

**THE LAND BEYOND THE FOREST: A CONCEPTUAL NOVELLA AND
ACCOMPANYING ESSAY ON SETTLER RESPONSES TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
IN GENRE AND CONCEPTUAL WRITING**

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 2016

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Okanagan)

November 2018

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THE LAND BEYOND THE FOREST: A CONCEPTUAL NOVELLA AND
ACCOMPANYING ESSAY ON SETTLER RESPONSES TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN
GENRE AND CONCEPTUAL WRITING

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Abstract

The Land beyond the Forest is a conceptual, found-text novella that blends public domain texts from and about Canada's Fur Trade-era with the core text from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In addition to the novel is an essay detailing the treatment and representation of Indigenous peoples in a range of texts from early Canadian Gothic novels and poems as well as more recent works such as film westerns and Canadian conceptual and experimental poetry. The novella and essay are working in concert to read the ways Settler writers in North America have appropriated and misrepresented Indigenous culture and how they continue to do so despite attempting redress and reconciliation in their work. I conclude by demonstrating how conceptual writing is a viable way for non-Indigenous writers to contribute to reconciliation, both by citing recent examples and presenting my own work, while avoiding the errors Settler writers in more conventional forms of writing continue to make.

Lay Summary

With my thesis taking two parts my goal with this work is two-fold: with my creative portion, I am attempting to conflate the narrative of progress attached to Canada's fur trade with that of Dracula's endeavour to corrupt Victorian England by combining the text of *Dracula* with texts from Canada's fur trade. In the theoretical portion, I am investigating how Settler writers have represented and misrepresented Indigenous peoples in writing, specifically the genres of the Gothic, the Western, and experimental poetry, and how experimental writing can allow settler writers to contribute to redress and reconciliation while avoiding the pitfalls of more conventional forms and genres.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the incredible support I have received from both the students and faculty of UBC Okanagan as well as the institution itself. Speaking more specifically to this project, I would like to acknowledge, first, Melissa Jacques, who gave me an opportunity to write a short story for her Vampire Fiction class that began the creative process that led to this project. I would also like to acknowledge Kevin McPherson, professor at Okanagan College, who first showed me the possibilities of experimental and conceptual writing and, most of all, taught me to have fun with it. And, of course, I must acknowledge my thoughtful and supportive committee: Daniel Keyes, whose generosity and knowledge in these fields was invaluable; David Jefferess, who has mentored me and taught me in the realm of postcolonial thought since second year and has afforded me opportunities wherever possible to work creatively within that field and its related fields; and my supervisor, Anne Fleming, who has supported and mentored me through a number of different projects in both my undergraduate and graduate studies and has helped me excel and grow as a writer more than I can reasonably measure.

I also would like to give special thanks to my friends and family for their support, both direct and indirect, which has helped sustain me through this process: My grandmother, Noreen Wolfer, and my mother, Lorelei Carter, as well as Brandon Taylor, Joe Lanaway, Marc Fredette, and Brodie Mackenzie-Dale.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to Brittni Mackenzie-Dale. All of this has been worth it just to meet you.

Section 1: Roadside Attractions: Settler Responses to Indigenous Peoples in Genre and Conceptual Writing

At the beginning of my Master's degree, I sought to investigate the nature of Canada's colonial past and current relationship with Indigenous peoples through a retelling of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* where the titular vampire was recast as a top-level bureaucrat in an analog of the Hudson's Bay company. It struck me upon studying Stoker's novel that his vampire, a violent symbol of Victorian anxieties towards immigrants, could be, in a meaningful way, repurposed to represent similar anxieties felt by Indigenous peoples in Canada during the fur trade in terms of their evolving relationship with early European settlers and traders. Additionally, the piece could speak to current settler Canadians and Indigenous peoples in Canada in regards to where colonization stands presently and where we might move forward towards whatever may constitute reconciliation.

Reconciliation in Canada is in something of a state of flux. Reconciliation as a mandate may not be developing in the way the TRC had intended, based on the actions of the federal and provincial governments in Canada. As of the writing of this paper, Justin Trudeau's Liberal government has bought the hotly contested Trans Mountain pipeline from its parent company Kinder Morgan despite a legal challenge by concerned Indigenous parties being in court (Subramaniam). John Horgan, the Premier of British Columbia, approved the Site C dam, a hydroelectric dam on BC's Peace River and the traditional lands of the Treaty 8 First Nations (Hunter). Horgan went ahead with the project, shirking responsibility for it, claiming that it was not his project to begin with (Hunter), and then, with no other excuse, simply stated "I'm not the first person to stand before you and disappoint Indigenous people" (Neve). Dylan Robinson notes in his article "Recon-

ciliation Relations” that “Since the inauguration of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the Indian residential schools in 2008, the term reconciliation has proliferated in governmental, artistic, and educational contexts across Canada” and moves on to examine how reconciliation has already been co-opted by provincial governments in order to forge better and more “prosperous” business deals with Indigenous groups (60). While Robinson’s article was written in 2015, affairs, as I have noted above, have certainly have not improved.

So, then, writing a Gothic vampire narrative, with its potential parallels to the nature of colonization, assimilation, and former and current governmental opportunism, seemed an apt genre to tackle this subject matter. However, how could I write a narrative speaking to the issues concerning Indigenous peoples in Canada without including an Indigenous character in some capacity? And how could I do so being a white straight cis-gendered man who is himself a descendant of Settler-Canadians? Despite my research through my undergrad and into my Masters, I assumed that, despite my subject position, as long as my retelling of *Dracula* was well researched and that I could deal with the political issues within the text in a meaningful and respectful way, I could sidestep the pitfalls of other Settler writers while still weaving a narrative that was objectively a ‘good’ and entertaining read. I assumed, naively, that my story would somehow be different, that I might be the one Settler Canadian writer to crack representing Indigenous peoples in a popular genre narrative through sheer force of will and altruism. Ultimately, I attempted to write the story regardless. This was a mistake, and continues to be a mistake that many writers in settler-nations, both Canada and the United States, continue to make. Hollywood, most visibly, continues to relegate Indigenous characters to expositional backups or simple plot devices, as with Grace Dove’s already-dead “Wife of Hugh Glass” in *The Revenant* (2015), Gil Birmingham’s half-Mexican, half-Indigenous dead-by-the-end deputy in *Hell or*

High Water (2016), and the ever-informative yet under-characterized “Chief” in *Wonder Woman* (2017). There is a greedy and head-strong assumption that our stories, our white, settler, conflict-driven, three-act stories are so important, that they should and deserve to be told, and that our pursuit of a certain political end, whether that be redress, reconciliation, or something else, will justify those means.

Nowhere is this sentiment clearer than the keynote address author Lionel Shriver made at the Sydney Writer’s festival in 2017. Here Shriver advocated for the freedom of the writer, balking at calls for a more careful and considered approach to writing outside of one’s subject position and suggesting that writers should simply be given credit for attempting to write outside their subject positions, and stating, whilst wearing a sombrero on stage, that “we fiction writers have to preserve the right to wear many hats – including sombreros.”

Other writers have voiced sentiments similar to this as well, with Hal Niedzviecki, who resigned as the editor of *Write* magazine in 2017 after writing a brief essay advocating free reign of the writer not unlike Schriver. “In my opinion,” Niedzviecki writes, “anyone, anywhere, should be encouraged to imagine other peoples, other cultures, other identities” (Renzetti). Despite backlash, Niedzviecki’s essay brought forth numerous other writers on Twitter, advocating *carte blanche* similar views (Hagi). Canada, in particular, has been here before.

Two decades ago the Writer’s Guild of Canada attempted to snuff out calls for any kind of restrictions on its largely Settler membership (Fee 64). Neil Bissoondath, a Trinidadian-Canadian author, whom Schriver echoes distinctly, said “I reject the idea of cultural appropriation completely. I reject anything that limits the imagination. No one has the right to tell me who I should or should not write about, and telling me what or how I do that amounts to censorship. I don’t believe anyone can steal the culture of another” (qtd. in Fee 64).

While the exploration of the relationship between Settlers and Indigenous peoples and the furthering of the conversation around them certainly stands to benefit from writers of fiction and poetry exploring them, unfortunately for the Schriver, Niedzvieckis, and eager white Settler students of the world such as myself, we are simply going to have to find a better way of doing it. There have been too many poorly written Indigenous characters, too many Tontos, too many, in Thomas King's words, "dead Indians" in white writing to justify white writers continuing to write these characters the same way repeatedly and expecting a fairer and more inclusive result. While white-settler writers should certainly not bow out of trying to make meaningful strides towards reconciliation through writing, they must find new ways of doing so. Conceptual and experimental writing can provide exciting alternatives to more traditional genres and forms for Settler writers that do not recreate damaging stereotypes that only make reconciliation more difficult, as I will explore later. Lionel Schriver says, "we fiction writers have to preserve the right to wear many hats." The mistake here is believing that this was ever a right, rather than a rare privilege to be earned.

Now I will discuss the tradition of the Gothic in early Canadian writing, not only because of how it pertains to the genre trappings of the creative work that accompanies this paper, but also how it foregrounds the appropriation and misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples by Settler writers for their own ends. Appropriative writing in Canada begins with early Gothic texts, according to Cynthia Sugars in her comprehensive text *Canadian Gothic*. Notable amongst early texts she analyzes are poems by infamous Indian Affairs alum Duncan Campbell Scott, both his oft-taught "The Onandoga Madonna" and the lesser known "Powassan's Drum". However, before delving into those poems, it is important to draw a distinction between *the* Gothic and Canada's particular brand.

The Gothic was a reactionary genre that set its sights on that which was external to both England as a whole and its dominant upper class. As Stephen D. Arrata notes in his chapter “The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization” “Late-Victorian fiction in particular is saturated with the sense that the entire nation — as a race of people, as a political and imperial force, as a social and cultural power — was in irretrievable decline” (622). Gothic texts not only reflected societal fears but were the subject of fear and derision themselves initially, as Fred Botting in his book *Gothic* writes “Intensified by fears of radicalism and revolution, the challenge to aesthetic values was framed in terms of social transgression: virtue, propriety and domestic order were considered to be under threat” (21). Victorian England feared what was beyond the shadows of its homes, counties, and nation’s borders, and these texts, the original Gothic, represented those fears and brought them uncomfortably into view.

Settler Canadian writers working with the Gothic, however, did not have a home or a history for which to fear and consider corrupted by external forces. Sugars states this plainly early in her book, writing that “For years, early Canadian writers struggled with an attempt to express a ‘story’ of the place that would be true to their experience of a new environment yet which would somehow have the cultural pedigree of European tradition” (50). The Gothic then, became an exercise of creating something to fear, rather than focusing on something already present, in order to create a sense of home and nation that the young colony was seen to be lacking. As Sugars phrases it, “Canadian authors were...manipulating their ‘hauntings’ in self-consciously discernible – even in self-sustaining – ways” (49). The Indigenous peoples of Canada thus became easy targets for this Gothicization due to their cultural differences. Sugars notes that “Native peoples were equated with the landscape as a monstrous presence that threatened to overwhelm the European colonizer from without (as an external threat) and within (as an intrapsychic threat

to civilized mores and rational sanity)” (22). In other words, Indigenous peoples in narrative could be appropriated and reformed into both a Dracula-like external threat and a Mr. Hyde-like internal threat: the monster clawing at the door and the one corrupting one’s mind.

While Sugars’s study focuses more on how Gothic fiction was repurposed in early Canada as a means of establishing a national literature and thus a national identity, this establishment of a Canadian gothic was not possible without a certain degree of appropriation of the Indigenous peoples’ identities and culture. Despite being essential to settlers’ early survival, commerce, and exploration of the continent, they were appropriated and fashioned into the new bogeymen of a burgeoning nation. Simultaneously, early Settler-Canadian writers had as much a vested interest in rendering themselves the caretakers of their new home as they did rendering the colony homely by way of Indigenous gothicization. As Malissa Phung notes in her article “Are People of Colour Settlers Too” “Nineteenth century Canadian literature was deeply invested in telling stories and devising images that worked to affirm the myth of Indigenous people as a vanishing and dying race, only to be replaced by stories and images of Indigenized white settlers; that is, Indigenous in their ability to cultivate Indigenous attributes and skills” (293). Adding to this, Daniel Francis writes in his book *The Imaginary Indian*, “The early image-makers all agreed that Indians were disappearing. This ‘fact’ was why it was so important to capture a record of their culture before it died away. This fate was what made Indians so interesting to the public at large” (68). Not only were Indigenous peoples and their cultures appropriated in order to give Canada a sense of history by way of gothicization, they were rendered past as well.

One of the first and most prominent cases of the appropriation and gothicization of Indigenous culture in North American Settler writing is in John Richardson’s 1832 novel *Wacousta*,

where an Indigenous monster of sorts is terrorizing a fur trading outpost, recreating the external/internal dichotomy of the Gothic in Canada. As Leigh Matthews notes broadly in his article “The New World Gaze: Disguising “The Eye of Power” in John Richardson’s *Wacousta*”:

the novel deals with the period of Indian rebellion against this stronghold of imperial authority in the wilderness, an event requiring that the fort, which in times of peaceful rule of colonial Natives was ideally meant to be a centre of cultural exchange, be transformed into a military garrison, a fortified architectural attempt to present a clearly demarcated boundary between empire and wilderness, British and Other, to differentiate between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ subject and object.

By the novel’s end, the Indigenous monster is revealed to be a settler who “dresses as a Native man...driven by a desire for revenge” (Rothenberger 105). Besides effectively shifting the Gothic threat from external to internal, this is also bald-faced appropriation of a kind embedded in the DNA of Canadian writing. Richardson does not utilize the Indigenous peoples and their culture within the novel as a means of critiquing their relationship with the Settlers; he does so only to appropriate their difference in order to create a counterfeit of an ancient terror. Returning to *Sugars*: “*Wacousta* is figured as the dark underside of the British imperial enterprise which projects its fears onto Aboriginal peoples, thus rendering them a Gothic source of terror” (33). The rendering of Indigenous peoples as a Gothic source of terror is a hallmark of much early Canadian writing, as evidenced also in the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott.

As mentioned earlier, Duncan Campbell Scott’s poems also appropriate in order to create a sense of Gothic historicism. In his poem “The Onondaga Madonna,” his subject, an Indigenous woman holding her son is described as “weird,” “savage,” and covered in blood within the first five of its brief fourteen lines. Despite the woman’s race “waning” according to Scott, there is

not only a sense of history, but also a sense of finality and relief. Scott depicts the woman as storied and experienced, her “blood...mingled with her ancient foes” and “lips...dabbled with the stains of feuds and forays and her father’s woes.” By alluding to the timeline of conflict preceding the woman and her father, Scott appropriates her culture and people and misrepresents it in order to give his own perception of Canada a more extensive history, a mere twenty two years old at the time of publication, than it actually has. The fact that Scott’s Madonna stands in some degree of undescribed defeat (the baby she holds the “latest promise of her nation’s doom”) also denotes a certain kind of accomplishment because, while he does afford her admiration, he relishes somewhat in the ending of her people’s time. This not only furthers a certain narrative of Canada having an extensive history by way of some symbolic victory over Indigenous peoples, it shores up the narrative of progress essential to Canada’s nationhood, not only when Scott wrote it, but today as well. While the poem is now often laughed at in first year English classes, the sentiments of it remain embedded in the Canadian, and North American, cultural imaginary. Chelsea Vowel speaks to this in her book *Indigenous Writes*, writing that “You never have to wait long for unambiguously racist opinions, depicting Indigenous peoples in an unflattering light...In fact, certain people...manage to make a living claiming to be experts on us while basically assuring Canadians that Indigenous peoples are inferior and broken in every possible way” (117). She adds that Carmen Robertson and Mark Cronlund Anderson in their book *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers* note that “with respect to Aboriginal peoples, the colonial imaginary has thrived, even dominated, and continues to do so in mainstream English-language newspapers” (qtd. in Vowel 119). This kind of imaginary began with writers like Scott, White writers, appropriating aspects of Indigenous culture and misrepresenting it in order to weave a narrative that suits their imperial nation building enterprise.

Some playful and much more recent Canadian Gothic texts are the series of *Ginger Snaps* horror films. These films, produced between 2000 and 2004, tell the stories of two sisters, Ginger and Brigitte, who become werewolves. The films leverage the idea of the werewolf as a metaphor for female empowerment and budding female sexuality. While the first two are set in present day, I am going to focus on the third film, *Ginger Snaps Back* (2004), by director Grant Harvey and writers Christina Ray and Stephen Massicotte, all white Canadians.

Ginger Snaps Back shifts the series to 19th Century, Fur Trade-era Canada from the contemporary setting of the first two films. The film begins with Ginger and Brigitte lost in the woods after being shipwrecked prior to the opening. Shortly after this, and after Brigitte being injured in a bear trap, they are rescued by an Indigenous man known only as “The Hunter” and are escorted to a trading post that has been besieged by werewolf attacks. The sisters’ presence disrupts the entirely male population of the outpost, driving one character, Reverend Gilbert, to blame them for the werewolf attacks, attacks for which it is clear to the viewer they are not the cause of. The conflict from there escalates until all the men are killed in a night-time werewolf attack and the sisters are all that remain.

From the outset, it is clear that the project of the *Ginger Snaps* films is a schlocky critique of the patriarchy and misogyny. From Ginger’s sarcastic “welcome to civilization” as they enter the outpost, the film’s thematic scope is trained on men and how they interact, in primarily negative ways, with its two female leads. This overdetermined feminist critique of patriarchy is, of course, fine in the first two films set in contemporary suburban Canada. Not every creative work, despite Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectionality rightfully taking hold as a concept and credo, must be doing the work of all social issues at all times, nor would it be necessarily feasible. However, *Ginger Snaps Back* egregiously appropriates Indigeneity and deploys it almost entirely

as exposition and for plot advancement, giving its Indigenous characters none of the agency that the two sisters are afforded, resulting in Indigenous caricatures having neither depth nor authenticity.

The first Indigenous character the sisters encounter is an elderly woman in what appears to be an attacked and abandoned Indigenous encampment. This woman, the viewers later learn, is the Seer, and she imparts cryptic exposition to the sisters regarding the werewolf attacks in clear English that is spoken in the slow, dotted-with-pauses rhythm indicative of the screen stereotype of the Indigenous person. Shortly after this encounter, when Brigitte's bear trap accident occurs, the sisters are rescued by the Hunter, a stoic Indigenous man outfitted in a long leather coat and a copious amount of knives who, throughout the film, is the only character capable of routinely intervening against the werewolf attacks. Despite this, he is only ever referred to as "the Indian" or "Savage." When they arrive at the outpost initially, Ginger says "The Indian helped us." Later at dinner one man proposes "a toast to our magnificent Indian friend" only to have another character call him a "redskin" and accuse him of being the cause of the werewolf attacks. The Hunter is clearly meant to fulfill an appealing action-hero type role, a role not often afforded to Indigenous characters, but any breakthrough in terms of representation is entirely mitigated by his clear use as a simple plot device. The Hunter only shows up to inform the sisters of the prophecy connecting them to the werewolves, or to save them in increasingly heroic ways.

Finally, the Hunter is killed by Brigitte during the climax of the film. As Brigitte learns that the werewolves can only be stopped if Ginger is killed, the Hunter provides Brigitte with a knife. Instead of going after Ginger, Brigitte kills the Hunter in a moment that epitomizes the film's issues with representation. As Sunnie Rothenberger notes in her paper "Welcome to Civi-

lization': Colonialism, the Gothic, and Canada's Self-Protective Irony in the *Ginger Snaps* Werewolf Trilogy" "The Hunter serves his purpose as a go-between for the girls and the land... and is destroyed, both literally via murder and symbolically in his reduction to a European version of patriarchal masculinity" (110). The Hunter character in this film is Indigenous appropriation at its most reductive: appropriated and employed solely for exposition and *deus ex machina* moments, recreating the stereotype that Indigenous people are both knowledgeable about the land and capable of defending against its terrors. It should also be noted that not only does The Hunter die, but The Seer is also killed, by Ginger, after Brigitte has a revelatory dream in her presence, as well as a nameless Indigenous teen, also killed by Ginger after informing the sisters of the Seer's location: All these Indigenous characters are knowledgeable, nameless, and disposed of once their usefulness to the main, white, characters has been exhausted.

By utilizing the fur trade, a turbulent period for interactions between settlers and Indigenous peoples, as merely a backdrop and prop for its continued feminist message of sexuality and friendship, *Ginger Snaps Back* is unfortunately as appropriative and misrepresentative as *Wacousta* and Scott's poems, signaling that despite the great chronological gap, very little progress, if any, has been made in terms of Gothic, and genre, texts written by white settler Canadians. Indigenous characters in the hands of white settler Canadian writers and directors, however strong, capable, and present, remain merely props in service of white characters, speaker, writers, and filmmakers.

I am now going to turn my attention to some recent films that, while they do not wholly fall within the Gothic tradition of writing nonetheless fit within this discussion of genre texts responding to Indigenous issues. Although Hollywood has been trying to respond meaningfully to the systemic displacement and attempted assimilation of Indigenous peoples in North America

for decades now, with *Dances with Wolves* Best Picture win in 1991 being a watershed moment in terms of white storytellers figuratively patting themselves on the back, there has been a recent uptick in films attempting to deal with these issues, beginning with 2015's *The Revenant* and carrying through to 2016's *Hell or High Water* and onto 2017's *Wind River* and *Hostiles*. Although these last two films are both American and deal with American Indigenous peoples, the Shoshone & Arapaho and the Cheyenne respectively, they both had wide releases in Canada, reaching a much wider audience than most English Canadian films, and consequently are worthy of discussion when exploring texts by Settler storytellers seeking to affect positive change for Indigenous peoples across North America.

Wind River is a thriller set on the Wind River reservation in Wyoming. The film opens with an Indigenous woman, Natalie, running for her life through the snow at night. After this we meet the lead, Cory Lambert, a white man in a cowboy hat whom the Indigenous characters throughout the rest of the film are particularly fond of. We learn that not only is he an employee of the reservation, called upon to hunt down wild animals who endanger the reservation's residents, but he also was formerly married to an Indigenous woman, and had a daughter, who died prior to the beginning of the story. When asked to hunt down a mountain lion terrorizing one man's property, Lambert discovers the woman from the beginning, dead in the snow. From here, the FBI is called in due to bureaucratic obligation, and Agent Jane Banner, a white woman, is drawn into the mystery despite her initial disinterest.

The film, written and directed by Taylor Sheridan, a white writer and director, who also wrote *Hell or High Water* is clear from the outset in its political intentions. While *Hell or High Water* clearly had its sights set on socio-economic issues, with concerns for Indigenous peoples layered in for texture and levity, *Wind River* goes for the gut in terms of attempting to investigate

and skewer law enforcements repeated lapses to investigate missing and murdered Indigenous women. However, the film fails to reach its full effect due to its need to mediate these issues through its two white leads. Lambert is what Matthew Hughey would refer to as a "white savior," a particular type of white male film lead that "[helps] people of color who cannot or will not help themselves, [teaches] nonwhites right from wrong" and is "the only character able to recognize these moral distinctions" (8). Hughey writes that this character type and the dynamics surrounding it "enables an interpretation of nonwhite characters and culture as essentially broken, marginalized, and pathological, while whites can emerge as messianic characters that easily fix the nonwhite pariah with their superior moral and mental abilities" (30). Again, while Sheridan is clearly empathetic to the poverty of the Wind River reservation in his film, the Indigenous people who populate its scenes fall in line with Hughey's "broken, marginalized, and pathological" analysis, and Lambert firmly within the blueprint of "messianic." While the main thrust of the story is driven by Natalie's murder, Lambert also must have a murdered daughter whom is a victim of similar violence, as though Sheridan could not trust the audience to have enough sympathy for Natalie alone. All this despite meeting her grieving parents, and being shown a brief but effective scene of her budding romance prior to her rape and escape that leads to her death. She is the victim, but Lambert is the white lead, and the audience's empathy is mediated through him.

It is also through Lambert's heroism that the mystery surrounding Natalie is solved. Natalie's father, Martin, despite being played by notable Comanche actor Gil Birmingham, is given very little to do during the plot but grieve. Her mother, not even afforded a name or even a line of dialogue, is shown simply cutting herself and crying when Lambert goes looking for her. Natalie's brother, Chip, is caught living in a crack house and is given a stern talking-to by Lambert

after his arrest. The only capable Indigenous character in the film is Ben, the Chief of the Reservation's policing unit who acts more as comedy relief to Lambert's sternness than anything else. It is notable that during the shootout that marks the climax of the film he is quick to die, and that the shootout is resolved by Lambert's expert marksmanship shortly thereafter. Now, while Indigenous peoples falling victim to external violence, depression leading to self-harm, and drug addiction are stark realities for many, Sheridan's film does little to dispel the view that this may be all that defines the Indigenous life at the present moment, and uses this notion more to texturize his thriller with grit and atmosphere than to level any kind of critique at the systems that create these conditions. Natalie is murdered by the employees of a nameless oil company, a company that, after the shootout dispenses of nearly a dozen of its employees, is forgotten about.

Sheridan ends the film with Lambert and Natalie's father, Martin, sitting next to one another, Lambert in his cowboy hat and Martin wearing face paint. It is a moment not without weighty symbolism: the Cowboy and the Indian finally sitting together on the same side, brought together by a mutual tragedy perpetrated by modern life. The scene seems to suggest that so much has been lost as a result of, perhaps, capitalism and bureaucracy, that these two formerly opposing forces have been relocated to the same lower class by the Powers That Be. What this moment completely disregards, as does the rest of the film, are the systems that created the imbalances in the first place, and the privileges that Lambert is still no doubt afforded. Adding on to this effect, Lambert remains the hero, and Martin, while not the villain by any stretch, is still a losing party. Lambert is the one who finds Martin's daughter's killer and brings him to a particularly gruesome brand of justice and he is also the one who rescues Agent Banner during the shootout, suggesting that he is absolved of the sin of two Indigenous women's deaths, Natalie's

and his own daughter's, by saving one privileged white woman. Martin has nothing at the end of the film.

While it is clear that Sheridan's intentions are good, closing the film off with statistics regarding missing and murdered Indigenous women, stats, presumably, most moviegoers may never encounter even in the news, he delivers an unfortunately typical white savior story, with his lead ending up just another "lone cowboy in an exotic land" (Hughey 8). And, in the tradition of Settler storytellers attempting to respond to these issues, Sheridan appropriates Indigenous culture as a means of doing so. As Jason Asenap notes in his article "Why do white writers keep making films about Indian Country?" "In both films, alas, we return to the point that, at least in Hollywood, the Indians die. To this day, the Indians die, and not just physically, but culturally...When do the Indians win" (25)? While Sheridan's film certainly cares, it does not care enough to let anyone but the Cowboy win.

Hostiles, which also premiered in 2017, strikes a similar balance in its representation and appropriation of Indigenous cultures. Similar to *Wind River*, the audience experiences the story through the story of white character, Captain Joseph J. Blocker. He is introduced to the audience as a troubled yet capable veteran of the American Civil War and Indian Wars, and is en route to retirement when his superior tasks him with escorting a longstanding Cheyenne prisoner of war, Chief Yellow Hawk, back to his land, along with his family, in what is now Montana. Blocker initially refuses but when his superior threatens his pension, he concedes. From that point forward, the relationship between Blocker and Yellow Hawk evolves somewhat clumsily, beginning with Blocker threatening to kill Yellow Hawk in hand-to-hand combat shortly after their departure, and ending with Blocker defending Yellow Hawk and his family's rights to their land against white landowners during the film's climax.

What separates these two films from the previous texts I have discussed, are their thematic and political projects. While *Wacousta* and Duncan Campbell's Scott's poetry are going out of their way to use Indigenous belief as Gothic texture, and *Ginger Snaps Back* could not care less about the Indigenous subjects they appropriate, *Wind River* and *Hostiles* are clearly attempting to critique the cultural imaginary surrounding Indigenous peoples in North America. Whereas *Wind River* attempts to sympathetically display current issues plaguing Indigenous peoples but falls into exploitation, *Hostiles* attempts to show Indigenous peoples at a time just prior to (or adjacent to) land theft, child abduction, and forced education, and subsequently falls into stereotype. Yellow Hawk is more often than not simply dispensing cryptic wisdom, warning, for instance, Blocker of a group of Comanche who are following them. Yellow Hawk's son is not given a line in the entire film, and his daughter's only significant exchange is when she kindly offers Rosalie Quaid, a victim of Comanche violence who their party rescues along their way, clothes to wear. Yellow Hawk and his family are depicted as humble and gracious throughout, endlessly forgiving of the Blocker's racism, and seemingly there less to represent any kind of honest representation of Indigenous peoples of the time (or now), how they felt, and how they might have reacted, but to assuage Blocker's guilt and to massage his hero's journey towards his own self-absolution.

An interesting character in the film in terms of the politics of the film is Master Sgt. Thomas Metz, who comes to symbolically represent the white guilt Writer-Director Scott Cooper seems to be commenting on throughout. When the audience is introduced to Metz, he is reminiscing with Blocker, recounting memories they have of killing. He notes, with a kind of zeal, how much Blocker seemed to enjoy the fight when they first began. The next time Metz is given time to wax poetic is when he is speaking with Lt. Rudy Kidder around the middle of the film.

Here he notes how eventually one no longer feels remorse for killing, to which Kidder replies that that is what he is trying to avoid. Finally, Metz tells Blocker later in the film that he no longer feels anything, and leaves in the middle of the night in order to capture a prisoner their party picked up along the way who has escaped.

Metz, perhaps more than any other character in the film, even Blocker, represents a kind of repentant white guilt over North America's collective crimes against its Indigenous peoples. Aptly, however, Metz is depicted as troubled, numb, and confused as to what to do with his sudden realization, which is perhaps more telling and indicative of current responses to Indigenous issues than Cooper had intended. Later Metz is found dead, having chased down and killed their escaped prisoner, previously included seemingly only to voice the racist opinions that all of Blocker's men were already thinking. Symbolically, having Metz kill this prisoner is perhaps meant to represent the futility of cyclical violence, but it also plays into the tag-line narrative of the film, that "We are all Hostiles." While I understand Cooper's intention with this, not only does it ignore the vast disparity in violence committed against Indigenous peoples by Settlers, it presumes that by either side of this conflict being equal in their aggression, they are also equal in their victimization. Metz killing the prisoner is, from a writing standpoint, a tragic end to an arc that is meant to illicit the audience's empathy, but in doing so it crafts him, a white Settler who admits to killing more Indigenous peoples than he can remember at the beginning of the film, as one of the true victims of this conflict. While there is some room to look at Settlers as victims of colonization in their own right, as perpetrators of violence and beneficiaries of colonization, the disparity is far too great, and Metz's martyrdom works against what is seemingly the intent of Cooper's film.

In the end, Blocker does escort Yellow Hawk and his family back to their land in Montana, only to be interrogated by a group of Settlers who are now the “legal” owners of the land. Yellow Hawk dies shortly prior to their arrival due to a respiratory illness, and this confrontation occurs as they are giving him a sky burial. Blocker, having both earned the respect of Yellow Hawk and learned to respect him over the course of the film, defends Yellow Hawk and his family’s right to return to the land, which leads to a climactic shootout that results in every remaining Indigenous character, save for Little Bear, a young boy, dying. While this moment is, from a writing standpoint, meant to complete Blocker’s character arc from vile Savage hater to staunch Indigenous ally, this scene and this arc both, again, work against what seems to be the intention of the film. Firstly, it furthers the narrative that progress will, by violence or otherwise, bring the time of Indigenous peoples to an end. It is a trope as old as the Western, typified by James Earle Fraser’s “The End of the Trail” and other works, including the previously mentioned “Onondaga Madonna” by Duncan Campbell Scott. Secondly, however, it furthers the narrative of the Indigenized Settler, where not only do White European Settlers usurp Indigenous peoples and take their land, but that they can in fact be better Indigenous people than the Indigenous people themselves. Malissa Phung’s writes “to justify their right to occupy and belong in Indigenous territories, nineteenth century white settler writers...constructed a labour narrative of hard work and enterprise to self-indigenize; meanwhile Indigenous people, according to colonial stereotypes, have been constructed as lazy and lacking in industry and civility” (293). While Cooper’s film does not hold to the second part of Phung’s assertion, it still constructs a narrative where his white lead self-indigenizes. Yellow Hawk, the Indigenous patriarch and figurehead of the film, dies as they arrive on the land, and Blocker, by taking up arms to defend that land, symbolically

replaces him. This is further exacerbated by the scene in the resolution, where Blocker accompanies Mrs. Quaid and Little Bear, whom it is assumed they have adopted, to New York. Again, while there is room in the conversation of colonization to consider the role of the Settler and how they are victims in their own right by the systems in place, both *Hostiles* and *Wind River* continue to ignore Indigenous victimization, despite attempting to do the opposite, while incorrectly placing the two separate issues on par with one another, resulting in films that, like *Ginger Snaps Back*, *Wacousta*, and Duncan Campbell Scott's poetry, appropriate Indigeneity for plot, theme, tone, and texture, rather than dealing with the struggles of Indigenous peoples in any meaningful way.

So what can be done then? It would seem that there are few avenues for Settler writers to write Indigenous characters without repeating past mistakes and continuing to appropriate, reduce, and stereotype, and this could be a result of Settler writers' 'need', as I mentioned in my introduction, to tell these stories. Taylor Sheridan, for instance, told *Rolling Stone* that "I have a good deal of friends in Indian Country...and it required a lot of trust on their part for me to tell this story. And the only way I could guarantee that these things were handled in a way that did not betray that trust was for me to do it" (Fear). While Sheridan clearly believes he has the interests of those who live in "Indian Country" at heart, it is interesting that the only person he felt he could trust to tell *their* story was himself.

Similarly, Angie Abdou, a white Canadian author who wrote the novel *In Case I Go*, also claimed to have consulted with the Ktunaxa peoples, writing in *Quill & Quire* about the process of meeting the Ktunaxa's cultural liaison and eventually presenting her novel to their tribal council (Abdou). Abdou describes her resistance to wanting to consult, as well as the changes suggested by the Ktunaxa people she met with, yet never relents from the pursuit of writing her

novel, writing “We are, understandably, not at a point in history where white people are invited to write about Indigenous peoples. Still, I had invested considerable time and energy in a novel I believed in.” The fact that Abdou recognized that her writing of a Ktunaxa story was unwanted, but that her investment in her own work took precedence over that awareness, seems to echo the sentiment of the other Settler writers, such as Schriver, Sheridan, and even myself, prior to working on this thesis, and this continued pervasiveness of a “need” to tell stories that are not ours. The Ktunaxa, shortly thereafter, issued a statement to *Quill & Quire*, noting that while they had agreed to consult with Abdou, they had not endorsed her novel, nor consented to her writing a piece about the consultation process (Sebastien). Closing off their article, Troy Sebastien wrote “Claiming Indigenous consent is a settler alibi for deeds without honour. Denying Indigenous consent is an essential recipe for the status quo of settler society. Indigenous consent is the truth of reconciliation. Otherwise, reconciliation is just another roadside attraction.” As long as Settler writers are telling the stories of white protagonists surrounded by Indigenous characters, without extensive collaboration and consultation with the specific Indigenous peoples they are attempting to write, then their writing, our writing, will never cease to be fraught and riddled with ideological problems that render our works inert, despite even the most altruistic intentions. Our attempted contributions will continue to be little more than, in Troy Sebastien’s words, “roadside attractions” on a highway of colonialism. Of course, I am not advocating that all hope be abandoned and that Settler-Canadian writers fall back and only write *bildungsroman* novels about their childhoods on the prairies or their confusing Graduate school years. There is a way for Settler-Canadian and non-Indigenous Canadian writers to make meaningful moves in the political conversation regarding Indigenous peoples with their work. While meaningful consultation and

collaboration with Indigenous writers are excellent ways of accomplishing this task, I will be focusing on the employment of experimental and conceptual writing.

Conceptual writing is nothing new, and Canadian writers have deployed this style of writing with aplomb when responding to timely issues of social and political justice. Warren Cariou describes this model of writing well in his chapter “Edgework: Indigenous Poetics as Re-placement” where he states:

While poetry is undoubtedly a marginalized genre in mainstream Western society today, I believe it retains the capacity to shake up the divisive mindset that is endemic in our class-inflected and still-colonized world. It can destabilize those edges that keep Aboriginal peoples marginalized in contemporary North American culture, and it can do this by holding different realities side by side: by juxtaposing the received mainstream perception of colonial reality with a perception that is rooted in Aboriginal experience. (33)

My first encounter with this style of writing used to similar ends was the long poem “Knuckle Sandwich” by Mercedes Eng from her collection *Mercenary English*. Importantly to this discussion, Eng is not an Indigenous person, but deftly explores the systemic violence that effects Indigenous women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, specifically the RCMP’s failure to respond to the victims of Robert Pickton, as well as the cultural discrimination carried out against Muslim women. She utilizes the style of juxtaposition described by Cariou when she writes of an initiative to honour veterans with a “Highway of Heroes” and contrasts that to British Columbia’s failure to respond to the Indigenous women who have gone missing along BC’s infamous Highway of Tears:

Thousands of motorcyclists took to the Trans-Canada Highway on Saturday to show support for Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

now that's progress

from a

Trail of Tears

to a

Highway of Tears

Motorcyclist wants to see the creation of a Highway of Heroes dedicated to fallen B.C. soldiers similar to the one in Ontario: It would be nice to have out here 'cause it's not just soldiers from Ontario, it's soldiers from across Canada... we lose soldiers from across this great nation of ours so to have one out here would be amazing. (33)

On this page, Eng utilizes juxtaposition, aptly sandwiching her own writing between two found texts regarding the proposed Highway of Heroes. Eng is able to invoke North America's entire history of Indigenous displacement in just a few lines, taking the reader from the American Trail of Tears to the Canadian Highway of Tears, and then contrasts that to the cultural privileging of the deaths of soldiers over those same displaced Indigenous peoples.

Perhaps even more formidable is when Eng does not even include her own writing, and using only placement of the text, draws attention to hypocrisies and disparities:

B.C.'s inquiry into the death and disappearance of

women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

opened amid the chants of protesters

Commissioner Wally Opal opened the inquiry by saying a key question

he wants answered at the inquiry is whether

society's most vulnerable women

are being treated the same as other citizens by the police and the law

M i s s i n g

from the inquiry

are more than a dozen non-profit advocacy groups

that were granted standing but withdrew because they were

denied public legal funding. (40)

Here the word “Missing,” stretched out and emphasized by additional spacing, is drawn from the latter text for further emphasis. Both the text above and below this word are clearly drawn from two separate news reports of the inquiry that resulted from the Pickton investigation, but by placing them into the context of a conceptual poem, Eng gives weight and power to what would otherwise be two routine news reports for many Canadians. Not only does the “Missing” draw a connection between the two stanzas above and below it in a way that a conventionally typed report would not be able to, her enjambment throughout also highlights areas of importance to her message, placing phrases like “society’s most vulnerable women” and “denied public legal funding” on their own lines and thereby increasing their importance.

Most importantly, however, is what the found-text conceptual format Eng employs is doing overall throughout the entirety of her book. While Cariou in his article refers to this technique as “re-placement,” it is also unequivocally appropriation, but done so in a way as to combat power structures rather than reinforce them. Eng takes mainstream media news, often so banal as to be insidiously effective, and creates poetry from it in order to expose the ironies and hypocrisies at play in the systemic disregard Canada’s governments have for Indigenous peoples. Whereas the texts I discussed earlier appropriated Indigenous culture and re-crafted it to suit both their respective genres and their respective purposes, conceptual writing like Eng’s appropriates

the dominant modes of narrative building in news and advertisements and appropriates them directly, only strategically rearranging their placement, in order to expose the often embarrassing racism negligence present in every day discourse.

This kind of found-text conceptual writing fueled by politically-charged appropriation is also deployed effectively by Shane Rhodes in his book *Dead White Men*. Rhodes is a white Settler-Canadian writer who, by exploring archival writings by early European explorers and appropriating their words, crafts scathing and evocative poems that both highlights the disregard early Europeans had for the Indigenous peoples they encountered and dispels any over-exaggerated notions that early settlement and exploration was amicable and mutually beneficial. One particularly effective piece from his book is the poem “Naming It.”

“Naming It” as Rhodes mentions in his notes, is a text built from “excerpts...from James Cook’s journals from his first Pacific voyage to Tahiti and Australia” (75). Visually, the poem takes the form of a large, justified block of text on the page, which is striking due to the fact all previous poems in the book take on a fairly conventional visual format in line with the modern poem. Within this block of text there is no punctuation, and it reads similar to a stream of consciousness piece, although it is clear that this is an effect of Rhodes’s arrangement of the text and not Cook’s original intent, the resulting poem is an unrelenting barrage of Cook naming his discoveries:

at the Masthead the Officer called out that he saw land which I named New Island because it was not laid down in any Chart and I hoisted an English jack and took possession in the name of His Brittanick Majesty calling them by the same names as the natives do which was their idea of the sound of the name of Poverty Bay which I named because it afforded us no one thing so I named it Young Nicks...(51)

The pace of Cook's naming picks up rapidly towards the end of piece:

...which very much resembles Glass Houses which occasioned my giving them that Name besides these we saw some Bustards such as we have in England which occasioned my giving this place the Name of Bustard Day and then Thirsty Sound by reason we could find no fresh Water so I named them Hope Islands because we were always in hope which I named after the Ship *Endeavour* and this island where the ceremony was performed I named it Possession (51)

As with Eng's poem, these texts Rhodes is working with are nothing particularly new to Settler eyes. Most Canadians grow up reading about the adventures and conquests of early European explorers, so much so that they, like the news articles Eng employs, become so banal that they begin to slip beneath the conscious mind where they do their more sinister work of upholding and maintaining the cultural imaginary surrounding Indigenous peoples in Canada. However, by juxtaposing Cook's conquests so rapidly amongst one another, Rhodes collapses the cognitive distance between these, resulting in an almost comical parade of conquests that is impossible for the reader to ignore. It is apparent for any novice reader of Rhodes's poem that the names of the places around us, that many Canadians and Settler citizens of other colonial countries, are the result of bull-headed and inconsiderate Europeans arbitrarily labelling their surroundings with no regard to the Indigenous peoples inhabiting them. Additionally, as with Eng's poetry, the poem is created entirely from the appropriated texts of one of Rhodes's titular Dead White Men, turning the appropriative acts of Cook's exploration around on him in order to more clearly demonstrate just how exploitative and appropriative they were.

The poem “More Translations of the Lappish Language” is more specific with its subtitle of “*Their Words for Sounds*” (93). While the resulting poem, given its title, could have been moderately interesting by simply listing what is most likely incorrect translations for these words, Rhodes takes this one step further by removing the original Lappish words altogether, resulting in a series of colons with missing previous clauses:

: wolves singing when I cry ass drunk

: a fire salt sprayed

: a bow when the arrows are shot (93)

While the initial experience of reading the poem is somewhat shocking, with the absence of the missing Lappish words reading callous and negligent, it gives way to revelation when Rhodes’s project becomes clear. Rhodes’s act of erasure directly reflects the original translators’ acts of erasure. Again, he appropriates in order to expose and illuminate the original act of appropriation. As with the previous poem discussed, these translations might not seem as misguided or offensive had Rhodes included the original Lappish words. Their absence demonstrates visually the translators’ intents far more effectively than their poor translations: it demonstrates that the original Lappish words are never what they cared about anyway.

However, the most elegant use of conceptual writing to address appropriation by way of appropriation is Jordan Abel’s book *Injun*. Abel’s book, cleverly epigraphed with a Mark Twain quote that reads “It is better to take what does not belong to you than to let it lie around neglected,” is “constructed entirely from,” as Abel mentions himself in his “Process” section, “91 public domain western novels” (83). Abel splits his book into three parts: “Injun,” “Notes,” and “Appendix.” The book begins somewhat conventionally, with Abel combining lines from the

Westerns he pulled from to create evocative poems that are plainly modern in their structure and appearance:

he played injun in gods country
where boys proved themselves clean

dumb beasts who could cut fire
out of the whitest sand

he played english across the trail
where girls turned plum wild

garlic and strained words
through the window of night

he spoke through numb lips and
breathed frontier (3)

Abel deftly uses juxtaposition here, much like Eng and Rhodes, creating a poem that is not only sharply critical with lines like “he plays injun in gods country” but also evocative in terms of its poetics.

This style is not intended to last, however. On page 9 of the book, following the line “injuns in a heap,” and barely noticeable at first, the poems begin to fragment. Beginning with

slightly greater spaces between words in each page's poems, the spacing becomes greater and greater until finally the poems begin to visually explode on page 18, where nearly every letter of every word has been spread as far from one another as possible. While Abel eventually visually contracts the words back together by the end, he also flips them upside down on the page, upsetting the possibility of any return to a sense of normalcy for the reader.

Symbolically this piece could serve a number of different purposes. Perhaps the conventional poems at the beginning exploding into near illegibility and then recombining but only part way and upside down is meant to represent the damage of words like "injun" and writing like the westerns Abel pulls from on Indigenous peoples. Or perhaps it's the opposite, and this is Abel, like Eng and Rhodes, appropriating the appropriators, and symbolically annihilating their texts.

Regardless of the innumerable directions interpretations of Abel's work could take, what remains is a powerful act of poetics constructed entirely of found text. And not just any text, but of texts representing the exact frameworks Abel is seeking to critique, as Eng does with news media in her book and as Rhodes does with history in his. In the following sections of Abel's book, "Notes" and "Appendix," Abel manages to show his readers his process while still crafting two more resonant poetic pieces. In "Notes," Abel stacks lines from the westerns he combed on top of one another, making columns out of single words that unify the lines, such as "whitest" (31), "truth" (33), "warpath" (44), and "possession" (58). Much like Rhodes's piece "Naming it," Abel is able to expose the damaging effects of these words and the writing of these westerns by drawing the words together and bridging the cognitive distance they would be able to hide within in their original texts. For instance, when Abel goes through this process with the word "territory" (42), a word that could read as a vague and innocuous when spread throughout a work of

Western fiction takes on a certain colonial weight when the reader sees it paired with the word “new” in five of the fourteen lines, or with “Mexican” and “redskin” in others.

In the final section of Abel’s book, “Appendix,” he performs the inverse of the “Notes” section. Here Abel places sections of the Western texts he has pulled from in their entirety into the book, with one notable exception: he has removed the word “injun” in every place it where it occurs and has left an open space in its place. By doing this he is flagging the use of this language in the same way that he did in the previous section but by different means: rather than highlighting by way of proximity, he uses erasure to show the stark surplus use of the word. The pages of “Appendix” are veritably riddled with blank spots, rendering the text partly empty and illuminating how overly reliant these writers were on the epithet. While “Appendix” may not be designed to be read in detail, its seventeen pages serve Abel’s political ends whether his readers read it as a work of poetic-fiction or simply peruse its pages, seemingly bullet-holed visually by the repeated absences, as something more visual.

It is worth noting that while these conceptual texts are evocative in their forms and interrogative in their politics, their overall audience is undoubtedly a fraction of that of the previous films and texts I have looked at in this paper. While this could make the comparisons between them seem unworthy of examination, I do believe they operate on a similar continuum in terms of their political intents. While Canadian Gothic texts from the late 1800’s, more recent Canadian Gothic films, American Westerns, and Conceptual Canadian poetry bridge large gaps in both genres and medium, their focus, that of the Indigenous peoples of North America, are, for better or worse, similarly aimed. Although I do not expect the audiences of *Wind River* and *Dead White Men* to necessarily be the same, the political conversation they are participating in is.

The Land beyond the Forest: My New Creative, Conceptual, Thesis

With these projects in mind, as models for how to address the issues surrounding Indigenous peoples in Canada using different found text techniques, I reconfigured the creative project I mentioned in my introduction from a purely fictional one to a more experimental text. Using the same basic premise, that of retelling *Dracula* in Canada's fur trade, I took the actual text of *Dracula*, which is in the public domain, and tried to combine it as seamlessly as possible with a number of different texts about the Hudson's Bay Company and Canada's Fur Trade found on Project Gutenberg's website. I decided to focus solely on Jonathan Harker's journey to Dracula's castle and subsequent escape so that the project would fall both within my intended goal of a novella-length work as well as running a similar length as the works I just analyzed.

My first attempt at this was interesting but somewhat flawed, as I attempted to craft the piece without editing the varied texts together in order to smooth the transitions between them. This made for a text that had some interesting overlap but not much narrative direction. The thematic focus was also somewhat lacking. On my second draft, I edited the texts to create more of an illusion of a seamless text. For instance, in the scenes where, in *Dracula*, Harker is taken by coach to Dracula's castle, I changed the terms "coach" to "vessel" (so as to indicate a canoe), and "driver" to "voyageur." Additionally, I changed a few other terms like "castle" to "fort" and "England" to "Canada," where it was necessary for the narrative. On the whole, however, I tried my best to simply collage texts together, rather than doing any extensive hands-on editing.

In terms of focusing the thematic and critical elements of my piece, I decided, after speaking with my committee, to hone in on creating a parallel between Dracula and John A. Macdonald. By taking Macdonald's words and actions and placing them at the hands of Dracula (now simply called "The Count" within my piece), I could manifest the original intent of this

project, which was to highlight the vampiric nature of the colonial project. As my research indicated, particularly in a number of recent think pieces on Macdonald (from which I also utilized text in my piece) it is not a stretch to draw a comparison between Macdonald and an other-worldly being intent on invading and conquering another country. Also in discussion with my committee, I worked to end the piece after Harker's escape on the more celebratory takes on Macdonald's legacy. This was so as to not end the story with "The Count" as the monster he is throughout the story but as the friendly, nation-building face Canadians see every day on their ten dollar bills. I did not want there to be an implication that, within the narrative I have crafted, Canada's colonial enterprise had ended in the past or remained in The Count's fort. The last section of my project is meant to indicate that he had a long and celebrated legacy after the protagonist barely escapes.

Despite the aspects of my text that I found successful, there are a number of limitations in crafting a project such as this. For instance, when utilizing predominantly settler-European voices to craft a found-text narrative, there is inherently a lack of Indigenous voices present. This is a valid critique for "Knuckle Sandwich," *Dead White Men*, and *Injun*, as well, however, given that these texts are more-so analyzing the rhetoric of these settler voices, I would say that their lack of Indigenous perspectives does not entirely undermine their projects. However, the future of these projects will benefit from collaborations between settler and Indigenous authors in order to provide a more balanced approach.

I also found enforcing a narrative potentially limiting on this text. I do not perceive of myself as a poet, even when I am working with experimental forms, and this is why I was passionate about maintaining a narrative direction with this project. The blending of texts could have worked more effectively in the hands of the poet, where certain narrative beats would not

have to be covered. I do believe my project still works, and is a valuable contribution to both the field of conceptual writing and politically interrogative writing, but it would seem that conceptual writing is better suited to texts purporting to be poetry, rather than fiction, where reader expectations of plot beats, character arcs, and logical coherence are somewhat more relaxed.

Settler writing, particularly regarding Indigenous peoples, is a writing of appropriation. While not limited solely to the Gothic, early Canadian Gothic texts, as Cynthia Sugars outlines in detail in her work, are particularly egregious, with Indigenous peoples and their spiritual beliefs often appropriated as means of nation-building: to add a horrifying and unknown history to a colony-turned-country too young to have the storied past its mother nation has. This appropriative tendency has barely shifted in nearly one hundred years, to the point where some texts, such as *Ginger Snaps Back*, focused entirely on its themes of feminism, appropriate Indigenous culture to no political end, but simply for aesthetic texturing, a practice that, while not steeped in a particular malice, is no less damaging. Some recent works by Settler writers, namely the films *Wind River* and *Hostiles*, attempt meaningfully to explore redress by drawing comparisons between both Indigenous and Settlers and the systems in place that victimize them both. These, however, despite their best intentions, ignore the immense disparities in privilege and victimization between these two groups, and still configure white cowboy characters as their heroes. Despite all this, there is a way forward for Settler writers to participate in acts of redress and reconciliation, and one of these methods that has proved fruitful is conceptual and experimental writing. The works of Mercedes Eng, Shane Rhodes, and Jordan Abel exemplify this style of writing and its power to illuminate systemic violence by appropriating some of the least examined yet most subtly powerful texts in our society: news, history, and genre writing. Additionally, I argue, these writers "appropriate back," using colonialism's most insidious tool

against it in immeasurably evocative and powerful ways. Though collaborative writing between Indigenous and Settler writers and meaningful consultation stand as viable options for telling conventionally formulated narratives that explore our collective past in a meaningfully and, most importantly, considerate way, conceptual found-text writing, with its sights set on the colonial project, is another way all Canadian writers can participate in the intellectual un-doing of systemic oppression: may we not let it lie around neglected.

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Section 2: The Land beyond the Forest

How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made manifest in the reading of them. All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later-day belief may stand forth as simple fact.¹

CANADA never knew a “Wild West.” We are forced to turn elsewhere for “penny thriller” and “dime novel” material, based on frontier lawlessness and blood-shed.²

Part 1 - Before

Leave Fort Chepewyan. Proceed to the Peace River. State of the Lakes. Arrive at Peace Point. The reason assigned for its name. The weather cold. Arrive at the Falls. Description of the country. Land at the Fort, called The Old Establishment. The principal building destroyed by fire. Course of the river. Arrive at another fort. Some account of the natives. Depart from thence. Course of the river continued, It divides into two branches. Proceed along the principal one. Land at the place of our winter's residence. Account of its circumstances and inhabitants, etc. Preparations for erecting a fort, etc., etc. Table of the weather. Broke the thermometer. Frost sets in. Description of birds.³

I was not able to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of the Fort, as there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey maps.⁴

In the afternoon I assembled the Indians, in order to inform them that I should take my departure on the following day; but that people would remain on the spot till their countrymen, whom they had mentioned, should arrive; and that, if they brought a sufficient quantity of skins to make it answer, the Canadians would return for more goods, with a view to winter here, and build a fort, which would be continued as long as they should be found to deserve it. They assured me that it would be a great encouragement to them to have a settlement of ours in their country; and that they should exert themselves to the utmost to kill beaver, as they would then be certain of getting an adequate value for them.⁵

They wore high boots, with their trousers tucked into them, and had long black hair and heavy black moustaches. They are very picturesque, but do not look prepossessing. On the stage they would be set down at once as some old Oriental band of brigands. They are, however, I am told, very harmless and rather wanting in natural self-assertion.⁶

I did not sleep well, though my bed was comfortable enough, for I had all sorts of queer dreams. There was a dog howling all night under my window, which may have had something to do with it; or it may have been the paprika, for I had to drink up all the water in my carafe, and was still thirsty. Towards morning I slept and was wakened by the continuous knocking at my door, so I guess I must have been sleeping soundly then.⁷

In the fall of the year the natives meet the traders at the forts, where they barter the furs or provisions which they may have procured; they then obtain credit, and proceed to hunt the beavers, and do not return till the beginning of the year; when they are again fitted out in the same manner and come back the latter end of March, or the beginning of April; They are now unwilling to repair to the beaver hunt until the waters, are clear of ice, that they may kill them with fire-arms, which the Chepewyans are averse to employ. The major part of the latter return to the barren grounds, and live during the summer with their relations and friends in the enjoyment of that plenty which is derived from numerous herds of deer. But those of that tribe who are most partial to these deserts, cannot remain there in winter, and they are obliged, with the deer, to take shelter in the woods during that rigorous season, when they contrive to kill a few beavers, and send them by young men, to exchange for iron utensils and ammunition.⁸

"Tell us, my friend," they said, "what those three letters yonder signify. Wherever we travel in this country we encounter 'H. B. C.' We have seen the legend sewn on the garments of Indians; we have seen it flying from rude forts; it has been painted on canoes; it is inscribed on bales and boxes. What does 'H. B. C.' mean?"

"That's *the Company*," returned the native grimly, "Here Before Christ."⁹

They did not appear to me so attached to their customs that they could not easily adopt those of civilized nations: they would dress themselves willingly in the European mode, if they had the means. To encourage this taste, we lent pantaloons to the chiefs who visited us, when they wished to enter our houses, never allowing them to do it in a state of nudity. They possess, in an eminent degree, the qualities opposed to indolence, improvidence, and stupidity: the chiefs, above all, are distinguished for their good sense and intelligence. Generally speaking, they have a ready intellect and a tenacious memory.¹⁰

When I asked him if he knew the Count, and could tell me anything of his fort, both he and his wife crossed themselves, and, saying that they knew nothing at all, simply refused to speak further. It was so near the time of starting that I had no time to ask any one else, for it was all very mysterious and not by any means comforting.¹¹

This lake and fort take their names from the island just mentioned, which, as has been already observed, received its denomination from the game of the cross, which forms a principal amusement among the natives.¹²

The grey of the morning has passed, and the sun is high over the distant horizon, which seems jagged, whether with trees or hills I know not, for it is so far off that big things and little are mixed. I am not sleepy, and, as I am not to be called till I awake, naturally I write till sleep comes.¹³

The provision called pemmican, on which the Chepewyans, as well as the other savages of this country, chiefly subsist in their journeys, is prepared in the following manner: The lean parts of the flesh of the larger animals are cut in thin slices, and are placed on a wooden grate over a slow fire, or exposed to the sun, and sometimes to the frost. These operations dry it, and in that state it is pounded between two stones; it will then keep with care for several years. If, however, it is kept in large quantities, it is disposed to ferment in the spring of the year, when it must be exposed to the air, or it will soon decay. The inside fat, and that of the rump, which is much thicker in these wild than our domestic animals, is melted down and mixed, in a boiling state with the pounded meat, in equal proportions: it is then put in baskets or bags for the convenience of carrying it. Thus it becomes a nutritious food, and is eaten, without any further preparation, or the addition of spice, salt, or any vegetable or farinaceous substance.

A little time reconciles it to the palate. There is another sort made with the addition of marrow and dried berries, which is of a superior quality.¹⁴

The men would not hunt. Probably they did not know how. Certainly none of them had ever before felt such cold as this--cold that left the naked hand sticking to any metal that it touched, that filled the air with frost fog and mock suns, that set the wet ship's timbers crackling every night like musket shots, that left a lining of hoar-frost and snow on the under side of the berth-beds, that burst the great pines and fir trees ashore in loud nightly explosions, and set the air whipping in lights of unearthly splendour that passed them moving and rustling in curtains of blood and fire. As anyone who has lived in the region knows, the cowardly incompetents should have been up and out hunting and wresting from nature the one means of protection against northern cold--fur clothing.¹⁵

That is the one demand the North makes of man--that he shall fight and strive for mastery; but these whimpering weaklings, convulsed with the poison of self-pity, sat inside shivering over the little pans and braziers of coal, cursing and cursing Hudson.¹⁶

Are ye looking at my wolverenes?" said he. "There's good men among them, and some that ain't so good, and many that's worse. But railroading is good enough for most of 'em. It ain't too rich for any man's blood, I assure ye.¹⁷

Whenever a haul is made the fish are split down the back and cleaned. Then they are washed, rolled in salt, and packed in the barrels. Three days later, when the bodies of the fish have thoroughly purged themselves, they are taken out, washed again, and are once more rolled in fresh salt and put back in the barrels, which are then filled to the top with water. The Indians subsist all winter upon this October catch, and, in addition, manage to exchange a few barrels for other provisions and for clothing. They demand an equivalent of six dollars a barrel in whatever they get in exchange, but do not sell for money, because, as I understand it, they are not obliged to pay the provincial license fee as fishermen, and therefore may not fish for the market. Even sportsmen who throw a fly for one day in the Nepigon country must pay the Government for the privilege. The Indians told me that eight barrels of these fish will last a family of six persons an entire winter. Such a demonstration of prudence and fore-thought as this, of a month's fishing at the threshold of winter, amounts to is a rare one for an Indian to make, and I imagine there is a strong admixture of white blood in most of those who make it. The full-bloods will not take the trouble. They trust to their guns and their traps against the coming of that wolf which they are not unused to facing.¹⁸

From the very first it had been customary among the English employees, and is yet for that matter, to take what was called a "country wife" from among the tribes around the fort, and when the trader left the country he always made provision for the support of his "country wife" and the invariably numerous family. These marriages between the whites and the natives were so common and so fruitful that sometimes in later years the entire summer population around the fort could with difficulty show a single full-blood Indian, and some entire tribes at present can show no single individual of pure descent.¹⁹

A brave man's blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble. The devil may work against us for all he's worth, but God sends us men when we want them.²⁰

The voyageurs were a hardy class of men, trained from boyhood to the use of the paddle. Many of them were Iroquois Indians--pure or with an admixture of white blood. But the French Canadians, too, became noted for their expert management of the canoe. Like all sailors, the voyageurs felt the day of their departure a day of fate. Very often they sought to drown their sorrows in the flowing bowl, and it was the trick of the commander to prevent this by keeping the exact time of the departure a secret, filling up the time of the voyageurs with plenty to do and leaving on very short notice. However, as the cargo was well-nigh shipped, wives, daughters, children, and sweethearts too, of the departing canoe men began to linger about the docks, and so were ready to bid their sad farewells.²¹

It is to be observed, that it is impossible to pass the vast Forests between the Countries of the Five Nations with Waggons, or other Carriages, or on Horseback, or even on Foot, in the summer Time, by Reason of many impassible thick Swamps and Morasses. For this Reason, the only Method of travelling is in Bark Canoes, or very light Battoes, along the Rivers, which may be easily carried on Men's Shoulders, where the Stream of the River becomes too rapid, and from one River to another; for which Purpose the shortest Passes are always chosen, and are called, for this Reason, Carrying Places.²²

When I got in the vessel the Voyageur had not taken his seat, and I saw him talking with the landlady. They were evidently talking of me, for every now and then they looked at me, and some of the people who were sitting on the shore--which they call by a name meaning "word-bearer"--came and listened, and then looked at me, most of them pityingly.²³

All day long we seemed to dawdle through a country which was full of beauty of every kind. Sometimes we ran by rivers and streams which seemed from the wide stony margin on each side of them to be subject to great floods. It takes a lot of water, and running strong, to sweep the outside edge of a river clear. Being practically on the frontier, it has had a very stormy existence, and it certainly shows marks of it.²⁴

We started at seven, A.M., the travelling very heavy in the woods. About noon we came upon a large lake, where we made better speed. Thirteen miles.²⁵

There were dark, rolling clouds overhead, and in the air the heavy, oppressive sense of thunder. It seemed as though the mountain range had separated two atmospheres, and that now we had got into the thunderous one. I was now myself looking out for the conveyance which was to take me to the Count. Each moment I expected to see the glare of lamps through the blackness; but all was dark.²⁶

Started at five, A.M. Our route in the morning led us through a chain of small lakes, and brought us out again on Whale River, on which we travelled till four, P.M. The appearance of the country much the same as described yesterday. Proceeded eighteen miles.²⁷

We travelled slowly at first, but gradually gaining impetus, the scow was soon tossing in the boiling waters, travelling with the speed of an express train. It trembled from stem to stern with the shock of the waves. There was an exhilarating sensation with an element of danger in it.²⁸

The Voyageur was a tall man, with a long brown beard and a great black hat, which seemed to hide his face from us. I could only see the gleam of a pair of very bright eyes, which seemed red in the lamplight, as he turned to us.²⁹

The whole route, with its rapids, whirlpools, and deceptive currents, came to be surrounded, especially in superstitious minds, with an air of dangerous mystery. A traveller tells us that a prominent fur trader pointed out to him the very spot where his father had been swept under the eddy and drowned. The camp-fire stories were largely the accounts of disasters and accidents on the long and dangerous way. As such a story was told on the edge of a shadowy forest the voyageurs were filled with dread.

The story of the Wendigo was an alarming one. No crew would push on after the sun was set, lest they should see this apparition.³⁰

Their conversation doubtless turned on the prospects of the season and the price of 'castors'; on the hardships of forest and lake, interspersed not infrequently with spicy anecdotes about their hardy factors and voyageurs, with now and then a sly and illuminating wink that recalled some beautiful Pocahontas met in their dreams or travels; for we have ample evidence that there was no Joseph among these puissant lords of the forests. Some made the hours slip rapidly away with Scotch story and Jacobite song, intermingled with those imperishable favorites '*La clair fontaine*' and '*En roulant ma boule*.'³¹

About 8 o'clock, however, things changed for the worse. The thermometer dropped and it began to blow and snow. It snowed more or less all night, and having no blankets or overcoat with me, I was employed the best part of the night in keeping the fire burning.³²

I felt a strange chill, and a lonely feeling came over me; but a cloak was thrown over my shoulders, and a rug across my knees, and the Voyageur said:

"The night is chill, and my master the Count bade me take all care of you."³³

I soon lost sight and recollection of ghostly fears in the beauty of the scene as we drove along, although had I known the language, or rather languages, which my fellow-passengers were speaking, I might not have been able to throw them off so easily. Before us lay a green sloping land full of forests and woods, with here and there steep hills, crowned with clumps of trees. There was everywhere a bewildering mass of fruit blossom--apple, plum, pear, cherry; and as we drove by I could see the green grass under the trees spangled with the fallen petals.

As we wound on our endless way, and the sun sank lower and lower behind us, the shadows of the evening began to creep round us. This was emphasised by the fact that the snowy mountain-top still held the sunset, and seemed to glow out with a delicate cool pink.³⁴

Travelled through woods the whole day. Encamped at half-past three. Eighteen miles.³⁵

Soon we were hemmed in with trees, which in places arched right over the path till we passed as through a tunnel; and again great frowning rocks guarded us boldly on either side. We could hear the rising wind, for it moaned and whistled through the rocks, and the branches of the trees crashed together as we swept along. It grew colder and colder still, and fine, powdery snow began to fall, so that soon we and all around us were covered with a white blanket. The keen wind still carried the howling of the dogs, though this grew fainter as we went on our way. The baying of the wolves sounded nearer and nearer, as though they were closing round on us from every side. I grew dreadfully afraid. The Voyageur, however, was not in the least disturbed; he kept turning his head to left and right, but I could not see anything through the darkness.³⁶

Took our departure at seven, A.M. Travelled without halting the whole day. Eighteen miles.³⁷

The time seemed interminable as we swept on our way, now in almost complete darkness, for the rolling clouds obscured the moon. Suddenly, I became conscious of the fact that the *Voyageur* was in the act of pulling up to the shore of a vast fort, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the moonlit sky.³⁸

I must have been asleep, for certainly if I had been fully awake I must have noticed the approach of such a remarkable place. In the gloom the courtyard looked of considerable size, and as several dark ways led from it under great round arches, it perhaps seemed bigger than it really is. I have not yet been able to see it by daylight.³⁹ Originally known as Barracks Hill, the site was chosen for its commanding location, its fine uninterrupted views of the region, and for its three decades of occupation by a military garrison and the Royal Engineers. The building complex was dramatically sited on the hill and construction began in 1859. The original buildings were examples of Ruskinian picturesque High Victorian Gothic architecture, designed by two architectural partnerships.⁴⁰

When the vessel stopped, the Voyageur held out his hand to assist me. Then he took out my traps, and placed them on the ground beside me as I stood close to a great door, old and studded with large iron nails, and set in a projecting doorway of massive stone.⁴¹

Within, stood a tall man, five feet eleven, black shaggy hair, clean shaven, liberal mouth, clear eye, big cravat, grey trousers, gay vest, black frockcoat.⁴² He held in his hand an antique silver lamp, in which the flame burned without chimney or globe of any kind, throwing long quivering shadows as it flickered in the draught of the open door.⁴³

The chief thing about him was his nose. I think I could draw a picture of that nose, although I lay no claim to being an artist; it was the centre and almost the circumference of his face. His eyes were penetrating and twinkling, his mouth generous, his face sallow and wrinkled with strange lines playing over that countenance as much as to say, " I like you all, I have kindly feelings toward you all, and yet I do not care a straw what you think of me."⁴⁴

"Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!" He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed as cold as ice--more like the hand of a dead than a living man.⁴⁵

Part 2 - Beyond

I only slept a few hours when I went to bed, and feeling that I could not sleep any more, got up. I had hung my shaving glass by the window, and was just beginning to shave. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count's voice saying to me, "Good-morning." I started, for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the glass covered the whole room behind me. In starting I had cut myself slightly, but did not notice it at the moment. Having answered the Count's salutation, I turned to the glass again to see how I had been mistaken. This time there could be no error, for the man was close to me, and I could see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself. This was startling, and, coming on the top of so many strange things, was beginning to increase that vague feeling of uneasiness which I always have when the Count is near; but at the instant I saw that the cut had bled a little, and the blood was trickling over my chin. I laid down the razor, turning as I did so half round to look for some sticking plaster. When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat. I drew away. It made an instant change in him, for the fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there.⁴⁶ He was very soon drunk. He was sick in consequence, and remained in a state of stupor for two days.⁴⁷

The Count may have many houses which he has bought. Of them he will have deeds of purchase, keys and other things. He will have paper that he write on; he will have his book of cheques. There are many belongings that he must have somewhere; why not in this place so central, so quiet, where he come and go by the front or the back at all hour, when in the very vast of the traffic there is none to notice.⁴⁸

The principal business of the Company in the early days was, of course, the purchasing of furs from the Indians, in exchange for arms, ammunition, clothes and other commodities imported from the United Kingdom. Naturally, therefore, the prosperity of the Company depended largely upon good relations being maintained with the Indians. The white man trusted the Indians, and the Indians trusted the white man. This mutual confidence, and the friendly relations which were the result, made the transfer of the territory to Canada comparatively easy when the time for the surrender came.⁴⁹

The Count held up his arms. "Is it a wonder that we were a conquering race; that we were proud; who more gladly than we throughout the Four Nations received the 'bloody sword,' or at its warlike call flocked quicker to the standard of the King?"

The Count saw his victory in my bow, and his mastery in the trouble of my face, for he began at once to use them, but in his own smooth, resistless way.⁵⁰

Whenever he spoke of his house he always said "we," and spoke almost in the plural, like a king speaking. I wish I could put down all he said exactly as he said it, for to me it was most fascinating. It seemed to have in it a whole history of the country.⁵¹

The half-breed has developed with the age and growth of Canada. There are now half-breeds and half-breeds, and some of them are titled, and others hold high official places. It occurred to an English lord not long ago, while he was being entertained in a Government house in one of the parts of newer Canada, to inquire of his host, "What are these half-breeds I hear about? I should like to see what one looks like." His host took the nobleman's breath away by his reply. "I am one," said he.

There is no one who has travelled much in western Canada who has not now and then been entertained in homes where either the man or woman of the household was of mixed blood, and in such homes I have found a high degree of refinement and the most polished manners. Usually one needs the information that such persons possess such blood. After that the peculiar black hair and certain facial features in the subject of such gossip attest the truthfulness of the assertion. There is no rule for measuring the character and quality of this plastic, receptive, and often very ambitious element in Canadian society, yet one may say broadly that the social position and attainments of these people have been greatly influenced by the nationality of their fathers. For instance, the French *habitants* and woodsmen far, far too often sank to the level of their wives when they married Indian women. Light-hearted, careless, unambitious, and drifting to the wilderness because of the absence of restraint there; illiterate, of coarse origin, fond of whiskey and gambling--they threw off superiority to the Indian, and evaded responsibility and concern in home management. Of course this is not a rule, but a tendency. On the other hand, the Scotch and English forced their wives up to their own standards. Their own home training,

respect for more than the forms of religion, their love of home and of a permanent patch of ground of their own--all these had their effect, and that has been to rear half-breed children in proud and comfortable homes, to send them to mix with the children of cultivated persons in old communities, and to fit them with pride and ambition and cultivation for an equal start in the journey of life. Possessing such foundation for it, the equality has happily never been denied to them in Canada.⁵²

And as he spoke he took his knife and drove it savagely into space. Then he went on:⁵³

If I may be allowed to quote Kipling (with slight alteration) to illustrate the inseparable connection between the history of the growth of the Hudson's Bay Company and Canada as a nation, I would say,

God took care to hide that country
Till he judged his people ready,
Then He chose you for his whisper,
And you've found it, and it is ours.

It is sentiments like this from people who have been customers of the Company for years that should spur us to honour the great name that our Company has earned during its tenure of serving the people of Canada and make us the more proud to be servants of this great institution.⁵⁴

I found the Count lying on the sofa, reading. When I came in he cleared the books and papers from the table; and with him I went into plans and deeds and figures of all sorts. He was interested in everything, and asked me a myriad questions about the place and its surroundings. He clearly had studied beforehand all he could get on the subject of the country, for he evidently at the end knew very much more than I did. When I remarked this, he answered:⁵⁵

"At all events, the Indians have been great sufferers by the discovery of America, and the transfer to it of a large white population."⁵⁶

Somewhere, looking out from the shadow, I seemed to see the high lights of the Count's evil face, the ridge of the nose, the red eyes, the red lips, the awful pallor.

The Count smiled, and as his lips ran back over his gums, the long, sharp, canine teeth showed out strangely; he answered:⁵⁷

"There are often times when I do things that are against my conscience," he said, "but if I do not make certain allowances for the weakness of human nature, my party would turn me out of power, and those who took my place would manage things worse than I."⁵⁸

The monopoly could hardly have been made more sweeping. If the adventurers found other territory westward, such territory was to be theirs. Other traders were forbidden to encroach on the region. People were forbidden to inhabit the countries without the consent of the Company. The Company was empowered to make war for the benefit of trade. The charter meant, in a word, the establishment of pure feudalism over a vast region in America. But in the light of the Company's record it may be questioned whether feudalism was not, after all, the best system for dealing with the Indian races. Under the Company's rule the Indians were peaceable; while in other parts of America, under a system the opposite of feudalism--the come-who-may-and-take-who-can policy of the United States--every step forward taken by the white race was marked by 'bloody ground.'⁵⁹

Everything had been carefully thought out, and done systematically and with precision. He seemed to have been prepared for every obstacle which might be placed by accident in the way of his intentions being carried out.⁶⁰

It gave me almost a turn to see again one of the letters which I had seen on the Count's table before I knew of his diabolical plans:⁶¹

Sir, We are looking anxiously for your report as to Indian titles both within Manitoba and without; and as to the best means of extinguishing the Indian titles in the valley of Saskatchewan. Would you kindly give us your views on that point, officially and unofficially? We should take immediate steps to extinguish the Indian titles somewhere in the Fertile Belt in the valley of Saskatchewan, and open it for settlement. There will otherwise be an influx of squatters who will seize upon the most eligible positions and greatly disturb the symmetry of future surveys.⁶²

When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents, who are savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly impressed upon myself, as head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.⁶³

It is worthy of consideration whether legislative measures should not be adopted for the establishment of some kind of municipal system among such bands as are found sufficiently advanced to justify the experiment being tried. It is hoped that a system may be adopted which will have the effect of accustoming the Indians to the modes of government prevalent in the white communities surrounding them, and that it will thus tend to prepare them for earlier amalgamation with the general population of the country.⁶⁴

*We have been pampering and coaxing the Indians; that we must take a new course, we must vindicate the position of the white man, we must teach the Indians what law is; we must not pauperise them, as they say we have been doing.*⁶⁵

We have done all we could to put them on themselves; we have done all we could to make them work as agriculturists; we have done all we could, by the supply of cattle, agricultural implements and instruction, to change them from a nomadic to an agricultural life. We have had very considerable success; we have had infinitely more success during our short period, than the United States have had during twenty-five years. We have had a wonderful success; but still we have had the Indians; and then in these half-breeds, enticed by white men, the savage instinct was awakened; the desire of plunder -- aye, and, perhaps, the desire of scalping -- the savage idea of a warlike glory, which pervades the breast of most men, civilised or uncivilised, was aroused in them, and forgetting all the kindness that had been bestowed upon them, forgetting all the gifts that had been given to them, forgetting all that the Government, the white people and the Parliament of Canada had been doing for them, in trying to rescue them from barbarity; forgetting that we had given them reserves, the means to cultivate those reserves, and the means of education how to cultivate them -- forgetting all these things, they rose against us.⁶⁶

We acquired the North-West country in 1870. Not a life was lost, not a blow was struck, not a pound nor a dollar was spent in warfare, in that long period that has since intervened. I have not hesitated to tell this House, again and again, that we could not always hope to maintain peace with the Indians; that the savage was still a savage, and that until he ceased to be savage, we were always in danger of a collision, in danger of war, in danger of an outbreak. I am only surprised that we have been able so long to maintain peace -- that from 1870 until 1885 not one single blow, not one single murder, not one single loss of life, has taken place.⁶⁷

*The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.*⁶⁸

The third clause provides that celebrating the “Potlatch” is a misdemeanour. This Indian festival is debauchery of the worst kind, and the departmental officers and all clergymen unite in affirming that it is absolutely necessary to put this practice down.⁶⁹

It is readily acknowledged that Indian children lose their natural resistance to illness by habitating so closely in these schools, and that they die at a much higher rate than in their villages. But this alone does not justify a change in the policy of this Department, which is being geared towards the final solution of our Indian Problem.⁷⁰

It has always been clear to me that the Indians must have some sort of recreation, and if our agents would endeavour to substitute reasonable amusements for this senseless drumming and dancing, it would be a great assistance.⁷¹

The Government will in time reach the end of its responsibility as the Indians progress into civilization and finally disappear as a separate and distinct people, not by race extinction but by gradual assimilation with their fellow-citizens.⁷²

His eyes caught the look in mine, and, without his thinking, followed their direction. As they saw the parcel he realised my meaning:

'And so you, like the others, would play your brains against mine. You would help these men to hunt me and frustrate me in my designs! You know now, and they know in part already, and will know in full before long, what it is to cross my path. They should have kept their energies for use closer to home. Whilst they played wits against me--against me who commanded nations, and intrigued for them, and fought for them, hundreds of years before they were born--I was countermining them.⁷³ There may be obstructions, local differences may intervene, but it matters not — the wheel is now revolving, and we are only the fly on the wheel, we cannot delay it. The union of the colonies of British America under one sovereign is a fixed fact.⁷⁴

And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my bountiful wine-press for a while; and shall be later on my companion and my helper. You shall be avenged in turn; for not one of them but shall minister to your needs. But as yet you are to be punished for what you have done. You have aided in thwarting me; now you shall come to my call. When my brain says "Come!" to you, you shall cross land or sea to do my bidding; and to that end this!" With that he pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nails opened a vein in his breast.⁷⁵

When a couple of hours had passed I heard something stirring in the Count's room, something like a sharp wail quickly suppressed; and then there was silence, deep, awful silence, which chilled me. With a beating heart, I tried the door; but I was locked in my prison, and could do nothing. I sat down and simply cried.⁷⁶

Somewhere high overhead, probably on the tower, I heard the voice of the Count calling in his harsh, metallic whisper. His call seemed to be answered from far and wide by the howling of wolves. Before many minutes had passed a pack of them poured, like a pent-up dam when liberated, through the wide entrance into the courtyard.⁷⁷

Some natives approached from up the river, a man and a woman. They were not attired like the others, but wore long robes of dressed deer-skin, with leggings and moccasins.⁷⁸

There was no cry from the woman, and the howling of the wolves was but short. Before long they streamed away singly, licking their lips.

I could not pity her, for I knew now what had become of the man, and she was better dead.

What shall I do? what can I do? How can I escape from this dreadful thing of night and gloom and fear?⁷⁹

I have not yet seen the Count in the daylight. Can it be that he sleeps when others wake, that he may be awake whilst they sleep? If I could only get into his room! But there is no possible way. The door is always locked, no way for me.

Yes, there is a way, if one dares to take it.⁸⁰

At last I felt that subtle change in the air, and knew that the morning had come. Then came the welcome cock-crow, and I felt that I was safe. With a glad heart, I opened my door and ran down to the hall. I had seen that the door was unlocked, and now escape was before me. With hands that trembled with eagerness, I unhooked the chains and drew back the massive bolts.⁸¹

At one corner of the room was a heavy door. I tried it, for, since I could not find the key of the room or the key of the outer door, which was the main object of my search, I must make further examination, or all my efforts would be in vain. It was open, and led through a stone passage to a circular stairway, which went steeply down. I descended.⁸²

The great box was in the same place, close against the wall, but the lid was laid on it, not fastened down, but with the nails ready in their places to be hammered home. I knew I must reach the body for the key, so I raised the lid, and laid it back against the wall; and then I saw something which filled my very soul with horror. There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. Even the deep, burning eyes seemed set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated. It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood. He lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. I shuddered as I bent over to touch him, and every sense in me revolted at the contact; but I had to search, or I was lost.

There was a mocking smile on the bloated face which seemed to drive me mad. This was the being I was helping, who, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst Canada's teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless.⁸³

In a voice which, though low and almost in a whisper seemed to cut through the air and then ring round the room he said: "Why, there is hardly a foot of soil in all this region that has not been enriched by the blood of men, patriots or invaders."⁸⁴

His eyes flamed red with devilish passion; the great nostrils of the white aquiline nose opened wide and quivered at the edge; and the white sharp teeth, behind the full lips of the blood-dripping mouth, champed together like those of a wild beast. With a wrench, he turned and sprang at me.⁸⁵

These may be the last words I ever write in this diary. I slept till just before the dawn, and when I woke threw myself on my knees, for I determined that if Death came he should find me ready.⁸⁶

The Count stood up, and said, with a sweet courtesy which made me rub my eyes, it seemed so real:

"To-morrow, my friend, we must part. You return to your beautiful England, I to some work which may have such an end that we may never meet. Your letter home has been despatched; to-morrow I shall not be here, but all shall be ready for your journey."

I remained for a long time with my eyes fixed in the direction of that land which I no longer saw, and almost despaired of ever seeing again; I made serious reflections on the nature and consequences of the enterprise in which I had so rashly embarked; and I confess that if at that moment the offer had been made to release me from my engagement, I should have accepted the proposal with all my heart.⁸⁷

As the door began to open, the howling of the wolves without grew louder and angrier; their red jaws, with champing teeth, and their blunt-clawed feet as they leaped, came in through the opening door. I knew then that to struggle at the moment against the Count was useless. With such allies as these at his command, I could do nothing. But still the door continued slowly to open, and only the Count's body stood in the gap. Suddenly it struck me that this might be the moment and means of my doom; I was to be given to the wolves, and at my own instigation.⁸⁸

I attempted the dangerous passage; and had proceeded about halfway, when my foot slipped, and I suddenly found myself resting with one hip on the border of ice, while the rest of my body overhung the rapid rushing fearfully underneath. I was now literally in a state of agonizing suspense: to regain my footing was impossible; even the attempt to move might precipitate me into the rapid. My first thought indeed was to throw myself in, and endeavour by swimming to reach the solid ice that bridged the river a short distance below; a glance at the torrent convinced me that this was a measure too desperate to be attempted;--I should have been dashed against the ice, or hurried beneath it by the current. But my time was not yet come. Within a few feet of the spot where I was thus suspended *in sublimis*, the rock projected a little outward, so as to break the force of the current. It struck me that a new border of ice might be formed at this place, under and parallel to that on which I was perched; exploring cautiously, therefore, with a stick which I fortunately had in my hand, all along and beneath me, I found my conjecture well founded; but whether the ice were strong enough to bear me, I could not ascertain. But it was my only hope of deliverance; letting myself down therefore gently, I planted my feet on the lower ledge, and clinging with the tenacity of a shell-fish to the upper, I crept slowly along till I reached land.⁸⁹

The Fort now stood out against the red sky, and every stone of its broken battlements was articulated against the light of the setting sun.⁹⁰

The sun was almost down on the mountain tops, and the shadows of the whole group fell long upon the snow. I saw the Count. He was deathly pale, just like a waxen image, and the red eyes glared with the horrible vindictive look which I knew too well.⁹¹

I suddenly broke through the ice. The current here running strong, I should soon have been swept under the ice, had I not, by extending my arms upon it on either side of me, kept my head above water.⁹²

As I looked, the eyes saw the sinking sun, and the look of hate in them turned to triumph.⁹³

Part 3 - Thereafter

"Dear Madam,--

"I write by desire of Mr. Jonathan Harker, who is himself not strong enough to write, though progressing well, thanks to God and St. Joseph and Ste. Mary. He has been under our care for nearly six weeks, suffering from a violent brain fever.⁹⁴ We found him near at the verge of the woods. I was sent in a boat and arrived at the fire. It was our gentlemen who had kindled it, to restore animation to the poor man, whom they had at last found under the rocks, half dead with cold and fatigue, his legs swollen and his feet bleeding. We clothed him, and brought him on board, where, by our care, we succeeded in restoring him to life.⁹⁵ The amputation was successfully carried out next day, and shortly after, he appeared to be in a hopeless state, refusing sustenance of any kind, and became delirious. This was the crisis of the malady; for he soon began to take some food, and recovered strength daily.⁹⁶

He wishes me to convey his love, that he is sorry for his delay, and that all of his work is completed. He will require some few weeks' rest in our fort in the hills, but will then return. He wishes me to say that he has not sufficient money with him.

"Yours, with sympathy and all blessings,

"SISTER AGATHA.⁹⁷

Sixty-five men on horses, and with some carts, were sent by, the Northwest Company, up the river towards the Fort. They included six Canadians, four Indians, and fifty-four half-breeds. It was afterwards said they went on innocent business, but every man was armed, and the "breeds" were naked, and painted all over to look like Indians. They got their paint of the Northwest officers. Moreover, there had been rumors that the colonists were to be driven away, and that "the land was to be drenched with blood."⁹⁸

The news of the brutal massacre was received with mixed feelings. Some blusteringly referred to it as the glorious news from the North, but the more thoughtful were greatly agitated. They foresaw the possible consequences with dread and apprehension. The immediate effect of the tragedy was the startled recoil of the principals. Later it was discovered that both the Club and the Northwest Company had received mortal wounds. The Company remained supreme, and into its vitiated blood was poured the exuberant energy and somewhat overbold hardihood of the bellicose Nor'-Westers.⁹⁹

The events had drawn closer the bonds which connected Great Britain with the Canadas. The blood of the sons of Canada had flowed mingled with that of the brave soldiers sent for its defence, when reinforcements were afterwards received.¹⁰⁰ The vampire live on, and cannot die by mere passing of the time; he can flourish when that he can fatten on the blood of the living. Even more, we have seen amongst us that he can even grow younger; that his vital faculties grow strenuous, and seem as though they refresh themselves when his special pabulum is plenty. He eat not as others.¹⁰¹

My friends, this is much; it is a terrible task that we undertake, and there may be consequence to make the brave shudder. For if we fail in this our fight he must surely win; and then where end we?¹⁰²

Why did he do it? Primarily because his national dream was a European settler dream — it was not an aboriginal dream.¹⁰³

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, and immigrated to Kingston, Upper Canada, in 1820, he played a leading role in the effort to achieve a federal union of Britain's North American colonies.¹⁰⁴ If it be so, then was he no common man; for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and the most cunning, as well as the bravest of the sons of the 'land beyond the forest.' That mighty brain and that iron resolution went with him to his grave, and are even now arrayed against us.¹⁰⁵

Within a short time will be celebrated the centenary of the birth of the great statesman who, half a century ago, laid the foundations and, for almost twenty years, guided the destinies of the Dominion of Canada.¹⁰⁶

He built a particular type of country, one which in 1867 took over control of aboriginal affairs from the British crown. Henceforth the partnership ideal between political communities was swept aside in favour of a wardship or “guardianship” relation which stripped aboriginal peoples of their political rights, granted them some civil rights but effectively set the institutional conditions by which many live today.¹⁰⁷

Canadians are lazily using the country's founder as a "scapegoat" for the sins of the past.¹⁰⁸

“While [he] did make mistakes, so did Canadians, collectively,”¹⁰⁹

He was a Canadian, struggling with the diversities and jealousies of far scattered people.

With him it is true Canada was first.¹¹⁰

What a very great man he was. He was wise, flexible, tolerant — but determined — and among the men who made Canada he must take pride of place.¹¹¹

He has been able to transmit his mature vision for this country to all Canadian leaders who have followed him, regardless of their party.¹¹²

His true and deep Canadianism was to him “a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.”¹¹³

It was his vision that brought Upper and Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick together in 1867 to form our Confederation. Later, he brought PEI, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories into the Canadian family. He was revered for his ability to balance English and French rights.¹¹⁴ He had a great heart, as big a heart as ever beat within a human breast. He was always thoughtful of the feelings of the other fellow.

He was born a leader; he had that peculiar quality which we call magnetism, which I suppose is another word for love.¹¹⁵

The canoe grates away from the shore, the voices subside, the Indian steps silently into the stern, the steady sweep of the paddle begins--we leave with sober melancholy, and ever and always we breathe a fervid prayer that at least while we live it will be possible to launch the canoe upon the impetuous streams that wash the domain where the "lords of the wintry lakes and boundless forests" once held imperious sway, and when current and paddle bear us swiftly away that our lingering backward glance may rest upon the fort and behold at the top of the tall staff the slowly heaving folds of the blood-red banner of the HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.¹¹⁶

I think I must have fallen asleep and kept dreaming of the incident, for it seemed to be repeated endlessly, and now looking back, it is like a sort of awful nightmare. It was almost impossible to believe that the things which we had seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears were living truths.

Every trace of all that had been was blotted out.¹¹⁷

Process

The Land beyond the Forest is constructed almost entirely from the original text of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and a number of public domain texts about Canada's fur trade which I found on Project Gutenberg. My goal with this text was to take the vampiric figure of Stoker's text and his mission of invading Europe and conflate him with that of John A. Macdonald and his goals of confederation and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

I began by importing all of my texts into Ulysses, a specialized word processor for Mac. I then searched for broad terms, such as "blood," "fort," "nation," and several others, and compiled the passages I found in to their own documents. I printed these compilations out, cut them up, and began arranging them into a narrative. In order to smooth this narrative, I searched for additional terms while working on the next draft, such as "escape," "fight," and "travel," in order to find sequences of strife or movement to blend my more thematic sections together. At times, but only very rarely, I edited the source texts. I did this most frequently during Harker's journey to the Count's fort, where I changed the "Driver" from *Dracula* into the "Voyageur." The only texts referenced here that are not in the public domain are most often news articles containing direct quotes from John A. Macdonald or voicing varied opinions about him.

While it is not news to most Canadians that John A. Macdonald was determined to assimilate Indigenous peoples, and that our government continued and continues to marginalize Indigenous peoples and ignore their needs, it is my hope that this text can continue to trouble our narratives of progress, nationhood, and the idea that reconciliation is anywhere near complete.

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