

The Bases Are Loaded: American Indians and American Studies

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To argue that baseball and American studies would not exist without American Indians might seem ludicrous, if it weren't so obvious. Well, perhaps we should say obvious to the four of us. Although one is a sport and the other an academic field of study, we suggest that they are both wholly "American" because they signify cultural patterns coterminous with the patterns valued by the Indigenous peoples of North America. Before you stop reading give us a chance to pitch some American Indian ball stories and hurl the discussion in four directions (first, second, third, and home), looking at how American Indian studies scholars respond to the place of Indian peoples in American legal and cultural nationalism, as well as in contemporary post-nationalist and transnationalist American studies. American Indian cultural patterns are intrinsic to the practice of American studies as a central and original—if too often overlooked—way of generating understanding in America. This recognition takes Indian writers, thinkers, and peoples off of the jerseys and ball caps where they have been mascotized into a grinning silence and places them on the ball field as active players in an inter-tribal, inter-national, and inter-disciplinary game. In our article we hope to show that the goals of American baseball and American studies are to bring people together from diverse backgrounds to produce knowledge. To create. Baseball and American studies depend upon collaboration to bring something

new into existence. Hence our thesis: there is no American studies without American Indians.

The bases are loaded with a variety of subjects—the historiography of American studies and the history of baseball, the elaboration of national American legal discourses concerning American Indian nations and the American culture wars, mystery novels about Indians and fast-pitch softball in Indian Country—in order to show the ways these things look from the point of view of American Indian studies. Engaging with the perspectives and insights of scholars of American Indian studies is not meant to “fix” the ways in which American studies sees and treats Indian peoples and cultures. Our goal is more ambitious than that. We hold that American Indian narratives are fundamental to any understanding of America that includes notions of justice in this multicultural and multinational world. Recognizing American Indian cultural patterns as intrinsic to understanding America provides a means to imagine and create a discourse that acknowledges the contemporary state of American culture while remaining connected to and cognizant of its foundational history. In other words, Indians have talked about America, about negotiating multinational and transnational understandings of this place, about what is needed to live well here, long before Americans were imagined. The patterns Indian people lived and live by inform the ways they interact with Europeans and their Euroamerican descendants, both culturally and governmentally. These patterns are here, but they are often obscured. Abner Doubleday did not invent baseball just as American studies did not invent the study of America as a culture. Nor did Indians necessarily, but American Indian studies’ scholarship and criticism have unique perspectives on these subjects—perspectives as old as creation itself.

Much of what we discuss in the following pages looks at the ways in which American Indian contributions to the study of American cultural life have been eclipsed. We also look at why those moments in legal and cultural history have been eclipsed, but we are not solely interested in honing our knives on ongoing colonialist oversights. American nationalism, in its dominant and sometimes doctrinaire forms (what is meant here will become clear later), has imagined a usable past for itself in the ways in which Indian peoples, nations, and literatures are constructed as wholly other to the “true” American. Much excellent American cultural history has been done on the topic of Indian otherness (Robert Berkhofer’s *The White Man’s Indian*¹ being an admirably detailed example), but Indians are not subjects in this history, they are objects in, and often victims of, this history. The usable past imagined in dominant strains of American nationalism, even when critical of the othering of Indian peoples, often neglects to seek out Indian agency as a main determinant in America’s shared story. Think, for example, of the doom implicit in the titles of famous popular revisionist histories like *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*, *Stolen Continents*, and *The Earth Shall Weep*.² Indians suffer in these narratives; their usable past is one of despair, loss, and victimage.

This is not the story we are interested in, nor are we interested in eliding it. We are concerned with finding a narrative of the past and the present that brings American Indian studies and American studies together. As is covered below, others in the field of American studies attempt to find ordinary moments for American cultural study that are not colored in tones of imperial dispossession and indigenous destruction. Columbus is turned away from, the Puritans rejected, but Indians are passed over in favor of Vikings as a potential source for a new origin story. We wonder about why Indians are neglected in this discourse. Indians storied this continent to life for countless generations before the Vikings plied the North Atlantic, before England was colonized. Isn't there something to be gained from heeding Indian stories, histories, and cultural mores?

We propose that there is such a gain to be made. As our paper unfolds, we will turn more and more to Indian notions of the power of diversity that are kept in the creation stories of a vast number of indigenous American literatures.³ Generally speaking, American Indian creation stories narrate inclusions rather than exclusions: animals help the culture heroes in the task of the earth's creation and they instruct humans on how best to live. The many faces of humanity are recognized as each possessing unique gifts, which if shared would serve to benefit all. There are no "others" in these stories; heterogeneity trumps homogeneity as inclusion trumps exclusion. Creation is, in these stories, an activity, not an event—an action that demands the participation of everyone, regardless of their technological prowess, race, or species. Creation stories peopled America, before America was given such a name, and they are the metaphor to which we turn in this paper. Baseball, as you will see, is an Indian creation story, as is the Indian mystery novel, as are treaty negotiations. Our metaphorical engagements with these cultural icons, events, and writings as creation moments recognize the stories of Indian loss and victimage as parts, *incidents*, in a larger story of creation. Our use of creation as a metaphor in this paper is intended to show that the American Indian studies view of America is roomy enough to absorb all sorts of adversity and diversity, without eclipsing either the people who keep the stories or the people that arrived later. Creation, it seems, is about collaboration, so we four chose to join our voices as one, in order to bring a multiplicity of perspectives to what American studies is, as seen through the narratives of American Indian studies scholarship and criticism, and to also see what American studies might be when joined with American Indian studies. As this creation is collaborative, we invite your participation in this process as well.

The four of us first tossed these ideas around at the 2005 meeting of the Mid-America American Studies Association in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where we presented our thoughts in a panel with the title, "There's No American Studies Without American Indians." Each of us presented our papers separately, one after the other, in conventional academic panel fashion. When it came time to adapt our work to an essay form for submission to this journal, we opted to keep

the notion of teamwork—which any good ball club depends upon—foregrounded by presenting our papers together, as one piece where we toss the ball to one another, around the horn and back again, acknowledging that the team’s success is more important than the padding of any individual player’s statistics.

Nationalism, Culture Wars, and Legal Discourse

Two of the most important pillars of the postnationalist paradigm of American studies are its aggressive critique of nationalism and its burgeoning recognition of transnational cultural patterns. In her 2003 presidential address to the American Studies Association, Amy Kaplan suggests that the primary agenda of American cultural studies might be the effort toward “decentering the tenacious model of the nation as the basic unity of knowledge production.”²⁴ This project of questioning the epistemic hegemony of national formations is intriguing and in a particular way stands as the foundation for the study of American Indian literatures within the pleasantly unpredictable framework of the American studies interdiscipline. In her 2004 presidential address to the ASA, Shelley Fisher Fishkin added her own mandates into the American studies fray, repeatedly asking—and answering—the question, “What would American studies look like if it placed the transnational at its center?”²⁵ The field of American Indian studies—through its ability to combine creative cultivation of viable community possibilities with critical interventions into the manifold patterns of modern state nationalism—serves to radically reorient, advance, and enhance the aspects of American studies emphasized by Kaplan and Fishkin.

In an ideal cosmos, American Indian studies would intrigue any American studies scholar because the former often directly confront and question the hypernationalism of the colonialist U.S. nation-state. Within a continuing history in which the U.S. national narrative consistently rehearses the flexing of state power against people and communities on this continent (and others as well), American Indian studies serves as an incredibly valuable resource that must be recognized by scholars in American studies who take up the project of destabilizing the oppressive cultural, social, political, military, and economic imperatives of the U.S. nation-state.

Indeed, works of American Indian literature often seem to resonate perfectly with the postnationalist American studies mandate to deconstruct, disassemble, and discard nations and nationalisms. The lens of our metaphor *du jour*—the ball game—reveals this mode of American studies as fundamentally defensive: taking to the field in order to counter the unsavory impulses and iniquitous imperatives of nationalism. This is certainly a laudable and necessary effort. Yet, as the Minnesota Twins tend to reveal, an impeccable defense will never win the day unless accompanied by at least a bit of offensive success. Likewise, an effective critique of nationalism must be accompanied by the creative imagining of communities divorced from the exclusions and violences of modern nationhood. In failing to foster this creativity, American studies, with its disre-

gard for the positive possibility of any and all forms of nation and nationalism, ultimately delimits the effectiveness of its own critique.

Critical work in American Indian studies suggests that while we can say that modern state-nationalisms—especially that of the colonialist/imperialist U.S. nation-state—are deserving of interrogation and destabilization, the American studies penchant to reject whole-hog any and all articulations of nationalism must be intensely scrutinized. When we critically engage the concept of nationhood, we must recognize the myriad possibilities that might exist under this term, many of which are not derived from dominant Western epistemology.

As the contemporary American culture wars reflect a crisis in the sense of U.S. nationhood, they provide a means to critically engage the concept of American nationalism and how it might be fruitfully reimagined by engaging with the perspectives of American Indian studies. In general, as Nikhil Pal Singh notes, current cultural discourse “counterposes multiculturalism and universalism as principal, opposed terms in the culture wars.”⁶ Singh elaborates that this opposition “determines much of what we end up speaking for, or against” in these debates. The question at play in Singh’s article is whether or not cultural pluralism and multiculturalism are threats to the nation—do they seek to disunify a universal state of civic nationalism by privileging a diversity of narrow, ethnic (as opposed to civic) communities? Singh explores the works of various conservative and liberal American writers, thinkers, and public figures from the New Deal through the mid-1990s in the article and finds the debates surrounding pluralism and multiculturalism covering a wide array of positions and offering a similar wide array of prescriptions as to how to best deal with the fact of cultural diversity in the United States. As Singh puts it, though these differences in perspective and prescription may exist, all such works “rely upon the U.S. nation-state as a stable container of social antagonisms, and as the necessary horizon of our hopes for justice.”⁷ Enlightenment ideals, as embodied in “the state, the founding documents, the ideals of the revolution, and so forth,”⁸ stand as originary in the discourse: they are the ideals that redeem antagonism into understanding and difference into consensus. Generally speaking, some writers in this discourse seek to tame ethnic affiliation, proposing it as secondary to the universal ideals of civic nationalism (Arthur Schlesinger’s *The Disuniting of America*, for example⁹), while others wish to open civic nationalism to the benefits of unchastened ethnic identities, but both positions accept the nation as the universal within which these prescriptions will take place. The nation, as a universal ideal, has the power to contain social divisiveness and cultural diversity.

As this paper unfolds, readers will come to see that we regard this moment of origin—of universal identity—as non-Indian, a perhaps unconscionable eclipse of the thoughts and ideals of the peoples who originally founded the social and cultural life of humanity on this continent. The United States as a nation is a problem in American Indian studies; U.S. nationalism, picking up on

a body of discourse from colonial Europe, constructs Indians as lesser peoples in need of redemption. The need to redeem should be understood as part of the European imperial project, which Columbus articulated in 1492 when he discovered that the Indians he met should “easily be made Christian” (that is, redeemed). Anglo-American colonists shared this attitude to redeem Indigenous Americans, adding to it the imperative to redeem the wasteland they found in North America, regarding the redemptive development of the landscape as part of their Christian obligation and their legal right to already inhabited homelands. Lenore Stiffarm and Phil Lane, Jr. discuss the concept of the Norman Yoke and its place in the ways the British used the Doctrine of Discovery and Right of Conquest. As it came to be articulated by John Locke, the Norman Yoke held that Christians, in coming across vacant or virtually vacant lands, had the obligation to cultivate them. Vacancy here refers to a state of cultivation (as determined by the conquerors) as much as population. In domesticating a wasteland, the Christian peoples are said, under this principle, to have conquered it and so are entitled to its ownership.¹⁰ Christianization and economic development are the redemptive forces that the Anglo-American colonists offer Native America. North America needs redemption (economic development) as much as the Indians do: missionization and development, as Christian obligations, shape later U.S. nationalist culture, especially in its popular cultural forms, informing treasured notions of Manifest Destiny as well as continuing to influence evolving forms of U.S. imperialism. U.S. popular cultural understandings of the redemption of peoples and landscapes need to be held in mind in discussions of the relations of American culture to American Indian cultures, as they articulate and sustain a notion of Indian neediness.

In this light, U.S. nationalism is a process of redemption and, in light of Singh’s articulation of popular debates concerning multiculturalism, it is the nation that redeems; it is the nation that contains social divisiveness and offers a universal identity that allows us all to be different ethnically while simultaneously seeing to it that we are all united civically. But where do Indians stand in this drama? They are props, objects to be moved upon, saved from their own shortcomings or sufferings. Put bluntly, Indians need to be redeemed. Putting it simplistically, some articulators of an American cultural tradition might say Indians need to be redeemed from their inherent moral and social backwardness and savagery (as was sought by colonial practices of missionizing and later by national policies aimed at assimilating Indian peoples to the “conquering” culture’s cultural and economic life), while those who articulate a multicultural countertradition might regard the Indians as needing to be redeemed from the injustices they have suffered. Redeeming the Indians here is also progress towards the nation’s redemption, as redressing historical wrongs will save the nation from its failures to live up to its own ideals. What we are suggesting here is that such notions of redemption are foundational in American cultural thought and that Indians are seen, in this cultural assumption, as needing a redemption that they do not imagine for themselves.

The notion of Indians needing redemption stems from the invented idea that Indians are inferior to Western peoples. The invention of Indians as lesser peoples is not only part of the American cultural tradition, but also can be found in the legal discourses that grew out of the encounter of Europeans (and later, Americans) with American Indian peoples. Upon becoming aware of the New World and its inhabitants, Europeans created discourses regarding the world and humans' place within it. These discourses allowed Europeans to develop moral justifications for the dispossession of native peoples, initially through the Spanish legal document, the *Requerimiento*, "which was to be read to the indigenous groups of the New World as they were contacted by Spanish explorers."¹¹ The *Requerimiento* delineated a history of the world and required indigenous peoples to accept Spanish rule and the word of god.¹² This manifesto, which used military threat to force Native peoples to submit themselves to Spain's authority, became the legal foundation for the colonization of the Western Hemisphere. The compilation of subsequent debates regarding the nature of Native peoples, carried out by Spanish theologians, formed the Doctrine of Discovery, which became cited as European monarchs' legal justification for claiming land title in the New World. This doctrine has multiple definitions, but it has been primarily cited to render the aboriginal title of American Indians as a "right of occupancy." European nations, including England, France, and Spain, that established colonies in North America justified their claims to territory through the Doctrine of Discovery.¹³ This "international law," with its obvious discriminatory applications, was generally respected by European nations and was cited as recently as 2005 by the United States Supreme Court in *City of Sherrill, New York v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*.¹⁴

The remnants of these theological debates that posited Native peoples as inferior have had extensive implications for Native nations. These Old World discourses produced a corpus of texts positioning Native peoples in opposition to European civilization, and these texts and the assumptions undergirding them shaped (and continue to inform) the American public imagination. Within this tradition, Native nations were depicted as without civilization, law, or order.¹⁵

This European legal tradition of Indian intellectual, cultural, and political inferiority was primarily enforced in U.S. law in John Marshall's Supreme Court decision in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1832). As Lumbee scholar David Wilkins observes, *Johnson v. McIntosh* intended to establish how pre-Revolutionary land transactions would be recognized. Setting this problem aside, Marshall proceeded to answer a different question entirely: whether or not American Indians held *title* to their occupied lands.¹⁶ In his opinion, Marshall argued the title was held exclusively by the United States as a result of the Doctrine of Conquest. In Marshall's formulation, Indian nations retained mere rights of occupancy. Marshall supported his opinion by invoking the American national mythology of superior civilization, stating:

But the tribes of Indians inhabiting this country were fierce savages, whose occupation was war, and whose subsistence was drawn chiefly from the forest. To leave them in possession of their country, was to leave the country a wilderness; to govern them as a distinct people, was impossible, because they were as brave and as high spirited as they were fierce, and were ready to repel by arms every attempt of their independence.¹⁷

In this opinion, the court argued that Native nations were “inferior” to “civilized” Europeans and were, therefore, incapable of owning and selling their lands. Furthermore, the court invoked the doctrine of conquest, asserting European domination over tribes. Finally, Marshall created a new rule as a means to legitimize what he called the “actual state of things.” David Wilkins has concluded that “[t]he ‘rule’ was Marshall’s innovative deployment of the historically fictitious doctrines of discovery and conquest to legitimize the United States’ power over tribes.”¹⁸ In other words, the European-derived doctrines of discovery and conquest, rooted in fictional notions of Indian savagery and moral inferiority, became U.S. law and have sometimes been used to diminish the legal rights of tribal nations.

Suffused with the national mythology that maintains the natural inferiority of Native nations, Marshall’s legal findings persist. In 1955, Justice Stanley F. Reed’s majority opinion in *Tee-Hit-Ton v. United States* reflected the continued belief in conquest. Reed proclaimed, “Every American schoolboy knows that the savage tribes of this continent were deprived of their ancestral range by force and that, even when the Indians ceded millions of acres by treaty in return for blankets, food and trinkets, it was not a sale but the conqueror’s will that deprived them of their land.”¹⁹ Justice Reed ignored the history of treaty-making between tribes and the United States by evoking conquest as the legal basis for the federal government’s usurpation of Indian title. This is not a story of the creation of America resulting from the alliances and exchanges between Natives and Europeans. This story, instead, places Native peoples as mere obstacles in the creation of America.

In addition to those found in legal discourses, such ideological national mythologies surface in contemporary (late twentieth and early twenty-first century) popular fiction written about Indians and point to the same kind of grave consequences for Indian peoples as those found in American legal discourses about Indian nations. The ideology of Manifest Destiny, which legitimates the need to redeem the American landscape by wresting it from “inferior” Indians by right of conquest, spills down through the centuries to the present and takes an odd but nonetheless revealing form in a subgenre of mystery writing, where Indians are the protagonists who seek to order the chaos that crime introduces into their communities. The logic of redemption that Manifest Destiny embod-

ies (redeeming a savage wilderness by transforming it into a civilized nation) is different in these mysteries than it is in U.S. legal culture, but just because the form differs does not mean that the result does. Indians, this subgenre of popular fiction suggests, are mysteries themselves—and mysteries need to be explained. Redemption is achieved through rational explanation.

The ideological notions of a redemptive American nationalism usurps Native lifeways, thought, languages, and literary expression, profaning them by declaring them profane, saving them by destroying them. What is maintained by Indian peoples, despite the programs of redemption, what survives, becomes prey to another kind of redemption: understanding. This idea of understanding is not based on indigenous standards of mutual respect and exchange; rather understanding is attained through the objective measures of dominant Western epistemology, where description is privileged over exchange. Objectified to be understood, Indian peoples become “cultures” to be thought about rather than people to think about the world with; objectified, Indian nations become tribes to be dictated too, rather than peoples with sovereign political interests. Objectified, rather than engaged, Indians become cultures that are mysterious and exotic, “different” as we say in the Midwest. Indians need to be “understood” rather than engaged as self-determining peoples with ideas that need to be thought about, not objectified.

This is where Indian mysteries come in. Indian mysteries, such as those with titillatingly exotic titles like *Skinwalkers* (by Tony Hillerman), *Shooting Chant* (by Aimée and David Thurlo), *The Eagle Catcher* (by Margaret Coel), or *Dance of the Thunderdogs* (by Kirk Mitchell),²⁰ promise two things: suspense and research. Suspense for breathless entertainment and research that will provide understanding and insight into the unfathomably strange cultures of Native America—and they must be strange since they are constituted with such beings as skinwalkers, thunderdogs, and eagle catchers.²¹ Based on research, such books may seem to be advancing a multicultural agenda, of expanding the cultural knowledge and sensitivity of their majority culture readers, of generating interest in the lives of Indians. But, is the knowledge of the cultural diversity advanced by emphasizing cultural differences as strangenesses, as things alien to the social norms of readers? No doubt most of us regard the exoticization of cultural differences as dehumanizing, as being something other than what we strive for in American and American Indian studies.

For example, Tony Hillerman’s *Skinwalkers* tries to “understand” Navajo people, heightening their exoticism as a way of redeeming them into knowledgability for non-Navajos. Hillerman, it must be said, writes enjoyable books with beautiful evocations of long drives through the desert. The characters of the detectives Leaphorn and Chee are well-drawn, and Hillerman admirably strives to show Native peoples as living in the here and now, driving pick-up trucks and making phone calls, visiting friends at the hospital, as well as participating in Navajo ceremonial life. Hillerman does well at letting Navajo people

live in the present; he's no Kevin Costner—his characters might ride horses, but they don't have to.

That said, it is important to recognize that a book like Hillerman's *Skinwalkers* exoticizes Navajo people as a means of helping readers understand their "Indianness" more than their humanity. In the first fifty pages of the paperback edition of the novel there are nearly a dozen references to the way a "traditional" Navajo will do things in a "Navajo fashion," as a means of affirming "Navajo courtesy."²² For instance, in the opening pages of the book, Hillerman writes that "Jim Chee's conditioning" was "traditional Navajo" (2) and scant pages later we are told that Chee is "too much the traditional Navajo to interfere with an animal."²³ Later, when we join Joe Leaphorn, we learn that his wife's family is "deeply traditional."²⁴ What we learn, in other words, is that the word "traditional" in Hillerman establishes a character's Indianness, or lack thereof, as when later in the book Leaphorn is reflecting on how he feels pressured by time and then laughs at himself for that "Most un-Navajo" way of thinking;²⁵ his sensitivity to time means he is not traditional and readers are left to wonder how Indian you are if you are not traditional. The word "traditional" is used to make us understand whether or not a character is like "us" Westerners, or whether they are somehow different from "us" majority culture readers of Indian mysteries.

Traditional, of course, is a loaded word; but it is loaded with different connotations in different contexts. In *Skinwalkers*, the phrase "traditional Navajo" is used to help the implied majority culture readers understand the ways in which an Indian character is perhaps different from them. It is a phrase that redeems difference, by offering cause-and-effect explanations for cultural behaviors that are alien to the majority culture. So you get moments where Jim Chee won't make eye contact with another character, because "traditional Navajos" know that looking another "traditional Navajo" in the eye breaks the bounds of "Navajo courtesy"; likewise a "traditional Navajo" knows that pointing at someone may be construed by other Navajos as insulting: Hillerman explains, "Navajos do not point at one another," but instead use their lips in "Navajo fashion" to indicate who is being spoken about.²⁶

The key here is not that Navajo people may or may not have these "traditional" cultural practices and behaviors. Rather, we must recognize that while such moments in a book like *Skinwalkers* may legitimately represent the social and cultural behavior of Indian people, these moments are exoticized into a kind of incommensurable alienness through the commentary appended to them. Chee doesn't just point with his lips, he points with his lips as a "traditional Navajo." The commentary redeems cultural differences that the Indian characters may have from the implied majority culture readers, redeeming difference by offering reasonable explanations. In this model of representing cultural differences, cultural diversity is something to be explained and rationalized by commentary that is external to the story. Rather than showing some Navajo peoples doing what some Navajo peoples do, readers receive a rationale about

why Navajos (as a monolithic collective) do what Navajos do. The rationale is redemptive; it saves the Indians from incomprehensibility. It mythologizes difference and in doing so forecloses an active dialogue about why Indianness matters.

In such mysteries, difference is redeemed through explanation rather than engagement. Just as America is imagined as separate from its European roots, America imagines Indian peoples, living in the same place and time, as alien to the nation, as not sharing in the creation, shaping, and ongoing development of America and American studies. Such exclusivist notions elide the fact that American legal, literary, and cultural history—the terrain, in part, of American studies—is a shared landscape. It is that shared landscape that American Indian studies can reintroduce to American studies, but it is a struggle to have this voice heard.

The scholars participating in a 2002 American Studies Association forum titled “American (Indian) Studies: Can the ASA be an Intellectual Home?” identify the relentless and reductive critique of nationalism enacted by practitioners of American studies as an issue of great concern. Philip Deloria describes a programmatic divergence between postnationalist American studies and American Indian studies in this way:

Many Native scholars have pointed out that the decentering of “nation” comes at a particularly inauspicious time for Indian people, who have invested a great deal of political and intellectual energy building a careful argument in courts, Congress, and regulatory agencies that treaty rights and sovereignty rest upon an acknowledgment of themselves as *nations*.²⁷

Deloria suggests that American studies must complicate its notion of nation in order to effectively and appropriately “decenter” it. Jean O’Brien contributes to the forum a still more explicit consciousness of this incipient relationship between American studies and American Indian studies, suggesting the following:

It seems to me that one could develop a model of American studies in which Indian studies is indispensable to its practice. . . . Framed this way, Indian studies offers to American studies a fundamental critique, and the possibility of transformation as Indian studies becomes a fruitfully troubling presence in any formation of nationhood.²⁸

As we can see, Deloria and O’Brien suggest that American Indian studies serves both to advance and to adjust the agenda of American studies. The key here

comes with Deloria's prodding of American studies to complicate its discussion of nationalism and with O'Brien's assertion that such a complication would be fruitful. That is, only if we in American studies complicate our notion of nation may we move beyond the damnation of contemporary communal constructions toward the fruitful and creative imagining of alternative approaches to vexing questions of nation and culture. As we move into the latter half of this article, we gesture toward such approaches through examinations of American Indian cinematic, legal, historical, and literary narratives.

American Indian studies also serves to challenge the American studies avant-garde imperative to move concretely and deliberately beyond the geographic borders of the modern U.S. nation-state. Shelley Fisher Fishkin's 2004 presidential address to the ASA, titled "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies," outlines and encourages the interdiscipline's transnational shift. What interests us currently about the address is its celebration of transnational research projects that in some ways seem to reify the modern nationalist borders that American studies ostensibly is critiquing as arbitrary and inappropriate. Fishkin commends dozens of recent studies for their insightful analyses of the ways in which modern nationalism is a global phenomenon—perhaps a global epidemic. These studies are undoubtedly fabulous. Even so, is it simply too much to ask for the proponents of transnationalist scholarship to critically engage with their own investments in the globalizing logic of capital, universalizing epistemology, and their fundamental need for *nationalist* distinctions across which their work can be *transnational*?

The most reductive section of Fishkin's address hits home for those of us who work in American Indian studies as well as American studies. Her two paragraphs on transnational research considering Native America insist that in order to qualify as authentically transnational, studies of American Indians must situate Indian peoples (or simply their invented image) in the gaze of Europeans.²⁹ Fishkin perceives one of these projects to be making a radical intervention in its assertion that North American literary history began not with Columbus, but with Viking explorations of this continent. Is this really such a huge leap? Does transnational American studies actively elide the possibility of a North American literary history not derived from European conquest?

Scholars in American studies interested in pursuing the transnational turn need not depend on the formal demarcations distinguishing nation-states. From the site where this panel was presented in Minneapolis, Minnesota, one can easily visit a dozen sovereign nations: a transnational trip all within 300 miles. Those of you who have seen *Smoke Signals*—a film written by Spokane/Coeur d'Alene author Sherman Alexie and made by Cheyenne/Arapaho director Chris Eyre—might recall a scene in which the two central characters embark on a road trip from their Coeur d'Alene reservation to Phoenix. The dialogue in the scene goes like this:

“You two guys got your passports?” asks one of their friends at the edge of the reservation.

“Passports?” one of the main characters responds.

“Yeah,” she explains. “You’re leavin’ the res and goin’ into a whole different country, cousin.”

“But it’s the United States,” he responds.

“Damn right it is,” another friend exclaims. “That’s as foreign as it gets. Hope you two got your vaccinations.”³⁰

As light and humorous as this exchange is, it points to the bald fact that geographically within what most perceive to be the borders of the U.S. nation-state are significant *extra*-national cultural, social, and ideological formations that contradict and contest universalizing national prerogatives. While many projects in American Indian studies may not explicitly transcend the external geographic borders of the U.S. nation-state, they certainly move beyond social, cultural, and ideological borders, and often move across the political and national borders of tribal nations. In this formulation, the field of American Indian studies works “transnationally” by engaging critiques of nation. These critiques, embedded in localities, interrupt the universalization of official national identity. They do so by refusing the oppressive distinctions that modern nation-states assert between one another.

Problematic as the relation of American culture and American cultural studies to Indian peoples and American Indian studies can be, the ideological imperatives of nationalism, including contemporary formulations of transnationalism, are not an all-defining totality. It is possible to imagine other ways of understanding America, American nationalism, and American studies transnationalism, but to do so requires a break with those Western epistemological blinders that accept exclusivist and racialist legal discourses as the only realities, that forward redemption as the goal of all cultural movement, and that propose Norse literature—the literature of a failed colonial project—as a better starting point than Columbus’s journals for a truly American studies. Those of us in American Indian literary, cultural, and legal studies are left wondering, Where are the Indians? Did Marshall’s schizophrenic recognition and dismissal of an Indian legal and political reality end up vaporizing them, *us*? Were Indians redeemed into nothingness once they were understood by the Supreme Court as “savages” and in paperback novels as “traditional”? We are left to wonder, where are the Indian stories and, more critically, what might an engagement with that knowledge offer American studies?

Shared Histories, Revised Mysteries, and Ball Games: The Lessons for American Studies

The means of reclaiming the shared histories of America and Native America is found within Native stories. This shared history was built through the interac-

tions and alliances between American Indians and non-Indians. Unfortunately, America has lost insight into the meanings inherent within the diplomatic practices employed by Native nations as they formed alliances with the United States. Raymond DeMallie argues, "In order to explicate the events of the past we have to explore the mental worlds in which those actions took place, the cultural knowledge on the basis of which choices were made."³¹ Therefore, it is critical to examine the knowledge systems of Native nations that contain insight into the thought and practice of these political nations in order to truly understand the compacts and relationships established between the Natives and the newcomers. Examining this perspective reintroduces Indians to American studies as actors, not just as objects in the works of others. Native knowledge serves as a lens by which to focus on the political thought and practices employed by Native peoples in their early relations with Europeans. Contemporary Native writing and expression recognize the ways in which indigenous knowledge and experience exist outside the imperatives of dominant U.S. nationalist mythologies even as it responds to them.

Recognition that hegemonic American national mythologies were generated from European discourses demands that American studies acknowledge its roots and connections with European thought.³² American studies was formed out of a desire to legitimize the United States as having a cultural production separate from Europe. However, with this goal, American studies has enabled America to legitimize itself as severed from certain histories—especially histories experienced, remembered, and understood by American Indians. For instance, American Indian studies can help American studies understand the "nation" by bringing forth the stories of alliance and exchange that occurred between American Indians and the American-born European descendants who founded the United States. The stories of diplomacy between European, American, and American Indian nations recognizes the critical role American Indian nations played in the formation and international recognition of America as a nation.

European nations who early established colonial outposts in America found their relations with Native nations to be essential to their survival in North America.³³ Interaction with Native peoples allowed Europeans to navigate new terrains while establishing critical social relations, economic partnerships, and political alliances. Consequently, European nations began to strategically leverage their alliances with Native nations in order to optimize the colonial governments' positions of political and economic power in North America. Concurrently, European investment in North America generated a discourse that portrayed the New World as holding vast, empty lands ready for colonization. Notions of cultural and racial superiority overrode narratives of alliance and peace with Native peoples as European colonists began coercively appropriating Native lands through any measures available.

At the end of the Seven Years War (1756-1763), the British Crown outlined a policy regarding its rule in the territories it claimed. The Royal Proclamation

of 1763 defined the territorial boundaries between the colonies and Indian country and also specified the “legal” procedures whereby land could be obtained from Indians (arguing that only the Crown, not the colonies themselves, could negotiate with tribes). After the conclusion of the Seven Years War, therefore, Great Britain’s struggles to obtain control of the New World no longer rested primarily with other European nations. Threats to Great Britain’s security in North America were coming increasingly from its own colonists, whose desires to break away from Britain were ignited by the constraints that the Royal Proclamation had imposed on them. As American colonists increasingly were re-imagining their role in North America, American radicals intensified their opposition to British rule.³⁴

American cultural discourses concurrently positioned Native peoples as “savage” while political discourses selectively recognized the sovereignty of Native nations, applying whichever discourse supported the idea that land purchases made by colonists were lawful. Robert Williams argues that “these divergent discourses on Indian legal status and rights were all derivative of the larger and more direct question . . . regarding the rationalization of the land-acquisition process on the colonial frontier.”³⁵ Ultimately, however, colonial legal theory that asserted the sovereignty of Native peoples became a stumbling block when Native nations refused to sell their lands to Americans who, after 1783, were no longer subjects of the British monarchy. In the newly independent United States, Native nations were recognized as sovereign nations in the political arena but were now rarely represented in cultural discourses as sovereign entities and instead came to be seen as inconveniences that needed to be removed. American ideologies of removal regenerated dominant European mythologies of Native peoples as inferior.³⁶

These national mythologies informed the legal foundations of the United States. After the American Revolution, while the states were in their infancy, the American government continued the British tradition of negotiating treaties with Native peoples. Discourses recognizing the status of Native nations competed with national mythologies such as Manifest Destiny, which deemed Indians as savage. The early republic was conscious of its need to deal with Native nations as sovereign political entities. It was in their relations with Native nations that Americans were able to posit themselves as a sovereign nation in the international community. They were desperate to carry on the practices of earlier nations in order to legitimize themselves. Nonetheless, as decades passed and treaties continued westward, national mythologies of conquest, at times, overrode earlier discourses in which recognition of Native sovereignty supported the sovereignty of the young nation.

International diplomacy that relied on an active and engaged recognition of the sovereignty of American Indian nations was often undercut by the discourse concerning Indian savagery and inferiority that came to find a home in American jurisprudence (as detailed above), but the discourse of inferiority is not the

only one extant. Diplomacy is also an important story, critically important to the formal recognition of the United States as a nation. While, as we have shown above, the discourse concerning Indian savagery and inferiority remained a prominent feature of American jurisprudence, diplomatic relations and cooperation with and within the various Indian nations and non-Indian nations of North America were crucial to the origin story of America.

As the national pastime, baseball can be seen, through the lens of American Indian studies, to contain an interesting story about the necessity of these kinds of diplomacy that shaped America, only here it is the ball field, not the treaty negotiation, that is the crucial site of exchange. The Indian ball field is a site where everyone has a role to play and the game is played in order to bring out the strength of the group.

While Americans assume that they invented or created *the* ball game, in fact, team ball games were being played in the Americas by indigenous peoples centuries before the arrival of Europeans. How “base and ball,” “stickball,” and “Indian ball” evolved into the “American” games we all know today is another story. There were, however, hundreds of ball game tournaments among tribal nations and just as many stories. A look at the stories of the ball games among southeastern Indian peoples allows us to see what ball games mean when they are divorced from contemporary notions of sports entertainment. Today, Native storytellers across the southeast tell stories about these games.

For the purpose of this article, we focus on the team sport of bat and ball. While the details and the central characters may vary, one thing remains constant: the animals and the birds taught Indians how to play this game. The following, although greatly abbreviated, is derived from both oral and written sources.³⁷

A long time ago, the animals challenged the birds to a great ballgame, and the birds accepted. The captain of the animal team was Bear, and he was very strong. He could play all day and never get tired. All the way to the ball ground Bear was throwing logs and boasting how the animals would win the game.

The birds had Eagle for a captain, and the co-captain was Hawk. They were so fast they could carry the ball and fly it home to score a point. Everyone knew the birds were fast and powerful ball players. Before the game the animals and the birds had an all-night dance. At that dance a few of the little ones came along and said they wanted to participate on the teams. Because they were so small, no one wanted them on the teams. Finally, Eagle took pity on the little ones and decided to make wings for the little ones so they could play the game too. Eagle took a small piece of leather from a drum

and put it on Bat to make him wings. Next he stretched the fur of squirrel to make him wings. Each of the little ones had a different way of fitting into the ball game.

On the day of the big game, the little ones would prove the effort to give them wings was worth it. The two teams, animals and birds played all day and all night. The game continued. Finally after many days and nights—when Bear and Eagle were exhausted—it was Bat who carried the ball across home to score the winning point. For his hard work and humbleness, Bat was thought to be so important to both animals and birds that today he can play on both teams.

This story offers a variation on an important American Indian theme. The animals and birds teach us humans how to cooperate by using the talents and strengths of one player (whether two-legged, four-legged, or winged) to make the whole group stronger, which in turn expands the group's knowledge and abilities.

Tribal nations also learned important political lessons from ball game stories like this one. When you include even the littlest of beings in your activities, your group wins the game. The Haudenosaunee have another variation of this theme in their stories of how the Six Nation Confederacy was created. They stressed respect, freedom, brotherhood, *and* their ability to unite and include. Originally their governance system was only for Five Nations, but it was changed to Six Nations when the Tuscaroras were included in 1715. In other words, the Haudenosaunee were inclusive rather than exclusive, and they have maintained their confederacy based on this Native philosophy.

From the ball game stories we also have a window into Native activities in pre-history. American Indians were breaking up into teams and playing ball centuries before the white man ever set foot on indigenous soil. What were the many purposes of the games? And what happens if there are not enough players from your family or tribal town to field a team? The home team accepted players from other communities or kinship networks who would play just as hard for them as they had played for their original teams. In other words, Indians accepted other players to help out, and this act of diplomacy makes the games more than entertainment.

One of the prominent animals in the ball game stories that is often interchangeable with Bat as the hero, is Squirrel. In some versions, it is Squirrel who flies the ball across the goal (or home plate depending on the storyteller) to score the winning point. Indeed, the Choctaws have a very old and prominent Fani Mingo (squirrel chief) institution that serves as a kind of cultural template for diplomacy, because he must “play” as hard for the opposing team as he does for his “home” team. In tense diplomatic situations he acts as a kind of relief pitcher in the eleventh inning. In other words, the Fani Mingo must try to save the game. As Patricia Galloway points out:

These first explorers found native institutions in place for dealing with formal intertribal communication. In the early eighteenth century the Fani Mingo institution served this purpose among the Chickasaw and Choctaws. Tribes would adopt an advocate within a neighboring tribe, and his duty would be to argue in favor of what became in a sense his adopted tribe whenever war threatened to break out. Under other names such an institution may have been widespread as a means of dealing with intertribal relations throughout the Southeast, connected with the fictive kinship mechanisms of the calumet ceremony.³⁸

In *Yuchi Ceremonial Life: Performance, Meaning, and Tradition in a Contemporary American Indian Community*, Jason Jackson writes that the Yuchi have regularly added participants from other southeastern tribes in order to continue Yuchi ceremonial practices. While many historians and anthropologists have often portrayed this phenomenon as “Pan-Indian,” we argue that intertribal participation has been misunderstood. The Yuchi have regularly allowed fictive kinsman to participate in their sacred ceremonial game of Indian football in order for it to continue.³⁹ Jackson writes, “In eastern Oklahoma where large numbers of Native people of differing tribal backgrounds reside, tribalism and intertribalism exist in a state of dynamic equilibrium. Among Woodland peoples in Oklahoma, ceremonialism has persisted in local communities as much because of inter-community contacts as in spite of them.”⁴⁰ Viewed in this context, inter-tribal cooperation means that by drawing on strengths from one another the tribal communities enhanced their praxis rather than diminished it. As Jackson writes:

The classic formation of Pan-Indianism does not account well for the American Indian social networks existing in Woodland Oklahoma today or in the East during colonial times. As a theory especially interested in forms of cultural performance such as dance and ritual, Pan-Indianism assumes that individuals or groups engaged in social gatherings across tribal or national boundaries will increasingly lose their cultural distinctiveness. Such a view is based on an overly strong assumption of primordial boundedness, but it also ignores the capacity of communities to consciously maintain distinctive local practices in interactionally complex settings. Such cultural continuity is possible in Woodland Oklahoma because the locus of social action is the community, not the individual. Among Woodland people, communities and their traditions are conceived in very super organic ways.⁴¹

All this is to say that once the tribes from the southeast were firmly ensconced in Indian Territory, they began playing ball. While the 1880s saw renewed fighting between the U.S. Cavalry and tribes on the Great Plains (the massacre at Wounded Knee took place in December 1890), tribal nations in Indian Territory were forming baseball teams and battling it out on the prairie diamond. An energetic reporter for *The Daily Oklahoman* named Charles Saulsberry published a series of articles in the late 1930s and early 1940s, which he called “Fifty Years of Baseball.”⁴² In these historically rich articles, as told by Oklahomans who remembered the early days, Saulsberry chronicles some of the earliest Indian teams such as the Purcell Chickasaws in 1891. But there are also reports on Indians teams in the newspaper accounts that go back to 1886.⁴³ Playing ball and forming teams had served the tribes in the East well in forming economic networks, and there is no reason these did not continue in Indian Territory. In other words, they wanted to form relationships that would prevent them from engaging in continual warfare over land and resources. At some point tribal communities formed baseball teams. Indeed baseball may be a game that Indians had been playing (in some form or other) for generations. (Newly uncovered references to Indian “base and ball” are being found all the time. In his recent documentary on the Lewis and Clark expedition, Ken Burns includes a snippet of information about Lewis and Clark being taught a ball game by the Mandans.⁴⁴ While Lewis and Clark’s ballplaying experiences are treated as an aside in the film, it clearly underscores the argument that Indians were playing ball games out west previous to the settlers.) While playing the stickball game “Little Brother to War” trained youths for warfare, forming teams trained them for diplomacy. Teaming with others outside one’s community encouraged cooperation in hunting, trading, and sharing of resources.

Saulsberry reported on many such peace games that were taking place in the territories before statehood. He noted the competition in 1885 between the Fort Reno Indians against the Fort Darlington Boys. One of Saulsberry’s informants, Gene Barnes, also tells the story of his grandfather in 1818 playing “town ball” back in Batavia, New York.⁴⁵ While baseball scholars have ignored Indian ball games as a possible source for the roots of American baseball (a game without time limits, a game that is played counterclockwise like the dances of southeastern Indians are conducted, a game with four quadrants), most admit that they do not know where the game originated. Recently, scholars such as baseball historian John Thorn argue that baseball is a game with no clear-cut origins. “It may be an unanswerable question,” says Thorn. “That’s what makes it eternally fascinating.”⁴⁶

Today, Indians in Oklahoma still play ball, but fast-pitch softball remains the most visible contemporary manifestation of the ball game. Since 1952, hundreds of American Indians have gathered in Oklahoma City at Wheeler Park for the annual fast-pitch all-Indian softball tournament that decides the unofficial Indian national champion. Like the ball games of old, this tournament is a grueling three-day contest among Oklahoma’s sixty-seven tribes. Because so little

is known about the Indian baseball teams and players in Oklahoma, filmmaker James Fortier and LeAnne Howe have begun filming a documentary called *Playing Pastime, American Indians, Softball, and Survival*. Fortier and Howe's goal is to tell the story of the American Indians and the families who have been playing ball—"as long as memory serves." As Charles Saulsberry wrote, "There was baseball in the old Indian lands before original Oklahoma was opened to settlement in April 22, 1889."⁴⁷ One of the more significant issues to be focused on in the film is the theme of inter-tribal cooperation and how that method of playing ball games together has helped to shape Oklahoma's Indian history.

The American Indian studies histories of baseball and American diplomacy are creation stories; they concern the realization of something new out of sites of exchange, whether ball fields or treaty camps. Through this lens of creation, no possibility is ever foreclosed; creation is not a totalizing constraint on what might be, but is rather a process in which new formations and formulations of being are expected. The challenge is to recognize the formations and formulations of American Indian creation as vital rather than exotic.

Many Indian mysteries, like Hillerman's *Skinwalkers*, treat cultural difference as exotic, as needing redemptive exposition to explain the strange ways of strange people. Such mysteries depend on American ideological expectations that Indian people are necessarily exotic, mysterious others whose lives and ways can be brought to light with quasi-anthropological commentary. However, if we turn to an Indian mystery written by an Indian writer we find that the cultural imperative to redeem difference through understanding (as *Skinwalkers* proposes) is unnecessary.

Hartley GoodWeather's mystery *DreadfulWater Shows Up*⁴⁸ offers an alternative approach to dealing with these issues of cultural difference and diversity. He treats Indianness as a natural part of creation, rather than as an exotic variation on some imagined human norm or as something that demands an explanation to redeem it from incomprehension.

GoodWeather's name is not as familiar as Hillerman's. GoodWeather may not be a familiar name at all, though it is the pseudonym of a writer whose name is familiar in American Indian literary circles. Hartley GoodWeather is the pen name the literary novelist Thomas King uses when writing genre fiction. Like his literary novels *Medicine River*; *Green Grass, Running Water*; and *Truth and Bright Water*, King sets his mystery on the Blackfoot reserve that straddles the U.S. and Canadian borders, though he never names it; it is home to his characters, not an exotic locale. Since the reserve is home to the characters, its name, location, and significance need no explanation, because everyone involved in the story already knows.

GoodWeather⁴⁹ signals his intention that his Indian mystery is different from others in the genre, even its title. There are no skinwalkers, thunderdogs, or shaman's rattles on the cover of his book. Rather we get the detective protagonist's name—DreadfulWater—and what he does—Shows Up—instead of the prom-

ise of some kind of Indian mysticism. (In the title *DreadfulWater Shows Up*, people familiar with native trickster stories might hear an echo of a conventional trickster story beginning: coyote was going along, but this reference is too veiled to be construed as exotic. It may be more of an in-joke.) Likewise, while the detective's name *DreadfulWater* may be regarded as different or as "Indian" (it certainly is not as familiar as Smith, Rodriguez, or Lee), GoodWeather does not exoticize it by explaining it. It is the character's name, not an opportunity to create redemptive "understanding." So in the title and in the detective's name, GoodWeather breaks with the "tradition" of Indian mysteries, forsaking explanation and foregrounding the naturalness of the culture to the characters by *not* making them exotic.

In a book like *Skinwalkers*, Hillerman spends great energy establishing Indians and Indian culture as knowable through repetition of key phrases and through explanatory information; Indians are exotic in such a book, having strange beliefs (like skinwalkers) and strange ceremonies (like the Blessingway) and much time is spent elaborating these elements. They are, in fact, the backbone of the plot. In *DreadfulWater*, the Indian characters are regarded as humans. Cultural concepts that might strike majority culture readers as alien are treated as natural, the norm, rather than as some uncanny manifestation of utter difference. Cultural expressions are not points of plot suspense or atmosphere, rather they are the way things are in this community.

For instance, detective *DreadfulWater* frequently consults with an elder in the community about how his investigation needs to proceed. The elder, Moses Blood, always helps; he knows *DreadfulWater* is working to restore the community's balance by investigating the murders. On one of these consultations, *DreadfulWater* and the elder are outside and *DreadfulWater* wishes to get Moses's input on a problem he has encountered. Moses says, "Then you better bring it inside. . . . You never know when an owl might be listening."⁵⁰ In a more conventional Indian mystery, one that aims to redeem difference, a statement like "an owl might be listening" would be taken as an opportunity to elaborate on "traditional" Indian culture and how Moses Blood fulfills that "traditional" role through his knowledge of "owl power." In GoodWeather's book the statement is given to us not through the lens of an imagined reader who knows nothing about Indian traditions and needs to be informed of them; rather the statement is given to us from the perspective of the elder's character. The statement goes unexplained and by not explaining it, GoodWeather allows it to be a natural way of seeing the world, not an exotic one.⁵¹ It is a reflection of the order of creation, not a point to be redeemed into understanding.

Creation Conclusions

Generally speaking, the conventional Indian mystery *Skinwalkers* works to establish Indians as exotic, while the unconventional Indian mystery *DreadfulWater Shows Up* works to establish the naturalness of a culturally di-

verse world. In *Skinwalkers* difference equals otherness; in *DreadfulWater Shows Up* there is no “otherness” because the world and all of creation is, and always has been, diverse—inter-tribal, inter-national, many-layered. Where *Skinwalkers* manufactures an “Indian” world, foregrounding cultural differences that need to be redeemed into knowability, *DreadfulWater* accepts diversity and difference as the natural order of creation.

Leslie Marmon Silko extends this notion in her essay, “Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit.” This piece, originally published in the *Los Angeles Times Sunday Magazine*, offers an intriguing (even if hyperbolized) narration of community as lived and seen by Silko:

In the view of the old-time people, we are all sisters and brothers because the Mother Creator made all of us—all colors and all sizes. We are sisters and brothers, clanspeople of all the living beings around us. The plants, the birds, fish, clouds, water, even the clay—they are all related to us. The old-time people believe that all things, even rocks and water, have spirit and being. . . . All things as they were created exist already in harmony with one another as long as we do not disturb them. . . . Because the Creator is female, there is no stigma on being female; gender is not used to control behavior. . . . At the same time, in the old-time pueblo world, identity was acknowledged to be always in a flux. . . . When I was growing up, there was a young man from a nearby village who wore nail polish and women’s blouses and permed his hair. . . . No one ever made fun of him. Pueblo communities were and still are very interdependent, but they also have to be tolerant of individual eccentricities because survival of the group means everyone has to cooperate.⁵²

As Silko’s story illustrates, heterogeneity and the minding of relations are necessary for the survival of the Pueblo people and are therein fundamental—rather than antithetical—to the survivance of the Laguna nation. The community recognizes humanity only as a specific category in the life of the Pueblo people, intimately connected to and interdependent with the entire living environment. The natural demands of ecological equilibrium compel and receive recognition, patriarchy has no place, and heteronormativity does not come to bear. In this passage, Silko narrates a nation unencumbered by Eurocentric epistemic and cultural injustice.

Silko’s assertion of the radical nature of Pueblo tradition relative to the limiting paradigms of imperial logic serves as a perfect site to apply a postnationalist, transnational critique of modern state-nationalism that is able to acknowledge, illuminate, and promote narrations of autonomous indigenous nations that embrace difference while maintaining community integrity. This

passage exemplifies the imperative for American studies to recognize the unique challenges that engagement with the field of American Indian studies stimulates. For its critique of nation and nationalism to be effective, and for its turn to the transnational to be fruitful, the interdiscipline of American studies must complicate these processes. The illuminations of American Indian studies reveal how this might be approached. While it is certainly safer to limit one's arguments to nay-saying criticism, it is certainly necessary to risk creative action. Indeed, critical intervention opens up opportunity; yet only the dangerous endeavor of creativity can make good on it.

Which returns us to the culture wars: the contest between those who wish to redeem the world into knowability, homogenizing difference through the perhaps dismissive explanations of neoliberal "understanding," and those, like Silko, who recognize and honor the diversity that is creation.

Creation suffers redemptive nationalism; redemption is development and exploitation, the destructive footfalls of the nation's progress. Resisting redemption to acknowledge and preserve creation is the real culture war in North America. Creation is both a process and a place. It is the act of bringing something into existence as well as being the context we live within: the earth is creation. When Indian writers like GoodWeather and Silko look at diversity in America, they don't see a mystery in need of redemptive explanation, they see a tradition in need of creation. When creation is a place, everything is present, or in the process of becoming present. Creation is always complete. It is never profane, never undeveloped, and so never needs redemption. It doesn't need explanation, it demands respect. Creation is a process of learning to live on the earth, in conversation with all the peoples—animal, plant, and human—that call the earth home. As Dennis Tedlock puts it, "the continuing growth of creation requires not a series of commands from a single source but an ever-widening discussion."⁵³ Redemptive explanation forecloses on discussion; the diversity of creation generates it.

If America understands its multiple creation stories as being simultaneously "fictional" (that is invented by self-serving national mythologies) and "real" (in that these national mythologies have consequences), these narratives could provide a framework for justice in this multicultural and multinational world. Narratives demarcating early encounters between Native and European nations recognize these foundational relationships as envisioning a multi-national continent where nations form alliances through the recognition of each nation's individual autonomy while sharing a responsibility towards each other. America's creation story is found in these alliances and mutually respective responsibilities.

An engagement with American Indian studies' counter-narratives provides American studies with a theoretical framework for understanding the nation as both "American" and "Indian." In this understanding, American studies can establish discourses that recognize the present state of the nation while remaining

connected to its foundational history. The recognition of this American past (the one based on the mutually respective responsibilities that the various Native and non-Native nations that call America home have to each other) imparts to American studies a grounded location from which to explore the scope of a post-nationalist disciplinary formulation. Amy Kaplan, in her 2003 ASA Presidential Address, argues that the “critical approaches (within the discipline of American studies) may contribute to insisting on limited sovereignty for the one nation-state that claims its exemption from those limits.”⁵⁴

American Indian studies not only insists on the limited sovereignty of the United States, it demonstrates the necessity of these limitations for the survival of all. American Indian counter-narratives demonstrate the need for nations to respect each other’s autonomy while simultaneously recognizing that the sovereignty of every nation is limited by those nations’ responsibilities to each other. Robert Williams clearly articulates the importance of recovering American Indian counter-narratives when he stresses that “our own survival in our multicultural world may well depend on our learning to understand the responses of indigenous tribal peoples to the challenge of achieving justice among different peoples. We must learn what it means to link arms together, according to American Indian treaty visions of law and peace.”⁵⁵

Indeed, from our points of view, and for the many reasons we have stated here, there is no American studies without American Indians because the cultural mores of inclusion, the recognition of the diversity in creation, of the impulse for adding people and things to the collective knowledge base through formal alliance and formal literature is the story American Indians have always told. American studies needs this story more than ones about Columbus, more than ones about the Vikings, and more than ones about domestic-dependent nations. This story is older than the nation, older than nationalism. Indian ball and bat games enact the linking of arms that Williams sees as part of the treaty vision; they serve as a site for diplomacy, exchange, and alliance. Here, the ball field becomes the site of creation, and moving around the circle of the bases, moving through each of the four directions, is undertaken in order to see all the possible stories available before returning home to make sense of them. Joining with American Indian studies, recognizing and engaging the place of Indians in understanding what is American, American studies may find itself coming home as well.

Notes

We are indebted to David W. Noble’s insightful comments in response to our MAASA panel, “Made in America: There’s No American Studies Without American Indians.” Professor Noble’s unparalleled understanding of the field of American studies and its genealogies has been an invaluable resource as we’ve worked to position ourselves and our critical contributions at the intersections of American and American Indian studies. Professor Noble’s comments about our panel at the 2005 MAASA conference play along with what one of us (LeAnne Howe) calls a Tribalography. Native stories, regardless of whether they are spoken or told in film, novel, memoir, or history, seek to pull together all the elements of the storyteller’s tribe. The goal is to draw all the

people and their land as well as all their manifestations and revelations together and connect these in a past, present, and future milieu. (Present and future milieu means a world that includes non-Indians.) A Tribalography then is a story that speaks of the Native propensity for bringing things together, for making consensus, and for symbiotically connecting one thing to another. David Noble's comments concerning our creation panel were those of a Tribalographer interested in the symbiosis of American to Native studies.

The effort in our essay to draw things together also benefited from the comments of our panel moderator, Tony Clark, and the anonymous readers of this essay in its various drafts. We are stronger when we rely on each other's stories (read theories) to understand the world we live in. We thank all those acknowledged for sharing their strength with us.

1. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1978).
2. Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), James Wilson, *The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), and Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents: The "New World" Through Indian Eyes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992).
3. See Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994) and Tomson Highway, *Comparing Mythologies* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2003) for discussions of the power of diversity in American Indian creation stories.
4. Amy Kaplan, "Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, October 17, 2003," *American Quarterly* 56 (March 2004): 11.
5. Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies—Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004," *American Quarterly* 57 (March 2005): 17-57.
6. Nikhil Pal Singh, "Culture/Wars: Recoding Empire in an Age of Democracy," *American Quarterly* 50 (September 1998): 471-522. Singh's discussion of the culture wars locates their rhetorical roots in cold war discussions of U.S. pluralism and nationalism.
7. *Ibid.*, 472. Emphasis in original.
8. *Ibid.*, 472.
9. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1992).
10. Lenore A. Stiffarm with Phil Lane, Jr., "The Demography of Native North America: A Question of American Indian Survival," in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 28.
11. See Vine Deloria, Jr. and David E. Wilkins, *Tribes, Treaties, and Constitutional Tribulations* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 3-5, for a discussion of these legal discourses.
12. Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1959), 19.
13. Deloria, Jr. and Wilkins, *Tribes, Treaties, and Constitutional Tribulations*, 4.
14. *City of Sherrill, New York v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*, 544 U.S. 177 (2005). In an 8-1 decision, the United States Supreme Court found that lands repurchased by the Oneida Nation were not immune from state and local taxation. This opinion countered historic precedent that held state and local governments could not impose taxes on reservation lands.
15. For a discussion of the development of this tradition see the first chapter of Robert A. Williams, *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800* (New York: Routledge, 1999), entitled "National Mythologies and American Indians," 14-39.
16. David E. Wilkins, *American Indian Sovereignty and the U.S. Supreme Court: The Masking of Justice* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 30.
17. *Johnson v. McIntosh*, 21 U.S. (8 Wheat), 543, 590 (1832).
18. Wilkins, *American Indian Sovereignty*, 34.
19. *Tee-Hit-Ton v. United States*, 348 U.S. 272, 289 (1955).
20. Margaret Coel, *The Eagle Catcher* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 1995), Tony Hillerman, *Skinwalkers* (New York: HarperTorch, 1986), Kirk Mitchell, *Dance of the Thunder Dogs* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2004), and Aimée and David Thurlo, *Shooting Chant* (New York: Forge Books, 2000).
21. See Ray B. Browne, *Murder on the Reservation: American Indian Crime Fiction, Aims and Achievements* (Madison: University of Wisconsin/Popular Press, 2004) and Samuel Coale, *The Mystery of Mysteries: Cultural Differences and Designs* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999) for two recent discussions of Indian-centered mysteries (in the case of Coale, Indian mysteries are just one chapter in a book that explores regional and feminist as well as ethnic/race-oriented mysteries).

22. Tony Hillerman, *Skinwalkers* (New York: HarperTorch, 1986).
23. *Ibid.* The reference to Chee as a “traditional Navajo” is found on 2 and the reference to the reluctance of a traditional Navajo to interfere with animals is found on 4.
24. *Ibid.*, 12.
25. *Ibid.*, 51.
26. *Ibid.*, 30.
27. Philip Deloria, “American Indians, American Studies, and the ASA,” *American Quarterly* 55 (December 2003): 672 (italics in original).
28. Jean M. O’Brien, “Why Here? Scholarly Locations for American Indian Studies,” *American Quarterly* 55 (December 2003): 690.
29. Fishkin, “Crossroads of Cultures,” 29-30.
30. *Smoke Signals*, DVD, directed by Chris Eyre (Burbank, CA: Distributed by Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 1998).
31. Raymond DeMallie, “‘These Have No Ears’: Narrative and the Ethnohistorical Method,” *Ethnohistory* 40 (Autumn 1993): 533.
32. For a further discussion of dominant American National mythologies and their roots in European discourse, see Williams, *Linking Arms Together*, especially Chapter 1, “National Mythologies and American Indians,” 14-39.
33. *Ibid.*, 20.
34. Robert A. Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 243.
35. *Ibid.*, 287.
36. *Ibid.*
37. For a variety of ball game stories see James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Cherokee, NC: Cherokee Heritage Books, 1982). For a well-rounded southeastern collection of stories collected from a variety of sources, see George E. Lankford *Native American Legends: Southeastern Legends: Tales from the Natchez, Caddo, Biloxi, Chickasaw, & Other Nations* (Little Rock: August House, 1987) and John R. Swanton, *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).
38. Patricia Galloway, *Choctaw Genesis, 1500-1700* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 322.
39. For a fuller description of the Yuchi football game see “Indian Football, Signaling the Creator,” in Jason Jackson, *Yuchi Ceremonial Life: Performance, Meaning, and Tradition in a Contemporary American Indian Community* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 117-140.
40. *Ibid.*, 137.
41. *Ibid.*, 138.
42. “Fifty Years of Baseball,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, February 4, 1940.
43. Charles Saulsberry, *The Daily Oklahoman*, March 5, 1940.
44. *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*, DVD, directed by Ken Burns (Burbank, CA: Distributed by Warner Home Video, 2001).
45. Charles Saulsberry, *The Daily Oklahoman*, February 13, 1940.
46. Bill Pennington, “Baseball’s Origins: They Ain’t Found Till They’re Found,” *The New York Times*, 12 September 2004, 1:1.
47. Saulsberry, *The Daily Oklahoman*, February 13, 1940.
48. Hartley GoodWeather, *DreadfulWater Shows Up* (Toronto: HarperPerennialCanada, 2003).
49. Because the novel is written under the name Hartley GoodWeather, this essay will be referring to that name instead of Thomas King.
50. GoodWeather, 86.
51. Most of the time, *DreadfulWater Shows Up* lets Indian cultural and social practices be the natural way of seeing things without any explanatory intrusions from the author. While this happens more often than not in GoodWeather’s mystery, there are moments when explanations, a la Hillerman’s, creep into the exposition. Still these moments are rare when compared to a book like *Skinwalkers*.
52. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 63-68.
53. Tedlock is quoted in Robin Ridington, “Voice, Representation, and Dialogue: The Poetics of Native American Spiritual Traditions,” in *Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader*, ed. Lee Irwin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 98. Lenore A. Stiffarm with Phil Lane, Jr., “The Demography of Native North America: A Question of American Indian Survival,” in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 28.
54. Kaplan, “Violent Belongings,” 12.
55. Williams, *Linking Arms Together*, 13.