Revelation as Reclamation: How Apocalypse Literature Promotes Indigenous Futurity.

Zoe Regnier

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By: Zoe Regnier

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Signed by the final examining committee:

______________________________ Chair
Dr. Stephen Yeager

______________________________ Examiner
Dr. Andre Furlani

______________________________ Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Stephen Yeager

Approved by ______________________________

Dr. Kevin Pask, Graduate Program Director.

April 2023 ______________________________

Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science

Abstract for Master's

Revelation as Reclamation: How Apocalypse Literature Promotes Indigenous Futurity.

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The apocalyptic genre presents a space to imagine alternatives to the governance of settler-colonialism, providing possibilities for Indigenous reclamations of land and culture. Apocalypse literature allows Indigenous writers to unveil mechanisms of settler-colonialism that dismantle attempts at Indigenous sovereignty. I will be situating Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow,* Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves,* and Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* to pre-existing thematics of the Christian apocalyptic tradition which these Indigenous authors simultaneously draw upon and dismantle by applying them to Indigenous contexts. I will be utilizing Bernard McGinn and Richard K. Emmerson's heuristic of the vertical (divine) and horizontal (historical) poles of apocalyptic modes of representation as a framework to demonstrate how these three novels work as apocalyptic texts and unveil aspects of settler-colonial modernity (Emmerson and McGinn 7). Apocalyptic literature unveils hidden secrets that deal with time and divinity that could unravel the fabric of society. Similarly, the Indigenous apocalyptic novels surveyed here move backwards through time to reveal hidden mechanisms of settler-colonial power that are used and reused to disregard Indigenous bodies, perspectives, and sovereignties. The dismantling of these mechanisms in the apocalyptic space allows for Indigenous characters to reclaim their connection with their cultures and territories.

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Introduction

In recent years, Indigenous authors have redefined and restructured genre literature to upend grand narratives of cultural decline and stereotypes of Indigeneity. Genres such as science-fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, and horror allow Indigenous writers the freedom to use the otherworldly to redefine what is 'real'. Daniel Heath Justice explains how genre fiction can undo the violence of the 'real' for marginalized communities and promote Indigenous futures:

> "At its best, speculative fiction offers a complementary and distinctive range of reading and interpretive strategies that can undo the violence of deficit models of "the real" and offer transformative visions of otherwise lives, experiences, and histories…There most certainly are Indigenous writers for whom the fantastic—in fantasy itself or its sister genres, horror and science fiction—offer as much (if not more) scope for addressing issues of decolonization and self-determination than realist fiction" (Justice "Indigenous Wonderworks…").

These conceptual spaces allow for Indigenous writers to navigate difficult histories and the possible futures in which their cultures are centered.

In this essay, I will focus on one trend in Indigenous genre literature, which is its deployment of apocalyptic themes and imagery. Specifically, I will argue that apocalyptic literature presents a space to imagine alternatives to the governance of settler-colonialism, providing possibilities for Indigenous reclamations of land and culture. Apocalypse literature allows Indigenous writers to unveil mechanisms of settler-colonialism that dismantle attempts at Indigenous sovereignty. I will be situating Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow,* Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves,* and Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* to pre-existing thematics of the Christian apocalyptic tradition which these Indigenous authors simultaneously draw upon and dismantle by applying them to Indigenous contexts. I

will be utilizing Bernard McGinn and Richard K. Emmerson's heuristic of the vertical (divine) and horizontal (historical) poles of apocalyptic modes of representation as a framework to demonstrate how these three novels work as apocalyptic texts (Emmerson and McGinn 7). Apocalyptic literature unveils hidden secrets that deal with time and divinity that could unravel the fabric of society. Similarly, the Indigenous apocalyptic novels surveyed here move backwards through time to reveal hidden mechanisms of settler-colonial power that are used and reused to disregard Indigenous bodies, perspectives, and their sovereignties. The dismantling of these mechanisms in the apocalyptic space allows Indigenous characters to reclaim their connection with their cultures and territories.

This unfolds differently in the three novels. In *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, Rice creates an apocalyptic setting in which the overreliance on settler technologies and conveniences is revealed to be deteriorating the Gaawaandagkoong First Nation's connection to Indigenous perspectives. The movement back in time within the novel is emphasized by the gradual loss of these modern necessities. By removing the settler-colonial presence and its technologies, Rice's fictive community can prioritize survival and regain aspects of their culture. Dimaline, meanwhile, moves backwards through time by recreating the residential school system in a distant post-apocalyptic scenario. The reuse of the residential school system reveals that settler-colonialism is a repetitive cycle in which Indigenous peoples and their cultures are erased. The children Dimaline uses as protagonists of her narrative are disconnected from their cultures and realize that their power stems from being able to reconnect to traditional language. Finally, Erdrich's apocalyptic design does away with evolution in its entirety to reveal how Indigenous connection to land is something that is beyond nostalgia. Prehistoric entities seep into the present while Erdrich's pregnant female protagonist deals with her connection to her Indigenous parents and culture, her foster family, and the fate of her future child. While this story focuses on the female protagonist struggling

with new forms of settler-colonial power, it is revealed that the Indigenous community around her learn to adapt to the ever-changing apocalypse and make plans to reclaim territory and maintain their culture regardless of the apocalyptic happenings around them.

Although these stories work differently, they imply that moving away from settler-colonial modernity or completely removing settler-colonial power encourages Indigenous people to progress beyond the limits of settler-colonialism and imagine futures that center their cultures and communities. The horizontal and vertical poles of the Christian apocalypse will be useful to frame how Indigenous apocalypse works within the conventions of apocalypse literature by having its revelations be both related to time (history and the course of time before the End) and to divinity (dealing with more abstract notions of God, spirituality, and the cosmos). While I use McGinn's Christian apocalypse framework to prove that these Indigenous novels work within a larger apocalyptic tradition, both styles of apocalyptic literature emerge from different histories. The novels I explore deeply connect to Indigenous frameworks and are unable to be read without the fraught history between settler-colonialism and Indigeneity. In the next section, I will explain how I define apocalypse and how Indigenous life is inherently post-apocalyptic to describe how these three novels use apocalyptic forms to unveil and dismantle mechanisms of settler-colonialism that threaten to eliminate Indigenous connections to land and culture.

Apocalypse, Post-Apocalyptic Life, and the Christian Tradition

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the modern definition of the term "apocalypse" is "the destruction of the world" and finds its roots from the Greek word *apokalupsis* which means to uncover or reveal ("Apocalypse")[1]. In his survey of medieval

[1] The destruction of the world could imply the destruction of the planet or physical world; however, it could also be read as the destruction of one's world or the destruction of a set of world views that conduct daily life and human interaction.

Christian apocalyptic literature, Bernard McGinn defines “apocalypse” as a “revelation” or “the revelation of a divine secret” (*Visions of the End* 3). Medieval Christian apocalypses differ greatly from apocalyptic imaginings of the twenty-first century because they do not necessarily entail Earthly destruction, a tradition which emerged after the popularity of the Book of Revelation at the end of the New Testament. Instead, this tradition includes religious prophecies and the revelation of divine secrets, usually from an angelic entity. Christian apocalypses and other religious apocalypses, according to McGinn, are generated within an “interplay between tradition and innovation that all religions, but especially those with a strong historical commitment, display” (*Visions of the End* 1). Similarly, Connor Pitetti establishes: “In many contemporary texts, cataclysmic events are used to give structure to the otherwise chaotic and incomprehensible experience of history…such narratives thus evoke ideas of a coherent process of historical development in which traumatic upheavals trigger transitions between distinct world-systems” (438). Pitetti and McGinn agree that apocalypse narratives are formed between the interplay of old and new and serve to make sense of or criticize changing worldviews. Whether they portray angels or zombies, apocalyptic imaginings emphasize a “dichotomized, developmental relationship” between two opposing worldviews in which one overtakes or emerges from the ashes of the other (Pitetti 441). Here, the defining characteristics that I apply broadly from the Christian apocalypse to contemporary Indigenous apocalypse are that apocalypses are end-of-world scenarios that juxtapose old and new systems of power (whether secular or spiritual) in order to unveil a “secret” that explains, criticizes, or condemns the transition between those systems.

Apocalyptic themes are appropriate to Indigenous literature because the lives of Indigenous peoples in colonized places are, in the contemporary sense of the term, post-apocalyptic. Alexander Cavanaugh claims: “Indigenous peoples are living in what their

ancestors would consider dystopic[2]: a future in which the other-than-human world is exploited and in which settler colonialism continues to target Indigenous relations, which mark the end of lifeways" (141). Indigenous peoples have seen their societies and worldviews overtaken by settler-colonialism. They have been made to adapt to living in the margins and have been made temporally stagnant as reminders of the primitive past of the Americas. Mark Rifkin explains this portrayal of Indigenous "absence or temporal stasis" by stating: "The representation of Native peoples as either having disappeared or being remnants on the verge of vanishing constitutes one of the principal means of effacing Indigenous sovereignties" (5). Indigenous peoples are used as reminders of a ghostly history haunting the colonial imagination to disregard present attempts at self-governance made by Indigenous communities.

Meanwhile, Anishinaabe scholar Lawrence W. Gross coined the term "Postapocalyptic Stress Syndrome" to describe the stresses that haunt Indigenous peoples recovering from the ongoing effects of colonialism: "Along with many other Native American peoples, the Anishinaabe have seen the end of our world, which has created tremendous social stresses" (Gross 437). I stress the term 'ongoing' to remind readers that the mechanisms of settler-colonialism persist. These mechanisms are formations built on the economy of racialized bodies and the forced migration of these bodies into unfamiliar lands, labor camps, slave ships, reserves, and residential schools. The unveiling necessary to apocalyptic imaginings reveals mechanisms of settler-colonialism that threaten to harm attempts at sovereignty. The revelation of these mechanisms then helps post-apocalyptic

[2] Postcolonial Indigenous peoples can be both dystopic and post-apocalyptic. Donna L. Roberts describes the relation between dystopic and post-apocalyptic literatures as "cousins", she states: "Dystopia (from Ancient Greek δυσ- "bad" and τόπος "place") typically depicts a society in the aftermath of some change…that has left the world…in unfavorable conditions. Building on that basic theme, post-apocalyptic stories generally depict the aftermath of a more profound societal collapse" (1).

Indigenous people prevail over these mechanisms and prioritize their sovereignties and perspectives over Westernized ones.

Particularly helpful to the present study is the descriptive terminology of McGinn and Emmerson, who characterize apocalypses as falling on two axes: divine (vertical) and historical (horizontal), which I will briefly describe below.

As I said above, there is a strong connection between the apocalypse and systems of power. Many foundational apocalyptic texts, including The Revelation of John from the Bible result from possible periods of crisis or persecution. Stephen J. Shoemaker states: "Apocalyptic literature is in fact broadly understood as a literature of resistance that responds to some sort of "crisis " or "distress," and not infrequently a specific political crisis" (12). As narratives of resistance, apocalypses are created for multiple reasons that are difficult to navigate. Thus, Christian apocalypse narratives are hard to define since they are varied and serve several purposes. They are meant to be read in multiple ways to facilitate their transition between time periods: "an apocalypse written in response to a specific set of historical circumstances could easily be reinterpreted and reapplied to subsequent situations." (Shoemaker 14).

McGinn explains how apocalypse literature functions between two axes, or poles, of wisdom with regards to their revelations:

> "This wisdom is both "vertical," that is, a revelation of the secrets of heaven and the universe, and "horizontal," an uncovering of the meaning of history and its end. Apocalypses emphasize one or the other of these broad modes of secret knowledge, although they often coexist" (Emmerson and McGinn 7).

As one of the most notable apocalypses in the early Christian tradition, John's Apocalypse has been read in a multitude of ways. However, if we were to apply the poles discussed by Emmerson and McGinn to this apocalyptic imagining, we would see images and symbols that

can lead to both historical (horizontal) unveilings and divine (vertical) unveilings. One image relating to both poles is the beast from the sea. In the Book of Revelation, John prophesizes: "The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority" (*New International Version,* Revelation 13:2). This beast is seen on the throne, implying that the beast is someone of kingly authority. Moreover, John states: "It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation" (*New International Version,* Revelation 13:6-7). The beast can be seen as either Satan or Imperial Rome as both see themselves as centers of supreme power and authority which run contradictorily to the will of God. As such, this section of Revelation shows an unveiling of a historical truth (Imperial Rome falls into the horizontal pole) and a divine truth (Satan taking divine power relates to the vertical pole).

To apply these poles of apocalypse to a modern, secular apocalypse, the conditions must be changed so that the Indigenous narratives incorporate a concern with history and 'divine' knowledge. To do so, I will change the terms of the vertical pole to apply more broadly: the vertical pole will deal with the secrets of heaven, the universe, spirituality, and more abstract forms of power. In this sense, revelations dealing with settler-colonialism and the cultures of Indigenous peoples can be placed within the vertical pole.

In the remaining chapters, I will delve into how *Moon of the Crusted Snow, The Marrow Thieves,* and *Future Home of the Living God* illustrate reversals of time and history that unveil mechanisms of settler-colonialism that need to be dismantled to further Indigenous perspectives. The methods of reversal that each author employs in their apocalypse shows how the horizontal pole, described by McGinn as "stretching out through

time into the prophetic future", relates to larger political and cultural motivations of these apocalypses (relating to the vertical pole). The horizontal and vertical poles of the Christian apocalypse frame how Indigenous apocalypse literature works within the conventions of traditional apocalypse literature since both modes contain revelations that are both related to time (history and the course of time before the End) and to divinity (dealing with more abstract notions of God, spirituality, and the cosmos).

Rice's Technological Apocalypse, Survival, and Culture.

While time is often understood by most Westerners in a linear formation, Indigenous conceptions of time are more fluid. Rather than seeing past, present, and future as individual points of time: "[Indigenous] histories are inevitably braided together with [Indigenous] futures" (Kimmerer 365). Experiences of time vary greatly depending on cultural circumstances and individual perspective. Laura Maria De Vos explains how the "spiralic temporality", one experience of Indigenous time, functions as a cycle that is not merely repetitive but transforms to fit the moment: ""Spiralic temporality" refers to an Indigenous experience of time that is informed by a people's particular relationships to the seasonal cycles on their lands, and which acknowledges the present generations' responsibilities to the ancestors and those not yet born" (2).[3] De Vos' presentation of this cyclical time emphasizes that this experience heavily depends on the network of kinship connections that the experiencer has. Depending on location or cultural responsibilities that a community shares, their experience of spiralic time changes. To complicate this notion, Rifkin elaborates that:

[3] Anishinaabe scholar Kyle P. Whyte describes how societies governed themselves according to cyclical systems:

> "Anishinaabe societies governed themselves using a seasonal round system. Part of the political philosophy guiding this system is that government institutions and social identities should be organized to change and shift throughout the year to adjust to the dynamics of ecosystems. … historical accounts show that people constantly transformed their identities in relation to other humans and nonhumans to form new strategic kin connections and to take up the projects of ancestors who had walked on" (228).

"Practices, knowledges, and forms of collective identification often characterized as *tradition* can be understood as distinctive ways of being-in-time" (29). Belonging and conceptualizing Indigenous time depends heavily on interacting within individual cultures and communities. Forming intricate bonds (with human kin, non-human kin, and place) orients one's way through time. Rifkin also explains how story and storying create these orientations: "Storying helps engender a frame of reference, such as by providing a background against which to perceive motion, change, continuity, and possible action in the world" (46). Stories do much more than represent events in an Indigenous framework. They motivate change and embody Indigenous cultures and communities. These conceptions of time that are often applied to Indigenous perspectives are important to note before delving into how these novels show a concern with these frames of reference within the apocalyptic revelations.

In *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, Rice creates an apocalyptic setting in which the overreliance on settler technologies and conveniences deteriorates the connection to Indigeneity. By removing the settler-colonial presence and its technologies, Rice's fictive community can prioritize their culture. Although most might not recognize the loss of technology and modern-day conveniences as an apocalyptic scenario, their removal coupled with modern society's reliance on these products causes devastating events to occur and this reversal of technological time leads to the unveiling that settler-colonialism, along with its technologies and mechanisms, harms Indigenous practice. The regression of technological time and the brutal winter are the prerequisites to create: "The conditions in which traditional knowledge becomes not merely an expression of survivance but also a necessary tool for survival in a radically shifting world" (Brussiere 53).

When it is unveiled to Evan and his community that the reliance on settler technologies will cause the community to collapse, the community begins re-establishing Indigenous perspectives. Rice's novel develops during the winter and winter is a marker of

survival for the Gaawaandagkoong First Nation community (48). Rice writes: "The trees and some of the wildlife around them were preparing to sleep while the humans prepared for the great annual test" (13). Rice describes winter as an ever-present marker for this community, recurring regardless of modern amenities. Preparedness and community strength are tested during winter, and this is something that has not changed between Nanabush's lifetime and Evan's, suggesting how important seasonal cycles are to Anishinaabe ways of being. Dan tells his grandchildren the story of Nanabush's poor planning in which Nanabush faces the consequences of his actions and finds himself without food for the winter (170-173). Dan's moral to this story is: "always be ready for winter" (174). This is a lesson integrated into the stories of this community, signifying its importance to their experiences of time and culture.

The newest changes in the community's wintering habits come from their reliance on modern technology which is gradually taken away during Rice's apocalypse. When Nicole mentions to Evan that the power has gone out, he is surprised at the revelation. Nicole reminds him: "Yeah we just forgot to put more wood in the stove…Remember when this happened last winter?" (28). Nicole's phrasing emphasizes that the couple relied on the electricity and forgot to prepare wood for the worst-case scenario that the electricity failed. Later, Evan reacts to this small reliance: "We let the furnace go out too…I guess we're getting too used to hydro" (31). They, like Nanabush, are not adequately prepared. When Evan learns from Tammy that the landlines have stopped along with the satellite and hydroelectricity, he does not remember the last time the community went without those services (31). Rice writes: "He had spent most of his life without cell service and satellite TV, and his parents had grown up without power at all" (31-32). The community's reliance on these technologies is relatively new compared to the settler communities to the south. While settler society is derailing due to the loss of these amenities, this northern community can still imagine their lives and cultures without these conveniences. Evan even states: "*Well, at least*

we still got the radio…We may as well be going back in time" (Rice 20). This statement shows how the need to use earlier forms of technology impacts the way time is experienced. The loss of technology and services like grocery stores cause panic in the residents of the community but those with families such as Evan's who have instilled "the basics of winter survival" in their children can fall back on those inherited practices (78) Rice reflects on the Anishinaabe spirit and the hardship and tragedy that play a part in its formation, he writes: "Survival had always been an integral part of their culture. It was their history" (48). Being Anishinaabe is connected to survival and learning to adapt to the environment and this spirit is only able to be re-invigorated in this community once the apocalypse has begun to unveil the failures of modern amenities and the settler-colonial mechanisms that created them. The movements back in time made by the novel during its apocalyptic turn are necessary conditions for the restoration of Indigenous perspectives and illustrate the beginning factors of the horizontal pole of the apocalypse.

As the situation in the Gaawaandagkoong First Nation community becomes dire, the vertical pole (relating to more abstract systems of power) of the apocalypse becomes more concrete. Resources are scarce and residents are beginning to realize that things are getting worse. This is when Justin Scott enters the community as a foil to Evan's embodiment of Indigenous perspectives. Scott signals the reappearance of settler-colonial culture, and this meeting is reminiscent of the first appearance of settlers to the Americas.[4] Scott is a reiteration of settler-colonialism: he steals power away from the band council in moments of insecurity, makes decisions for the community as an outsider, and sees anything as a potential resource which enables him to persuade those around him to eat the bodies of the deceased

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[4] Robin Wall Kimmerer summarizes the Seventh Fire Prophecy of the Anishinaaabe which foretells the coming of the white man or *zaaganaash.* In a similar fashion to this prophecy, Justin Scott promises a friendly relationship but becomes a menacing omen for Rice's novel: "The first prophet said that if the offshore people, the *zaaganaash*, come in brotherhood, they would bring great knowledge…But the second prophet sounded a warning: He said that what looks like the face of brotherhood might be the face of death" (Kimmerer 366).

regardless of cultural taboo(Rice 141, 180, 203). Scott takes advantage of the community's "hospitality" and quickly becomes a leader in the community, especially to those with less cultural connection. There are fraught relationships with Indigenous knowledge within the community and some members embrace a more Western style of living on the reserve, making it difficult to re-conceptualize an Indigenous framework when crisis becomes unavoidable.

Evan describes the living situation of Vinny Jones: "Vinny Jones's two-storey home was unusual in this community… He'd been able to afford it because he worked in the mines to the west…When the shit really hits the fan, what are people like him gonna do?" (43). Kirsten Brussière describes this relationship well: "Because of the intergenerational knowledge that has been passed onto Evan by his father, he is better able to sustain his family in comparison to those within the community that had become reliant on shipments from the South." (51) There is a vast difference between characters like Vinny Jones who profit off settler-colonialism and Evan and Nicole who feel guilty after getting drunk to have some fun (45).[5] The community members' relationship with the consumption and use of settler-colonial products is an extension of their relationship with the dominance of settler-colonialism since these products function as mechanisms of settler control over Indigenous bodies. Cam ends up in Scott's grasp since Cam does not have the skills to be self-sufficient and requires leadership from the Western knowledges which Scott embodies. Scott also gains the support of the white outsiders who enter the community and feel alienated from their practices. Evan confronts Scott at the end of the novel:

[5] To contextualize this point, Rice writes about the alcohol ban on the reserve: "Alcohol had been banished by the band council nearly two decades ago after a snarl of tragedies. Young people had been committing suicide at horrifying rates in the years leading up to the ban, most abetted by alcohol or drugs or gas or other solvents. And for decades despairing men had gotten drunk and beaten their partners and children, feeding a cycle of abuse that continued when those kids grew up. It became so normal that everyone forgot about the root of this turmoil: their forced displacement from their homelands and the violent erasure of their culture, language, and ceremonies" (44)

> “[Evan]“We don’t need you, Scott…We know this land”
>
> [Scott] “Maybe you guys do. Not the rest of the deadbeats here.”
>
> “It’s in all of them. They know it.”
>
> “Don’t get all Indian on me now””

This interaction elaborates on the dichotomized dynamic between Evan and Scott. Evan encourages Indigenous perspectives while Scott, who represents settler perspectives, takes advantage of those who seek his guidance and belittles the practices of the community to make them seem inferior. The death of Justin Scott ends the community’s reliance on settler-colonialism and convinces the survivors to return to the original homelands they were sent away from:

> “It became clear to them that they were never supposed to last in this situation on this land in the first place…Their ancestors were displaced from their original homeland in the South…But they refused to wither completely, and a core of dedicated people had worked tirelessly to create their own settlement away from this town” (Rice 212).

While the ancestors of the Gaawaandagkoong First Nation community, their stories, and practices first came from the south, those who were forced to the north adapted to the harsh climate, demonstrating what Rice means by survival being a part of Anishinaabe culture. It becomes clear to the reader that the decision to return to Indigenous practices and homelands was a positive one thanks to Nicole’s dream. In the novel, dreaming and storying generate further understanding of the situations that are occurring. In an article called “Stories, Dreams, and Ceremonies: Anishinaabe ways of Learning”, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson states: “Anishinaabe take dreaming very seriously”. Dreams reflect mental state, emotional state, and they connect to the spiritual plane. Simpson further explains: “During my work in the community, dreams were repeatedly shared, interpreted, and used to make decisions”

("Stories, Dreams, and Cermonies…"). In her dream, Nicole is with their kids running through the snow when the snow attempts to take her. She explains:

> ""'The kids kept saying stuff like, 'Don't worry, Mommy' and 'We're gonna make it,' but it wasn't their same voices. It was like they were elders speaking to me…they made sure I made it out of there"" (69).

Maiingan and Nangohns transform into elders, figures of immense knowledge: "I saw a young man and woman…I knew it was them. It was our kids. But they were adults…They started talking to me in the old language, but I didn't understand them" (69-70). Nicole's dream prophesizes the futurity of this Anishinaabe community. Maiingan and Nangohns are fluent in their language and have a community of their own on their traditional homelands. Out of the cold winter comes the possibility of cultural renewal and futurity. Nangohns and Maiingan are the beginning of a generation that grows without settler intervention and the results of the community's efforts are positive as shown by Nicole's dream. Maiingan and Nangohns transforming into elders confirms that the children will be living in an Anishinaabe world and will become even better practitioners of Anishinaabe knowledge than their parents. Simpson explains how she hopes her work will inspire a world in which her great-grandchildren are able to embody Anishinaabe practice in a similar way: "I want my great-grandchildren to be able to fall in love with every piece of their territory. I want their bodies to carry with them every story, every song, every piece of poetry hidden in our Nishnaabeg language" (7). Nicole's dream affirms this future, that her children will embody an Indigenous perspective.

Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow* can be categorized as apocalyptic according to McGinn's poles of the apocalypse. The novel reverses time (along the horizontal pole) by gradually removing settler technologies and presence to reveal how these technologies have led to the deterioration of Indigenous practice and culture. This deterioration is proven

through the loss of wintering skills and the reliance on Western knowledge by Cam and other community members who rely on Scott, the embodiment of Western knowledge. Once these mechanisms of settler-colonialism are effectively purged from the community after the death of Scott, the community, under Evan's guidance, can begin regaining aspects of culture and their traditional homelands as proven by Nicole's dream (relating to the vertical pole). The unstable space of apocalypse allows Rice to imagine alternatives to settler-colonial power that center Indigenous perspectives. Similarly, Dimaline's apocalyptic imagining uses survival in an apocalyptic setting to prioritize Indigenous cultures and reveal the cyclical nature of settler-colonialism.

***The Marrow Thieves,* Cyclicality, Infra-humanity, and the Old-Timey.**

Unlike Rice's novel that occurs in modern time, Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* occurs in a distant dystopic future after an ecological disaster has occurred. The resulting settler society reconstructs the residential school system, an aspect relating to the horizontal pole of apocalypse, which reveals settler-colonialism as a repetitive cycle built on the bodies of Indigenous peoples and the cultures they practice. Dimaline's protagonists, a group of children with varied levels of connection to their Indigeneity, yearn to reconnect to their cultures and learn over the course of the novel that their Indigenous identities are the key to recovering their strength. Their experiences as infra-humans allow them to become more connected to their cultures which relates to the vertical pole. Frenchie, the main character of the novel, explains his own "coming-to": "I came from a long line of hunters, trappers, and voyageurs. But now, with most of the rivers cut into pieces and lakes left as grey sludge puckers on the landscape, my own history seemed like a myth along the lines of dragons" (21). The current reality of the world leaves Frenchie unable to connect to his culture. Instead, Frenchie lives on survival instincts alone to keep himself out of the hands of

Recruiters. Recruiters are "school truancy officers" hunting Indigenous peoples to place them in the new iteration of residential schools. (2). These officials are hunting those that play truant, for being absent from the newly formed residential schools. In a flashback, Frenchie's father, Jean, explains to his family that: "The Governor's Committee didn't set up the schools brand new; he says they were based on the old residential school system they used to try to break our people to begin with, way back" (5).

Although this novel takes place in a dystopic future, the residential school system has been revived in this new era to break down newer generations of Indigenous people and this repetition of past settler-colonial mechanisms reveals how settler-colonialism continues to take advantage of Indigenous bodies. Miigwans later explains in "Story" that: "They needed too many [Indigenous] bodies, and they turned to history to show them how to best keep us warehoused, how to best position the culling. That's when the new residential schools started" (89). Miigwans describes the schooling as "culling" which is normally used for the selective slaughtering of animals. Thus, Miigwans is suggesting that Indigenous life is no longer considered human life. Patrizia Zanella describes how the new era has arisen:

> "Historically, state- and church- run residential schools, the last of which closed in 1997, separated generations of Indigenous children from their families in an effort to alienate them from their nations and assimilate them into the settler state, to ultimately eliminate Indigenous peoples as peoples. The new residential schools in Dimaline's novel serve a similarly self- interested goal of securing the settler state's future" (178).

The futurity of the settler state continues to rely on the destruction of Indigenous bodies through this reiteration of the residential school system. Settlers, within the novel, are unable to dream and the cure to this dreamlessness is the bone marrow harvested from Indigenous bodies. Through this dynamic, Indigenous people have been reduced to resources.

Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga explains the process of 'thingification' and how the transformation of human to nonhuman facilitates the eradication of human life: "When humans turn other humans into vermin beings, they prepare them for annihilation using weapons befitting "problem animals," reducing them into things" (154). The reduction of Indigenous people to cultural inferiors, in the case of the residential schools, or to preyed animals, in the case of the novel, facilitates the use and abuse of Indigenous lives. These dynamics allow settler-colonial powers to hunt and farm Indigenous peoples as resources for settler consumption. Dimaline's use of the residential schools as sites of the continued torture of Indigenous bodies reveals that Indigenous lives are still considered infra-human in a future scenario. This revelation that Indigenous bodies will continuously be consumed by settler-colonialism allows for the children to begin reconnecting to their cultures.

The 'thingification' process has an unintended consequence, directly parallel to what happens under quite different circumstances in *Moon of Crusted Snow*. It encourages the children to go back into the past and become "old-timey" (96). Frenchie and his companions, due to their nomadic lifestyle, have become self-sufficient hunters and gatherers. As Slopper tells the group: "On account of the Recruiters. We're bush Indians for real now" (128). 'Thingification' becomes an alternative model for Frenchie to connect to his voyageur nomadic roots as he is constantly in a cycle of hunting and being hunted. When Frenchie attempts to hunt a moose, he likens it to a being that has withstood history and hesitates to kill it. He describes their confrontation: "The moose watched all this play out on my face, a dirty boy tangled in the roots of an upended tree…His eyes were huge, dark globes that reflected back their surroundings. I was sure I could see myself in there, in the trees, a long-haired warrior taking aim" (49). Frenchie is both a young boy tangled in his present circumstances and an ancestral warrior taking aim, linking him to his present circumstances and to his past ancestry. Similarly, his ability to see the moose as kin signals that his infra-

humanness fosters an unintended intimacy with nonhuman kin, suggesting a larger network of kinship being maintained. Kimmerer explains: “In the Western tradition, there is a recognized hierarchy of beings, with, of course, the human being on top…But in Native ways of knowing, human people are often referred to as “the younger brothers of Creation” … Humans have the least experience with how to live and thus the most to learn—we must look to our teachers among the other species for guidance” (9). With Kimmerer’s statement in mind, Frenchie’s infra-human status allows him to see the wisdom of other creatures which is an important aspect of Indigenous culture. Another suggestion of cultural maintenance and futurity relating to the vertical pole comes in the various stories interwoven within the novel.

Events of the novel are interrupted by various chapters explaining the “coming-to” stories of certain characters and sections of “Story” that explain events from the past. By structuring the novel in this way, Dimaline presents coinciding cyclical narratives, or “stories wrapped in stories” that draw on the past to better understand the present and future (Dimaline 20). Laura Maria De Vos’“spiralic time” maps well onto this narrative: “In such a [spiralic] worldview, *when* things happened in time becomes less important than where they happened and to which relations; the past and the future are all relevant in the now” (2). By imagining a future that is intimately tangled with the past, Dimaline’s novel displays a cyclical time where each fragmented story connects with the narrative surrounding it.

These interwoven stories become less connected by time and more connected by kinship bonds. When Miigwans describes coming-to stories, he portrays them as sacred and intimate to the storytellers: “Everyone tells their own coming-to story. That’s the rule. Everyone’s creation story is their own” (29). The stories the children hold within them are sacred knowledge and those who are trusted with this knowledge are responsible for it. By referring to the “coming-to” stories as creation stories, the “coming-to” stories become sacred knowledge and the children become knowledge holders. The sacredness of these stories

comes from their pastness since each story tells how each child came to be in the little family Miigwans has grown. While these stories are from the past, they deeply connect to how the child views the present and perceives the future. It forms a new sort of cultural narrative that values the cyclicality of time.

Similarly, experiencing Miigwans' "Story" is another sort of sacred knowledge that explains the unfolding of history and how that has impacted the experience of culture: "We needed to remember Story…to set the memory in perpetuity. Sometimes Story was focused on one area, like the first residential schools…Other times he told a hundred years in one long narrative" (25). "Story" is a form of collective understanding of the unraveling of history and the cultures the children are disconnected from.

Merging these stories further with the grander narrative occurring to Frenchie creates the spiralic nature of Indigenous time explained by Rifkin and De Vos. These merging stories illustrate an intersection between the horizontal and vertical poles of apocalypse in which the stories navigate historical time while also connecting to a larger cultural or personal cultural identity.

Finally, Minerva's sacrifice at the end of the novel suggests that the way to fight against the Recruiters and the schools is to reconnect with Anishinaabe culture. Minerva, the group's other elder alongside Miigwans, is an older woman described by Frenchie as "Real old-timey" as she makes "prayers out of ashes and smoke" (19). Bits of Anishinaabemowin, the language of the Anishinaabe people, are given to the children by Minerva (38). Frenchie and the other children guard these pieces of language as if: "hoarding something precious" (109). Having the knowledge of language, in this apocalyptic setting, is extremely valuable. Minerva function as the "deep roots" of the group and she is their main connection to cultural knowledge (154). When Minerva is taken to the school and tied into the machines meant to take her bone marrow, she:

"called on her blood memory, her teachings, her ancestors…She sang…pulling every dream from her own marrow and into her song. And there were words: words in the language that the conductor couldn't process, words that the Cardinals couldn't bear, words the wires couldn't transfer. As it turns out, every dream Minerva dreamed was in the language" (173).

Minerva's ability to dream in their language causes her dreams to be strengthened: "It was her gift, her secret, her plan. She'd collected the dreams like bright beads on a string of nights that wound around her each day, every day until this one" (173). Although it's unknown how Minerva harnessed the energy of her dreams, Dimaline connects cultural knowledge, especially knowledge of language, to the ability of dreaming and of imagining alternatives to difficult present circumstances. As Dimaline illustrates, this broken-down residential school system was: "torn down by the words of a dreaming old lady" (173). Dreaming, in the context of this novel, is the vehicle of cultural futurity. When Minerva passes away later in the novel, she tells the children ""Kiiwen" or go home" (211). In this sense, the desire to go home, or return home, is the desire to go back to traditional homelands, to maintain cultural futurity, and to foster good relations. Regaining the skill to dream in language, alongside returning to cultural homelands and experiencing life as Anishinaabe people, is the ultimate method of maintaining cultural continuity and fostering communal strength.

Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* uses its apocalyptic setting as a method of pursuing cultural strength. The revelation of settler-colonialism's cyclicality through the restoration of the residential schools (relating to McGinn's horizontal pole) as well as the infra-humanity settler-colonialism instills into Indigeneity fosters the climate necessary for Indigenous characters to seek out alternatives to settler-colonial violence by prioritizing cultural knowledge (relating to the vertical pole). By structuring the novel to include methods of

storying and Indigenous time, emphasizing cultural practice and alternative kinship networks as necessary to survival, and by creating a link between language with imagining alternatives to struggle, Dimaline uses the apocalyptic to restore Indigenous sovereignties. Erdrich's work also attempts to imagine the restoration of Indigenous sovereignties in a world running backwards.

***Future Home of the Living God*, States of Flux, Savagery and the Civil.**

Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* presents an apocalyptic scenario in which history is threatening the boundaries of time. The world that is depicted in the novel is running backwards, which is relevant to the horizontal pole. As protagonist Cedar Songmaker states at the beginning of the novel: "Apparently…our world is running backward. Or forward. Or sideways, in a way as yet ungrasped" (Erdrich 3). Cedar's world is in a state of flux and while these physical changes are occurring, the system of governance in this new era is restructured to fit a puritanical perspective which sees pregnant women harnessed to forcibly produce futurity for the settler state. The backwardness of this system of power reveals how settler-colonial governance relies on the dichotomy between civility and savagery while reproducing methods of control over female and other oppressed bodies to maintain this binary. On the opposing side, the Indigenous community in the novel continues to adapt to the changing environment and Cedar's new-found connection to her Indigeneity and her status as a hunted creature causes her to see the beauty in the unstable wildness of life.

Erdrich's depiction of history emerging into the present is a disruptive one. She writes:

> "If evolution has actually stopped…and if evolution is going backward…then we would not see the orderly backward progression of human types that evolutionary

> charts are so fond of presenting. Life might skip forward, sideways, in unforeseen directions. We wouldn't see the narrative we think we know. Why? Because there never was a story moving forward and there wouldn't be one moving backward…We might actually see chaos" (61)

Erdrich emphasizes that a forward or "linear" projection of history is non-existent and that one moving backward would not suffice to understand the chaos surrounding this apocalypse. By creating this chaotic progression or regression of history, Erdrich is criticizing the idea of progress and linear time. As Eddy explains to Cedar: "Everything is in flux right now. You've got to realize how little we know of our ancestors" (35). Eddy maintains that due to how little we know about previous generations of humanity, we cannot foresee the ramifications this unstable environment will have on Cedar's pregnancy and the future of humanity in general. The environment continues to see changes including what Cedar calls a "lizard-bird": "A bird the size of a hawk swoops off the oak…I glimpse its head—beakless, featherless, lizardlike, rosy red… It is captivating…In spite of what this tells me about the fate of living creatures and the world in general…I realize this: I am not at the end of things, but the beginning" (107). Cedar is left in awe of the creature before her, despite its being a harbinger of the end-times of humanity.

Cedar frames the encounter with this prehistoric creature as a realization of being at the beginning of a new state of reality. Her perspective of the apocalypse is not one of finality but one of continuance. Although the world as she knows it is changing, a new state of the world is emerging that will either include humanity or change the nature of humanness. Cedar is forced into an unrestrained environment of uncertainty in which nature is both familiar and unfamiliar. As Erdrich writes: "I used to know most of the bird cries, but now there are new sounds in the leaves. Some are menacing and dry, others are ravishingly sweet, both familiar and alien" (110). Cedar sees a beauty in the uncertainty that is occurring. This

unrestrained natural environment is juxtaposed with the order and control necessary to The Church of the New Constitution. The establishment of the new government, The Church of the New Constitution, brings with it a slew of patriarchal, chauvinistic policies that emphasize control. The political landscape goes from the liberal modern landscape we currently understand to a puritanical patriarchal state set on the control and harnessing of non-European and female bodies. At one point in the novel, Cedar turns to television and is surprised to see: "There are no brown people, anywhere, not in movies not on sitcoms not on shopping channels or on the dozens of evangelical channels up and down the remote…Something is bursting through the way life was" (49-50). Even when mentioning that the military raids an in-vitro clinic on the radio, it is necessary that an announcer include: "We took the leftovers. The embryos not labeled Caucasian" (105). The Church of the New Constitution favors a white, religious, patriarchal futurity while bodies that fall through the cracks, including people of color, and pregnant women, are oppressed and controlled. The establishment and cultivation of this extremist government reveals that settler-colonialism functions on a strict binary between civility and nature and maintains this dichotomy by reproducing strict methods of control over "uncivilized" bodies. When Cedar begins to recognize her wildness through her pregnancy and her Indigeneity, she can embrace the beauty of the rapidly changing world and adapt as much as she can. Similarly, the Indigenous characters in the novel, led by Eddy, can adapt, and reverse the power dynamic settler-colonial imposes on them by taking over traditional lands and managing their own sovereignties.

As I stated earlier, Cedar's pregnancy causes her to be hunted, linking her to a "wildness of being":

> "Perhaps at all times and in all countries women with child are actually at risk…We go about the business of the day and find out that our baby, like every other baby on

earth, will be a throwback of some kind…Our bodies have always remembered who we were. And now they have decided to return. We're climbing back down the swimming-pool ladder into the primordial soup…And here I am, wiring a whole new brain in my sleep" (77).

Cedar's status as a pregnant woman causes her to envision her kinship networks differently. While she once hoped for a "whole parish of friends" when becoming a devout Catholic, she finds a network of connection with nonhuman and prehistoric kin (7). Even when watching Tia give birth, Cedar remarks: "She greets each oncoming contraction with a powerful sound, a growl that starts low in her ribs and rises in pitch until, at the ceiling of her contraction, it is a cougar's scream" (221). Like Dimaline's use of the infra-human, pregnancy has brought Cedar closer to the nonhuman. Durrand-Roux suggests: "As a matter of survival, Cedar must experience the puzzlement of stepping into the wild to rediscover the forces that animate nature and fully get attuned to this "supernal, lovely" world" (*Saber-tooth in my backyard*). Cedar finds comfort in the alterations of the world and the certainty that life will continue in whatever form it decides to take. Cedar further explains: "I have this feeling, as I carry this baby into life, that…Things aren't falling apart. All that is happening…physical, personal, even political, is basically all right…I feel…A pleasure in this senseless truth—we happen to be alive. We didn't ask for it. We just are" (251). Erdrich creates a link between uncertainty and Cedar's pregnant, Indigenous being.

By acknowledging the beauty of the uncertain, Cedar is denouncing the forces that cause her to be constantly under threat of destructive settler-colonialism (Martínez-Falquina 165). Likewise, other Indigenous people, including Eddy, are embracing the uncertainty of the apocalyptic by creating "Indian Paradise" (170). Eddy makes the point to Cedar that Indians have adapted to their environment and will continue to do so: "Indians have been adapting since before 1492 so I guess we'll keep adapting…The world is always going to

pieces…It is always different. We'll adapt" (32). Like characters previously discussed in Dimaline's work and in Rice's work, Eddy connects Indigenous existence with survival and post-apocalyptic adaptation. In fact, Eddy mentions that this apocalyptic scenario cured his depression: "Seventy percent of my depression was my seventeenth-century warrior trying to get out" (274). While their methods are heavily militarized, Eddy creates many opportunities for those who were thrown away by settler-colonialism: "Vintage is the new au currant. And we're back to the moccasin telegraph…Eddy has tasked our fastest kids and rehabbed gang members as runners. We get the news twice a day" (268). The Indigenous community, supported by Eddy, is even set to double: "As half our population lives off res, we're set to double in this crisis…enjoy the benefits of more teachers, professors, doctors, lawyers, artists, poets, and gang members" (257). All walks of life are welcome in Indian Paradise and as Eddy aptly points out: "Quite a number of us see the governmental collapse as a way to make our move and take back the land" (112). The collapse of settler-colonialism allows for Indigenous sovereignties to be rebuilt. The uncertainty of the prehistoric re-emergence causes Cedar and the Indigenous community she comes from to understand that moving forward is the only way of surviving: "Now is all we have…Work on the now, the hereness, the present" (79).

In *Future Home of the Living God,* Erdrich creates beauty in the uncertain. While time runs backwards and the settler-state reverses from its modern liberalism to puritanical control, Indigenous characters flourish in the apocalyptic and regain their sovereignties. Like Rice and Dimaline, Erdrich uses the reversal of time and the apocalyptic setting to demonstrate alternative ways of being (illustrating the horizontal pole). The seeping of the prehistoric into the modern causes the liberal government to quickly change face into a puritanical form that reveals settler-colonialism's obsession with controlling those it sees as "uncivilized". Cedar and her community demonstrate a reconnection to Indigenous ways of

knowing. Cedar, as a pregnant woman, connects to her Indigeneity through her infra-humanness and her desire to survive. Her Indigenous relatives, on the other hand, use their ability to survive in instability as a method of incentivizing the community to further decolonization efforts and center Indigenous perspectives in the new era of humanity.

Conclusion

Apocalypses, as I define them, are end-of-world scenarios that juxtapose old and new systems of power to unveil a secret that explains, criticizes, or condemns the transition between those systems. Indigenous apocalypses like *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, *The Marrow Thieves*, and *Future Home of the Living God* fit into the apocalyptic genre and expand it to host new perspectives that seemingly contradict those of settler culture. Although the apocalyptic may not be seen as designed to promote futurity, since they imply destruction, Indigenous authors experimenting within this genre are creating apocalyptic novels that move beyond settler-colonial control and promote Indigenous cultures and communities. As Medak-Saltzman explains: "Since Native presence in North America, by colonial design, is always already vanishing (rendering Indigenous futures impossible), inserting ourselves into future narratives (as subjects, authors, and participants in futurity) is a particularly powerful act" (146). The tradition of apocalyptic literature allows these Indigenous authors to create new worlds that prioritize radical Indigenous futurity:

> “Indigenous futurisms…provide authors, readers, filmmakers, audiences, and our communities with opportunities to explore beyond what is and what has been and moves us toward imagining, creating, and manifesting a variety of possibilities that better represent our understandings of, our place in, and our responsibilities to this world and to those yet to come. This is to say that Indigenous futurist works do not

> simply “include” Native people as part of the narrative; rather, they are generated by and inspirational for Native peoples" (Medak-Saltzman 143)

By unveiling secrets of settler-colonial power, following the horizontal pole, and prioritizing the maintenance of cultural practice, along the vertical pole, Indigenous apocalyptic literature works within the larger history of the apocalyptic tradition while cultivating Indigenous frameworks. Unlike the modern implication of the apocalypse as “world-ending”, the instability of the apocalyptic allows Indigenous writers and characters to rebuild their cultures and homelands to better project themselves into the post-apocalyptic future.

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