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Feel It in Your Bones

The Difference Indigenous Studies Makes

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Empire, Colonialism, and the Human Sciences is a timely, impressive, and generative contribution for thinking about the politics of historical scientific engagement and especially its intimate entanglement with coloniality, power, indigeneity, race, and gender. Reading these chapters, and especially my affective engagement with them, brought up a lot. In this short epilogue, however, I want to focus on three main themes: (1) the encounter with Indigenous Studies; (2) the importance of engaging with Native ideas of affect – what Dian Million calls "felt theory"; and (3) the significance of thinking with haunting and ghosts as central to reimagining the history of science in the Americas.

Some of the central questions that emerged for me as I read echo the questions and concerns many of the authors directly address in their contributions to this book. To begin where the book ends, that is, in the spirit of "productive discomfort," I offer some thoughts about what an encounter with Indigenous Studies might, or maybe even should, produce. To phrase it perhaps a little provocatively, if the "human sciences" are to engage meaningfully with Indigenous Studies – with theorists from the Native North and Native South – then I would suggest that that engagement must be transformative, not just additive. To be clear, I think many of the contributions here do reflect this move toward transformation. To give an example of what I mean, we can consider the work of K'iche' Maya scholar Emil' Keme who is cited in the introduction. In his influential essay, "For Abiayala to Live, the Americas Must Die," he calls for a reconsideration of the geographies of knowledge we continue to work with.[1] He asks us to question the very category of Latin America and proposes a shift toward the concept of Abiayala for thinking otherwise and toward what he calls a transhemispheric Indigenous bridge. This raised questions for me about terminology, naming, and language. While contributors to this book do not use this terminology, I do think in many ways the book gestures toward the transhemispheric

[1] Emil Keme, "For Abiayala to Live, the Americas Must Die: Toward a Transhemispheric Indigeneity," *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 5, no. 1 (2018): 42–65.

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Indigenous bridge Keme is calling for in placing discussions of Indigenous Brazil, Paraguay, Peru, and Hawai'i (for example) into conversation. But perhaps there is a way to more explicitly engage with or address this call.

In other words, it is not enough to simply cite Native theorists. How does thinking with Native theorists, Native epistemologies and ontologies, radically transform the work we are doing? How does it shift the why, the audience, the approach or method used? How does it transform the way we think about knowledge production? About what counts as knowledge? Who is this for? Some chapters answer these questions more directly than others, but as a whole they encourage us to think along these lines.

Another question the book raises is about scholarly representation. Who is at the table? Who is inviting whom? What are the networks and processes that have already shaped who participates in this conversation? Let me be clear that I am not questioning the editorial decisions that led to inviting this group of unquestionably talented scholars. My point is about the broader workings of disciplinarity and academic boundaries that makes specific projects legible in specific ways.

I wondered too about the tensions inherent in placing Indigenous Studies and decolonial scholarship in the same frame without more fully unpacking both the possibilities and tensions that exist. In his conclusion, Stephen T. Casper mentions Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's critique of Aníbal Quijano's use of "decolonial" jargon. But Rivera Cusicanqui's critique went beyond that, and focused in particular on Walter Mignolo and other scholars of decoloniality for what she understands as extractive/imperial knowledge production. Here is one memorable quote: "Walter Mignolo and company have built a small empire within an empire, strategically appropriating the contributions of the subaltern studies school of India and the various Latin American variants of critical reflection on colonization and decolonization."[2] Moreover, she was concerned not only with neologisms but with structures of power. Let me quote Rivera Cusicanqui once more:

> Equipped with cultural and symbolic capital, thanks to the recognition and certification from the academic centers of the United States, this new structure of academic power is realized in practice through a network of guest lectureships and visiting professorships between universities and also through the flow – from the South to the North – of students of indigenous and African descent from Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador, who are responsible for providing theoretical support for racialized and exoticized multiculturalism in the academies. Therefore, instead of a "geopolitics of knowledge," I propose the task of undertaking a "political economy" of knowledge.[3]

[2] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: On Practices and Discourses of Decolonization* (Boston: Polity Press, 2020), 51.
[3] Ibid., 59–60.

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I think it is in these tensions and in explorations of the limits of this project that we might find some interesting possibilities. I really appreciated Casper's conclusion and the importance of productive discomfort. He writes: "I hope this self-reflection generates productive discomfort in the face of the question: how can we frame the history of the human sciences moving forward, knowing that we must?"

One of the opportunities this language offers – the language of discomfort as an embodied, affective response – is to engage with what Athabascan literary scholar and poet Dian Million famously called "felt theory." Million's work came forcefully to mind, for example, when I read Eve Buckley's chapter discussing the significance of emotion and affect in debates about overpopulation, hunger, and poverty between Brazilian geographer Josué de Castro and American conservationist William Vogt. But the discomfort that Casper describes is a kind of understanding that is fueled by a *decolonizing* desire, and I mean this very much following Million who wrote about a key part of decolonization. "To 'decolonize'," she writes, "means to understand as fully as possible the forms colonialism takes in our own times."[4] And I would add in our own lives. Naming the embodied responses our work provokes is not just self-flagellation but an indicator that signals the need for new forms of relationality and repair. Holly Barker, cultural anthropologist and curator for Oceanic & Asian Culture at the University of Washington's Burke Museum, once told some of our students during a visit to the Burke that she feels a "knot in her stomach" every time she sets foot in the building that houses Native artifacts and ancestors without Native permission. Yet, Barker used that discomfort to create a form of knowledge production she calls "research families," a form that has mentored an incredible number of Pacific Islander students and shown them how to use museum collections to reconnect with their own peoples, waters, and lands.

Like Barker's work, many of the contributions in this book model responses to this productive discomfort and some possible paths forward. In his chapter, "Subverting the Anthropometric Gaze," Adam Warren offers an explicit engagement with Indigenous methods, even or especially when they are *not* part of the work. I found in Warren's direct and honest discussion of his methodological choices and decisions, of the practical issues raised by considering how his research could or should shift through engagement with Indigenous methods, a model for seriously considering the possibilities and the limits of this kind of work, for thinking through the implications of designing research that is not situated within decolonial or Indigenous frameworks from the beginning, but also for what can change moving forward. For

[4] Dian Million, "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 55.

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example, his determination to translate his work into Quechua to share with communities for very specific political uses is inspiring and offers a concrete and important path forward.

Maile Arvin's chapter, "Replacing Native Hawaiian Kinship with Social Scientific Care," is also a beautiful gift. The care she begins with is a striking gesture of relationality and accountability, and a model for others working in this field. "Throughout this essay," she writes, "I do not use the real names of children who are named in archival records given I have not (at least not yet) been able to contact descendants or other kin who may have particular desires about sharing these stories." Her work reflects an elegant move away from damage-centered research, without ignoring the harm and brutality of what she terms the "settler colonial transinstitutionalization" of children in the territory of Hawai'i. Her chapter was particularly inspiring for me as I begin working with the archived testimonies of Indigenous survivors of the recent war in Peru.

Similarly, Rosanna Dent's engaging discussion of the history of genetics research in A'uwẽ communities in Brazil, underscores the importance of affect and relations in discussions about ethics and bureaucracy. She explores the various affective dynamics that have shaped the experience of researchers and the communities and peoples impacted by this research, as well as the bureaucratic regulation of research itself. And she insists on centering the agency of A'uwẽ *aldeias* as they work toward developing their own frameworks for regulating and overseeing research conducted in their communities. Dent's discussion of adoption and kinship in relation to research, and her emphasis on affective fields were particularly compelling. She describes the adoption of researchers by community members as an Indigenous strategy for "claiming" researchers, and thus asserting "a relationship of kinship by publicly announcing their chosen relationship to the researcher." This claim compels researchers to behave according to particular familial and community social norms, thus offering the A'uwẽ moral authority and a dimension of control over researchers' actions. And, she writes, in taking these relations seriously, in "working through the affective field of A'uwẽ regulations of research, we may open ourselves up to being changed." And quoting Kim TallBear, she continues: "A researcher who is willing to learn how to 'stand with' a community of subjects is willing to be altered, to revise her stakes in the knowledge to be produced." This is a central concern in Indigenous Studies, a concern that Dent takes seriously and tackles thoughtfully and with great care.

These and other contributors in this book invite serious, careful, detailed reflection on approaches that can transform the field in significant ways. But let me move to the next theme, which is the significance of thinking through and with haunting. As I read the chapters in this book, I kept returning to what thinking with ghosts might offer. In "A Glossary of Haunting," Eve Tuck and C. Ree write that haunting does not "hope for reconciliation. Haunting lies

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precisely in its refusal to stop . . . For ghosts, the haunting is the resolving, it is not what needs to be resolved."[5] In my own work in Peru on the afterlives of war, and more specifically on the impact of political violence on more-than-human life, I have found this an incredibly generative conceptual tool. In Peru – and in so many other places – we need ghosts to continue their work, to continue to haunt so that we may never forget, so that we may continue to work not toward any kind of false reconciliation, but rather toward altogether reimagining possible worlds. Perhaps, we can think about haunting as a kind of healing, or better, as a disruption, a call to wake up. We may even begin to think about haunting as a kind of anticolonial practice, especially if we think with and from Indigenous standpoints. As Tuck and Ree put it, haunting is a "relentless remembering and reminding" that "with some crimes of humanity – [such as] the violence of colonization – there is no putting to rest."[6] This, to me, also includes thinking about the disruption of relations, and the repairing of those relations, not only among humans, but also in relation to nonhuman kin. In my own work, I want to think about the many nonhuman ghosts that may also wander through Andean valleys and rivers. I wonder, do they too demand justice? Do they too ask to be remembered? How do they figure in these histories and politics? What are the nonhuman relations disrupted? And what are the ghastly memories embedded in lands, in rivers; what do glaciers remember and how do they respond?

I read and feel this book as an invitation to sit with and think with ghosts, to take them seriously. From haunted institutions in Hawai'i and Puerto Rico (Arvin and Ortiz Díaz), to the potential haunting of/by the ghosts of kidnapped Aché girls (Gil-Riaño) or of/by the Akimel O'odham people from Arizona – Carolyn Matthews' "human subjects of research" (Stark), to the afterlives of Cuauhtémoc's bones (Rosemblatt), and skulls as "uncanny objects," (Rodriguez), many of the contributors gesture to this and in various ways ask what it means to think of how the human sciences are haunted. However, it is worth slowing down to think with the many entities that haunt the entire book: bones, skulls, DNA samples, spirits. I hesitated to name these as human, nonhuman, or once-human, since the very category of the human (and "the living") seems to be one that is being interrogated by this project, and also by radical Black and Indigenous scholarly traditions.[7] Indeed, it might be worth

[5] Eve Tuck and C. Ree, "A Glossary of Haunting," in *Handbook of Autoethnography*, eds. Stacey Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis (Oakland, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013), 642.

[6] Ibid., 642, 648.

[7] Bénédicte Boisseron, *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Anti-Black World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020); Patty Krawec, *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future* (Pine Bush, NY: Broadleaf Books, 2022); Elizabeth Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to*

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complicating the human subject/nonhuman object distinction made a few times throughout the book. Taking Indigenous Studies, epistemologies, and ontologies seriously, means reframing and rethinking who or what is animate and inanimate, alive or dead. Bones are not things, they are ancestors who can be dangerous, restless, or at peace. If thinking with "the materiality of human remains expands the historian of science's toolkit" (Rodriguez, this book), that toolkit expands even further when we attend to what Rodriguez calls evocatively the "spiritual materiality" of bone, which I take to mean the ontological, epistemological, and metaphorical possibilities that come with thinking of bones as more-than-material. It is notable that in several Polynesian languages the word for bone is also the same word for people, tribe, or nation (e.g., Kanaka ʻŌiwi in Hawaiʻi; iwi for Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand). In the supernatural and historical Peruvian novella *Adios Ayacucho* by Julio Ortega, a tortured, murdered, and disappeared Andean campesino searches for his own remains.[8] He fails to find them and resorts to stealing the bones of the conquistador Francisco Pizarro and laying in his tomb to reassemble himself, metaphorically linking the violence of the late twentieth century with that of the sixteenth. Rosemblatt's discussion of the afterlives of Cuauhtémoc's bones could be placed in interesting conversation with Ortega's novella and its broader implications. This is not the place to add more flesh to these bones, but possibilities are many, and the essays here push us to think expansively.

Rodríguez's description of the "haunting effects" of bones also inspired me to think with photographs as haunted. In particular, the work of anthropologist Lisa Stevenson came to mind. In an essay titled "Looking Away," she draws on Roland Barthes and John Berger to describe the care that can be part of anthropological encounters and ethnographic writing. This kind of approach, she writes, "addresses how images – whether, photographic, painted, or written – may come to be seen as 'just'."[9] And she considers the possibility that "it might be necessary to *look away* from our interlocutors, or

Late Liberalism (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); Daniel Ruiz-Serna, *When Forests Run Amok: War and Its Afterlives in Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Territories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023); Kim TallBear, "Why Interspecies Thinking Needs Indigenous Standpoints," *Cultural Anthropology* (2011), https://culanth.org/fieldsights/why-interspecies-thinking-needs-indigenous-standpoints; Zoe Todd, "Fish, Kin, and Hope: Tending to Water Violations in Amiskwaciwaskahikan and Treaty Six Territory," *Afterall* 43, no. 1 (2017): 102–107; Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.

[8] Julio Ortega, *Adiós Ayacucho* (Lima: Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani and Fondo Editorial de la UNMSM, 2008).

[9] Lisa Stevenson, "Looking Away," *Cultural Anthropology* 35, no. 1 (2020): 12.

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the images we have of them, in order to be able to sense, and then communicate to others, their singularity. The traces they leave behind in our memories can allow us to register an aliveness that exceeds our existing labels, categories, and styles of thinking."[10] In other words, Stevenson calls for "looking away" from those we are trying to understand, in order to more fully "see." For her, "looking away" – from a photograph, a person, someone we are trying to represent – can be a form of "seeing with our eyes closed" that gestures to "the singularity of another being."[11] As she writes, this form of looking – or not looking – might "allow us to go beyond seeing someone as a specimen from a social category."[12]

Stevenson is writing about photographs she encounters in the archives of McMaster University's Health Sciences Library, photographs from the mid-1900s of Inuit patients in Canadian sanatoriums. She explores the idea of "looking away" as one form of refusing the "look" of the colonial gaze, refusing "categorical ways of looking" that reduce lively beings to specimens, ethnic categories, anthropological types. She is searching for an "un-stately, unseemly, un-fixative" way of looking; for a way to move "beyond the clinical label or social category [that] involves a play between seeing with our eyes and seeing with our soul."[13]

I find inspiration in Stevenson's invitation to look away to more fully "see" individual beings. Gil-Riaño's work in particular brought Stevenson to mind as I wondered what the photographs of some of the Aché girls he writes about would reveal if approaching them through and with Stevenson's framing. And yet, the privileged focus on sight raises important concerns about this approach. We must find ways to push beyond ableist language and framings that are so often part of scholarly discourses. Perhaps, then, we might read Stevenson in multi-sensorial conversation with Tina Campt's powerful work on "listening" to images. For Campt, "'listening to images' ... designates a method of recalibrating vernacular photographs as quiet, quotidian practices that give us access to the affective registers through which these images enunciate alternate accounts of their subjects."[14] "To listen to them," she writes, "is to be attuned to their unsayable truths, to perceive their quiet frequencies of possibility ..."[15] This last point, "to be attuned to their unsayable truths, to perceive their quiet frequencies of possibility," is what I think Stevenson is trying to do through her play with the language and practice of looking and seeing. It invites a move toward a multilayered affective

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 8.
[12] Ibid., 11.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 5.
[15] Ibid., 45.

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attunement to others, one that perhaps allows for a more complex relation to and with others, one that recognizes the emotional richness of their lives, as well as their multifaceted experiences of and in life. What would it mean for historians of science to think more explicitly with such an approach?

And to return once again to Dian Million, this kind of looking, not looking, and hearing is also a kind of feeling, a kind of "felt analysis." This work helps us take seriously the "structures of feeling" that were both part of the extractive and colonial mode of the human sciences that all the contributors describe so well, and also the new kind of structures of feeling that emerge once we center Indigenous Studies values like radical relationality, reciprocity, and accountability in the writing, teaching, and mentoring we do. I think that the conversations modeled in this book can help reveal how Indigenous Studies have transformed our work and can signal alternative ways forward.

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