The Tools of a Cartographic Poet: Unmapping Settler Colonialism in Joy Harjo's Poetry

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This essay looks at alternatives to the Cartesian forms of mapping that have come to structure settler colonial geographies. The poetry of Joy Harjo enables an engagement with concepts of spatial justice from an Indigenous feminist practice. I place Harjo's poetry into multiple conversations with various tribal stories and geographies, thus illuminating constellations of human relationships to each other and to land and their complexity. Settler colonialism is about putting into place settler understanding of geography. These are always gendered practices. Language and concepts of storied land enable us to push for a spatial justice that unpacks settler produced knowledges. It is this type of focus on land that engenders my desire to (re)map socialities that will materially and mentally sustain future Indigenous generations.

Whereas many maps are intended for political purposes, such as nation-building, and later become unquestioned universal truths, Muscogee Creek poet Joy Harjo speaks a 'truth' openly founded on her particular location as a colonised woman who continues to pass down knowledge to the next generations.[1] In her (re)mapping of the settler state, Harjo draws on her 'politics of location' to reaffirm her understanding and place in the world and that of future generations.[2] Her knowledge is an embodied and a complex 'truth', as was that of the milieu of women-of-color, feminist activism and theory-making from which she emerged as a poet. In the work of writers Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Jewelle Gomez, Helena Maria Viramontes, Cherríe Moraga, June Jordan, and Gloria Anzaldúa, to name just a few, we see a resituating of forms of knowledge through

language that shift women from the margins to the centre of activist reconfigurations of societal, political, and economical structures.[3]

Rather than advocating submission to dominant settler structures in order to achieve 'success' – so that an individual may ascend out of the ghetto, barrio, reservation or other places constructed as degenerative – these women poets positioned their arguments in the everyday reality of their communities to improve on the quality of life for all. From the vantage points of their writings comes a critique of dominant forms of power, yet not a full assessment as to how these powers are exerted through settler colonial structures. This situation renders a Native feminist critique of movements for social justice important and necessary. Harjo, like the women-of-color feminist movement, does not adhere to a simplistic identity politics for which Native people are too often dismissed. In this essay I examine the geo-politics in Harjo's poetry in relation to settler colonialism to make visible the importance of a Native feminist critique in working toward spatialised justice. I am arguing not for more representative voices, but, rather, for engagement with the gendered geo-politics of race and settler colonialism at the local and global levels. The essay advocates that we examine the poetic tools of Joy Harjo as part of this effort, and that we specifically include a critique of settler geographic constructions. Reclaiming Native cartographies is key to decolonising the spatial disruptions caused by settler colonialism and to promoting broader forms of spatial justice. Harjo reminds us through her decolonised poetics that Native people possess the right cartographic tools for this work.

I interpret the construction of maps by utilising an Indigenous method of spatial justice that consistently struggles over geography. In his research on the city of Los Angeles, geographer Edward Soja redefines justice as having a consequential geography, 'a spatial expression that is more than just a background reflection or set of physical attributes to be descriptively mapped'.[4] Native forms of justice are inherently spatialised accounts of geographies made consequential by histories of settler colonialism that continue to impact on Native communities and individuals. Understanding geographies and justice as existing within a dynamic interrelationship also enables an understanding of the spatial ties

between colonisation, imperialism, and what is now called globalisation. All this is reflected in the series of axioms that comprise the poetic spatiality of Harjo's poem, 'A Map to the Next World'.[5] The poem's sayings, which dart in and out of time and place, are intended as advice to her granddaughter – her link to the next generation. The narrative is a map for future survival which will help her granddaughter negotiate her way through a world that is often contradictory in its violence, sadness, and beauty. Harjo projects a model of spatial justice that seriously considers Indigenous peoples. According to Soja, justice needs to be redefined away from liberal concepts that are rooted in the state and that operate around categories of difference, for instance, race, gender, and nationality. While Soja argues that in the era of globalisation, redefining forms of justice is critical to transcend 'homogeneous and often exclusive group or community identity', Harjo provides a vision that can recognise 'unequal power relations in a common project' without forgoing her belonging to her nation, which is far more than a mere identity category.[6]

Alternative ways of producing knowledge emerge in 'A Map', as Harjo twists the elements and images found on Western maps. The poetic versions of legends, the symbol of the X, print, names, instructions, navigation, paper, and celestial elements of the earth, sun, and Milky Way – components of many Western forms of mapping – are embedded in Harjo's one-sentence stanzas. The map is a text and the turn to a play with language is a natural move towards upsetting imposed spatial concepts that figure so prominently in daily life. In 'Texts, Hermeneutics, and Propaganda Maps', geographer John Pickles claims that

> maps have the character of being textual in that they employ a system of symbols with their own syntax, that they function as a form of writing (inscription), and that they are discursively embedded within broader contexts of social action and power.[7]

Harjo focuses her map-making on this textual character, quite literally bringing the map into the form of text. By using the language of mapping in a poetic form, new meanings appear, revealing

imagined settler geographies, exposing the conditions that map-making produces, and rewriting the map from the vantage point of view of a Creek poet living and travelling throughout the world. Harjo positions these elements in the Creek context of an emergence myth. With each new day, an emergence can occur, keeping possibilities for cultural growth open. The implications of this literary strategy are a significant contribution toward asserting a Native feminist spatial practice that does not close down possibilities, as would thinking purely (pun-intended) in terms of an exclusive nation-state.

HISTORICISING CREEK SPATIALITIES

To situate the contemporary relationships designated within Harjo's maps, we must address the history of the colonial spatial restructuring legislated upon the Creeks, as well as the Creeks' story of migration that enabled them to work through the restructuring of lands and bodies. These histories are mutually constitutive and should not be understood as exclusive. In this regard, they reflect the day-to-day experience of mapping lands and bodies that produces and is productive of human interaction.

The Creeks' engagement with the burgeoning United States was intensely spatialised and gendered in multiple ways. Contact between whites and Natives led to health epidemics which, in turn, were exacerbated by militarised governmental restrictions on the movement of Native peoples. US jurisdiction over former Creek territory and the subsequent privatisation of land into individual lots for white settlement perpetrated land theft in two different centuries. Creek people were forced to travel in a treacherous and deadly march away from traditional lands to the outskirts of the newly-forming settler state. These significantly spatial injustices and their historic restructuring of Creek life continue to influence communities today.

Having developed their holdings for centuries, the Creek Nation was occupying very desirable land during the early history of the United States. The war of 1812 was a time when various Creek townships were divided into the 'upper' and 'lower' Creeks because of their geo-political positioning in the US South. For Creeks (often

referred to as the lower creeks) living in closer proximity to white homesteads, an alliance with the Americans had became a rational choice. The encroachment of white settlers – both male and female – created uneasy living relationships amongst different racial groups, notably Native peoples from various tribal nations, confederacies, and townships, whites with varying geographical origins and temporal immigrant status, and blacks with various statuses as kin, free, and enslaved (this variety resulted from long histories of intermarriage and slaveholding). David Chang, in speaking to the historical fluctuations around the war of 1812, recognises that alterations within the Creek Nation resulted from the influence of private property, in that, traditionally, among Creeks, accumulation was culturally problematic so long as others were in need. Just as in many other Native communities at the time, tensions grew from shifting ideas regarding the ways in which land was conceived and its population organised. As the US implemented policies to centralise Creek governance, it chose to back those Creek representatives who were in closer proximity to white settlers and who therefore had the most incentive to privatise land and black bodies as property and labor. Chang also indicates that 'Creeks with black ancestry – people who had escaped slavery and their descendants – had reason to fear the rise of the slave order [...]. After all, to defend the rights of the owners of property was to protect the rights of the owners of people'.[8]

Eventually, disagreements over land, property, and governance within Creek society and disagreement between colonial entities led to the Creek War of 1813-1814 and its resolution in the Treaty of Fort Jackson. Twenty-three million acres, over half of the remaining Creek land, was lost to the United States. 'In such a context', Chang remarks, 'no Creek side can be said to have won, but the Lower Town forces and advocates of private property and centralised authority did prevail'.[9] The US government continued its process of spatially restructuring Native lands into private property while dislocating the Native population. Today, trips home to the stomp grounds by Harjo and others demonstrate the original southeastern peoples' ability to maintain their identities in the wake of colonial spatial restructuring.

The United States would wrest land from Native people by labeling communal land as surplus land, subsequently privatising it,

and imposing Western gendered norms onto the constructed landscape of the settler nation. Bethany Berger's account of Federal Indian Law and Native American women between 1830-1934 portrays the gendered spatialities at play during this era. According to her, the construction of the domestic sphere was pivotal to the Jacksonian era. Whereas women's labor had been necessary during the unstable colonial era, the idle white woman maintaining domain over the middle-class home became a status symbol of wealth, progress, achievement, and a stable nation. By way of contrast, Berger argues, Indian women's rights to control property became entangled with settlers' redefinition of the way property was distributed and inherited. As women's power became eroded by the imposition of the 'Cult of Domesticity', Indian women's traditional autonomy was interrupted, which in turn disrupted relationships to land and community among their peoples.

New codifications of gendered relationships were instrumental to colonial spatial restructuring. As noted by Berger, soon after, Native people were forcibly shifted away from living as tribal communities with a communal land base; and a series of court cases disinvested Native women of their property and citizenship rights if they married white men. Referencing these cases, Berger notes how '[f]rom each understanding of history the judge provides, comes a shaping of history. By articulating assumptions and rules regarding the relationships of Indian women to their partners and children, the judges transform those relationships'.[10] Shifting gender norms were as necessary to supporting an imagined US liberal democracy as was the spatial constructions of land bases too small to support Native communities and the ever-surveilling eye of the government ready to exert terrifying military force. I situate Harjo's poetic work as a response to these histories of settler colonialism remapping land as property and Native bodies as detribalised, landless, racialised, and gendered individuals, all of which Harjo answers with calls for a decolonisation that engages with spatial justice.

DESIRED MAPS

Harjo's map-making narrative upsets basic components of cartography through a series of carefully-balanced images of

intertribal origins. She calls into question the composition of a map as object and Native peoples and lands as the objects of settlers' desires. More importantly, Harjo takes cartographic elements and uses them in intertribal ways to make a new sense of the ordering of the universe – especially the ordering of our nations.

Harjo's map-making is born out of desire, awakening, and emergence. 'A Map' opens with these lines:

> In the last days of the fourth world I wished to make a map for
>
> those who
>
> would climb through a hole in the sky.

Unlike supposedly 'objective' settler state mapping, Harjo's map does not presume a representation of the real, or ignore the larger forces of politics, economics, and foreign policy. She presents a map of possibilities connected to human agency and relationships. She is forthright about her purpose, telling the reader that she intends to construct a map that can break barriers for her family, her community, Indigenous people, and all those who '*desire*' new directions.

For Harjo, the emergence of maps is predicated on those who *would* climb through the hole in the sky. The supposedly 'objective' reality of the map is deeply contested by Indigenous people who deal with the power structures set up through the settler state's mapping of lands and bodies. Harjo's use of the conditional tense stresses the human desire and agency involved in this narrative mapping process. 'It's difficult to walk through the illusion without being awed and distracted by it', Harjo reminds us, and part of the distraction is spatial. Observing settler monuments, settler namings of streets, schools or buildings, and settler definitions of what is rational, Harjo states: 'It is a system of buying and selling. Power is based on ownership of land, the work force, on the devaluation of life'. She, however, proceeds to (re)map our desires and to redefine power as something that is not 'amass[ed] through the pain and suffering of others'.

Shunning any pretense of an 'objective' or 'scientific' ideal, Harjo's map-making process continually confounds the normative map of the state. Notably, her map is dated not in the Western calendric sense, but by using the Diné conception of the fourth world. The fourth world is a cycle of events, not a period of linear time or an age that can be confined by a set of dates; it is delineated by actions that take place in cycles. Anthropologist Bill Grantham explains how the emergence of myth and time are inextricably linked:

> Many cultures view sacred or cosmic time as cyclic. It begins, ends, and begins again. This concept is more comprehensible when it is understood that time itself only came into existence with the original creative act; thus, the reactualisation of the divine creative activities recounted in myth, in effect, restarts the cosmic cycle. To some cultures time and cosmos are so intertwined that they are considered synonymous.[11]

In using cultural tools to conceive of time, poets often provide the material to redefine the relationship between time and space. Harjo's narrative (re)mapping upsets any belief in the objective existence of timeless space; space for her is not passive or blank, and the lines often drawn around or through communities, for instance, become acts that define subjectivity in deliberate ways. Harjo's framework of time and space, referencing Diné and Creek registers, performs the event of creation over and over again, merging traditions with cultural innovations to structure maps with new meanings.

For instance, 'climbing through a hole in the sky' in the first stanza and throughout the poem refers specifically to Creek and Navajo creation myths, her granddaughter's intersecting tribes. In the cosmologies of many tribes, emergence connects people to a specific landscape and to cyclic conceptions of time. The place of emergence is a sacred space. Grantham states that

> sacred space, any space where the sacred manifests itself on earth, can be thought of as an axis mundi: the center of the

> world. It is the world axis that provides the orientation for the world and connects the three planes.[12]

Creek and Diné concepts of space are particularly tied to the act of balance or recreation of the emergence myth. In 'Emergence', the narrator states:

> I remember when there was no urge
>
> to cut the land or each other into pieces,
>
> when we knew how to think
>
> in beautiful.

Beauty exists beyond the merely physical in Diné philosophy, for it refers to balancing a relationship with those around you. Emergence in Harjo's poem thus is tied to a long and complex history of migration, birth, spatial conceptions, and subject formation from our multiple interactions in the world. Harjo provides spatial and historical depth to her map by invoking Native spatial signifiers, such as those in the painting entitled *Four Directions*, by Hopi artist Linda Lomaheftewa reproduced on the front cover her book. In fact, the book of poems operates as an atlas, pointing out a way to live in this world. While there may be a centre, as found in the emergence myths, the stories emanate in the four directions to create a map that then connects to others, as opposed to one that distinguishes territory or property or a specific moment in time.

Harjo names the sites and directions in her map by emphasising agency and addressing gender, as when the second stanza of the poem states:

> My only tools were the desires of humans as they emerged
>
> from the killing
>
> fields, from the bedrooms, and the kitchens.

The emergence recurs 'through the desires of humans' and the consequence of their actions. Harjo remaps gendered spaces and

social lives by juxtaposing typically male-associated spaces of war ('the killing fields') with spaces associated with women ('the bedroom' and 'the kitchen'). In doing so, she also advocates for spatial justice on a local Creek scale and on a global scale. Like many Native writers, Harjo brings war into the domestic space of the nation and locates personal politics along national and global scales in ways that shatter expectations that Native peoples' lives fit neatly within the binary spatial divisions imposed by settler culture.

Gillian Youngs' 'Breaking Patriarchal Bonds: Demythologizing the Public/Private', elucidates the power relations of the public/private divide that are at work in Western conceptions of gendered spaces:

> One of the strengths of the feminist public/private critique is that it overtly associates power relations with particular definitions of social spaces and activities. As a strategy, it encourages the attention to the primary locations of social existence and the ways in which social meanings are generated and maintained in definitions of that existence. It seeks to break into the patriarchal forces which work towards the representation of society as unified, and actively undermines the hierarchical opposition of public over private which abstracts the former from the latter. In order to understand gender inequalities and gendered identities, it is essential to investigate how they are constructed across public/private divides, and to recognise that these divides are not fixed but themselves transform according to wider political processes.[13]

By applying a spatial analysis to societal constructions, Young and Harjo both trouble the public/private divide as it is still largely applied to Indigenous peoples. Settler colonisation causes Indigenous people to experience local and global scales as interactive and connected. In the violent history of colonisation, the killing fields enter both the private and public realm: they are a very real part of 'home'. Food is contaminated, water polluted, and forests cut down

as a result of the environmental disasters that Native people disproportionately experience because of the way our lands have been redefined. Our lands are the places where the contradictions in liberal democracy meet and the public/private divide breaks down.[14] The sanctity of private property becomes the means to destroy whole communities, even as it criminalises tribal ways. One need only examine the legacy of Federal Indian Policy to note that this is not hyperbole, but the very foundation of settler conceptions of space and mappings of our lands.[15]

But public/private distinctions also affect Native people within a globalised world. The United States practices settler colonialism by separating Native peoples as a 'domestic' problem from 'foreign' affairs on a global scale. Simultaneously, the state uses its control over 'domestic' Indian lands to mine resources for carrying out war abroad, such as the uranium mining on Laguna Pueblo that enabled nuclear warfare.[16] In *The Ruptures of American Capital* Grace Hong examines how labour and women-of-colour organising took note that '"private sphere" and "private property" are inextricably linked and mutually constitutive', a concept foundational to the spatial justice women often sought within the gendered spaces produced by a history of colonisation and, as Hong notes, fomented by the history of capitalism.[17] In kind, whereas in many feminist analyses the kitchen suggests an oppressive and confining space, Harjo questions the very notion of private space that maps Native women's lives. In her poem, the spaces of the kitchen and bedroom (private) and war (public) reflect Hong's and Youngs's feminist critiques while simultaneously breaking down the coloniality of the public/private divide for Native people.

Harjo deliberately employs the space of the kitchen in a Creek cultural context to argue that a willingness to emerge from these spaces or an ability to derive different meanings from new contexts can be a liberating process. While the spatialising of our everyday lives deeply affects our actions in the world and material reality, this experience is not wholly oppressive nor indissoluble. In fact, Harjo's 'Perhaps the World Ends Here' empowers gendered spaces. The poem begins with these lines:

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must

eat

to live.

She speaks throughout the poem of the life that takes place at the kitchen table and its importance to community and cultural survival, closing with,

Perhaps the world ends at the kitchen table, while we are

laugh-

ing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.[18]

In Harjo's poems, women's spaces hold the sweetness and sustenance of the community from beginning to end. In fact, women often occupy places in their community that are fluid and that have many components, their multiplicity resting in the fact that 'the soul is a wanderer with many hands and feet'. Harjo suggests that making connections with each other is necessary to survive spatialised violence.

Harjo creates a map through desire, memory, and telling – all components of the poet's language – to reveal the contradictions of a liberal democratic state that relies on the continued production of inequalities. In doing so, she defies the brute force of a Western construction of maps through the physical and mental erasure of complex histories and differences; Harjo constructs her map not out of paper, but from material that emphasises the importance of orality and remembrance: 'The map must be made of sand and can't be read by ordinary light. It must carry fire to the next tribal town, for renewal of the spirit'. Sand easily can blow away and is fluid in its materiality; thus a process of remembering is key to reading the map. While the sand in this stanza refers to the southwest or to Navajo villages, Harjo also invokes descriptions of past communication systems between Creek villages that existed before removal.

Her emphasis on oral communication is elaborated further by the image of a runner carrying news between Creek villages, which

also evokes the transmission of knowledge between generations as well as among her granddaughter's multiple tribal contexts. During wartime, the runner warned the next towns of encroachment, allowing them to prepare for war. This historical image is recycled as a contemporary metaphor that not only stresses the persistent importance of orality across generations, but also acts as a call to action. Telling, or verbal forms of communication, requires a listener or a focus on a relationship; it also is a temporal form of mapping relationships and producing new ways of telling the story. In this passage, the poetic voice is conveying to her granddaughter how to find her way. Preceding the poem is a narrative in which Harjo states:

> I try to remember the beautiful sense of the pattern that was revealed before that first breath when the struggle in this colonised world threatens to destroy the gifts that my people carry into the world. But we cannot be destroyed.

While maps written down on paper – lease maps, reservation boundaries, maps of states, maps of national borders – all carry a force, they also can be destroyed. The histories of the Muscogee Creeks and Harjo's poetics stress the importance of memory: 'Trees of ashes wave good-bye to good-bye and the map appears to disappear'. Inevitably, what we remember and pass down through the generations holds the most promise in providing spatialised justice in this colonised world.

Thus, instead of focusing on Indigenous erasure and absence in Western mapping, Harjo appropriates the language of a map to speak of the consequences of forgetting and of its detriments to tribal continuity. The poem sets up the necessary components for creating a map that will guide Harjo's granddaughter through life, reminding her that the consequences of forgetting are immense for Native communities:

> In the legend are instructions on the language of the
>
> land, how it was we
>
> forgot to acknowledge the gift, as if we were not in it or

of it.

Take note of the proliferation of supermarkets and

malls, the altars of money.

They best describe the detours from grace.

Keep track of the errors of our forgetfulness; the fog

steals our children while

we sleep.

With the expressions '[i]n the legend', 'take note', and 'keep track', followed by the consequences of not doing so, Harjo provides her granddaughter with skills for surviving in a world in which Native people are forcefully forgotten or made to forget. John Pickles argues for reading maps as textual, non-linear, and always laden with meaning. He claims that:

> mapping is an interpretive act, not a purely technical one, in which the product – the map – conveys not merely the facts but also and always the author's intention, and all the acknowledged and unacknowledged conditions and values any author (and his/her profession, time, and culture) brings to a work. Thus like all works, the map carries along with it so much more than the author intended.[19]

Harjo's text/map refers to forgotten histories and lost memories, emphasising human error and loss of knowledge:

We no longer know the names of the birds here, how to speak

to them by their

personal names.

The Western form of mapping is treated as an objective and realistic depiction, as I discussed earlier; in it there is little room to

acknowledge human error. Yet Harjo's map is a non-linear, complex product of human experience, and the human qualities of error and forgetfulness can be recovered and rectified through language, forgiveness, and acknowledgement.

The infinite possibility of human interaction and experience in place recalls – and, from an Indigenous perspective, troubles – Michel de Certeau's concept of the 'grammar of space'. In de Certeau's work, place correlates to the arrangement of rules and regulations, while space invokes everyday practice. The grammar of space – for example, the nation-state or the Indian Territory, or the subsequent state of Oklahoma – is structured around a settler order we all inhabit, inherit, or have imposed upon us, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. But we can still play with this grammar, and often do, to reflect our own 'desires and goals'. For instance, de Certeau reminds us:

> Renters make comparable changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories; as do speakers, in the language into which they insert both the messages of their Native tongue and, through their accent, through their own 'turns of phrases', etc., their own history; as do pedestrians, in the streets they fill with the forests of their desires and goals. In the same way the users of social codes turn them into metaphors and ellipses of their own quests. The ruling order serves as a support for innumerable productive activities, while at the same time blinding its proprietors to this creativity [...].[20]

'Renters' in the context of settler colonialism is an apt phrase. If grammar provides a social code and mode of governance, it does not determine the way we act. Harjo's poetic mapping uses the structures of language and the rules of map-making to navigate the colonial world. But by recounting the everyday practices of Indigenous people and the infinite possibilities that come through the tactical art of language and remembering, she (re)maps the grammar of settler place-making.

Analysing an earlier poem by Harjo (from *In Mad Love and War*, 1990), Native literary critic Craig Womack contends that often Native tribes reenacted a spatial consciousness when they were forcibly relocated. Maps can reappear because of desire, memory and imagination. He offers insight into Harjo's spatial memory:

> As Harjo indicates, however, 'the sacred lands have their own plans', and this can be witnessed by comparing Creek geography in Alabama to Oklahoma. As Louis Oliver discusses [...] towns in Indian Territory were given their old names, and even the spatial and cultural relationships between upper and lower Creek towns were duplicated, as well as settlement patterns along rivers [...]. Thus the poet's phrase 'Nothing can be left behind' is evident even by a cursory comparison of a map of eastern Oklahoma and Alabama, where many of the town names are replicated by Creek memory reinventing itself in a new landscape.[21]

Womack provides a sample of how cultural memory actively creates space that connects memory, remembering, and space and to emphasise how this is reflected in Harjo's poem.

Important facets of cultural survival thus include the unpacking of settler forms of place-making, which are largely motivated by the need to turn land into property, and open up creative forms of social practice. But while places provide the context for our practices, the act of remembering is practice itself. So what does it mean to recall the places of emergence and stories tied to them and pass that on to the next generation? And even if some elements of memory and cultural transmission are not recovered in that moment, does this mean complete loss, if we accept the fact that place is never stable or immutable, but rather comprised of reiterative practices? Harjo advocates a map that examines the reiterative practice of emergence, birth, renewal, and recreation with 'no beginning or end'. For mapping the future, '[a]n imperfect map will have to do'; what is important is retaining tribal concepts and relationships to ensure a material and social place in the world.

A new way of looking at Native practices emerges by examining Creek continuity in comparison to the structuring of space on a global scale. Many geographers also have noted immigrant and migrant spatial practices that recollect traditional lands and help to maintain cultural continuity, such as when large immigrant populations congregate in certain areas of cities or small towns. Whether space is restructured through traditional memory or through new relationships to landscapes, for many Native communities this activity is a move toward self-determination. Rather than regarding Native concepts of spatialisation as romantic notions of the past or as essentialist markers of identity, the practices of remembering and of playing with language surface as strategies for continuance and political power. In a discussion on the value of experience in forming theories of the construction of identity, Womack states:

> Land is central to many Native cultures. The reasons are many, the subject of another essay, but land is at the center of religious belief and practice, definitions of sovereignty, and current court battles to get back home territories. In terms of theory, land is a way of avoiding universal claims or irresponsible essentialism because we can ask the question 'how well does a given philosophy meet the needs of the people in a particular locale?'[22]

For Womack, specific pieces of land place us and give a context to struggles. While I agree with Womack, Harjo inspires us to think of land not merely as the place marker for discrete territories with specific histories, but as inherently connected to other lands, crossing rigid borders among individual communities, Native and non-Native. It is this type of focus on land that engenders my desire to (re)map socialities that will materially and mentally sustain future generations.

The poem enables a (re)mapping of settler geographies in its incorporation of oral traditions to map realities of the present day context. By putting into conversation important tribal stories about the emergence and birth of tribal nations, Harjo's poetry illuminates

the complexity of the constellations of human relationships to each other and to land. In her framing, Creek and Navajo territories are dissociated from notions of tribal purity that have been imposed by settler structures of property rights to legitimate racialised 'Indian' bodies (although Harjo is very careful in her poetry to continually recognise the material reality of tribal jurisdiction). The many stories and retellings of the emergence and travel of the Creek, Navajo, and Hopi people evoked in the poem resonate with rich historical and cultural connotations that do not discredit tribal maps, but support the many centres that reverberate and are recognised by tribal peoples:

> Fresh courage glimmers from planets.
>
> And lights the map printed with the blood of history, a
>
> map you will have to
>
> know by your intention, by the language of suns.

The various centres of Native traditions, symbolised in multiple suns and planets, do not adhere to a master narrative as we see in Western history and map-making.

Diné geographer Holly Youngbear-Tibbets addresses the intersections between landscape and discourse and the making of places for Native people by arguing that place is not made from the 'margins' or 'periphery', nor does place have to be fixed and contained. Rather, place is a working relationship between space and humans. She states:

> The landscape of the Upper Great Lakes, sculpted by volcanoes, glaciers, floods, sea-floor spreading, and tectonic up-thrusts, is not merely the backdrop for the drama of human life [...]. People and place are inextricably joined, and this most profound relationship to the land is told and retold in stories, songs, oral histories, and predominates in our everyday mundane conversations, as it probably has for a millennia.[23]

The tribal stories – especially brought together – co-exist, and this storied cartography unmoors place or land as a mere object for claiming or one simply with multiple description. The possibilities in incorporating and dialoguing with oral traditions are boundless.

The narrator's own wanderings in life through the simultaneous existence of traditional landscapes and landscapes of colonisation were sustained through the art of sharing her stories. The poem itself is written at the granddaughter's birth in the hopes of giving her the tools she will need in a settler colonial context. She tells the next generation:

> When you emerge note the tracks of the monster slayers
> where they entered
> the cities of artificial light and killed what was killing us.
> You will see red cliffs. They are the heart, contain the
> ladder.
> A white deer will come to greet you when the last human
> climbs from the
> destruction.
> Remember the hole of our shame marking the act of
> abandoning our tribal
> grounds.
> We were never perfect.[24]

In one of the Diné creation stories of our world, the monster-slayers are the heroic mythic figures born from Changing Woman, the entity that creates the world we live in and landscapes we depend upon with her gendered body. These stories and landscapes will mark her granddaughter's belonging, even though Native belonging is often coded through a Western mapping in the form of residence or identity cards issued by settler agencies (and here I include the majority of tribal council structures introduced since the nineteenth century). Monsters generated from human conflict threaten the

survival of the people, and the 'artificial light' employed in the poem contemporises this destruction. The monster-slayers not only eventually save the Diné from destruction in the mythic story, but as they decimate the monsters they are transfigured into the landscape and the sacred mountains that mark the Diné homelands.

The spatial metaphors of 'planets' and 'suns' in the above passage interact with the lower-world mythic figures of the monster-slayers who represent creativity and innovation. Creek philosophies between the three worlds come into play here, where the upper world of planets and stars connotes stability and fixity, the middle world one of human fallibility, and the lower world one of chaos and fertility. All three are without judgment and keep the world in balance. The Diné philosophy of bringing the world in balance through Hozho, or concepts of beauty and ways of being, also mark Harjo's map as modelling a journey that does not depict the 'Truth', as in Western attempts to stabilise power. In place of discrete territorial possessions, Harjo's map presents an interactive conversation that occurs in remembering and listening. Her mapping is an act of remembering that we are all born into situations where we try to achieve balance, even as it is an act of forgiveness for the imperfections we all carry as human beings.

Harjo deliberately rewrites roads, usually flat lines on a map, as a three dimensional spiral leading along the course of lives and dependent on relationships to mothers, fathers, ancestors, and the decisions we make. Birth and death are continual cycles:

> The place of entry is the sea of your mother's blood,
>
> your father's small death
>
> as he longs to know himself in another.
>
> There is no exit.
>
> The map can be interpreted through the wall of the
>
> intestine – a spiral on the
>
> road of knowledge.
>
> You will travel through the membrane of death, smell
>
> cooking from the en-

campment where our relatives make a feast of fresh

deer meat and corn soup,

in the Milky Way.

They have never left us; we abandoned them for science.

Harjo deeply personalises and embodies her spatial practices by depicting the process of birth and nurturing of life very differently from Western cartographers who seek to represent 'the real'.[25] In her poetic acts, Harjo remembers and abandons science as she travels, in this instance, through the spiral found in her mother's body. The embodied map disrupts national narratives that trace spaces full of Native absence: from active erasure such as in 'the frontier' and in the reservation, to the naming of Native women through written, linear one-dimensional signs, to coded historical narratives found on the printed page. Harjo's map remembers the lives before her and greets the life being born that is proof of renewal and continuance.

CONCLUSION

Language carries the weight and contradictions of history and of living in the present settler-colonial moment. By constructing complexities, for 'at birth we know everything, can see into the shimmer of complexity', Harjo moves us away from a tautological structure of space. Space no longer has an essentialised essence, nor can it dictate a racial essence. As the poetic voice navigates her way through 'this world apparently driven into craziness by violence and greed', she is recontextualising herself and the place of future generations.[26] She tells her granddaughter, and the reader of the poem,

And when you take your next breath as we enter the fifth world

there will be

no X, no guidebook with words you can carry.

You will have to navigate by your mother's voice, renew the

song she is singing.

There are no marks written down on paper, only the voice, a desire to remember traditions, and the will to sing your own song. Harjo repeatedly uses the particular lexicon of mapping, words such as 'navigate', 'X', and 'guidebook', positioning them within tribal texts. In doing so, spatial metaphors transform the meanings of these social codes while a gracefulness of meaning is established.

Harjo ends the poem with the following deeply personal and tribal lines: 'Humans are imperfect in their forgetting and in their remembering'. Like a spiral that never returns to the same exact point, but is still connected to the origin, Harjo suggests that the only method for making a map useful is to construct your own. The mapping process for Harjo is not a one-to-one relationship of tracing borders and territories, but rather a series of second-degree signs such as the re-actualisation of the emergence myth. Yet, because of the effects of colonisation on the passing down of knowledge, the meanings of the signs are not always evident or interpretable. Harjo ultimately asks what tools her granddaughter may need in life to grow and remember her place in the world – a question we should all be addressing.

We, and here I am not just speaking to Native peoples, need to (re)create a spatial practice which mediates the displacement created through colonial conceptions of land and bodies, by maintaining, recognising, and if necessary reformulating networks and knowledge systems that provide an alternative to the conscriptions of race, bounded nations, and conquered people. Harjo, imagining solutions to displacement, alienation, and spatial restructuring, creates a guide for more than just a granddaughter. By the use of the tools of the emergence myths and by creating metaphors out of the material tools of the coloniser, she is able to (re)map space and guide us in the ways to make our own maps in this new world. In conceiving of her place and her own map, Harjo provides tools for our journey, struggle and resistance. Rather than a stable sum of her contexts, pigeon-holed in ethnic entrapment, she is a *mobile subject in process and connected to others*. Part of this journey will be to encounter other people who will carry with them their own imaginings and stories – and thus possibilities.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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NOTES

[1] See J. B. Harley, 'Deconstructing the Map', in Trevor J. Barnes, James S. Duncan (eds), *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text, and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992).
[2] Adrienne Rich, 'Notes on a Politics of Location', in Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry* (New York: Norton, 1989): 210-231.
[3] These works appear in Gloria Anzaldua (ed.), *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider,* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984), Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa (eds), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1981).
[4] Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010): 23.
[5] Joy Harjo, 'A Map to the Next World', in Joy Harjo, *A Map to the Next World: Poetry and Tales* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000): 19.
[6] Harjo, 'A Map to the Next World': 23.
[7] John Pickles, 'Texts, Hermeneutics, and Propaganda Maps', in Trevor J. Barnes, James S. Duncan (eds), *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Texts, and Metaphors in the Representation of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1992): 193.
[8] David Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation and the Politics of Land Ownership in Oklahoma* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010): 24.
[9] Chang, *The Color of the Land*: 24.
[10] Bethany Ruth Berger, 'After Pocahontas: Indian Women and the Law, 1830-1934', *American Indian Law Review*, 21, 1 (1997): 1-62.
[11] Bill Grantham, *Creation Myths and Legends of the Creek Indians* (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 2002): 6-7.
[12] Grantham, *Creation Myths and Legends of the Creek Indians*: 7.
[13] Gillian Youngs, 'Breaking Patriarchal Bonds: Demythologizing the Public/Private', in Marianne H. Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan (eds), *Gender and Global Structuring: Sightings, Sites, and Resistances* (London: Routledge, 2003): 48.
[14] For more information on Indigenous land destruction on a global scale and Native people's work to stem the exploitation of land and consequential erosion of Native lifeways, see Winona LaDuke, *All My Relations: Native Struggle for Land and Life* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1999), Winona LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005); Elizabeth Deloughrey, George B. Handley, *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), Melissa K. Nelson, *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future* (Rochester, VT: Bear &Company, 2008), Beth Middleton Rose, *Trust in Land: New Directions in Tribal Conservation*

(Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011). These authors who rigorously combine scholarship and activism.
[15] The image of the kitchen as a private and political space recurs frequently in Native scholarship. In a sense Native women are recovering the kitchen from a space that has been relegated to drudgery and subordination. One of the best examples occurs in Donna K. Goodleaf, *Entering the War Zone: A Mohawk Perspective on Resisting Invasions* (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books Ltd., 1995). Goodleaf relates the story of Oka and Mohawk resistance, where women who fed and cooked acted as a focal point, a command centre, passing on information and instructions. This gendered site was fundamental to resistance.
[16] Recognising the various connections between colonial violence, violence from war, and violence amongst individuals, Leslie Marmon Silko writes eloquently about internal colonisation and global conflicts. See Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Penguin, 1977).
[17] Grace Kyungwon Hong, *The Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color, Feminism and the Culture of Immigrant Labor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006): 45.
[18] Joy Harjo, *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky: Poems* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994): 68.
[19] Pickles, 'Texts, Hermeneutics, and Propaganda Maps': 211.
[20] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): xxi.
[21] Craig S. Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 236.
[22] Womack, *Red on Red*: 28.
[23] Holly Youngbear-Tibbetts, 'Making Sense of the World', in Susan Hardy Aiken (ed.), *Making Worlds: Gender, Metaphor, Materiality* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998): 64-65.
[24] Harjo, 'A Map to the Next World': 10.
[25] Mishuana Goeman, 'From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the discussion of Indigenous Nation-building', *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 1, 1 (2008): 23-34.
[26] Goeman, 'From Place to Territories and Back Again': 22.