methods of exploiting water often test reliability to the limit. Now climate change is undermining the predictability, too” (127). All life requires water, not only for survival, but also for the maintenance of a healthy ecological balance. Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) notes that

knowing the sets of relationships between the various plants and animals enables one to predict what kinds of species will be present in a healthy environment, and so failure to locate a species in a particular location will alert people about the condition of the place. (qtd. in Vaughan-Lee 56)

Modern economic activities alter ecosystems worldwide, removing key species from niches occupied from time well before human presence on Earth. This tragic loss of life diminishes not only the world in which we live, but also our literature.

Water is so essential to existence that one might think we would better care for it. Yet, the history of colonialism in North America and much of the world, still ongoing for Indigenous peoples everywhere, speaks differently. From overpopulation to over-appropriation, Euroamericans have plundered the natural wealth of the Americas, valuing short-term profit over sustainable futures, a continuing mistake. Seen through the lens of Western economics, a growing population simultaneously brings wealth and domestication, taming a perceived wilderness into something more amenable to human management. Few ventures project this mad adherence to the invisible hand of the market more than dams, mines, and pipelines, further

examples of the expansion of the settler colonial project. All three seek a false mastery over nature, enriching a small portion of the population while simultaneously doing grievous ecological damage to natural systems, many of which developed a delicate homeostasis over eons. Recent proposals for an expansion across traditional indigenous lands of dams along Manitoba's Nelson River, a tributary of Lake Winnipeg, pipelines through the Great Bear Rainforest, and, of course, the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines foreground the prematurity of claims of a postcolonial Present. Rather than accept these developments as inevitable, indigenous writers have risen to the call, and indeed have been at their oppositional work since well before these present crises.

Since their proposals, the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines have been a source of controversy for several reasons, not the least of which are their routes, which cross through the current homelands of First Nations in Canada and Native American tribes in the United States. Without approval of these independent nations, the pipelines are blatant treaty violations. Indigenous tribes in both countries along the route, activist organizations such as Idle No More, and environmental groups have all attempted to fight these projects, collectively and individually. The dangers seem clear. Tar sands oil ranks among the dirtiest of fuels, due to the energy required to extricate the oil from shale as well as the work necessary to expose it: between 2000 and 2013, for example, 26 million hectares of boreal forest were cleared (Petersen, Sizer, Lee), doing grievous ecological damage to wildlife, from mammals such as endangered woodland caribou, grey wolves, and black bears to fish and migratory birds, not to mention the traditional culture of parts of the Cree Nation. Burning this fuel could result in "game over" (McKibben) for efforts to keep climate change in check, preventing atmospheric carbon from rising above the 440ppm level climate scientists tell us will lead to the worst future changes.

The danger to waterways may be a more immediate central concern; as the Center for Biological Diversity states:

Keystone XL would transport dirty tar sands oil 1700 miles across six states and hundreds of water bodies, posing an unacceptable risk for spills. An existing pipeline, Keystone 7, has already leaked 14 times since it started operating in June 2010, including one spill that dumped 2,000 gallons of tar sands crude. (Center for Biological Diversity)

Worth noting, as well, is the fact that the Canadian government is now in violation of its promises via the Kyoto Protocol implicitly to protect the revenue from its tar sands operations (Rauber 16). Yet the Keystone XL is far more than a simple pipeline. The tar-sands area itself exists as one of the planet's largest open-pit mines, visible from space, and required clearing vast amounts of forest before the oil below could be reached.

A vast literature exists of past as well as current treaty violations committed against First Nations and Native Americans, most notably with regard to resource development. More importantly, many of these ecologically destructive projects

have occurred despite organized tribal resistance. Approved by the newly enshrined Trump administration in the United States, the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines stand as yet another example of indigenous peoples' concerns being brushed aside by the larger market interests of a worldwide commodity. A University of Nebraska hydrologist estimates that Keystone XL alone would spill "7.9 million gallons in Nebraska's Sandhills, polluting 5 billion gallons of drinking water" (Mufson). If those numbers seem hard to fathom, ExxonMobil's 1 July 2011 spill of 63,000 gallons near the Crow Nation territory contaminated 240 miles of the Yellowstone River (Fox). Literary correlates to these larger cultural issues exist, notably in the works of indigenous authors, including Louise Erdrich, Winona LaDuke, Sherman Alexie, Thomas King, Eric Gansworth, and Simon Ortiz. Joni Adamson makes a case for this practical application of environmental literary theory: "Ecocritics, concerned about the increasingly evident consequences of [...] depleted aquifers, ask how literature and literary criticism can be a force for or against environmental change"

- 56 (14). Indigenous literatures serve larger ecological, environmental, and social justice goals.

The conceptualization of literary water ecologies works from the basis of the obvious importance of water to life. Many tribal origin stories, such as those of the Hopi and Sipapu, begin with water. The sacred springs of the Hopi are under threat from development and over-usage of water from the Black Mesa Peabody Coal project; some are polluted, and many have dried up from underground pumping activities by the mine. Keystone XL and Dakota Access pose no less of a threat. In solidarity with Canadian First Nations, the National Congress of American Indians opposed the pipeline, stating: "The Keystone XL Pipeline [...] would threaten, among other things, water aquifers, waterways, cultural sites, agricultural lands, animal life, public drinking water sources, and other resources vital to the peoples of the region in which the pipeline is proposed to be constructed" (ncai.org). The vital role of water cannot be understated. The connection to these spots represents the larger cultural construct of the world through which this pipeline may pass.

One of the most successful indigenous writers, Louise Erdrich (Anishinaabe), highlights the importance of water throughout in her impressive body of work. From her first novel, *Love Medicine*, to the recent *The Round House*, water plays a central role in the deep cultural and ecological connections of her characters' lives. Though she does not write explicitly about dams, her writing shows great respect for the waters that move around the Turtle Mountain Reservation, as she watches a flood in "I Was Sleeping Where the Black Oaks Move":

We watched from the house  
as the river grew, helpless  
and terrible in its unfamiliar body.  
Wrestling everything into it,  
the water wrapped around trees  
until their life-hold was broken.

They went down, one by one,  
and the river dragged off their covering.

Nests of the herons, roots washed to bones,  
snags of soaked bark on the shoreline:  
a whole forest pulled through the teeth  
of the spillway... (*Original Fire* 14)

The river's undammed power makes life possible, but also brings with it unpredictable changes. Rather than something to be tamed, however, these waters connote respect, especially in the sense of natural cycles. A healthy river floods from time to time. Living on the land and accommodating its rhythms, pre-colonial peoples like the Anishinaabe understood this basic fact of ecology; and, as noted in the poem, they worried about more than the human realm; in this case, the herons. In a 12 October 2011 blog post about the film *H2Oil*, Erdrich makes these connections unambiguously: "Billions of gallons of fresh water are used to steam the tar out of the sand, and the Keystone XL pipeline [...] could spill into our largest fossil water aquifer, which lies beneath South Dakota" ("Why?"). As Erdrich states in *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*, "Tobasonakwut [...] knows the lake in a way that only indigenous people can truly know anywhere. His people were the lake, and the lake was them. [...] As the people lived off fish, animals, the lake's water and water plants for medicine, they were literally cell by cell composed of the lake and the lake's islands" (*Books* 34). The good health of the waters tied into the health of the larger landscape, not only for those within the Anishinaabe's traditional lands but those who used the water wherever it flowed.

Author and activist Winona LaDuke (Anishinaabe) also approaches water issues with the same passionate concerns. The many bands of Anishinaabe living in the state of Minnesota depend upon a wholesome water supply to maintain their traditional lifeways, notably with regard to the wild rice crop that forms their dietary base. The supplies and health of the rice crop is no longer what it once was, a problem LaDuke blames on the US Army Corps of Engineers and its poor water management history (LaDuke 184-86). The challenges do not end there. While the Anishinaabe have won some important victories and are allowed to harvest rice outside of reservation boundaries, the larger issue is that unrestrained beaver populations also threaten the future of the rice crop. Removal of top predators, such as wolves, created a space for the beaver to expand well beyond their traditional boundaries. The predators were removed solely to expand agricultural access in these areas, to protect the business interests of farming communities and livestock.

A further threat to the wild rice beds comes from the Crandon and other mining interests who wish to drill in these spaces. One company the Ojibwe Mole Lake band fought successfully was Exxon, who issued a statement in 1980 that it planned to develop the "rich 70 million ton zinc and copper ore body at Crandon, Wisconsin, next year while it works to neutralize objections from environmentalists, residents

and Indian tribes in the area” (LaDuke 188). The observation was premature: the Mole Lake Ojibwe joined with Forest County Potawatomi to purchase the land and leave it in its present state. These fights will continue: “In the midst of this time, land-based peoples work to continue such a lifeway [...] This path is often littered with the threats of a fossil-fuel and nuclear economy: a uranium mine, a big dam project, or the Tar Sands” (LaDuke, qtd. in Vaughan-Lee 86). LaDuke’s activism extends as well into the realm of the salmon and the Nur, an ecologically balanced relationship that came to an end in 1941 with the creation of Shasta Dam.

The Shasta Dam’s construction influenced much of Sherman Alexie’s (Spokane/Coeur d’Alene) work about the Grand Coulee Dam. Known more for his writing on urban Indigenous characters, he still maintains a strong adherence to salmon imagery. Swimming alongside the ghosts of his salmon are the ghosts of bears from the Spokane region who relied on the same salmon for survival that the Indigenous people did. The dam affected human and nonhuman habitat alike. In an interview, **58** Alexie said that “the Grand Coulee Dam [...] took away seven thousand miles of salmon spawning beds” (*Conversations* 22), a trophic ecological cascade that transcends species. In “That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump,” Alexie writes:

Look

at the Falls now, if you can see beyond all of the concrete  
the white man has built here. Look at all of this  
and tell me that concrete ever equals love....  
These white men sometimes forget to love their own mothers  
so how could they love this river which gave birth  
to a thousand lifetime of salmon? How could they love  
these Falls, which have fallen farther, which sit dry  
and quiet as a graveyard now? (*Black Widows* 19)

These graveyard connectors of salmon, deforestation, dam building, and vanished bears and other wildlife come to the fore in the last story of Alexie’s collection *The Toughest Indian in the World*. In the story “One Good Man,” Alexie’s narrator reconnects with his heritage by returning to the Spokane reservation to care for his ailing father. Logging is noted as one of the few available occupations, adding to the deforestation of the region and the degradation of the common ecological good. As a child, the narrator felt “the reservation to be an endless, magical place” (*Toughest* 221). One of those magical moments refers to what he calls “that Catholic bear”:

When I was six years old, a bear came out of hibernation too early, climbed up on the roof of the Catholic Church, and promptly fell back asleep. In itself not an amazing thing, but what had amazed me then, and amazes me now, is that nobody, not one Spokane Indian, bothered that bear. Nobody called the police or the Forest Service. None of the Indian hunters took advantage of a defenseless animal. [...] Hell, even the reservation dogs stopped barking whenever they strolled past the church. [...] During that brief and magical time, “How’s the bear?” replaced “How are you doing?” (*Toughest* 221)

This respect moves from literature to life: in 2013, the Spokane tribe moved several

black bears from Grand Coulee to the eastern side of the reservation as a bad winter forced them into newer territory searching for food. The bear memory allows father and son a moment of laughter, always an essential theme in Alexie's work, but here, perhaps, a deeper force is at work in the story. The dam forced the transitional nature of the roving bear, "dreaming his bear dreams" (*Toughest* 221), which connects to the narrator's father dreaming his diabetic dreams. Underneath the magical rarity of the bear's appearance and the removal of the father's feet sits a deeper truth, certainly one less comfortable for Alexie's Euroamerican readers. The dam's construction made possible the loss of the salmon, which made the bears so rare, as well as the sugary dietary carnage of non-traditional processed foods that caused the father's diabetes. This narrative has played out across North America over time. Removing the Grand Coulee might not only restore the watershed for the salmon, but also restore the health of the Spokane people. Whereas at the time of this writing, both the Shasta and Grand Coulee dams seem to sit on solid ground, LaDuke notes that while "taking down dams is sort of the antithesis of American notions of progress" (LaDuke 232), that very thing is beginning to happen in her homeland and other places in North America, freeing the waters to the benefit of all our relations, human, salmon, and bear alike.

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This liquid resonance plays itself out again in Thomas King's (Cherokee) body of work. Of his published oeuvre, five books include *water* in their titles, reinforcing the vitality of this unique substance to all life. Perhaps no King book better demonstrates his attitude toward water mismanagement and dam building than *Green Grass, Running Water*. The book's title not-so-subtly mocks the broken treaty language of Euroamericans: that Indigenous peoples would be given rights to their traditional lands so long as the grass grew and the water flowed. King uses humor to express his indignity over the misappropriation of water resources and its treaty guarantee. The novel could also be used as a lesson in the madness of dam-building politics. King's four Indigenous horsemen of the apocalypse wend their way through various creation stories in the novel's four sections, ultimately beginning and ending with water and Coyote: "In the beginning, there was nothing. Just the water" (King 1).

Though the novel is far more complex than its humour at first glance makes it seem, one of its central themes is Eli's fight against the dam sitting just above his home. The Duplessis Dam stands as an example of the era of dam building's greatest excesses, when projects were being thrown up just for their own sake: "The irony [...] was that once Duplessis started construction on the dam, nothing stopped it. Environmental concerns were cast aside. Questions about possible fault lines that ran under the dam were dismissed. Native land claims that had been in the courts for over fifty years were shelved" (King 128). In the real world, the same thing seems to be happening with the dam proposals on the Nelson River. Eli's injunction halts construction of the dream homes of characters like Bill Bursum and, when the dam falls, ultimately costs Eli his life. King's optimism resonates in an ecocritical sense as a rewriting of Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, when, after the dam's

demise, “the water rolled on as it had for eternity” (King 455), the great concrete wrong righted. The unnatural shoreline dissolves, and the waterway returns to the way nature intended. More than that, “[r]ather than becoming part of a ‘tragic narrative,’ however, [Eli’s] death is recontextualized and becomes instead an occasion for celebration. Subsumed by the deluge, he returns to the flowing water, the shifting space of eternal movement, change and renewal” (Smith 75).

This positive vision, or happy ending, is unique in a literature that has seen so much going against it historically. Perhaps one of the finest examples of Indigenous literature’s potential for environmental justice advocacy comes from Eric Gansworth, whose novels set on the Tuscarora reservation deal explicitly with the impacts of a reservoir created by the state of New York in the middle part of the twentieth century. *Indian Summers* and *Mending Skins* concern themselves with the social diaspora created by what Susan Bernardin called a “landscape of diminishing land and an immovable wall of water” (124). His fine collection of poetry, *Nickel Eclipse: 60 Iroquois Moon*, concerns itself less with landscape and more with representations of Indigenous peoples, except perhaps for “The Fishing Moon” section. In his novels, Gansworth’s characters are boxed in by the white town of Lewiston on one side and the state’s intrusive water project on the other. Although Gansworth concerns himself perhaps primarily with questions of identity in such a parenthetical situation, the environmental justice issues are just as important.

For example, nowhere in either book does Gansworth explain the complicated history of the reservoir’s construction. One could almost argue that he challenges his readers to discover the story for themselves. In *Indian Summers*, Floyd’s mother “hated the dike, because we’d lost so much land to it, and so... [she] refused to go up there” (*Indian* 7). Scenes and characters dovetail between the two novels, including cross-referencing and retelling of central events, in the style of Louise Erdrich’s multi-narrative approach. The social breakdown of the tribe due to the reservoir’s construction plays a larger role in *Mending Skins*. Multiple narrators spin the generational stories, but Shirley Mounter tells the majority of them. The dam’s construction directly informs and affects her life. The novel begins in 1957, the year the State Power Authority began construction on the dam. Shirley loses her home for a pittance and is forced to move into town, cutting her off from the flow of her culture and heritage. Thus, the foreign intrusion of Euroamerican technocracy affects her life in more ways than one.

Shirley’s central role casts her as a vital source of historical memory, and in the important Indigenous literary role of woman as culture bearer. In her Bible, she keeps notes of everything that occurs, and the novel ends with a listing of many of the things she has collected over her lifetime. Gansworth demonstrates her toughness and resilience in her continued attendance at meetings, and when she kicks one of the surveyors “right in the nuts” (*Mending* 16). Throughout the novel, her strength and fortitude keep her tied to a cultural ethic that she uses to mend her life and others’, especially Martha Boans, whose house is destroyed. In *Indian Summers*, one thing

that draws Hank back to the heritage with which he has lost connections, upon his return to the reservation, is the memory of his grandmother, Umma: “She used to always come through the woods, when she could still walk, to our place. It wasn’t that far, and she always had a saucepan with her. Used to pick all kinds of stuff, different medicine and berries, stuff like that. [...] She always wanted me to walk through the woods with her, learn to pick out the medicines” (*Indian* 104). The herbs and woods he reminisces about lie under the water of the state’s hydroelectric plant.

Bernardin notes, “The reservoir occupies tricky terrain in Gansworth’s fiction: a place seemingly defined by loss and displacement *and* a place to swim and hang out for Gansworth’s postreservoir generation” (138). What Gansworth’s post-reservoir generation does not know and Shirley does not discuss is the detailed explanation of the complexity of the fight to keep the reservoir off reservation land. The Tuscarora website includes a vivid photograph of a protest against the project and descriptions of the battle waged to stop construction. The website notes: “The progress of industry in the twentieth century introduced new conflicts for Native Americans, particularly with the development of hydroelectric projects as a source of electric power [...] Using both legal channels and open protests, the Indians succeeded; the Federal Power Commission ordered the project stopped. 2 yrs later, however, the Supreme Court reversed the decision, and the reservoir was built” (<http://tuscaroras.com/pages/reservoirE.html>). The complications with the case ultimately date back to the Federal Power Act of 1935, in which President Franklin Delano Roosevelt sought to improve the American electrical grid and distribute power more equitably to rural areas. The Act was revised in 1986, giving better rights to Indigenous peoples to fight projects like the one that frames the background of Gansworth’s work, but too late for the Tuscarora. As a last fitting insult to those displaced, the area of the reservation confiscated by the state was deemed project-worthy because it had been bought by the tribe and was not actually part of the original federal reservation grant. This decision came despite the existence of at least two other sites, not on the reservation, that could have been used to create the reservoir without disrupting the lives of those living in the flood zone or diminishing the reservation’s size.

Gansworth’s upstate New York historical moment was not unique, though he is unique as one of the few Indigenous authors to write explicitly about hydroelectric issues and treaty violations. The 1950s and 1960s in the United States were simultaneously the great era of dam building, sometimes called the Big Buildup, and a period of time during which Native American water rights were ignored. The Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation, two distinct builders of dams, often did not even consult with each other about the myriad projects in which they were involved, and they certainly did not prioritize Indigenous anxieties about their activities. In *Cadillac Desert*, his seminal work on the unrestrained lunacy of dam building during this time, Marc Reisner stated definitively, “One of the least-known consequences of water development in America is its impact on the Indians” (186). The Picker-Sloan Plan of the 1940s and 1950s is an excellent example. Despite Native American

protests, very much like what the world witnessed in the summer and fall of 2015 at Standing Rock, this project ultimately flooded most of the arable land on North and South Dakota reservations. In a no-nonsense commentary on what was called the *Three Tribes Development* along the Missouri River, Reisner points out that reservations that had been ceded arable land near the river by treaty were wiped off the map, while the communities of Bismarck, Pierre, and Chamberlain had the boundaries of the dams adjusted to keep their municipal and residential areas safe from rising waters. Reisner concludes: “For the sake of the Fort Berthold Reservation, where the Mandan and Arikara and Hidatsa lived, no such intricate gerrymandering of reservoir outlines was even tried [...] Virtually every productive acre of bottomland the tribes owned would go under” (187). Unlike the Tuscarora, the Three Tribes still wait for a Gansworth to tell their story.

The American southwest shares a history of poor dam and water policy with the rest of the country. Besides the obvious massive projects such as Hoover and Glen Canyon dams, many smaller projects have had significant impacts on Indigenous communities. Navajo Dam on the San Juan River is only one example of tribes being forcibly removed by the United States Army, traditional sacred lands and engraved images inundated by the rising waters:

Just as the law gave no protection to free-flowing waters or redrock canyons, neither did the system make accommodations for dispossessed people [...] The tribes might have the best water rights on paper, but few tribes had lawyers. When they did [...] the attorneys showed little inclination to stand up to the states and the private interests. (Wilkinson 199)

Also worth noting is that this action occurred in the driest part of the continental United States, disrespecting not only treaty rights but ecological wisdom as well. Like the Three Tribes, the Navajo and Ute wait for an appropriate fictional retelling of these violations.

No commentary on the literary and ecological significance of water in a desert ecosystem would be complete without the inclusion of Simon Ortiz (Acoma). According to Evelina Zuni Lucero (Isleta/Ohkay Owingeh):

Acquisition of New Mexico by Anglo-Americans brought dramatic changes to the Pueblo rhythm of life, and land and water use. The building of the railroad, introduction of wage economy, mining, education, and attacks on Pueblo religion necessitated a continued struggle for sovereignty and protection of aboriginal land and water rights, which were unrecognized by the United States. More recent battles waged by the Pueblos include the Taos Blue Lake controversy, which resulted in the lake being returned to Taos Pueblo in 1970. (Berry Brill de Ramirez and Lucero 10)

In an arid environment, water is clearly of paramount importance. Water waste cannot be tolerated. Ortiz’s sensitivity to the central importance of water to Pueblo life is echoed in the title of one of his first poetry collections, *Going for the Rain* (1976), which includes a section titled “The Rain Falls.” Several of Ortiz’s early poems pay homage to his father and grandfather for teaching him of the interconnectedness

of the world into which he was born. His father's light usage of water in mending a wall in "A Story of How a Wall Stands":

He tells me those things,  
the story of them worked  
with his fingers, in the palm  
of his hands, working the stone  
and the mud until they become  
a wall that stands a long, long time. (*Woven Stone* 145)

and his careful watering of his grandfather's vines in "For Joy to Leave Upon":

I cut the dead vines down to the quick  
of the main stem, inches above a cluster of roots  
(piled dry gray vines and burned them—  
smoke is sweet and acrid) and pulled dirt  
in circles around the roots and watered them. (*Woven Stone* 146)

represent this awareness of living within the Pueblos' unique dryland ecology. In the introduction to *Woven Stone*, Ortiz acknowledges the challenges Indigenous peoples face:

In an America, particularly the United States, which is overwhelmingly present every day, in every social, political, cultural, economic, psychological way, it's hard not to feel as if you're *confronting* a reality that's so powerful you can't expect it to recognize you. Especially if you are a people who has been historically subjected to the meanest, cruelest treatment by social and economic forces backed up by military power, with the result being a feeling of no self-esteem, insignificance, powerlessness, and of being at the mercy of powers beyond your control. (27)

He conveys the essence of this passage in much of his work. Ortiz often uses water metaphors, especially in the larger contextual sense of *from Sand Creek*, which arguably opens and closes with water imagery, tying the tragedy of Sand Creek to the ultimate healing and purification toward which the collection builds.

In the sense of the ecological connectedness of land and culture, however, three poems from the "Fight Back" section of *Woven Stone* align themselves almost naturally. In "Out to Tsaille Lake," Ortiz encounters a white couple with racist attitudes and a hostile dog. Their comment, "Indian fish are maybe hungry" (305), pushes Ortiz away from them. The sense of "difference" plays clearly from the couple. Ortiz finds a much more welcome reception from a Navajo man, even though he and the man—from Shiprock just around the lake's bend—are tribally distinct. They customarily introduce themselves and converse pleasantly while they fish. A dog tied up nearby is much friendlier. More is happening in this poem than simply commenting on Anglo racism. Tsaille Lake sits just outside Canyon De Chelly National Monument, and rests within the Navajo reservation. Implicitly, this water is Indigenous, as any examination of a map of the area shows that the waters draining from the lake stay within reservation boundaries and are thus the property of the tribe and its peoples. The fact that its waters are open to whites for fishing should make them more tolerant while

on land that is not the domain of the United States. The man's defensive retort, "We just got here" (Ortiz 304), as a reason for not having any fish to show for his efforts could be read as a rejection of him by the landscape, but this reading is countered by Ortiz's attempted kindness to him and his wife. Unlike them, the landscape passes no judgment: the value or meaning tied to it is entirely a human construction.

Portions of *Fight Back* speak directly to the resistance of Indigenous peoples to intrusions into their domains. More directly addressing specific concerns than Gansworth, Ortiz writes about these issues with passion but not militance. In "That's the Place Indians Talk About," for example, he specifically denotes the removal of the Coso Hot Springs, a traditional healing site, from the Shoshone by the United States Navy for its China Lake Naval Station, part of which is used for heavy armament testing:

And now,  
they have a fence around Coso Hot Springs....

64 We got up there to talk with the hot springs power  
but the Navy tells us we have to talk to them.  
We don't like it, to have to do that.  
We don't want to talk to the government fence,  
to the government Navy. (*Woven Stone* 323)

A religious basis that ecological critics should tread widely around exists in this poem, but from a purely ecological spectrum, the violation of the natural flow seems clear. A similar case could be made for "We Have Been Told Many Things but We Know This to Be True" in its pure sense of a land and water ethic, where the Acoma

breathe and drink and eat from it  
gratefully—  
and we must work for it  
to give it life. (325)

"No More Sacrifices," the final section of *Woven Stone*, contains multiple images of water and water concerns, especially regarding "the people of Deetseyamah and Deechuna and Kahwaikah" (363). The 26-page poem could be a study in Pueblo water ecology all on its own.

While Erdrich, LaDuke, Alexie, King, Gansworth, and Ortiz write about ecological transgressions that have altered Indigenous societies, the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines serve as examples of ongoing colonialism, like a historical zombie that continues to haunt our attempts to put the untidy beast down for once and all. If the pen truly is mightier than the sword, Indigenous writers and a rising movement by Indigenous peoples to reclaim and restore more sustainable world-views the world so desperately needs right now can strike the first blow against a history that puts commercial values over human and ecological ones. As Chief Oron Lyons (Onondoga) writes:

What happens to you and what happens to the earth happens to us, as well, so we have

common interests. We have to somehow try to convince people who are in power to change the direction that they've been taking. We need to take a more responsible direction and to begin dealing with the realities of the future to insure that there is a future for the children, for the nation. That's what we're about. (qtd. in Vaughan-Lee 7)

Yet, in order to change our direction and confront what a more sustainable future might look like, a future more respectful toward nature, Euroamericans must reconsider the history they have been taught and realize what a great lie much of it has been. Naomi Klein's recent book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* puts colonialism in context: the wealth of Euroamericans "today has a relationship with the way society has drawn on nature, and overdrawn on nature. That has to be paid back. That's the historical responsibility issues that we need to confront" (414). No issue is more central to the cause of environmental justice than what current and future generations will do to respond to that liability, but clearly further ecocide is not the answer. Through their writings and insistence on retaining their cultures and not being silenced by the dominant paradigm, the writers mentioned in this essay encourage us to confront the colonialist environmental legacy, now over five centuries old, and find new ways to fight it.

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Quite simply, the fight for a greener and more sustainable world free of dams and pipelines is not only an Indigenous issue. Simon Ortiz says, "It is important for Native literature to be recognized for what it is [...] and the writers and intellectuals in it have to be recognized for what they are. They are the voices of Native people" (qtd. in Berry Brill de Ramirez and Lucero 115). However, Ortiz makes no case for essentialism: like Chief Lyons, his is an inclusive ecological awareness of the connectedness of all people and creatures. In *from Sand Creek*, Ortiz laments the Euroamericans' refusal to learn from the Indigenous people:

Like a soul, the land  
 was open to them, like a child's heart.  
 There was no paradise,  
 but it would have gently and willingly  
 and longingly given them food and air  
 and substance for every comfort.  
 If they had only acknowledged  
 even their smallest conceit. (*from Sand Creek* 79)

In a later poem, "To Change in a Good Way," Ortiz tells his friend Bill, "You and Ida are not Indian, / but it doesn't make any difference" (*Woven Stone* 314). The time is long past for us to abandon the conceits of development and its benefits. Though it appears that the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines will be forced through by the Trump administration, the renewed awareness that we are all in this together must be voiced by writers of all ethnicities, because the threats to our global community, the human as well as the nonhuman, are not isolated by skin tone, at least not to any person of conscience. Until this attentiveness seeps into the larger cultural

awareness, for the sake of the people, for the sake of the land, Indigenous author-activists and all of us must continue not only to fight back but to write back.

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