

Métis Survivance: Land, Love, and Futures in Cherie Dimaline's Dystopian Novels

Celiese Lypka

"Who knows what it's like to leave, to give up a piece of land? If you do,
it might haunt you forever, follow you till you come back."

Marilyn Dumont¹

Although widely different in their composition of Indigenous futurisms, Métis author Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* (set in the dystopian future, [2017]) and *Empire of Wild* (set in the present as a dystopian landscape, [2019]) reveal the impossibility of a shareable future between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples under settler colonialism. In both novels, Indigenous bodies and land are co-opted by settler communities to be mined for capital gain. *The Marrow Thieves* presents a horrific future in which Indigenous bodies are harvested for their ability to dream, something that non-Indigenous peoples have lost the ability to do. The narrative focuses on a young man named Frenchie, who is trying to make sense of the colonial past and present, while looking toward an Indigenous-centric future. In *Empire of Wild*, Joan searches for her husband who loses control over his mind and body after suggesting they sell her family land to developers for mining and pipeline projects. The protagonists of both texts are Métis,² and the novels can be read as quests to find a sustainable community for the characters who, through processes of colonization, have forgotten Métis practices and ways of being—knowledge that is integral to healing and reconnecting with the land to build a better future in a postcapitalist world. Both Frenchie and Joan³ begin their respective narratives lost and alone, in search of a specific place or person rooted in "decolonial love," what Leanne Betasamosake

Simpson outlines as “a rebellion of love, persistence, commitment, and profound caring” that is a “generative refusal of colonial recognition.”⁴

Kyle Whyte articulates how, through the sustained militaristic campaigns of settler colonialism across the globe (which includes damaging ecosystems for colonial gain, violent assimilation, and containment processes, as well as forced dependency and instilling conditions of mass fear), Indigenous peoples “already inhabit what our ancestors would have understood as a dystopian future.”⁵ This essay analyzes the representation of Métis communities within the dystopian settings of both novels, identifying the fractures of Métis identity as a result of land dispossession. Dimaline’s dystopias detail various ways in which Indigenous people and the land they live on have been devastated by the violence of settler colonialism, leaving them in a nightmarish landscape where they are insidiously disconnected from land and Indigenous ways of being. I argue that through the processes of learning and putting into practice Indigenous storytelling rooted in landedness—what acclaimed Métis scholar Emma LaRocque defines as “Metis love of land”⁶—the protagonists come to embody decolonial love that cultivates Indigenous futures by upending colonial constructions of identity and community through relational resilience. Landedness, in its relationship with “a particular and unique land area . . . where we carry out body and home-stitching everydayness” is a “place where we become familiar” to ourselves, a place where we live and grow in decolonial love that nurtures Métis identity outside of colonial structures. This idea is particularly important in Dimaline’s novels, as landedness is continuously threatened by the dystopian structures that abolish Indigenous land and ways of being.

Reading the colonial history of North America reveals the specific and insidious instances in which Indigenous peoples have been systematically eradicated to legitimize settler state claims to land, practices, and power. However, as Danika Medak-Saltzman identifies, “Yet, and despite the best efforts of settler colonial societies to deny Native peoples the possibility of meaningful futures, narratives about the future have always been, and remain, deeply entrenched in, and important to, Native communities.”⁷ And it’s important to note, more specifically, how Indigenous storytelling embodies the interplay between the past, present, and future, acting as a method of narrative resistance in the face of the ongoing violent and linear colonization processes. At the same time, it also offers persistence in Indigenous peoples’ connection and relationship to the land by providing a theoretical application to construct a viable future, including concerns over climate and ecological crisis brought about by unbridled capitalism. Thus, storytelling is predicated on creating a tethered line from the past to the present, allowing for a continuation of Indigenous knowledges into the future. In Dimaline’s novels, Indigenous storytelling is paramount for sharing vital knowledge that holds power to stem ecological crisis and revive the land for possible future generations. This, Medak-Saltzman goes on to state, is the radical potential of Indigenous futurisms, “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.”⁸ Sharing stories of the future in ways that are conjoined with the past and present is not only a “powerful act” of sovereignty, it’s also “vital for survival.”⁹

Stories, however, are not always easily shared; they are often dismissed, repressed, or forgotten. For many Indigenous communities, including the Métis, this is a constant reality under the processes of colonial fragmentation and kinship dispossession. Eurocentric worldviews have devalued Indigenous teachings; ancestry and relations have been repressed in the face of violent assimilation methods; and the severance of Indigenous kinships by nation-state systems has resulted in many difficulties concerning the transmissions of stories. However, as Lee Maracle reminds us, “Although our knowledge was scattered, it was not destroyed.”¹⁰ So long as there are story-keepers, there remains hope to collect knowledge and share stories for future community-building. Dimaline’s work centers the need for Indigenous storytelling, both traditional and contemporary narratives such as her own, as a vital mode for healing the land from the devastation of settler colonialism and capitalist structures while also safeguarding spaces of decolonial love. Her method of storytelling is deeply rooted in Métis knowledge and ways of being that decenter colonial narratives of their identity as liminal and rootless. Employing language and stories from Métis histories, Dimaline shows the profound relationship between Métis communities and their landscapes that rejects settler logics of ownership and extraction, one that is based in everyday family life and livelihood on ancestral land. Thus, these novels deftly depict how Métisness is forever entangled in and in balance with the land. Frenchie’s constant search for family in relation to his growing sense of his Métis identity in *The Marrow Thieves* parallels Joan’s quest to save her husband and bring balance to her community in *Empire of Wild*, with both symbolizing the fractures of Métis identity and displacement from the land. These novels are invested in Indigenous futurisms, creating characters that cultivate a sense of self-love with their Indigenous communities to upend settler colonial formations of both indigeneity and the future. Frenchie and Joan, in their acts of decolonial love explored below, are active forces in Indigenous community-building and story-keeping that enacts Métis survivance, ensuring the continuance of their Indigenous sovereignty and care for the land in the present and, hopefully, into the future.

Métis Identity: Protagonists Who Are Lost, Not Liminal

The protagonists’ specific connection to their Métis community is not always at the forefront of the novels; however, it is visible in the background of the narratives—acting as a framework while Frenchie and Joan endeavor to secure a sustainable future in their respective dystopian landscapes that threaten their respective Indigenous futures. They individually have lost connection with their sense of identity as Métis—Frenchie has little memory or knowledge of Métis history and Joan knows her family stories but often forgets or dismisses them—

but the language, stories, and structuring of the narratives evoke a relation to Métisness, suggesting that reconnecting with this identity is necessary to secure a viable future that fights back against the settler capitalism that threatens landedness. Although neither Frenchie nor Joan contextualizes their respective journeys as a mode to reconcile the colonial destruction of their individual senses of Métisness, I read the depiction of their division from Métis knowledge and the land as a reminder of the insidious ways in which colonialism is always working to sever Indigenous claims and kinship. The “forgetfulness,” as Dimaline writes it, of both characters concerning severed connections with (home)land and practices of decolonial love can be read as a metonym for ways that settler colonialism threatens to disturb not only a secure sense of Indigenous identity but also the possibilities of Indigenous resurgence. Aubrey Hanson defines “resurgence as the regrowth of Indigenous communities from strong roots toward strong futures, building upon tradition and heritage through processes of revitalization and reclamation in order to create healthy, vibrant, self-determining nations.”¹¹ Resurgence, therefore, is predicated on Indigenous communities and their relationship to the land—the desire and necessity of building and rebuilding Indigenous worlds. And Dimaline’s work weaves together a continuous refrain of how land, identity, and knowledge are integral to one another and vital for futurity.

The ongoing politics of Métis identity crises in Canada, fueled by colonial interventions into Indigenous self-determination and safeguarding, speak pointedly to the formation of community-building in Dimaline’s novels that reflects how the Métis nation has “struggled and survived” in a setting that continues to unsettle the formations of its culture.¹² In his study of the racialized project of Métis identity in Canada, Chris Andersen provides an illuminating history of the (mis)recognition of Métis Nation and how colonial narratives continue to frame Métis as a “biological mixedness” between indigeneity and whiteness rather than a distinct people and culture.¹³ Andersen’s unpacking of colonial understandings of race-based politics of Métis identity complements LaRocque’s criticism of the (little) scholarship available on Métis literature, which “has been subject to a series of misrepresentations and misnomers emerging from the legacy of colonial history... It is almost impossible to treat Métis literature without dealing with the intricacies of identity.”¹⁴ This colonial gaze of reducing Métis identity to race-based politics of hybridity is an active attempt to delegitimize them as an Indigenous group while also hiding the collective moment of the Métis resistance that is embedded with a desire to secure a sovereign future.¹⁵ This dismissal of Métis Indigenous identity is also entrenched within nation-state politics of land and resource entitlements that led to the dislocation of Métis communities, severing their livelihood and kinship networks that were predicated on their connection to homeland, which was based in a purposeful relationship with waterways and landscape for livelihood (fur trade and buffalo hunting), extended family structures, and daily cultural practices. As LaRocque points out, many “contemporary Metis writers and scholars seek to deconstruct the West’s stereotype of the itinerant hybrid and to re-inscribe or, more properly,

re-root the Metis with home(land), community, culture, and agency.”¹⁶ In both *The Marrow Thieves* and *Empire of Wild*, Dimaline represents Métis characters who are lost but not liminal and employ decolonial love to reconnect with their Métisness (their kin, ways of life, and love of the land) while actively combating settler colonialist desires to fracture Indigenous community.

In *The Marrow Thieves*, Dimaline depicts this journey towards Métis understanding as an uneasy path for Frenchie, a young teenager who stumbles and makes mistakes along the way—not always recognizing where knowledge comes from or how best to honor it. The novel opens with “Frenchie’s Coming-to Story,” which describes the events leading up to his meeting with Miigwans’s family in the woods of former Northern Ontario. The story begins with Frenchie and his brother Mitch on the run from “school” (the new system of residential schools set up for marrow harvesting). Within a matter of moments Recruiters capture Mitch, and Frenchie is left on his own to ruminate over his recently lost family members: first his father, then mother, followed by Mitch. His memories, which explain why his family has been moving north to escape Recruiters, are couched explicitly in language that evokes Métis history. Frenchie remembers his feelings of disappointment when his family was still together and had to move from their temporary settlement: “none of us were keen on leaving, especially me and Mitch. We had family here, blood and otherwise. There were other families, people like us, who had settled here. The old people called it the New Road Allowance. And now we were jamming clothes and jars of preserves wrapped in blankets into our duffel bags to move again.”¹⁷ To calm his dislike of moving, Frenchie’s father insists that in doing so, “We’ll find a way, ... up North is where we’ll find home.”¹⁸ In this passage, Dimaline implements a traditional dystopian narrative—the drive to move north for possible safety, away from the tyranny and wreckage of urban centers¹⁹—only to echo how the Métis have previously made and lived along this path. This mapping of the Road Allowance People, dispossessed Métis groups from the end of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century who moved north from the Red River Settlement across the prairie provinces to settle on crown land intended for infrastructure in rural areas, demonstrates the continued struggle for Métis in the spaces of the novel.²⁰ Frenchie’s comments about his connection to the makeshift settlement demonstrate his desire for a sense of landedness, of being able to build and make connections with the landscape so as to foster community and security.

There are other moments in the novel that evoke the history of Road Allowance People, and it’s important to note how Frenchie seems unaware of the specifics of this history—he simply knows that the “old people” placed the word “new” to the previous labeling, indicating that perhaps they lived like this once before. In the opening chapter, we learn the deliberateness of this lack of knowledge, as Frenchie’s father laments how lucky his children are that they “didn’t remember how it had been, so [they] had less to mourn.”²¹ Significantly, by not imparting the history to his son, Frenchie’s father inadvertently ensures a further disconnect for his children of the specific connection of Métis identity and unacknowledged

land claims by the colonial nation-state. Thus, Frenchie doesn't hold the history of rebellion or the fight for sovereignty to be defenders of the land. This history, of course, is remembered by "the old people"—which includes Frenchie's father, Isaac (Miigwans's lost "halfbreed" husband), and Minerva (an elder and story-keeper). However, this history isn't specific to only Métis communities in the present, as all Indigenous peoples are attempting to evade the Recruiters while moving along the roads in makeshift communities. And these concerns and politics directly reflective of Métis nationhood are not overtly dealt with in the novel. In fact, the Métis or "halfbreeds" are only referenced a handful of times; the first instance is found in the second chapter when Frenchie identifies to the reader the members of Miigwans's "patchwork family."²² Frenchie and a young girl, RiRi, are the only members of the family specified as Métis, and Frenchie makes a note of how he was nicknamed "as much for my name [Francis] as for my people—the Métis. 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."²³ Through multiple generations of dislocation, Frenchie has become so removed from his kinship histories that the stories become unfamiliar and almost magical. Although Andersen's in-depth study makes clear that there are no easy answers to the understanding of Métis nation and peoplehood, he does contend that their "sense of peoplehood was produced, first, in [ongoing] conflict and, later, in the diplomacy of interactions between a growing Métis people as they dealt, in collaboration with their Indigenous relatives, with encroachments by European settlers."²⁴ Most importantly, however, Frenchie notes how their settlement is made up of family members both "blood and otherwise," showing how community is made up of multiple Indigenous families uniting for a cultural and political purpose of survival, reverberating the history of Road Allowance.

Empire of Wild is more direct in its framing of Métis identity and cultural community consciousness as integral elements of the novel's plot and structure. Even still, rather than focusing on how Dimaline combines considerations of Métisness with current ecological concerns, the novel is hailed as a "supernatural thriller" with little mention of the novel's care for contemporary Indigenous concerns. This is particularly evidenced in a review for National Public Radio that frames the novel as a slight story that is simply "about Joan, [a woman] who has lost her husband. And who means to get him back. That's all. There are no worlds to be saved, no history to be altered."²⁵ This oversimplification of the plot (which is predicated on an assumption that Indigenous storytelling is both "mythic" and not epistemologically equal to Euro-American history) completely misses the point of Dimaline's novel and her approach with storytelling: the importance of cultivating community practices to preserve Indigenous ways of tending to the land and kinship, countering settler colonialism as the only possible future. In actuality, in *Empire of Wild* there are histories to be remembered and worlds to be saved—the literal empire of wild that surrounds the community is under threat by mining companies. As the novel progresses and the insidious process of mining

practices on Indigenous communities is depicted in various ways, readers are invited to recall the novel's opening that provides an attentive and sustained description of the kinship and land practices of Joan's Métis community in Georgian Bay, Ontario. The prologue, "A New Hunt," begins as a rooted explanation of the connection between the Métis of Arcand and their relation to the land. The narrator reflects on how, within this area, "In any halfbreed home there were jars of coins and a wistful plan to buy back the land, one acre at a time,"²⁶ echoing the history of Métis land claim concerns also evidenced in *The Marrow Thieves*. The history detailed in the prologue is put in tension with the present moment, where Joan's family and other Métis community members struggle with finding sustainability and maintaining family land. In the opening chapter, Joan's brother gets into a fight with their grandmother about the possibility of working for the mines so he can make enough money to keep their land. Joan's mother eventually snaps at Mere: "What are we supposed to do? Stay poor? Would that prove to you that we're Indian enough?" and Mere serenely answers no, "we are supposed to stay right with the community. That's how we know we're Indian enough."²⁷ This scene highlights how (even momentary) lapses in practice relating to the care and nurturing of community directly connects to the ability (or lack thereof) to preserve the land.

Importantly, Dimaline's opening line of the novel reassures readers that the connection between storytelling and practice, the ancestral gift of "old medicine," is preserved in the land so long as people are open to it: "Old medicine has a way of being remembered, of haunting the land where it was laid. People are forgetful. Medicine is not."²⁸ Not surprisingly, given the function of memory and forgetting that structures the novel, the urgency of landedness that begins the novel is seemingly forgotten by the end of the narrative. In an interview, Dimaline reveals that the opening sentence reflects the discord of forgetting that haunts Joan of Arcand.

I was trying to write about my community. ... [Joan is] a very modern woman and she's still in her community, which can exist at the same time. She had just forgotten that beauty of being an Indigenous women [sic]—that she had forgotten, but that place that she is from had not forgotten. I always wanted it to be about Joan and that she had forgotten something and something beautiful that could be really powerful.²⁹

Dimaline's words thus slant the novel's perspective to focus more on Joan's relation to herself and indigeneity rather than her need to find her husband, Victor. Of course, the narrative is about Joan's quest to save her husband, but it is also about a journey that leads her to reconcile her sense of identity with her Métis community, to reignite her Métis love for land. Like Frenchie, Joan is lost; Frenchie does not have the memory of connection to healthy Indigenous relations of land (this has been taken from him by the systems of the New Order), but Joan appears in the novel in the middle of a crisis, having forgotten that "her

land made her happier than she could have imagined.... The place reminded her who she was."³⁰ There is a switch for Joan in the narrative, where her sense of self—of the land's ability to "remind her who she was"³¹—is replaced with her desperate need to recover Victor. Dimaline appears to be suggesting, through her reimagining of a traditional romance plot, that heteronormative Western notions of love as all-consuming are in direct conflict with decolonial love rooted in self-love and ties to community kinship. Strikingly, the need to recover Victor only comes about because of his own inability to "stay right with the community," revealing his personal gap with decolonial love. He only goes missing after he and Joan fight "about selling the land she'd inherited from her father."³² And it's no coincidence that once Victor leaves, all future chapters that detail his first-person perspective are set within "a twenty-six-acre cell,"³³ the exact amount of land that Joan inherited from her father and that would be destroyed by mining companies if Victor had convinced her to sell.

Storytelling: Reconnecting Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being

While *The Marrow Thieves* is interested in showing the relation between story-keepers and the future, of how those who hold ancestral knowledge unfold Indigenous storytelling in ways that secure a future (however tenuous), *Empire of Wild* demonstrates this to readers in its very unfolding of a story that is being told to and lived by Joan as it happens—her story, which is based in traditional Métis stories, is necessary for repairing the future for herself and kin. In these ways, Dimaline demonstrates a fundamental aspect of the importance of storytelling within Indigenous communities, that of theoretical application and practice. This aligns with Dian Million's observation that "Story has always been practical, strategic, and restorative. Story is Indigenous theory. If these knowledges are couched in narratives, then narratives are always more than telling stories. Narratives seek inclusion, they seek the nooks and crannies of experiences, filling cracks and restoring order."³⁴ Combining the theoretical framework of Indigenous storytelling with the application of Indigenous futurisms that envisions speculative spaces of possibilities, hopes, and dreams gives a way of reconciling the past in the present while creating a generative space for the future. This restoring of order and reconciliation of Indigenous ways of being agrees with Grace Dillon's contention that all instances of Indigenous futurism "are narratives of *biskaabiyyang*, an Anishinaabemowin word connoting the process of 'returning to ourselves,' which involves discovering how personally one is affected by colonization, discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried from its impact, and recovering ancestral traditions in order to adapt in our post-Native Apocalypse world."³⁵ Through this "process of returning to ourselves," Indigenous peoples must also return to and navigate trauma of the past (which is often trauma that continues into the present) that has separated the individual from their community. In *The Marrow Thieves* and *Empire of Wild*, part of the "emotional and psychological baggage carried" by the protagonists is

an unarticulated struggle to reconcile their dislocated subjectivities as resulting from their separations from Métis identity through settler colonial violences of removing Indigenous bodies from homelands.

Dimaline signals in Frenchie's young perspective the disjunct between his sense of self and his Métis identity, and how this displacement and missing stories leave him unprepared to cultivate a strong sense of decolonial love. While his journey leads to many nonblood kinship ties across Indigenous communities in a way that celebrates Indigenous relations, he is also missing essential stories from his ancestors that could help him learn more of himself and his community outside of a settler gaze. This is perhaps most evident when considering Frenchie's understanding of hair braiding: "I did have the longest hair of any of the boys, almost to my waist, burnt ombré at the untrimmed edges. I braided it myself each morning, to keep it out of the way and to remind myself of things I couldn't quite remember but that, nevertheless, I knew to be true."³⁶ The significance of braiding is known to Frenchie, but there is dissonance in his understanding of the underlying storytelling that is bound up with the act of braiding—a story that reinforces the connection to ancestors, earth, and the creator. He enacts practices without "quite remember[ing]" for what purpose, not seeming to realize how the very act of braiding brings him closer to his culture and kinship ties, how the process is an act of love that strengthens cultural relationships. Instead, Frenchie compares the length and braiding of his hair to the other Indigenous boys in the community (particularly his rival Derrick), surveying them in ways that are complicit with settler colonial understandings of what makes an Indian: how Indigenous they look based on colonial notions of cultural signifiers. Whenever Frenchie feels unsure about his place within the community or how he "stacks up" against other male members of the collective, he reassures himself by noting that he "still had the longest braids. . . . That made [him] a better Indian, after all."³⁷ Though it may at first seem like typical young adult behavior, these insecurities are reflective of Frenchie's gap between storytelling (which holds Indigenous knowledges) and practice within his community.³⁸ Part of the novel's ingenuity and its YA perspective is how often Frenchie stumbles in his quest, showing readers his misrecognition of the importance of storytelling to reconcile his displaced Métis identity.

This can also be seen in his thoughts regarding the elder of their group, Minerva, who turns out to hold the key to ending the new residential school systems. It is because of Minerva and her ancestral songs that there is hope to create meaningful change in the future by restoring the land to Indigenous communities and repairing what capitalism has destroyed. For most of the novel, Frenchie dismisses the value of Minerva—echoing how in the novel, settler communities fail to understand the nuances of ceremony and the power of medicine. For instance, Frenchie views Minerva as someone who needs to be "babysat" rather than someone who can impart vital knowledge. He considers himself "lucky" when he gets to go hunting with Miigwans and learn from him,³⁹ prioritizing the male leader's knowledge of "Apocalyptic Boy Scouts" skills over

"crazy old Minerva" and her connection to ancestral knowledge,⁴⁰ which he doesn't "quite get."⁴¹ In contrast, Rose, a fierce young woman with Indigenous and Black heritage, immediately recognizes Minerva's importance to the community's future through her gift as story-keeper, and Rose practices being in good relation with Minerva by pursuing closeness and learning as much as she can from their time together. When Rose speaks a Cree word to Frenchie, one that she learned from Minerva, he becomes animated in his annoyance: "'How do you have language?' My voice broke on the last syllable. My chest tightened. How could she have the language? She was the same age as me, and I deserved it more. I don't know why, but I felt certain that I did. I yanked my braid out of the back of my shirt and let it fall over my shoulder. Some kind of proof, I suppose."⁴² In this scene, Frenchie does not recognize the power of Minerva's love embodied in connection to language and ancestral knowledge. Instead, he displays a moment of toxic masculinity in which he believes that his gender and braid are markers of his merit over Rose to hold language. Even after the group learns that Minerva holds the ancestor's power within her and uses it to destroy Recruiter marrow extraction tools, Frenchie misunderstands this power and is anxious to find Minerva to learn her process of destruction. Miigwans tiredly explains to him that, "She didn't find anything. She always had it. Maybe we just need to be better listeners."⁴³ This gap in listening for Frenchie is rooted in his removal from Métis knowledge and storytelling. He is anxious for hearing and learning more stories throughout the novel, soaking in the historical stories that Miigwans narrates to the group and even getting excited when Minerva tells children's stories to the younger members of the family. But because this process of storytelling is new to him, due to both his father's reluctance to tell him stories and the severs of settler colonialism that have kept him from communities like Miigwans's, he hasn't yet learned how to truly listen to the lessons of the story-keepers and put them into daily practices of restoration.

The idea of being a better listener (in ways that transmit tradition and knowledge to enact resurgence) also ripples through *Empire of Wild* as Joan repeatedly recalls the stories of her youth but fails to translate them into practices that bring her closer to her Indigenous identity—an issue that both her grandmother and friend Ajean comment on frequently. The two older women narrate stories to Joan, who expresses her "exasperat[ion] by all this Indian shit" while the storytellers reprimand her for being "no good at listening."⁴⁴ Ironically, Joan is given all the practical information that she needs to save Victor and bring balance to herself and the community from the beginning of the novel, but because she dismisses the teachings, her journey is that much more difficult. The main story being told is that of the rogarou, a community tale found within Métis nations.⁴⁵ In an interview, Dimaline clarifies the use of the figure in her stories, stating that the rogarou

is different in every Métis community. But in mine, he's a big black dog who also kind of looks like a man and talks.... He had

this seductive quality to him, but he would lure [women] and could cause great harm. And for the people who identified as male in our community, the rogarou was the story you would hear for what you could turn into; so, if you broke the rules of the community... in particular, if you didn't listen to or take care of the women in the community, you could turn into the rogarou.... It was like a curse.⁴⁶

In this conversation, Dimaline outlines how the rogarou is used to interpolate the Métis individual, causing them to reflect on what makes them a "good enough Indian" and to always be mindful of how their actions affect the balance of the community.⁴⁷ The prologue outlines this specifically, noting that when the Métis Arcand "forgot what they had asked for in the beginning—a place to live, and for the community to grow in a good way—[the rogarou] remembered, and he returned on padded feet, light as stardust on the newly paved road. And that rogarou, heart full of his own stories but his belly empty, he came home not just to haunt. He also came to hunt."⁴⁸

Initially, the novel sets up Joan as lost because of Victor's disappearance; and the act of forgetting that has led this Métis community into imbalance is because Victor (an outsider who has drifted most of his adult life) had no strong ties to the community and their stories and thus forgot (or rather never held knowledge) about the importance of land. When Joan visits her grandmother the day after Victor leaves to try and make sense of what has happened in their relationship, Mere steers the conversation into his connection with their community and ways of being.

"Victor, he's from out west, isn't it? He didn't grow up in community, yeah?"

"He did when he was littler, with his mom, but then he went with his dad to Winnipeg." She cut the twine with a small pair of sewing scissors and knotted it.

"Sometimes we forget what's real. For him, he sees a different way of being secure, I suppose." Mere touched some of the smaller leaves thoughtfully with her pointed fingernail, appreciating the architecture of the plant. "It's not bad, just not right."⁴⁹

This moment, initially, seems only to be directed at Victor and his actions concerning the land, his dismissal of the land to bring security to him and his family; indeed, his inability to understand the land's potential to enact sovereignty. But in this conversation, as Mere muses on "different way[s] of being secure" while making a physical connection to the earth by gingerly touching a plant, she is also commenting on Joan's own lapse in "forget[ting] what's real." Implicit in this scene of Mere's consideration of what makes community and reality is

the missing link of storytelling. Victor lacks the security gained from being connected to kinship through the knowledge passed down from generation to generation in storytelling—knowledge that keeps the community balanced and establishes a reciprocal relationship with the land. And, more importantly, Joan is also complicit in this moment of forgetting the stories that keep her tied to her Métis family and homeland. The division that Victor has brought into their lives through the act of land and kinship betrayal pulls Joan further from knowing and being herself. Therefore, the rogarou comes not only because of Victor's betrayal but also because Joan has lost her connection with her Métis roots: "She felt lighter leaving the burden of young and old relatives behind, lighter and without boundaries. It was scary to be this weightless, to be unheld."⁵⁰

Indigenous Futurisms: Imagining Métis Landedness

The Marrow Thieves constructs a world in which settler communities come to face one of the unsettling feelings that racialized people experience: that of not being able to see themselves in the future. Set in the not-so-distant future, when our "world [is] nearly destroyed by global warming,"⁵¹ the novel depicts a reprisal of the partnership between the Canadian government and religious organizations under the residential school systems, first established in New France, showing how settler colonialism continues to enact similar violent structures to destroy Indigenous life and bodies. The realization of a missing secure future unfolds for settlers like a Greek tragedy: "At first they just talked about it all casual-like. 'Oh, funniest thing, I haven't dreamed in months.' 'Isn't it odd, I haven't dreamed either.' . . . [But then,] they turned on each other, and the world changed again."⁵² Later in the novel, an observation is made that a man without dreams is just a machine, echoing back to the epigraph: "The way to kill a man or a nation is to cut off his dreams, the way the whites are taking care of the Indians: killing their dreams, their magic, their familiar spirits."⁵³ The irony of this reversal of settler societies, who have historically stolen futures from racialized peoples, losing the ability to imagine themselves in the future after decades of pillaging from the land and communities is surprisingly not often commented on in reviews or scholarship.⁵⁴ This is most likely because this reversal in the novel, while throwing settler communities into desperate action, still does not overthrow the power imbalance of settler nations continuing to enact violent colonization processes over Indigenous peoples. Thus, readers are more likely to reflect upon the novel's main premise: that without dreams, there are no futures; and with no futures, what point is there?

If we read this question as a way to reconceive the difficulty of imagining a future for Indigenous peoples as they navigate colonial processes that actively attempt to eradicate their presence and culture, then Dimaline recenters approaches to the future by repositing her dystopian narratives to enact modes of decolonial love through reconnection with the land by Indigenous practices. Of course, before doing this, *The Marrow Thieves* sets up a picture in which settler communities actively refuse to accept Indigenous worldviews and knowledge

as answers to repairing the world or offering a promising vision of the future—because this future is centered on a sharable world rather than one based in capitalist structures. Now, however, as the world crumbles around them and they suffer physically and mentally from their inability to dream, settler communities in North America grow frantic at the possibility of losing their position of power and contrived sense of control:

At first, people turned to Indigenous people the way the New Agers had, all reverence and curiosity, looking for ways we could help guide them. They asked to come to ceremony. They humbled themselves when we refused. And then they changed on us, like the New Agers, looking for ways they could take what we had and administer it themselves. How could they best appropriate the uncanny ability we kept to dream? How could they make ceremony better, more efficient, more economical?⁵⁵

Linking the government and Recruiters of the present to the harmful commodification process of New Agers from the 1970s onward, Miigwans articulates how disassociated the New Order is from the ongoing ecological crises that are leading to the death of millions. In the face of ecological apocalypse, the government originally dismisses the need to slow down its commodification of the land before it must give up on further development due to the irreversible damage it has inflicted; it then shifts its approach to focus on the fastest way to co-opt methods from Indigenous communities to give dreams to non-Indigenous peoples and settle their growing unease. They have lost sight of what is important; they have forgotten (or, more likely, never knew) that the land is vital, above humans, for survival. This lapse in settler knowledge, of continuously refusing to understand what is vital for balance in the future, is contrasted by Frenchie and his active memory work of re-establishing family ties and building a community of knowledge centered on tending to devastated homelands.

As the embodiment and keeper of dreams from the ancestors, Minerva represents the promise of a better future for the land and community. At first, the death of Minerva is too great and signals, particularly for the younger members of the community who have fewer memories of traditional ways of being, their collective certain death—without the language and dreams that Minerva carried in her bones, the family has lost the key to overthrowing the New Order. The future that they believed was so near, in which settler colonial structures could be destroyed and Indigenous ways of being would flourish, appears lost. The characters believe themselves to be in an even worse predicament than where they started at the beginning of the novel because they have lost their youngest member (Riri and her symbol of the future) and their elder. The loss of Minerva strikingly coheres with Maracle's assertion that Indigenous peoples "are operating from a diminished capacity to imagine the future not because we are

not capable of brilliance but because the knowledge we were to inherit has been seriously diminished, scattered, or altered.”⁵⁶ But, as previously noted, Maracle also asserts that scattered knowledge is not gone, simply mislaid; and even though Indigenous peoples have been further displaced in *The Marrow Thieves*, with many no longer connected to their kin or ancestral knowledge, characters like Minerva demonstrate how storytelling not only imagines a better future, but it also creates one. Through the stories she holds and shares, Minerva imparts vital knowledge that can be used to “start healing the land. We have the knowledge. ... When we heal our land, we are healed also. ... We’ll get there. Maybe not soon, but eventually.”⁵⁷ This passage articulates the growing consciousness of the rebel Indigenous group, particularly with the older generations who recognize that their mission is not just destroying the Recruiters and New Order but also establishing homelands and a viable connection with landedness—no matter how long the process.

How the rebel Indigenous community moves forward in their planning for the future resonates with Andersen’s articulation of the specific movements of Métis political and cultural consciousness, revealing that the postcapitalist dystopia is also depicting the longer ongoing story of Indigenous survivance. He argues that rather than a colonial notion of Métis nation as liminal peoples who hail from First Nations women and European fur traders, the Métis are a kinship community that arose under the particular conflict and violence experienced in the Red River area and grew into a specific Indigenous peoples. Andersen intends to demonstrate how “Métis national origins” are more correctly articulated as “a political consciousness” formed due to the need for Métis sovereignty and connection to care for and tend to the land.⁵⁸ Thinking about these cultural and political relations is integral for considering the ending of the novel and the actions of the rebel Indigenous community, which opens a space specifically for thinking through the dynamics of cultivating Indigenous futures in a way that echoes the Métis nation:

The council spent a lot of time piecing together the few words and images each of us carried: hello and goodbye in Cree, a story about a girl named Sedna whose fingers made all the animals of the North. They wrote what they could, drew pictures, and made the camp recite what was known for sure. It was Bullet’s idea to start a youth council, to start passing on the teachings right away, while they were still relearning themselves. Slopper was tasked with putting that together, and he thrived under the responsibility. He even gave them a name: Miigwanang—feathers. We were desperate to craft more keys, to give shape to the kind of Indians that could not be robbed. It was hard, desperate work. We had to be careful we weren’t making things up, half remembered, half dreamed.⁵⁹

The above passage demonstrates the collaborative consciousness of the rebel community moving forward—combining Cree words, an Inuit creation story, forming a new council with an Ojibwe name, and other unnamed aspects from various Indigenous nations. The community, recalling the survival practices of Métis nation, is a collective consciousness determined to retain knowledge and move forward toward a better future. Dimaline's reimagination of Métis nation practices—a postcontact Indigenous nation that assembled a political, social, and cultural consciousness of kinship alongside moments of violent conflict with settlers—under this new Indigenous rebellion enables a parallel reading of the practices for enacting Indigenous resurgence and survivance.

In *Empire of Wild*, the Recruiters and New Order are reimagined in the form of Thomas Heiser, a PR consultant hired by mining projects, and his group of roving evangelists that demonstrate how settler colonialism is organized with the specific aim of eliminating Indigenous sovereignty by destroying their relationship to the land. Heiser comes to symbolize the long history of Métis dispossession of land and sovereignty, which is causally related to how the land shapes Métis identity. In a similar way that *The Marrow Thieves* evokes Road Allowance People, *Empire of Wild* employs Heiser and his conceptions of the problem of Métis to his project to depict the legacy of industrial encroachments and strategic fracturing of Métis communities. He articulates the colonial notion that the Métis sprang up, seemingly from nowhere, as an Indigenous project to counter settler land claims: "Fucking Métis never used to be an issue. No one gave a shit about halfbreeds in these deals. But now, they were everywhere, on everything."⁶⁰ Near the end of the novel, readers learn that Heiser found Victor after his betrayal of Joan and her family. Heiser seizes the opportunity to use Victor in his vulnerable state of the rogarou to co-opt his charm and connections to sway the local Métis community into giving up their homeland to pipeline projects. And, as depicted in the novel, his strategy proves successful; Victor, under the control of the rogarou, persuades the community that

"These lands were given to us by the Lord Himself," he insisted. "They are ours to live on and prosper from. This entire wilderness is ours for the very purpose of celebrating and honoring the glory of God. . . . This entire empire of wild is ours in order that we may rejoice in His name. . . . We must build churches, new homes, better schools, thriving businesses—all in His name. This is how we move forward. This is how we heal."⁶¹

In this passage, Victor articulates a sense of healing the land and Indigenous bodies with a similar type of language used in *The Marrow Thieves*, but with an obviously different rhetorical purpose. Rather than reconnecting Indigenous communities with a sense of landedness that supports reciprocal healing of Indigenous bodies and land, Victor, under the curse of the rogarou, spews the

message Heiser has instilled in his consciousness to distract the local Indigenous communities and move forward with his mining project. In this way, the “empire of wild” is stripped of the Métis love for land that opens the novel in the prologue. Victor’s speech also brings up the ongoing tensions that underlie his conflicted relation to the land. Even under the power of the rogarou, Victor continues to need a physical connection to the land, choosing to sleep outdoors often during the mission’s travels: “He slept in the woods when he could. He said that to be under the stars made him feel closer to God.”⁶² Of course, being in the wilderness does not actually bring Victor closer to God; it brings him closer to Joan and his previous connection to the land of her community before his act of betrayal.

Ironically, it’s the mining worker Joan meets in a bar one night that reveals to her the link between the ecological destruction in the community and Heiser’s mission tents. While flirting and buying her drinks, Gerald comments that “The only real threat to a project—to our jobs—are the Indians. They’re the ones with the goddamned rights, I guess. Always protesting and hauling us to court.”⁶³ It’s Gerald’s rants, as he tries to get closer to Joan’s body, that unfold the truth to Joan about the connection between Heiser’s group and the land: “Mission tents are an important part of mining, of any project really—mining, forestry, pipelines”; leading Joan to the conclusion that “Missions are *part* of the project.”⁶⁴ If she had listened to Mere at the beginning of the novel—when she tells everyone that the church is a part of the mining industry, but the family blows this information off as a “conspiracy theory”⁶⁵—Joan would already have this knowledge. But her failure to listen to her grandmother’s wisdom has left her without this vital information. However, at the pivotal moment when Joan realizes her one chance to save Victor from his rogarou, she recalls Ajean’s stories and uses the knowledge to release him from the curse: “Remind him he is a man under it all. You can do it by making the thing bleed. Make him remember.” Minerva expresses a similar interaction that she had with a rogarou: “It starts with that violence and ends with that singing in my gut—another violence. He comes as beast and I make him bleed. ... When I bring the blood, he brings the man.” When Joan strikes two blows to Victor, once for his killing of Mere under the rogarou curse and once for his betrayal to Joan and her land, the shedding of the blood wakes him from the curse and restores him. In so doing, the violence Joan exacts rebalances Victor’s violence that perpetrated capitalist notions of extraction, monetization, and ecological desolation.

Decolonial Love: Strengthening Kinship and Identity

Decolonial love can be envisioned in many ways, and Dimaline’s novels in this study offer two vastly different approaches: one explored through coming-of-age tropes of discovery concerning kinship, ancestors, and land; the other through adult autonomy and passion in the face of colonial nation-state dislocation. Notably, the characters’ processes of finding love are intrinsically tied to their understanding of the importance of story-keeping, as well as the moments in which they forget the power of their ancestors’ teachings about

land and kinship. Thus, their quests for decolonial love are tied to rebalancing a sense of landedness with their communities and homelands, working to establish an active process of, what Gerald Vizenor terms, Native survivance: "an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent."⁶⁶ While Vizenor's articulation of survivance doesn't at first appear to provide an explicit consideration of decolonial love, when thought of in connection with Simpson's conditions for "resurgent struggle" it becomes clear that survivance is the ultimate act of self-love needed to enact Indigenous futures: "When my Indigeneity grows I fall more in love with my homeland, my family, my culture, my language, more in line with the idea that resurgence is my original instruction, more in line with the thousands of stories that demonstrate how to live a meaningful life and I have more emotional capital to fight and protect what is meaningful to me."⁶⁷ The moment of finding oneself and community, as discussed below in Dimaline's novels, is vital for the Métis protagonists to thrive and, hopefully, upend settler-colonial power. It leads to a powerful act of decolonial love and resurgence. By the end of the novels, both Frenchie and Joan come to find themselves and embody a sense of decolonial love that allows them to accept and give recognition to all the fractured parts of their Indigenous selves, which brings them closer to restoration and balance.

Despite this thriving collective consciousness at the end of the novel, Frenchie thinks his journey of community finding isn't over yet. Although he has come to respect and care for the power of ancestral relations that Minerva embodied, he still doesn't understand how the "key" Minerva holds works, which is through a connection to the ancestors through decolonial love. Frenchie chooses to leave his new family, which now includes his biological father, to follow Rose on a new journey to travel and find other communities; however, the young couple's journey ends before it begins. When they are about to leave, Frenchie and Rose join group members who rush to encounter new travelers trespassing outside the settlement site. They soon discover that the newcomers' leader is Miigwans's long-lost husband, Isaac, who speaks Cree fluently and has a strong connection with the ancestors and land. Interestingly, both Minerva and Isaac are labelled as "halfbreed" in the novel, while Minerva is Métis though not articulated as such.⁶⁸ In this revelation that Isaac is alive and holds the power of decolonial love that Minerva also embodied, Frenchie comes to realize all the acts of love and connection to the ancestors' knowledge that he has witnessed in relation to Indigenous survivance—his father leaving, his brother's sacrifice, Minerva's gift of ancestral song, and Isaac's continued search for Miigwans. Frenchie's journey isn't just about learning, healing, and fostering communities in the hope of repairing the earth, it is also learning about decolonial love that counters the generational trauma of settler colonialism: "That bundle I carried in my chest, the one that inflated when I heard about our triumphs, the one that ached with our losses, the same place where my love for Rose nested and the painful memories were enshrined and mourned: from there came the push, and I set off running."⁶⁹

This feeling “push[es]” Frenchie back towards the rebel community and their consciousness of extended kinship building, as he and Rosie decide to ultimately stay at the settlement.

And I understood just what we would do for each other, just
what we would do for the ebb and pull of the dream, the bigger
dream that held us all.
Anything.
Everything.⁷⁰

At this moment, Frenchie experiences at full height the true power of decolonial love—the “bundle” that carries all the sadness and hope of an Indigenous community into the future.

It is not only the rebel Indigenous community in *The Marrow Thieves* who understands the connection between body, land, and healing; in *Empire of Wild*, Dimaline is careful to note how Joan comes from “a particular Red River family” who grew medicine “salt [that] came from the[ir ancestors’] actual bones.”⁷¹ The bone salt is used as a means of protection for homes and people. Notably, the family legacy of bone salt is grounding to Joan, reminding her of her connection to the land she is on, including both her current quest and also the family memories that were laid there. Importantly, it is the combination of her Mere’s bone salt and the power of her sexual connection with Victor that leads Joan to her victory over Heiser. With the salt and her physical love, Joan subdues Victor long enough to wound him in the flesh, which ignites his humanity and reminds him of his ties to Joan and her community. In many ways, the story’s finale is an action of decolonial love, breaking the cages and restrictions of colonial captivity, both figuratively and literally. However, this healing that enacts the bringing together of physical bodies and emotional connection between Victor and Joan does not explicitly address coming home or healing the land from settler colonialism. Yet, I argue that their coming back together is symbolically linked to a return of connection with the land and resurgence of cultural community—a reunion that mends the break from Victor’s betrayals and opens up space for Joan to reconnect with her Métis community. Interestingly, the novel ends with a shifting tension similar to Frenchie’s short-lived decision to leave the rebel community, where Joan realizes that there is another conflict in her community that needs her attention and love—her young cousin, Zeus, who has been her sidekick throughout her journey to save Victor, has also become a rogarou.

Conclusion

What’s most important in Dimaline’s dystopian novels is not that they offer alternatives for the present moment in terms of imagining or creating a better future; instead, Dimaline offers her protagonists the possibility of shifting the way they see and move within the spaces of their respective worlds. Although *The Marrow Thieves* and *Empire of Wild* are novels that build different Indigenous

futurisms, the depiction of their storytelling, the relationships between Indigenous and settler communities, the unbalanced structures of power, and the growing urgency of climate change and ecological destruction are all authentic reflections of Indigenous oppressive realities in the here and now. Thus, what at first appears as ecological disaster fictions are revealed to hold Indigenous worldviews of survival and survivance, countering settler colonialism through Indigenous futurism. Instead of world-building a possibly different future, one that solves the problems or offers joy that isn't viable or sustainable in the present, Dimaline's dystopian novels reiterate how decolonial love and landedness are the answer to crises of the past, present, and future—no matter the situation. In centering Indigenous perspectives, Dimaline takes the sense of responsibility in Indigenous communities seriously in *The Marrow Thieves* and *Empire of Wild*, depicting how to cultivate and transmit teachings in order to unsettle colonial understandings of knowledge, while framing a more sustainable future enacted by practices of decolonial love. I argue that the very act of creating Indigenous futurisms, of writing any version of an Indigenous-centric perspective into a future setting and space, enacts a mode of decolonial love—ensuring that Indigenous love, knowledge, and ways of being in the world continue in the face of colonial structures that continuously try to silence them.

It's unsurprising, then, that both of Dimaline's narratives attest to an unshareable future within their dystopian settings. Frenchie and the rebel group cannot survive without destroying the New Order based on settler capitalist practices, and Joan and Victor can't reconnect with the Arcand Métis community while Heiser's project continues dislocation practices. These settings reflect the longer history of settler colonialism that has severed and continues to sever relations between Indigenous communities; and while they have been extremely successful in severing all Indigenous relations, it is especially true for the Métis. Colonialism has created, as LaRocque mentions, an external sense of shame, lost identity, and liminality for the Métis, so when they recover themselves, when they return home, when they accept a decolonial love, there is no possibility of moving forward in the future alongside the structures that continue to enact colonial violence. Simpson reiterates these concerns of how Indigenous communities must continue to grow into the future:

Indigenous futures are entirely dependent upon what we *collectively* do now as diverse Indigenous nations, with our Ancestors and those yet unborn, to create Indigenous presences and to generate the conditions for Indigenous futures by deeply engaging in our nation-based grounded normativities. We must continually build and rebuild Indigenous worlds. This work starts in motion, in decolonial love, in flight, in relationship, in biiskabiyang, in generosity, humility, and kindness, and this is where it also ends.⁷²

Dimaline's work enacts the practices that Simpson outlines above, of creating pathways and stories that lead to Indigenous resurgence, "which is an Indigenous community's capacity to adapt in ways sufficient for its members' livelihoods to flourish into the future."⁷³ In both *The Marrow Thieves* and *Empire of Wild*, Dimaline depicts how resurgence is embodied within the characters, how "Indigenous bodies are part of the land, and Indigenous bodies are everywhere. Indigenous bodies carry those teachings and that resistance with them."⁷⁴ In the end, Frenchie and Joan both construct a space of landedness—"which is purposeful; [landedness] gives meaning to language and life"⁷⁵—and enact decolonial love that ensures their Métis survivance in the present and, hopefully, into the future.

Notes

1. Marilyn Dumont, "The Gift," in *Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada, an Anthology*, ed. Jeanne Martha Perreault and Sylvia Vance (Edmonton: NeWest, 1990), 41.

2. Métis scholar Chris Andersen defines his community as "an Indigenous people that originated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century on the northern plains of what is now southern Manitoba. Centered historically in and around Red River (now Winnipeg) and intimately tied to the buffalo-hunting economy, the Métis became a powerful force that pushed back against the Hudson's Bay Company's claims to economic monopoly and later led two armed resistances against the Canadian state." "Who Can Call Themselves Métis?" *The Walrus*, December 29, 2017.

3. Both protagonists are seemingly named to highlight the French aspects of their Métis heritage. Frenchie, given name Francis, is both a nickname and reference to the French Empire's involvement in the colonization projects of North America. Joan appears to be an evocation of Joan of Arc, a young woman sainted for her steadfast belief in homeland sovereignty and French resistance. Importantly, these characters and their reminders of New France/French history emphasizes the etymology of the word *métis* that originates from a French adjective for people of mixed heritage; it was later used in the sixteenth century by French colonists to denote peoples of mixed European and Indigenous heritage. The adjective, of course, is not synonymous with the Métis (noun) as a distinct people. See Heather Devine's *People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660–1900*.

4. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 9.

5. Kyle Whyte, "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene," in *Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 207.

6. Adele Perry et al., *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 179.

7. Danika Medak-Saltzman, "Coming to You from the Indigenous Future: Native Women, Speculative Film Shorts, and the Art of the Possible," *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, 29, no. 1 (2017): 146.

8. Ibid.

9. Lee Maracle, *Memory Serves* (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers, 2015), 134.

10. Ibid., 128.

11. Aubrey Jean Hanson, "Holding Home Together: Katherena Vermette's *The Break*," *Canadian Literature*, no. 237 (2019): 31.
12. "Cherie Dimaline on *Empire of Wild*," *The Next Chapter*, CBC Radio Canada, September 13, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/books/empire-of-wild-1.5212680>
13. Chris Andersen, *"Métis": Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 11.
14. Emma LaRocque, "Contemporary Metis Literature: Resistance, Roots, Innovation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (New York: Oxford University Press), 131–2.
15. There are two main resistance movements in Métis Nation history: the Red River Rebellion of 1869–70 and the Northwest Resistance of 1885—both movements were against Canadian governmental interference and regulations of Métis homelands.
16. *Ibid.*, 140.
17. Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves* (Toronto: Dancing Cat Books, 2017), 6.
18. *Ibid.*
19. For other examples of this dystopian trope, see Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1987); Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993); Sarah Hall's *Daughters of the North* (2007); Doris Lessing's *Mara and Dann* (1999); and Fiona Shaw's *Outwalkers* (2017).
20. For further information on Road Allowance Peoples, see: <https://indigenousspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/road-allowance-people/>.
21. Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves*, 9.
22. *Ibid.*, 150.
23. *Ibid.*, 21.
24. Andersen, "Métis," 110.
25. "'Empire Of Wild' Tells A Small Story—But Not A Slight One." Review of *Empire of Wild*, NPR, July 29, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/29/896445003/empire-of-wild-tells-a-small-story-but-not-a-slight-one>.
26. Cherie Dimaline, *Empire of Wild* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2020), 3.
27. *Ibid.*, 21.
28. *Ibid.*, 1.
29. "A Native Woman Battles Neocolonialism and Werewolves in 'Empire of Wild,'" *Electric Literature*, November 25, 2020, <https://electricliterature.com/cherie-dimaline-empire-of-wild/>.
30. Dimaline, *Empire of Wild*, 72.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, 6.
33. *Ibid.*, 42.
34. Dian Million, "Intense Dreaming: Theories, Narratives, and Our Search for Home," *The American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2011): 322.
35. Grace L. Dillon, *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (University of Arizona Press, 2012), 10.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, 190.
38. These ideas are further reflected in the novel, where there is much speculation by the characters as to who is a "real" Indian or "pretendian" working for the Recruiters. There is a growing sense of unease among the Indigenous rebels over securing ancestral knowledge to safeguard the community and land.
39. *Ibid.*, 34.

40. Ibid., 34, 37.

41. Ibid., 149.

42. Ibid., 38.

43. Ibid., 178.

44. Dimaline, *Empire of Wild*, 145.

45. The rogarou also appears in *The Marrow Thieves* in a section where Minerva tells the tale of her own encounter with a “dog that haunts the half-breeds but keeps the girls from going on the roads at night where the men travel,” 66.

46. “Cherie Dimaline on Empire of Wild.”

47. In another interview, Dimaline discusses how while the rogarou can be used as teaching tool and as a metaphorical layering within stories that he is also literal and real within her community, “A Native Woman Battles Neocolonialism and Werewolves in ‘Empire of Wild.’”

48. Ibid., 4.

49. Ibid., 84–5.

50. Ibid., 23.

51. Cover copy, *The Marrow Thieves*.

52. Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves*, 45.

53. From William S. Burroughs’ *The Place of Dead Roads*.

54. In his reading of the novel’s ending, Daniel Heath Justice comments on the elements of survivance, how family and kinship ties are prevailed upon to build some sense of the future: “Family—kindship—carried through relations that extend through this life and beyond it, is the key to the critique of settler expropriation and exploitation” (137–8). *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2018.

55. Ibid., 88.

56. Maracle, *Memory Serves*, 134.

57. Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves*, 193.

58. Andersen, “Métis,” 109.

59. Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves*, 214.

60. Dimaline, *Empire of Wild*, 46.

61. Ibid., 122.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., 220.

64. Ibid., 220–1.

65. Ibid., 22.

66. Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 85.

67. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Anger, Resentment, and Love: Fuelling Resurgent Struggle,” *Native American and Indigenous Association*, June 6, 2015, Washington, DC.

68. Minerva tells the Métis story of the rogarou that she learned from her grand-mère; it was also confirmed through correspondence with the author that Minerva has a Métis parent.

69. Ibid., 229.

70. Ibid., 31.

71. Dimaline, *Empire of Wild*, 2.

72. Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 265.

73. Kyle P Whyte, “What Do Indigenous Knowledges Do for Indigenous Peoples?” in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Learning from Indigenous Practices for Environmental*

Sustainability, ed. Melissa K. Nelson and Daniel Shilling (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 68–9.

74. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Glen Coulthard, "Dechinta Bush University, Indigenous land-based Education and Embodied Resurgence," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, October 18, 2014. <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2014/11/26/leanne-simpson-and-glen-coulthard-on-dechinta-bush-university-indigenous-land-based-education-and-embodied-resurgence/>.

75. LaRocque, Emma. "For the Love of Place—Not Just Any Place," *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada*. Edited by Adele Perry et al. Winnipeg: U Manitoba Press, 2013, 182.

