

FOUR. GHOST DANCING AT CENTURY'S END

On January 1, 1889, a Yerington Paiute living in Mason Valley, Nevada, named Jack Wilson/Wovoka had a vision that he ascended to heaven and spoke with God. While the exact character of this prophecy has been the subject of much debate, it entailed reunion with the dead and the performance of a dance through which to hasten that moment, and the resulting set of beliefs and practices came to be known as the Ghost Dance.¹ There were numerous similar visions and movements throughout the period, including one among the neighboring Walker Lake Paiutes twenty years earlier, and these various movements spread over wide areas, reaching at various points over the Plains, into California and the Great Basin, and up through the Columbia River and Puget Sound regions.² Wovoka's revelation, though, gained greater fame, and has become a touchstone in American (Indian) history, because Lakotas who had responded to Wovoka's message were pursued by the U.S. military in late 1890, owing to the false claim that they were threatening an uprising. The most famous of the events connected to this campaign occurred at Wounded Knee Creek on December 29, when a band under the Minneconjous chief Big Foot was massacred even though they had already surrendered and were in the process of making their way to the agency on the Pine Ridge reservation. Wovoka's Ghost Dance becomes epochal, and is widely remembered, as a result of its association with an act of state violence itself often understood as signifying the end of the Indian wars.³ If lamented as tragedy, Wounded Knee becomes a historically canonical site for marking the end of an era, that of meaningful Indigenous resistance to U.S. occupation, and, through association with it, the Ghost Dance of 1890 gains its prominent position within settler and Native accounts of U.S. national history. In this way it serves as an exceptional moment of Native visibility, only to indicate the prior and subsequent irrelevance of Indigenous presence within Euramerican history.

From one perspective, then, the Ghost Dance operates as a figure of futility, the impossibility of opposing U.S. rule over Native peoples, the official containment of Native sovereignties within government-delimited spaces, and the irreversibility of the unfolding of settler time/history. In this way it fits within the dynamics of U.S. national time and of the temporalities of the treaty system discussed in chapter 2. However, many contemporary Native writers draw on its symbolic significance (as a result of its association with Wounded Knee) in order to stage alternative visions of Native pasts and futures than those at play in narratives and enactments of settler time. These texts of a century later mobilize Wovoka's prophecy in order to envision and seek to realize forms of Native world making that are bound to neither a narrative of settler national progress nor a territorialization of indigeneity onto the sanctioned spaces of the reservation.⁴ As discussed in the preceding chapters, Indian policy sought to contain Native peoples within constricted areas, consistently shrink these areas by making swaths and sections of them available for non-native use and ownership (via treaties and allotment), and reorder existing Indigenous experiences of time to bring them in line with non-native modes of jurisdiction and programs of development (personal, familial, and commercial). In *Manifest Manners* Gerald Vizenor characterizes non-native accounts as "the ruins of representations of invented Indians," further observing that these "simulations of manifest manners . . . become the real without a referent to an actual tribal remembrance."⁵ Invoking the Ghost Dance, though, enables Native authors to deviate from settler historical emplotments and their associated cartographies, opening room for acknowledging Native realities in which the dynamics of settler colonialism exert force but do not define the limits of Indigenous possibility, placemaking, and perception. As Mishuana Goeman argues, "the literary . . . tenders an avenue for the 'imaginative' creation of new possibilities, which must happen through imaginative modes precisely because the 'real' of settler colonial society is built on the violent erasures of alternative modes" of Indigenous being in the world.⁶

Ghost Dance narratives, like Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999), story late nineteenth-century millennial visions in ways that index the persistence of possibilities for Native self-determination. Chapter 2 explored how non-native narratives of national time (particularly pivoting around the Civil War as a moment of national transcendence) position Indigenous peoples and their relations to place as forms of exception, casting Native presence as an anomaly while rendering the continued existence of the state and its assertion of jurisdictional authority over Native lands as the background and horizon for a settler sense of continuity

and futurity. Chapter 3 addressed the ways that the force of U.S. Indian policy, specifically the allotment program, cannot be understood as totalizing the possible spatiotemporal formations on Native lands, instead operating as one frame of reference that occupies the “same” space as the dynamics of Indigenous duration—the long-term rhythms and immanent relations that arise from Indigenous modes of occupancy and engagement with the specificities of that place. While addressing different ways that Native peoples are forcibly incorporated into settler time, and ways they retain their own temporalities distinct from it, both of these examples depend on forms of persistence, an undivided expanse of time across which Indigenous presence stretches. However, as envisioned by Alexie and Silko, the Ghost Dance suggests less unbroken continuity than complex cross-temporal communications, impressions, and relations that exceed the unfolding of a timeline. Such cross-time proximity, the sense of direct implication across the apparent gulf of chronology, might be described as *prophetic temporality*. Unlike the silence discussed in the last chapter, prophecy emerges in these texts less as an unarticulated phenomenological background than as a catalyzing force that punctuates and animates Native frames of reference. What makes these particular texts so compelling is their exploration of the complex relation between prophecy and everyday experience: the former does not rupture the latter, instead emerging in and through ordinary conjunctures of sensation, perception, and duration; and, conversely, prophecy cannot be reduced to the mechanics of quotidian circumstances, a set of causal relations that can explain (away) the force of paranormal presence.⁷

Drawing on the paradigmatic quality of Wovoka’s prophecy and movement within extant historical narratives, these texts divorce Native prophecy from the periodizing finality attributed to the massacre at Wounded Knee. Alexie and Silko cite the Ghost Dance while drawing on its iconicity to index regionally specific prophetic movements and sensibilities. The Ghost Dance, then, operates as a site for generating Native futures not bound by the presumed givenness of settler national geographies and destinies. More than a turn to the past, the novels access the potentials of prophecy as a nonsuccessive relation to time that indicates both intimacy across periods and the action of nonhuman entities as causal agents that take part in processes of becoming.⁸ As Russell West-Pavlov suggests, time can be understood as the complex relations among “multiple, interwoven, immanent temporalities inhabiting entities of many types rather than providing their medium or container.”⁹ In this way the notion of prophecy provides a way of talking about kinds of backgrounding and storying in which the past, present, and future do not line up as an evolving, continuous causal chain but in which, rather, collective experiences of time are

oriented by affects—and entities—that do not follow a developmental pattern. The spirits that animate prophecy have their own “immanent” itineraries that affect temporal relations, creating forms of juxtaposition, syncopation, fusion, and interpenetration. In both novels the Ghost Dance entails the operation of beings and forms of force and power that have no place within rationalist modes of explanation. As Scott L. Pratt notes, Wovoka’s prophecy and the movements that emerge from it have usually been explained “in naturalized terms” as a derivation of something else, and doing so engages in a process of “ontological reduction” in which everything can be understood as a function of “objects in the world as experienced by the surrounding Euro-descended peoples” such that they are “fully accessible to non-Natives.”¹⁰ In invoking and mobilizing the Ghost Dance, these texts do not seek to explain it (or manifestations of prophecy more broadly) within what one might describe as a sociological framework (Native despondency, lack of resources, weakening of Indigenous governance structures, etc.). Instead, the novels suggest, in John Dewey’s terms as quoted by Pratt, “a contrast, not between a Reality, and various approximations to, or phenomenal representation[s] of Reality, but between different reals of experience.”¹¹ Via the Ghost Dance, *Indian Killer* and *Gardens in the Dunes* envision quotidian forms of Indigenous temporal experience that are galvanized and gain new meaning and momentum through collective expressions and experiences of prophecy. Such experiences further license, stimulate, and texture possibilities for living a future not determined by settler histories. Rather than understanding the quotidian and the prophetic as opposed or contradistinguished, the novels present prophecy as taking part in ordinary life in various ways: as an extension and intensification of everyday affect, as a mode of ritual with its own regular periodicities, as a practice embedded in geographic and historical relations encountered in everyday ways (in terms of prior sites of prophecy or areas referred to in prophecies), and as a set of principles, guides, and frames for everyday perception and decision making.¹²

These novels do not so much supplement history, something like filling in what has been missing in available narratives, as reconceptualize *historicity*, including the principles by which to understand the relation between the past and the present and the possibilities for Indigenous futurity/ies. In this way the texts might be thought of as seeking to theorize temporal sovereignty in their insistence on the limits of linear accounts of Indian history and their emphasis on how prophetic movements express nonchronological modes of Indigenous experience and collectivity. The performance of the Ghost Dance in both novels undoes the self-evidence of settler becoming, the ways the creation, extension, and consolidation of the settler state and its social and legal

geographies serve as the implicit milieu within which meaningful change over time occurs. Highlighting the potential nonequivalence between Native and non-native phenomenologies, these novels trace how settler stories become realized through their accumulation over time and the violences they enact while also indicating the existence of other temporal rhythms and forces that bear alternative possibilities for Indigenous being in the world. *Indian Killer* highlights the accretion of non-native representations of Indianness and the way they provide the context for ordinary non-native perceptions that affect not only non-natives' engagements with Natives but Native people's own conceptions of Indian authenticity, especially inasmuch as it becomes bound to the space of the reservation. Alexie positions Native prophecy as a means of breaking with this regime of imposed settler perceptions and the particular brutalities they enable, engaging with the continuing legacy of settler expropriation in ways that resonate with prophetic legacies among Coast Salish and Columbia Plateau peoples. The characters in the text continually draw on nineteenth-century Indian history as a means of naming current struggles, and, in doing so, they suggest both how the present-day pursuit of Indigenous self-determination gets dismissed as an anachronism and how contemporary events replay supposedly superseded dynamics from the past. Within this double-sided set of citations, the text's invocation of the Ghost Dance gives material shape to ongoing histories of Native grievance. Neither separate from the history of settler colonial violence nor simply derivative of it, the prophetic dancing in the text bodies forth new relations among the following: the legacies of the Indian wars, the continuing assertion of expansive Native claims to place that exceed modes of state recognition, Indigenous ontologies of spirit, and the potential for a transformed Indigenous horizon of possibility.

While in Alexie's novel the Ghost Dance produces a singular figure who is the condensation of everyday forms of Native anger at being routinely rendered unreal and unhistorical, for *Gardens in the Dunes* prophecy coalesces the potential for regeneration. Silko envisions forms of Native survival that exceed the chronobiopolitics of Indian policy and the annihilating tendencies immanent within settler institutions and economies. The novel displaces the questions of authenticity that lie at the center of *Indian Killer*, instead foregrounding the presence of complex networks whose indigeneity is not dependent on the generational transmission of quanta of blood Indianness. As against notions of the Indian real as a form of racial lineage maintained through proper sexual order and contained within governmentally regulated spaces, Silko offers a portrait of indigeneity as a dynamic and expansive matrix of transtemporal connections, for which the Ghost Dance (as it manifested on the Arizona-California

border) provides the paradigmatic example. The text suggests that the state seeks to realize a certain vision of Indianness through the imposition of reservation geographies and the insistence on the need to train Native peoples in bourgeois familial and gender norms. In contrast to this set of heteronormative temporal scripts and their dependence on a view of Native place as fetishistically bounded, Silko's storytelling focuses on desire as a means of indicating the variability of Native social ties, their ability to engender new formations without decimating the old ones, and the presence of modes of development that are multivectoral and not the linear unfolding of progress or civilization. If the realization of prophecy in Alexie's novel arises out of grief and rage, in *Gardens* prophecy bears hope through its ability to promote everyday forms of creation that weave together varied and apparently incongruous histories and future potentials, providing an alternative to the conception of modernity as newness which the text casts as inherently organized around destruction.

At the Limits of Indian Realness

Set in Seattle, *Indian Killer* centers on the life of John Smith, a Native man adopted by a white couple from birth, without any knowledge of the tribe from which he comes. The novel leads readers through John's everyday tribulations, which suggest significant mental illness modeled on schizophrenia.¹³ John's story, then, suggests a series of questions about what constitutes reality, both his own as a Native person (in the absence of connection to a specific people or meaningful information about his genealogy) and his impressions of the world (given the ways they are punctuated by voices, hallucinations, and persistent paranoid episodes). The questions circulating around how to conceptualize John's Indianness expand to include the other Native characters in the novel, each of whom fails in some way to fulfill the criteria for authenticity articulated by the others. Moreover, the novel suggests how the self-subjection of Native people to such regimes of inspection emerges within the context of accumulating non-native representations of Native people(s) that come to serve as the basis for settler-Indigenous relations. As John's difficulties intensify and the reader is introduced to multiplying conflicts over the contours and character of "real" Indianness, a rash of murders are committed by a figure referred to only as "the killer," who over the course of the novel is increasingly associated with the Ghost Dance and who is described in other-than-human terms (usually through bird imagery). The text draws on the Ghost Dance to indicate the presence of forms of Native feeling and becoming that, while responsive to continuing modes of non-native occupation, exceed the representational capacity of conventional

conceptions of the real.¹⁴ In doing so, Alexie sketches the cumulative material force exerted by such narratives over time while simultaneously gesturing toward the existence and counterforce of Native experiences of temporality—modes of prophetic duration—that exceed the parameters of settler historicity.

The novel highlights the ways that non-native accounts of Native pasts and presents come to serve as the baseline against which to define the truth of Indianness, which itself can then be claimed by non-natives as their own possession.¹⁵ As scholars have noted, the novel repeatedly invokes the proliferation of settler stories about Indians, stories that then are treated as the basis for settlers' understandings of what constitutes the reality of Native life and history. In *Muting White Noise* James Cox argues that "the correlation that Alexie draws between storytelling and violence is so explicit that the storytelling *is* the violence that leads to John Smith's death," adding that the text "emphasizes the power of these stories to define worldviews that encourage acts of violence against Native peoples."¹⁶ Discussing the various kinds of collection at play in the novel, Janet Dean explores the "intangible forms of violence in the text," specifically "the ways institutional and private archives designed to authenticate Native American identity threaten the very cultures they would define and purportedly preserve."¹⁷ Examples of this pattern include the narrator's observation that John's adoptive mother, Olivia Smith, has learned all she knows about Indians "from books, Western movies, documentaries" (12), as well as the text's comment in discussing Jack Wilson, the otherwise white writer who claims Shilshomish descent with no proof, that "he knew about real Indians. He'd read the books" (178).¹⁸ Furthermore, Olivia says to Wilson, upon meeting him at John's apartment, "I like your books. You really get it right" (355). More than illustrating the circulation of non-native portrayals of Native people as (if they were) the real of Indigenous experience, these moments suggest the role of temporality in the process of materializing such images as the basis for non-native perception: they gather and reinforce each other over time. Each builds on the previous one, such that non-natives come to treat their own past experience of such representations as a phenomenological, conceptual, and evidentiary basis for engaging with dynamics and accounts in the present—Olivia's confidence that Wilson "get[s] it right." Through this implicit process of adjudication, the archive of non-native representations functions as a cumulative repertoire of narratives through which to assess Indianness, giving a historical density to non-native versions of Indianness and providing the intuitive basis through which Native people become actual within settler sensations of the world.¹⁹ The narrator informs readers that the book on which Wilson starts working in the wake of the murders is also called *Indian Killer* (227), and later

the text notes, “Wilson knew that he was writing more than a novel. He would write the book that would finally reveal to the world what it truly meant to be Indian,” adding, “He wanted the world to know about the real Indian Killer, and not just somebody else’s invention” (338–39). This work of nonfiction, in which he presents John Smith as the killer (415), appears as the apotheosis of the questions of authenticity, narrative authority, and documentation around which the novel has been building, offering itself as the “truth” of not only the killer’s identity and actions but Indigenous being.²⁰

Moreover, the construction of Indian realness around settler stories facilitates a temporality of *becoming Indian*, whereby non-natives can cast themselves as not only possessors of the knowledge about Native people supposedly contained in such representations but also, in consuming and circulating these stories, as coparticipants in Indianness. The text observes that “Jack Wilson grew up white and orphaned in Seattle. Dreaming of being Indian, he’d read every book he could find about the First Americans,” and he “recreated himself in the image he found inside those books” (157). Additionally, the mystery novels he writes feature Aristotle Little Hawk, “the very last Shilshomish Indian” (162). In terms of his sense of himself and his creative work, Wilson inhabits Indianness with a sense of authority and authenticity, an orientation, feeling, and momentum animated by his lifetime of reading (non-native) texts about Indians. Similarly, in a Native American literature class taken by Marie Polatkin (one of the novel’s central characters, a Spokane woman who meets John at a powwow on campus), the professor, Clarence Mather, assigns a series of as-told-to autobiographies rather than texts produced by Native authors. In justifying his choices in the face of Marie’s repeated critiques, Mather asserts, “One would hope that we can all benefit from a close reading of the assigned texts, and recognize the validity of a Native American literature that is shaped by both Indian and white hands. In order to see that this premise is verifiable, we need only acknowledge that the imagination has no limits. That, in fact, to paraphrase Whitman, ‘Every good story that belongs to Indians belongs to non-Indians, too’” (60–61). From this perspective, “Native American literature” testifies to a history of collaboration between whites and Indians, one in which Mather putatively takes part through his recirculation of these books.²¹ In “Writing Off Treaties” Aileen Moreton-Robinson suggests that within settler accounts indigeneity functions as “a white epistemological possession” and that, through the process of recognition, “tribes become constituted as an epistemological possession of the nation state.”²² Indian stories “belong” to everyone because they have no ontological status outside of their ability to be *imagined*, narrated, and experienced by non-natives.

Beyond displacing Native people's representations and understandings of their own histories, both Wilson and Mather contribute to a temporal dynamic whereby the accreting legacy of non-native depictions of past and present Indians provides the horizon for imagining the potential for a Native future, or the absence of one. In *Queer Phenomenology* Sara Ahmed suggests that the perception of an object as "having qualities" is less "a perception of what is proper to the object" than a reflection of the object's ability "to enable the action with which it is identified," and objects gain such qualities, imagined as inherent, from being repeatedly taken up in similar ways.²³ The Indian emerges in Alexie's text as such an object for whites, as a habituated potential for non-natives to orient themselves as belonging to this place through the imagination of a shared history. When Native people(s) do not illustrate such qualities by capacitating white presence, they are construed as, in Ahmed's terms, "bad object[s]" or "the cause of the failure," as having failed to be properly Indian and thus being in need of disciplining.²⁴ In this sense the novel suggests that the amassing of settler portrayals of Indianness does not simply defer Indigenous accounts but actively works to replace them in ways that affect the material possibilities available to Native people. With respect to Mather's syllabus, Marie notes, "It's like his books are killing Indian books" (68), and at a demonstration during one of Wilson's readings at a local bookstore, in which protestors hold signs such as "ONLY INDIANS SHOULD TELL INDIAN STORIES," Marie says in response to a reporter's question, "Books like Wilson's actually commit violence against Indians" (263–64). More than indicating something like a proprietary relation to Native histories, the insistence that "Indians should tell Indian stories" arises out of the sense that the momentum of non-native narrations directly functions as a form of settler colonial force, affecting possibilities for Native action in the world (in ways that might be read as similar to the field of force exerted by allotment, discussed in the previous chapter). The effects of the intensifying proliferation of, in Vizenor's words, the "simulations of manifest manners," whose "invented Indians" replace "actual tribal remembrance," extend to bodily wounding, going beyond the discursive and ideological to the corporeal.²⁵ Any attempt by readers to cast such claims by Marie as hyperbole is undermined by the novel's repeated insistence on the causal relationship between accumulating white stories about Native histories (the temporality of simulation) and assaults on Indigenous persons and communities in the present.²⁶ Characterizing non-native accounts as "killing" Native ones suggests that the former enact a decimating aggression against the latter (on a spectrum with physical assault and murder), cutting off the potential for storying *by* Indians—their ability to offer alternative visions of the past and present that could eventuate in a

different future for Indigenous people(s) than that projected in settler stories (especially given the strategy of *lasting* that pervades such texts—as in Wilson’s description of Little Hawk).²⁷

While the text critiques non-natives’ circulation of “Indian stories,” Alexie also raises questions about the effects of such narratives on Native people’s sense of their own Indianness.²⁸ Marie articulates a number of criteria for Indigenous authenticity, including speaking a Native language and participating in ceremonies (33), tribes’ having clear “records of membership” and the attendant ability to find “documentation” of one’s Indian identity (67, 264), and having “lived on a reservation” (246). Many of the Native characters, including Marie herself, though, do not fit these criteria. Marie was not taught to speak Spokane by her parents “because they felt it would be of no use to her in the world outside the reservation”; instead, “they bought her books” (33). Neither Reggie (Marie’s cousin) nor John ever lived on a reservation, and John and Carlotta Lot, a Duwamish woman living on the street, raise further problems with the issue of documentation. John was taken from his mother and adopted by whites with literally no way of accessing any records that indicate the people from whom he descends, and Carlotta’s people, the Duwamish, do not have federal recognition or prior reservation lands.²⁹ As she says when John meets her, “I ain’t homeless. I’m Duwamish Indian. You see all this land around here. . . . All of this, the city, the water, the mountains, it’s all Duwamish land. Has been for thousands of years” (251). If John provides an example of nonbelonging due to one kind of white intervention—extratribal and cross-racial adoption—Carlotta speaks to the ways histories of treaty making, settler invasion, and bureaucratic (in)visibility can contribute to peoples’ lacking legally recognized membership lists or land bases, undermining their ability to *document* their indigeneity.³⁰ These dynamics indicate the problems involved in utilizing the kinds of temporal recognition for which Marie sometimes advocates—a notion of unbroken succession in which Indianness remains visible as such in ways intelligible to settler institutions (especially as maintained within the space of the reservation).³¹

Such problems of recognition and “tribal” identity are particularly pointed with respect to both the Puget Sound region (in which the novel is set) and the area of the Columbia Plateau (in which the Spokane reservation is located and from which Alexie himself comes).³² Numerous peoples in both regions were not recognized through treaties, surrendered land via treaties in exchange for promised reservations that were never created, or refused to come into treaty relations because they did not want to be confined to a reservation or to be under the stifling superintendence of an Indian agent. With respect to the lands recognized via formal treaties, often they were in areas from which subsistence

could not be sustained via Euramerican farming, did not contain the hunting and fishing areas still vital to Native peoples' seasonal self-provision (rights of access that themselves were guaranteed within treaties), were not considered by Native people as their exclusive site of residence, and/or were inhabited by what previously had been multiple peoples whose relations with each other might be complicated and strained. Given the official end to U.S. treaty making by congressional statute in 1871, agreements with respect to land cessions and the creation of reservations after that point (which occurred a great deal in the Columbia Plateau) had a much more insecure legal status than those reached through treaties, such that many were not fulfilled or were not fulfilled until years later (sometimes a decade or more). In other cases, agreements were substantially and unilaterally altered after they were adopted (which also happened with treaty lands, although doing so had less legal sanction) and/or were revoked entirely (sometimes with land provided elsewhere, sometimes not). Given the delays and constrictions in land recognition for Indigenous peoples in these regions, as well the limits of reservation lands for self-provision and trade and the desire to gain at least some distance from the authority of Indian agents, many Natives filed claims under the Indian Homestead Acts of 1875 and 1884 to get plots of their own, which, while not officially requiring a severing of "tribal relations," after 1884 sometimes were treated as such. Also, many Indigenous people sought seasonal wage labor, especially in the hop fields. In addition, the emergence of the hop economy brought Native people(s) to the area from much farther north, leading to greater mixture among Indigenous populations as well as a legacy of increased presence of members of such groups in the Puget Sound region. With respect to Native collective identities, the tribe was not a precontact structure, instead being generated as part of the treaty process (with non-native leaders, such as Washington's first governor, Isaac Stevens, appointing "chiefs" who could speak for larger groups so as to centralize consent and facilitate land cessions). Further, the centrality of villages made of extended kinship networks and the tendency to marry outside one's kin group (in order to secure access to resources elsewhere) positioned individual Natives within an elaborate matrix of relations on which they could call, including potentially moving to different villages and accessing different resource sites.

While the novel does not itself highlight these historical dynamics in particular, Alexie alludes to the varied histories of settler-induced dispossession, erasure, and impoverishment that contribute to such complicated diffractions of Native identity (individual and collective). The novel implicitly raises a question posed by Malea Powell in "The X-Blood Files": "Whose complicated histories and messy relationships to conquest and colonization simply

become unimportant, unheard, absent?”³³ Moreover, Alexie’s choice to set the novel in an urban center and continually to cast Seattle as a legitimate—if embattled—site of Native placemaking reflects the ongoing complexities of Native mobilities, networks, and processes of becoming in the region.³⁴ This portrayal refuses the implicit depiction of the reservation as the proper container for Indianness—one that facilitates forms of settler anachronization (as noted in the discussion of Charles Eastman’s work in chapter 2). In *Mark My Words* Goeman argues that “the debate about authenticity, or who is actually a ‘real’ Indian, is often motivated by the spatial politics” of the reservation—“supposedly progressives leave the rez and traditionalists stay at home”—such that the image of the reservation as the proper site of Indian *realness* simultaneously contains the latter both spatially and temporally.³⁵

All the Native characters in *Indian Killer* suffer from insecurities about their authenticity, a dynamic that can be understood as resulting from the effects of non-native discourses and institutions on Native perception. In discussing Marie’s sense of her own identity as Native, the narrator notes, “Indians were always placing one another on an identity spectrum, with the more traditional to the left and the less traditional Indians to the right. Marie knew she belonged somewhere in the middle of that spectrum and that her happiness depended on placing more Indians to her right. She wondered where John belonged” (39). In Vizenor’s terms, a settler *simulation* replaces *the tribal real*, or, put in the language of the preceding chapters, the gravitational force of settler formations can reorient Native frames of reference in ways that work to align them with dominant non-native accounts and experiences of time (individual, juridical, and national), leading to efforts to adjudicate others’ place on a (singular) “identity spectrum.”³⁶ If Eastman and Mathews offer portraits of how Native people might reorient U.S. nationalist discourses or live with the friction generated by incommensurate settler and Indigenous spatiotemporal formations, *Indian Killer* takes up the question of the effects in the *longue durée* of accreting forms of settler imposition. What becomes of Indigenous frames of reference? Are such experiences of duration simply overwhelmed by non-native presence, imperatives, and simulations? At what point does everyday indigeneity become no more than (to recall the discussion of Weheliye in chapter 2) being reduced to Indian flesh?³⁷

Yet the absence of particular markers of proper Indianness does not serve for the text as a basis to disqualify the characters’ representations and understandings of themselves as Indigenous, nor do the presence of settler simulations and their effects on Native self-understandings simply displace other ways of experiencing being and becoming. At one point Carlotta observes, “There’s even a bigger difference between what Indians think about each other, and what you

and I know about ourselves” (252). The novel takes up the Ghost Dance, and prophecy more broadly, as an expression of Indigenous temporalities—what Native people “know about ourselves”—that do not take official geographies and “records” as their frame of reference.³⁸ Alexie stages two confrontations over the dance’s meaning, one between Mather and Marie and an earlier one between Wilson and Reggie Polatkin (Marie’s cousin). About halfway through the novel, Wilson (who has the same name as the prophet of the Ghost Dance of 1890) has a conversation with Reggie in a local bar. After Wilson shares some details of the first of the killer’s murders that he learned from the local police, Reggie asks, “You know about Bigfoot?,” to which Wilson replies, “He died at the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890. He was Minneconjou Sioux, I think. He was killed because he was leading the Ghost Dance. . . . [It] was supposed to destroy the white men and bring back the buffalo. Ghost Dancing was thought to be an act of warfare against white people.” Reggie presses Wilson, “What color was the man who killed Bigfoot?,” and after Wilson observes, “He would’ve been white,” Reggie insists, “Exactly, Casper. Think about that” (185). The association of the Ghost Dance with both the Wounded Knee massacre and “warfare against white people” highlights a history of conflict that the novel suggests extends into the present, thwarting Wilson’s sense of an easy slippage between his history of whiteness (in terms of being perceived and living as such) and his appropriation of Indianness (in his claims to be Shilshomish).³⁹ In refusing Wilson’s project of Indianization, and the sense of unconstrained possibilities for settler development on which it draws, Reggie implicitly figures the dance as something other than a failure, other than a story of Indian disappearance. While Reggie’s comments do not themselves indicate a persistence of the dance into the present, the fact that he raises the matter in association with the actions of the killer implies such a relation, insinuating that the killer is a contemporary incarnation of similar forces as in the Ghost Dance. The narrator heightens this sense by noting that after Reggie spread word of the scalping, “Most Indians believed it was all just racist paranoia, but a few felt a strange combination of relief and fear, as if an apocalyptic prophecy was just beginning to come true” (185). The text here gestures toward the idea that the killer may, in fact, be the fulfillment of the earlier prophecy. The killer appears as an expression of enduring Indigenous sentiments and sensations that do not count as something from the past. Instead, linking the killer to the Ghost Dance suggests the potential of “Indian stories” to remake relations among the past, the present, and what’s to come.

Marie’s argument with Mather extends and further concretizes these impressions, detailing the Ghost Dance’s role in anticolonial struggle while also

more fully sketching the ways that the killer may be a manifestation of continuing histories of Native grievance.⁴⁰ During a meeting in the office of the chair of the Anthropology Department, to which Marie has been summoned in order to address a complaint filed by Mather against her, she challenges Mather's claims to expertise in ways that she routes through the invocation of the dance: "You really think you know about Indians, don't you? . . . You think you know about the Indian Killer, huh? Well, do you know about the Ghost Dance?" After she reiterates that it would cleanse the Americas of Europeans, Mather observes, "Yes, it was a beautiful and desperate act," later noting, "The Ghost Dance was not about violence or murder. It was about peace and beauty."⁴¹ In response, Marie asserts, "Yeah, you don't believe in the Ghost Dance, do you? Oh, you like its symbolism. You admire its metaphorical beauty, enit? You just love Indians so much. You love Indians so much you think you're excluded from our hatred. Don't you see? If the Ghost Dance had worked, you wouldn't be here. You'd be dust" (313). The text suggests that, for Mather, the dance functions as a means of identifying with Native people(s); he claims the Indigenous past as a symbol through which to express feelings of potentially peaceful relation, albeit on settler terms. Making Native history into a vehicle for this kind of imagined reconciliation, though, requires an assertion as to the *real* dynamics of the Ghost Dance, what it was ("peace and beauty") and what it was not ("violence or murder"). Doing so works to sustain control over history as a means of shaping the possibilities for the future, one in which non-native "love" for Indians serves as an alibi for ongoing settler occupation, and Native (counter)articulations remain merely "metaphorical," in the sense of something solely figurative with no direct impact on the world.

For Marie, as for Reggie, more than expressing the irresolvable antagonisms produced by the ongoing compulsions and imperatives of settlement, the Ghost Dance of 1890 indexes the historical density of Native experience, which exceeds the colonial temporality of unending settler succession and futurity ("If the Ghost Dance had worked, you wouldn't be here"). The Indian Killer operates as the physical condensation of Indigenous perspectives, affects, and knowledges. As Marie indicates, "so maybe this Indian Killer is a product of the Ghost Dance. Maybe ten Indians are Ghost Dancing. Maybe a hundred. It's just a theory. How many Indians would have to dance to create the Indian Killer? A thousand? Ten thousand? Maybe this is how the Ghost Dance works" (313). This account insists that the Ghost Dance cannot be located at a single moment in time, which would allow it to be situated as a contained, knowable, pitiable object within a process of historical unfolding whose organizing principles axiomatically presume sustained settler presence and dominance. While John

commits suicide, implying the futility of his search for authenticity, the text ends with the image of the killer itself dancing and joined by growing numbers of Native people in a ceremony “over five hundred years old” (420). The dance here indexes a continuing, collective process whereby accreting forms of everyday Indigenous imagination, sensation, awareness, and practice generate an emergent force that alters the present and seeks to realize the potential for Indigenous futurity/ies not conditioned on settler identification, narration, or possession. As Crisca Bierwert suggests of Coast Salish epistemologies in *Brushed by Cedar*, the dance can be seen as based “on ways of knowing that are *imbricated* with colonial transformations” but are not “in the grasp of state power” or merely a reaction to non-native formations.⁴² After Mather declares to Marie that “we . . . are on the same side of this battle” and reacts to her repudiation of this gesture by slamming his office door in her face, the narrator notes, “She wanted every white man to disappear. . . . Hateful, powerful thoughts. She wondered what those hateful, powerful thoughts could create” (85), and toward the end of the novel, when John kidnaps Wilson and takes him to the top of the skyscraper that John had helped build, the text observes, “John wondered if Wilson knew the difference between dreaming and reality. How one could easily become the other” (403). Furthermore, in the penultimate chapter, the police question Marie, and after she rejects their claims about John’s culpability in the murders committed by the killer, the chapter ends with her saying, “Indians are dancing now, and I don’t think they’re going to stop” (418). These moments all speak to the power of Native affect to shape reality, altering existing configurations of (settler-imposed) materiality through alternative processes of becoming: dancing, dreaming, creation.⁴³ Alexie implies that the killer arises (achieves physical presence and effect) out of pervasive yet quotidian Native feelings and perceptions that exceed the settler real—that do not figure against a background defined by non-native desires, stories, orientations, and expectations. The Ghost Dance shifts the temporal frame, less enacting a return to or of the past than stretching the earlier prophecy’s trajectory and momentum across time: the dance emerges within, embodies, and coalesces present sensations in ways that alter the potentials available in the present.

In this way Alexie’s novel refuses the traditional kinds of empirical narrative closure offered by mystery novels of the sort that Wilson writes.⁴⁴ Michelle Burnham reads this dynamic as the text “not even allow[ing] for the identification of this killer as anything other than *something its readers cannot know*.”⁴⁵ More than a catachrestic figure for unknowability per se, though, the killer consistently is linked with the Ghost Dance, suggesting the presence and

power of forms of relation (in the present and across time) that do not obey the terms of Euro-American realism or historicism—opening onto other potential modes of being-in-time. Seeing the killer as simply a symbol of incomprehensibility itself engages in a form of, in Scott Pratt’s words, “ontological reduction” by treating the nonrationalist aspects of the novel as figures for epistemological opacity (non-natives can’t know) rather than material expressions of another mode of reality with its own dynamics and temporality/ies, including that of prophecy.⁴⁶ The novel repeatedly depicts the killer as being other than human and as possessing paranormal abilities, pointing toward an order of reality within the novel that does not obey the rules of post-Enlightenment Euro-American empiricism or historicism. In the first chapter focused on the killer, the narrator notes that during its first murder its “hands curved into talons” (54). Later, after the killer has kidnapped a white child named Mark Jones, the text characterizes its movements as “a flutter of wings” (192). In Mark’s testimony to the police after the killer returns him to his house, he describes the killer as having “feathers” and “wings,” and he guesses that “it could fly because it had wings” (324). In addition, the final chapter indicates, “The killer gazes skyward and screeches” (420). Cumulatively, these moments suggest a birdlike entity that has the power to transform into a human shape. The novel also indicates the killer’s ability to appear as “a shadow” (71), to obscure the memory of those who have seen it (72), and to alter its features (“the killer’s face, which shimmered and changed like a pond after a rock had been tossed into it” [153]). As discussed earlier, the killer is generated out of Native feelings and dancing (or at least participates in a complex causal nexus with the dancing—a point to which I’ll return shortly), suggesting that it embodies accumulated forms of ordinary Native experience and action. The killer takes part in the plot as a social actor. If one refuses to see its paranormal or nonrationalist being as merely figurative (a symbol of unknowability), its central role in shaping the events in the novel suggests that the killer serves as a means of indexing kinds of sensation, existence, and becoming that do not conform to dominant notions of the literal and settler forms of chrononormativity. Alexie’s *Indian Killer*, then, can be understood less as suggesting the impossibility of knowledge—what (presumptively non-native) readers “cannot know”—than as offering the potential for forms of Indigenous realness, “truth,” and knowledge that do not fit the modes of causality and history at play in Wilson’s *Indian Killer*.⁴⁷

The dancing in the text does not really constitute a return, since the movement(s) engendered by Wovoka’s prophecy did not spread to the areas Alexie addresses (the Puget Sound and the Columbia River region). Yet through the

repeated citation of the Ghost Dance in relation to the “Indian Killer,” the text asserts some connection between the present of its setting and the nineteenth-century context in which the dance emerged. The fulfillment of, in the text’s terms, an “apocalyptic prophecy” (185) gives shape to, and is shaped by, the “hateful, powerful thoughts” (85) of contemporary Native people. The killer *incarnates* such feelings, which themselves arise out of the experiences amassed across generations of living within conditions overdetermined by the everyday materialization of settler stories. Linking the killer to the movement(s) of 1890 allows the text to stage a relation between the spiritual and the historical. In *Brushed by Cedar*, her study of Coast Salish forms of power, ceremony, and relation, Bierwert says of storytelling, “This linking of memories, this setting remembrances in motion, is not a nostalgia but an immanence,” and Alexie’s citation of the Ghost Dance offers less a return to what was or a bringing of the past into the present than a vehicle for indicating forms of sustained and sustaining immanence.⁴⁸ Through the dance, the text marks the potential alterity of Indigenous affects, experiences, and knowledges within non-native framings (and, thus, the violence of such framings’ imposition), and it gestures toward forms of prophetic temporality that are nonsuccessive.

More than drawing on the fame of Wovoka’s vision (particularly as taken up by the Lakota) to indicate a generic form of oppositional Indianness, though, *Indian Killer* implicitly references Salish histories and ontologies, and in doing so, it moves beyond the historical and geographic boundaries that conventionally circumscribe the meaning and scope of the Ghost Dance.⁴⁹ The citation of the Ghost Dance often recalls Wounded Knee and Lakota struggles more broadly (such as Reggie’s mention of Chief Bigfoot, discussed earlier).⁵⁰ One might be tempted, then, to see the novel’s citation of the Ghost Dance, and presentation of the killer as its realization, as merely an importation of Sioux philosophy or practice—something of a pan-Indian invocation that has little to do with Seattle or the Spokane reservation (the novel’s two principal sites). However, as Gregory E. Smoak suggests in his study of nineteenth-century prophetic religion in the northern Great Basin, “Ghost Dances became part of a common process of identity formation that took place at different times and in different ways in Indian communities across the United States,” adding, “The Ghost Dances were an appeal to spiritual power to overturn a world that was not of their making.”⁵¹ In this sense the text’s invocation of the Ghost Dance of 1890 can be understood as figuring against the background of Salish processes of becoming and the role of prophecy within them. The novel implicitly translates between regional Indigenous frames of reference and the conventional chronology of Indian history, opening that history to forms of

temporal experience that exceed the officially sanctioned expressions of authentic Indianness for which the reservation serves as the privileged site.

The terms of the vision Marie articulates, which is amplified elsewhere in the novel, resonate with various prophetic traditions in the Columbia Plateau of western Washington. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a movement of dreamers arose who had visions of traveling to heaven, speaking with a deity in the land of the dead, and being given a dance to be performed that would hasten their return.⁵² In the mid-nineteenth century, a Wanapum leader named Smohalla (who had been a medicine man) died, visited the spirit world, and returned with a prophecy that, in the words of the local Indian commissioner at the time, “a new god is coming to their rescue; that all the Indians who have died heretofore, and who shall die hereafter, are to be resurrected; that as they will then be very numerous and powerful, they will be able to conquer the whites.”⁵³ At the height of his influence, Smohalla had approximately two thousand followers from a range of neighboring peoples, and he called for a return to older ways and a renunciation of white technologies and practices, including the signing of treaties and the acceptance of government-delineated reservation lands. Not only do these movements long precede Lakota Ghost Dancing, but such patterns of faith and vision extend beyond the time of Wounded Knee and into the twentieth century, passed down generationally to new bearers of the vision.

In addition, the text’s depiction of the killer subtly invokes elements of Salish cosmology and spiritual practice. Coast Salish stories include the presence of a Transformer figure, linked to the moon, who while taking something of a human shape has the power to alter the form of other beings, including changing humans into animals and features of the landscape such as rocks. Transformer’s ability to do so suggests not only the entity’s power (understood as enacting a kind of moral authority to punish wrong conduct) but more ambient possibilities for alteration in the world and the existence of the capacity for humans to tap into such modes of power.⁵⁴ The killer in Alexie’s novel only ever appears by moonlight (the narrator notes that the killer’s knife “would soak up all the moonlight” [53]), taking a human-analogous form such that it can hold and engage with objects as a person would and can walk among people without being viewed as something not human. However, as noted earlier, the killer is cast consistently as having extrahuman characteristics, including birdlike aspects (a movement between human and animal often attributed to Transformer) and a face whose appearance “change[s] like a pond after a rock had been tossed into it” (153). The narrator observes in the first description of the killer that “the killer felt powerful, invincible, as if the world could be changed with a

single gesture” (49), a characterization that matches the moments in Salish stories when the Transformer punishes people for their misbehavior by changing them into animals or things with a gesture. Further, the fact that the final chapter is called “A Creation Story” and features the killer, whose songs and dancing animate a gathering of hundreds of Indians who themselves start dancing, can be read as alluding to the primal generative potential of Transformer and its role in the process of creation. The Lushootseed (the language of peoples in the Puget Sound region) word for Transformer carries the same prefix, *duk*, that serves as “the root for a host of concepts including worry, dissatisfaction, anger, infirmity, and ferocity” while also serving as “the root of the words for ‘yesterday’ and ‘tomorrow.’”⁵⁵ The figure of the killer could be read as being drawn from this matrix, in which movement and shifts over time gain expression as “anger” in ways that also carry the sense of a fundamental and persistent possibility of new creation. This linkage to Coast Salish stories helps explain the multiplication of causality in the final chapter, which suggests that the killer’s dancing brings others to dance in ways different than in Marie’s account, where the killer arises from Indians dancing (313). If Transformer bears a power of alteration that could become active at any time (especially given the linguistic connection to temporality itself), then this potential remains ambient, awaiting a conjuncture for its emergence. From this vantage, causality appears more polyvalent than in dominant narratives of the real, sharing something with the asynchronous rhythm of prophecy.

The killer, and its complex generation of and by the Ghost Dance, suggests a particular kind of vision and experience of time and its movement that cannot be captured within Euramerican historicism. In Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s terms, perception entails “*reckon[ing] with the possible*,” and *Indian Killer* suggests a more expansive sense of what constitutes the possible.⁵⁶ In this way the killer in the novel also resonates with extant ceremonial practice among Salish people in the Longhouse religion (otherwise known as Washat).⁵⁷ In it, people are visited by their personal spirit (or *syowen*), who enters them as a result of their current psychological or emotional distress, resulting in what is referenced in English as “hollering” in ways that have been known to sound like the expression of an animal.⁵⁸ The killer’s “screech” at the end of the novel may recall this particular ceremonial exchange, invoking the ability of spirit to enter the realm of human action and thereby to make history. Its modes of participation in personal and collective dynamics of becoming are not readily amenable to the forms of *documentation* through which Indianness is produced and authenticated, but such forms of engagement still depend on what might be termed historical circumstances—the specific alignment of persons, affects,

events, and practices that provides the ecology for the entry of this form of power. From this perspective, the nexus created in the novel between the killer and the Ghost Dance gains its momentum from the specific forms of distress faced by Native people(s), modes of Indigenous knowledge and feeling not registered within accreting settler stories. In addition, within Salish languages on the Columbia River the generic term for “bird” links to the term for “guardian spirit,” connecting the depiction of the killer’s birdlike characteristics to its potential status as a spirit presence within Washat and other ceremonial systems.⁵⁹ Yet the generative forces (and temporalities) at play around those experiences and associations are not themselves explicable—do not count as real (efficacious, existent, and/or causative)—within the terms of settler-sanctioned history.

The killer does not exist outside of time but illustrates a process of causality that does not comport with the explanatory procedures and modes of verification at play in rationalist historicism. To say that prophecy and subsequent spiritual movements like the Ghost Dance emerge out of settler colonial conditions is not to say that they should be understood within dominant Euramerican frames—as psychological fantasy or merely a response to the extremity of desperation, dislocation, hunger, and so on produced by Indian policy.⁶⁰ Rather, the potential for prophecy, for a syncopated relation to time that may include the impress of varied nonhuman entities, is affected by the extant social and physical environment, in which settler presence and violence play a significant role. In citing the Ghost Dance of 1890, then, Alexie draws on a prominent (set of) event(s) within Euramerican historiography to gesture toward and provide a means of naming the kinds of forces, sensations, understandings, knowledges, and beings that occur within a social landscape heavily influenced by the ongoing materialization of dominant settler stories as the supposedly given basis for reality. In this way Alexie’s *Indian Killer* does make a bid for the real that is quite distinct from the “truth” posited by Wilson’s *Indian Killer*. The novel sketches the potential for Indigenous temporalities that may be affected by non-native occupation but that need not be understood as reducible to the settler real, including its accumulating simulations of Indianness.

Histories of Rage

In *Indian Killer* time is out of joint. Non-natives in the text often experience Indigenous people(s) as uncanny—as ghostly remainders or eruptions from a previous era. Not unlike the nineteenth-century officials discussed in chapter 2, settler perception in the novel remains oriented by a sense of national futurity in which Native sovereignties can be apprehended only as an aberrant,

backward pull against the momentum of progress. To be a *real* Indian, then, entails being construed as spatially and temporally constrained.⁶¹ To the extent that the present is not singular, that there might be multiple and intersecting temporal formations at play in ways that exceed settler historicism and rationalism, the appearance or invocation of things from the past might signal less a form of performative recycling than the coexistence of disparate temporalities (in ways reminiscent of the overlapping spatiotemporal formations discussed in chapter 3). The killer less emerges out of the past than expresses an Indigenous sense of time in which the continuities of settler violence and the attendant Native anger and grief provide the background for prophecy, engendering conditions ripe for its articulation, arrival, and realization. More than staging a return of the repressed, *Indian Killer's* portrayal of the Ghost Dance suggests that the dance expresses, condenses, and catalyzes forms of Native feeling. The killer arises in response to such ordinary affects and orientations, and that process suggests how prophecy serves as part of and emerges through the historical density of everyday sensation. In this way Alexie differentiates between the search for origins as a ground for contemporary action, such as John's futile attempts to authenticate his past, and the ways prophetic time arises out of and transforms everyday circumstances while remaining turned toward the future.

A crucial part of the accounts of Indianness offered by non-natives in the novel lies in their projection of it into the past, treating it as itself somehow inherently anachronistic. To be Indian in the present is to be out of time, in the sense of both being in the wrong era and having no future. Readers learn that Reggie's father, Bird, served as area director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs during the early 1970s, and speaking from within Bird's perspective, the narrator notes that the region at that time

was under siege by the American Indian Movement. All over the country, hostile AIM members had been attacking peaceful BIA Indians and non-Indians. Bird had known that the murder rate in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, was the highest in the country. All because of the hostiles. . . . It had been happening since Europeans first arrived. In the nineteenth century, while a peaceful and intelligent chief like Red Cloud had been trying to help his people, a hostile Indian like Crazy Horse had been making it worse for everybody. But Bird had always believed that Crazy Horse got what he deserved, a bayonet to his belly, while Red Cloud had lived a long life. (92)

The text here alludes to the significant forms of activism in and around Seattle in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, which included the extensive campaign

of fish-ins that eventually resulted in the Boldt decision of 1974 (allocating half the annual fishing catch to Native peoples based on mid-nineteenth-century treaties), the organization of an international conference for urban Indians from the United States and Canada in 1968, the takeover of Fort Lawton in 1970, and the transformation of the fort into a cultural center in 1976.⁶² Notably, these events speak to enduring Indigenous relations to place (including Native connections to urban spaces) but do not necessarily accept the institutionalized geographies of the reservation system as the paradigmatic way of marking such relations. Bird understands these events through the prism of nineteenth-century Lakota history. Not only does he invoke Pine Ridge, the site of the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890 and the standoff in 1973 between Native activists and federal officers, but he casts the contemporary struggle by Natives as an extension of that of the “hostiles” who refused to stay within demarcated reservation boundaries in the late nineteenth century, and he understands the only possible future for the latter as subjection to murderous retribution.⁶³ Further, Bird provides childhood instruction for Reggie in his own version of Indian history in which all events end in Native death and decimation, with Bird enjoining Reggie “to know your history” (93–94). History itself entails Indian defeat, geographic containment, and disappearance, and anything that counters such an unfolding of settler time appears as an assaultive throwback to an earlier era. Similarly, the right-wing talk show host Truck Schultz offers his own historical narrative: “treaties that the tribes signed a century ago” enable them to “insist on their separation from normal society” (118), “and now comes the news that an Indian savage is killing white men. Have we somehow traveled back to the nineteenth century? Has some Godless heathen been kept on ice on the reservation for a couple hundred years?” (208–9). Within this framing, the killer is a product of temporal deviance, of non-natives having *allowed* the continued existence of the nineteenth-century anachronisms of the reservation and the treaty that preserve Indians in their ahistorical relation to “normal” forms of development.⁶⁴

However, the elements in the text that could be cast as supernatural within a Euramerican rationalist frame are not, in fact, ghostly: there are no hauntings in the text, no revenants whose appearance indicates an untimely lingering of that which is otherwise properly past.⁶⁵ The text may allude to the history of spectral Indians in non-native writings, including the terrors of the Indian burying ground, but it does not reenact that tradition.⁶⁶ Alexie actually mocks such conventions through reference to Chief Seattle’s skeleton. When discussing a collection of tapes of Spokane elders telling traditional stories stored in the basement of the Anthropology building at the university, the narrator notes,

“Some rooms had not been opened since the early part of the century. . . . The basement even had its own mythology. Chief Seattle’s bones were supposedly lost somewhere in the labyrinth. And the bones of dozens of other Indians were said to be stored in a hidden room” (139). At one point when Mather is down there listening to the tapes, the lights go out, and while walking in the darkness, Mather hears noises and thinks of “the forgotten bones and fragments of clothing. Chief Seattle’s bones.” After running to avoid that ghostly presence and slamming into an overhang, he discovers the “rattle” he heard was only the janitor (140–41). This moment presents such fears of Indigenous haunting as one of the many “Indian stories” told by non-natives while it also distinguishes such tales from the materiality of the killer and the complex causal matrix of its relation to the Ghost Dance.

In invoking Chief Seattle, Alexie also calls forth the long legacy of non-natives circulating stories about dead Indians as a means of negotiating their relation to the Puget Sound region and its Indigenous histories. A Duwamish headman, Seattle (or Seeathl) developed an alliance in the early 1850s with settlers in what would become the city of Seattle, and a speech he supposedly gave has become (in)famous owing to its ability to signify the passing away of Native peoples, the continuation of Native wisdom (despite the disappearance of actual Natives), and the attitude of melancholic nostalgia with which non-natives can experience the past of settlement.⁶⁷ Not only does the speech circulate as a sign of the quasi-ghostly presence of the otherwise definitively departed, but it closes with the statement, “The white man will never be alone. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not altogether powerless.” The speech itself is a kind of ghost story in which the vague allusion to a haunting substitutes for the actual presence of Duwamish and other peoples, who will dissipate as “the changing mists on the mountain side . . . before the blazing morning sun.”⁶⁸ Moreover, Seeathl and the speech attributed to him serve as only one of the Indian ghost tales the city of Seattle tells of and to itself. As Coll Thrush observes, “Every American city is built on Indian land, but few advertise it like Seattle. Go walking in the city, and you will see Native American images everywhere in the urban landscape”; “the city’s Native American imagery . . . define[s] Seattle as a city with an indigenous pedigree.” Thrush further characterizes the city’s self-presentation as “Seattle’s Indian ghost stories,” “historical creations” that “spring out of the city’s past” and that work “to make sense of that past.”⁶⁹ Such stories, though, are marked precisely by their *pastness*, the sense of existing across a chronological gulf that can be traversed only in ethereal ways in which Native peoples are cast as lacking substance in the present.⁷⁰

As against such apparitional remainders, invoked through Chief Seattle's bones and even John himself, the novel presents the killer as a realization of the vision of the Ghost Dance, one made possible by the accumulating violences of settler policy.⁷¹ Setting the final scene of the novel in a graveyard, Alexie transforms the phantasmagoria of the ghost stories circling around (Chief) Seattle into a commentary on the social and spiritual ecologies engendered by continuing colonialism. The location is a "cemetery on an Indian reservation. On this reservation or that reservation. Any reservation, a particular reservation" (419), repeating the language used to open the first chapter and speaking to the genericizing of Indians within non-native accounts as well as the shared circumstances of settler occupation that transect extant tribal distinctions. The narrator adds, "There are many graves, rows of graves, rows of rows" (419). The image is suggestive of mass death, due to disease, warfare, and/or starvation, and while not referring to Seattle in particular, the image of the cemetery subtly alludes to the repeated need in the region to move Native gravesites because of the shrinking of Indigenous land bases, multiple displacements of Native communities, and wholesale rerouting of waterways to facilitate non-native housing and trade patterns.⁷² This image of the killer among the graves actually echoes a moment in Chief Seattle's speech, when he insists "that we will not be denied the privilege, without molestation, of visiting at will the graves of our ancestors and friends."⁷³ The novel can be read, then, as ironically citing that particular specter, and the meanings that attach to Seattle and his supposed speech, in order to differentiate the melancholic anachronizing such stories perform from the present corporeality of the killer and the powers of prophetic time that flow through and around it.

The novel implicitly contrasts the account of the killer as a historically stunted residue having no relation to the present or future—a ghost or a "hostile" out of the nineteenth century—with the movement of prophecy, in which contemporary events call forth a spirit or vision that was also active in the past but that offers the potential for transformation in the present. When John's father, Daniel, is searching for him on the streets of Seattle, he runs into a homeless Native man who insists that he knows "who did it" with respect to the recent murders and kidnappings: "It was Crazy Horse. . . . This Indian Killer, you see, he's got Crazy Horse's magic. He's got Chief Joseph's brains. He's got Geronimo's heart. He's got Wovoka's vision. He's all those badass Indians rolled up into one" (219). Except Wovoka, all of these figures took part in warfare against the United States in ways that directly followed from government efforts to contain their peoples within strictly regulated boundaries, and, as such, they are the very kind of "hostiles" to which Bird alludes. Describing the killer as composed out

of aspects of these well-known warriors implies that the killer is also taking part in a struggle against forms of settler constriction and management. The man adds, "Every Indian is keeping score. What? This Killer's got himself two white guys? And that little white boy, enit? That makes the score about ten million to three, in favor of the white guys, enit? This Killer's got a long ways to go. Man, he's the underdog" (220). The killer newly incarnates a long trajectory of Indigenous resistance to settler geographies and imperatives, one that defies the archaism attributed to such opposition (as in Wilson and Mather speaking of the Ghost Dance in the past tense). While Wovoka's prophecy was not itself directly articulated against non-native expansionism, prophet-led movements can be understood as responsible for animating much of the struggle against settler relocations in the Columbia Plateau in the late nineteenth century.⁷⁴ Such resistance includes the war in 1858 to which Alexie refers both in his use of the name Polatkin (the name of a Spokane chief whose daughter was married to a Yakima chief named Qualchan, often cited as the leader of the Native opposition) and in Reggie's reference to the Battle of Steptoe Butte (352).⁷⁵ Conceiving of the killer as an expression of "Wovoka's vision," or as possessing a similar kind of vision, casts the killer as a vehicle for carrying forward a prophetic movement whose power lies in its capacity to realize greater possibilities for Indigenous self-determination.

Forms of prophetic citation and sensation, then, add temporal depth, form, and force to feelings in the present. Addressing the importance of historical imagination as part of contemporary Native self-conception, Craig Womack observes, "Until we imagine these stories for ourselves, however, they mean little more than facts and dates. . . . I am talking about more than developing a capacity to empathize with people from our pasts. This has to do with placing ourselves inside their stories, becoming participants in history," adding, "History is a vision quest, the quintessential religious experience. How else, if not through vision, can we access these experiences from the past so we may also experience them?"⁷⁶ *Indian Killer* enacts the converse: rather than illustrating how to use one's imagination in order to live inside stories from the past, the Ghost Dance in the text intimates how (previous) prophecy comes to live inside the corporeal experience of the present. Addressing contemporary citations of earlier prophetic visions among Yukon women, Julie Cruikshank notes, "These prophecies are evaluated by contemporary narrators not in terms of whether they altered social circumstances, but in terms of their ability to forge legitimate links between knowledge experienced by past prophets and events experienced by present tellers."⁷⁷ The putative failure of the Ghost Dance of 1890 to do what, in Wilson's terms quoted earlier, it "was supposed

to” indicates a particular kind of closing off by which such an event, vision, movement becomes locked into a completed moment, and from this perspective its citation later must necessarily be anachronistic, the return of a thing that had disappeared. As Veena Das suggests in ways discussed in chapter 1, though, “regions of the past” can become “actualized and come to define the affective qualities of the present moment” by rotating into present perception: “It was as if the past had turned this face toward them—not that they had translated this past story into a present tactic of resistance.”⁷⁸ The novel suggests that various knowledges from the mid- to late nineteenth century, gathered around and through the Ghost Dance, gain material form in the contemporary moment because they resonate with current experiences—in Das’s terms they operate as “unfinished stories.”⁷⁹ Thus, they are not so much a kind of reversion as a projection or animation, less an uncanny reincarnation of what’s gone than the synopated enfleshment of prophetic vision within current frames of reference.

If prophecy requires conditions in which that spirit or vision can manifest, part of what provides that possibility within the novel is the scope and intensity of Native anger. Early in the novel, the narrator notes of John, “He didn’t want to be angry. He wanted to be a real person. He wanted to control his emotions, so he would often swallow his anger” (19), and toward the end of the text, after she fends off an attack on John by a gang of white men, Marie “was shocked by her anger, and how much she had wanted to hurt those white boys. Nearly blind with her own rage, she had wanted to tear out their blue eyes and blind them” (375), echoing the killer’s tearing out the eyes of his first victim (54).⁸⁰ The fact that, for John, his anger makes him less “real” harkens back to the ways that Indianness circulates as a function of non-native stories in which settlers are welcomed as shared participants, such that negative and antagonistic Native affect has no place within the social geographies realized through those stories. As Dian Million illustrates in *Therapeutic Nations*, bad Native feeling is acceptable to non-natives when presented as arising from the pain of past trauma and as redressable through depoliticized healing and national reconciliation (a feeling in which all can share), but not when it engenders critiques of ongoing structural violence and points toward the desire to realize forms of Indigenous self-determination.⁸¹ John’s *swallowing* his feeling, directing it back into himself and away from the world, parallels his retreat to a fantasy of the reservation as origin, but Marie’s direction of that feeling outward toward the world via aggression suggests the potential for materializing a different kind of real that is oriented by Native agency, interests, and understandings.⁸²

Some critics have characterized the killer’s violence and the affects out of which it arises as necessarily destructive, as failing to build or resolve anything

and, thus, indicative of the novel's ambivalence toward the killer or repudiation of its actions.⁸³ However, as Ahmed suggests in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, "crucially, anger is not simply defined in relationship to a past, but as opening up the future. In other words, being against something does not end with 'that which one is against.' Anger does not necessarily become 'stuck' on its object. . . . Being against something is also being for something, but something that has yet to be articulated or is not yet." Earlier Ahmed observes of settler responses to Indigenous expressions of pain, "The impossibility of 'fellow feeling' is itself the confirmation of injury. The call of such pain, as a pain that cannot be shared through empathy, is a call not just for an attentive hearing, but for a different kind of inhabitation. It is a call for action, and a demand for collective politics, as a politics based not on the possibility that we might be reconciled, but on learning to live with the impossibility of reconciliation."⁸⁴ From this perspective, the concentration of Native anger in the novel, and the momentum it generates for the killer, suggests neither a pathological response nor a historical or political dead end. Rather, such feelings point to the pain generated by a background of accreting and ongoing histories of settler violence while turning such quotidian sensations into a collective force that can enable a different future, one in which the kind of reconciliation projected by Wilson or Mather (on settler terms) need not function as the trajectory of Indigenous aspiration. When John maims Wilson before jumping off the skyscraper he previously had been employed to help build, he says, "Let me, let us have our own pain" (411), and this moment can be read as less an expression of pathos than itself an articulation of self-determination.

Indigenous pain and attendant anger index the everyday accumulation of the effects of persistent and intensifying settler colonial displacements—a particular experience of duration that provides the context for prophetic emergence (as opposed to ghostly return). This relation to the past marks not a backward-looking identification but the potential for a changed orientation toward the parts of the present that continue to engender such negative affects. The killer, then, arises as the condensation of that possibility, as a materialization of active histories of rage in ways inflected by regional Indigenous ontologies of spirit. At the end of one of Truck Schultz's broadcasts in which he presents Native people(s) as willfully and murderously refusing the gift of civilized instruction, he asserts, "This Indian Killer is merely the distillation of their rage. He is pure evil, pure violence, pure rage. He has come to kill us because we have tried to help him. He has come to kill us because his children have moved beyond him" (346). Here the killer's status as a manifestation of collective feeling appears as indicative of its fixation in the past, a "rage" against change that

bespeaks a longing for stasis as against the forward movement of progress. Yet, given the novel's consistent portrayal of Schultz's explanations as racist nonsense, his formulation here might be inverted, suggesting that Native rage itself produces effects in the world, of which the killer is the most palpable one. The killer indicates the presence of other modes of being and becoming in which everyday feeling provides a conjuncture in which (prophetic) force gathers in ways that can transform existing circumstances, opening up alternative futures than those taken by Schultz to be inevitable. The killer's violence, then, can be interpreted as marking the (re)appearance of a vision or spirit that gains material form within and because of the historicity of everyday forms of Native feeling and perception, the accreting contexts and dynamics of Indigenous anger. In this way Alexie does not offer a clear, teleological path forward based on an easily defined sense of Indianness, instead suggesting that in contemporary indigeneity there remains, in Ahmed's terms, "something that has yet to be articulated" that can be expressed only through invocations of what appears as the past.⁸⁵ The everyday is less haunted by the ghostly than saturated by non-native aggressions and Native anger in ways that call forth memories of the *longue durée* of settler colonial violence while providing the occasion for the prophetic materialization of the spirit of the killer as a force for forging a different future.

Networks of Pleasure

The citation of Native history in *Indian Killer* positions the Ghost Dance and the killer as neither anachronisms nor ghostly remainders. Instead, in the text spirit gives material form to pervasive Native affects that themselves arise owing to the dynamics of ongoing settler occupation, including its making unreal of continued Native presence except inasmuch as it can be inserted into accreting narratives of Indianness. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, though, the realization of prophecy coalesces less around rage than around longing—for contact with ancestors and the (re)generation of the conditions for continued Native life. The novel is set in 1900, a decade after the movement and forms of resistance to white dominance borne by the Ghost Dance supposedly ended in the carnage of Wounded Knee, and its ceremonial dancing for the coming of the Messiah appears belated.⁸⁶ However, in its simultaneous embodying of what has been and what could be, the dance breaks with settler emplotments of history, in which it would seem exceptional or residual (in similar ways to the dynamics discussed in chapter 2). The past and the future appear as virtually present in the current moment, and prophecy enables ways of accessing and materializing those potentials. Moreover, *Gardens* suggests how such prophetic experience

gains momentum from defying the heteronormative temporality of Indian policy, particularly in its efforts to define Indianness by reference to racial genealogy as well as to subject Indians to a pattern of civilized maturation organized around hetero-monogamous union (as discussed in chapter 3). In this way the novel offers an account of Native experiences of time as a heterogeneous network that cannot be reduced to a reified Indian lineage or descent from a properly Indian origin (both of which are retroactively projected from, and regulated through, the reservation system).⁸⁷ Prophecy eschews a vision of unidirectional, linear development in favor of a sense of multiplicity that does not dichotomize continuity and change and that connects chronologically disparate sites.

The novel begins with a Ghost Dance occurring in 1900 in Needles, California that is interrupted by Indian police and soldiers. The central characters are a pair of sisters, Indigo and Sister Salt, from a fictional group from the lower Colorado River valley named the Sand Lizard clan, and they are in Needles with their mother and grandmother, Grandma Fleet.⁸⁸ Their mother is lost in the raid that sends them running south, back to the dunes of the title in which their people had lived for centuries, especially when fleeing from the “bloodshed and cruelty” brought by “aliens” “long, long ago” (15).⁸⁹ When their grandmother passes away of natural causes, they head north in search of their mother, only to be caught by the police. Indigo is sent to an Indian boarding school, the Sherman Institute, from which she eventually escapes; she meets a white couple (Hattie and Edward Palmer) who live nearby and ends up traveling across the United States and to Europe with them before being reunited with her sister. Sister Salt ends up doing laundry and sex work at a construction site near the Colorado River Indian reservation, getting pregnant, having a child (whom they call little grandfather), and eventually returning with her sister to the dunes. The dancing in Needles bookends the novel, and authorities find it threatening because of the various kinds of inappropriate associations occurring there. The narrator observes, “The United States government was afraid of the Messiah’s dance” (14), later noting, “Federal officials feared the dancers were a secret army in disguise, ready to attack” (45). The hundreds of people who come to dance for the coming of the Messiah, following Wovoka’s prophecy (22), violate the principles at play in Indian policy in several ways: Indians themselves should be living on reservations (17–18); the children are not in federally run Indian boarding schools, which “was the law” (21); they are engaged in forms of Native worship, the kind of dance celebrations that previously had been outlawed and that were particularly suspect in the wake of Wounded Knee (22); and the dances included whites, particularly

Mormons, who themselves had been targeted for federal assault owing to their polygamy (44–45). Wovoka's vision and the movements that arise from it, then, appear in the novel as generating forms of combination, connection, and inhabitation that thwart the regulatory imperatives and mappings guiding U.S. policy. In this way prophecy both marks and animates Native peoples' ongoing deviations from the sociospatial order instituted through settler governance.

Much of the commentary on the novel, though, has framed Indigenous displacements of non-native expectations, including the imposition of criteria for defining proper Indianness, as forms of *hybridization* or syncretism.⁹⁰ In "Ghost Dancing through History in Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* and *Almanac of the Dead*," David L. Moore argues that this way of characterizing sociospiritual life relies on a "lamentable theoretical qua horticultural discourse." He argues, "For all the mixing and blending seemingly implied in hybridization, it has a reverse effect of separation and alienation precisely because of its dualistic limits," further pointing to the role of such ways of envisioning "mixture" in calculations of blood quantum which gathered much greater force within postallotment Indian policy (as discussed in chapter 3).⁹¹ The concept of hybridity, as Moore notes, draws on the notion of mixing species, and it was a prominent way of figuring interracial sexual relations and procreation in the nineteenth century and beyond. In discussing how earlier notions of "amalgamation" as anomaly exceed the sense of reproductive doubleness at play in the Civil War–era emergence of the term *miscegenation*, Tavia Nyong'o asks, "Is it not possible to unyoke racial hybridity from its association with progressive, heterosexual time? Into what alternate temporalities might it then fall?," and this question further develops a challenge he poses in the introduction: "A critical approach to race should encompass both the history of racial ideas and the forms of historicity and temporality embedded in those ideas and practices."⁹² To speak in terms of hybridity offers a reproductively inflected sense of union among things taken to be opposed or incommensurate that then enables a rapprochement between them, facilitating a more harmonious future. The event of ostensible hybridization projects two prior lines of self-contained (racial) unfolding as the background against which to register its transformative effects.⁹³ The prophetic temporality at play in Wovoka's vision and in the experience of the dancing in the novel remains askew with respect to such straightening of collective tradition and development. Ahmed suggests in *Queer Phenomenology*, "Things seem 'straight' . . . when they are 'in line,' which means when they are aligned with other lines. Rather than presuming the vertical line is simply given, we would see the vertical line as an effect of this process of alignment," and the straight line of history, proper relations of cause and effect, gains coher-

ence through its congruence and overlay with other lines, such as conceptions of familial descent, racial lineage, and cultural inheritance.⁹⁴ Ahmed further notes that in “the requirement to follow a straight line, . . . straightness gets attached to other values including decent, conventional, direct, and honest,” and, reciprocally, “any nonalignment produces a queer effect.”⁹⁵ The imposed temporal, spatial, and sexual orders work in and through each other, functioning as mutually reinforcing alignments through which history—the connection between the past and the present on the way toward the future—becomes imbued with a lineal immanence that parallels the genealogical transmission of racial identity and property. The failure to fit that pattern generates a sense of *queerness*, of deviation from the proper unfolding of time.

Violating the terms of dominant conceptions of causation (the straight line of history), the Messiah and the dance he inspires indicate less a developmental understanding of indigeneity—some point at which it becomes *hybridized* through engagement with Christianity—than the interanimating copresence of what might otherwise function as distinct periods.⁹⁶ In “Basin Religion and Theology,” Jay Miller discusses how understandings of power (or *puha*) within the Great Basin, which includes the Colorado River area in which the novel largely takes place, depend on sensations of “flux, action, and process”: “It is not static or concrete, but rather kinetic, always moving and flowing throughout the cosmos, underpinning all facets of the universe” in ways that are “rhythmical.” Power, he suggests, functions like a web that “is pulsating and multidimensional,” and since power accrues “wherever life gathers for however long,” apparently incommensurate belief systems can be practiced simultaneously “because they all lead to the same center.”⁹⁷ This kind of rhythmic, multi-dimensional movement characterizes the temporal dynamics of the Messiah dance.⁹⁸ A Paiute woman who came to Needles to escape the cold farther north tells Grandma Fleet of Wovoka’s vision, that she “had seen Jesus surrounded by hundreds of Paiutes and Shoshones and other Indians”: “Jesus talked to them, and talked all day. He told them all Indians must dance, everywhere, and keep on dancing. If they danced the dance, then they would be able to visit their dear ones and beloved ancestors. The ancestors were there to help them. They must keep dancing. . . . The clear running water and the trees and the grassy plains filled with buffalo and elk would return” (23). The narrator adds, “Wovoka wanted them to dance because dancing moves the dead. Only by dancing could they hope to bring the Messiah, the Christ, who would bring with him all their beloved family members and friends who had moved on to the spirit world after the hunger and the sadness got to be too much for them” (26).⁹⁹ As opposed to the unidirectionality of inheritance, the dance realizes

a transgenerational connection that allows a reunion with the ancestors and materializes the conditions for further life (as opposed to those that generate “the hunger and the sadness”). The prophecy promises to gather chronologically disparate potentials and to actualize them in the present so as to enhance the possibilities for survival, and in doing so, it creates something like a flow of time around a common center, a weblike network, rather than a succession that follows the straight line of genealogical order or conventional historicism.¹⁰⁰

This process of prophetic realization entails the potential for forms of relation that do not fit Euramerican alignments, and the seeming oddity, or queerness, of such conjunctures reveals the violences involved in securing state-sanctioned orientations and trajectories.¹⁰¹ The novel suggests that a sense of Indianness as a form of lineal unfolding emerges as a back-formation from the terms and dynamics of late nineteenth-century Indian policy. *Gardens* makes clear that Native people’s and peoples’ residence outside of reservations, such as in the old gardens among the dunes, was increasingly unacceptable to U.S. officials and that part of the role of the military and Indian police was to round up those who previously had chosen to remain apart from such sanctioned spaces. The text notes that Grandma Fleet refused to move to the reservation because “there was nothing to eat” there: “Reservation Indians sat in one place and did not move; they ate white food—white bread and white sugar and white lard” (17). Later the narrator observes that “farming was easy along the river but getting along with the authorities was not” and that the “Sand Lizards preferred to rely on the rain clouds and avoid confinement on a reservation” (48), and readers are told that a “barbed-wire fence marked the entrance to the reservation” at Parker (394). The novel’s Messiah dances in Needles are modeled on ones that took place among the Hualapai outside of Kingman.¹⁰² As Jeffrey P. Shepherd observes, after Hualapais had escaped internment on the Colorado River Indian reservation eight years before, the creation of the Hualapai reservation in 1883 (just east of where much of the novel takes place) “signaled the possible preservation of a piece of their aboriginal homelands.”¹⁰³ Even as reservations could provide legal recognition for some forms of Indigenous territoriality (as discussed in chapters 2 and 3), they increasingly functioned from the 1850s onward (and even more so after the formal end of treaty making in 1871) as spaces of confinement through which Native peoples were largely segregated from those on other reservations—often forbidden from leaving without passes from the agent—and subjected to supposedly civilizing regimes that reorganized extant modes of social life (particularly in the wake of the implementation of allotment starting in the late 1880s).¹⁰⁴ Offering a somewhat representative portrait of the reservation system as it emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, Secretary

of the Interior Jacob D. Cox in his annual report of 1869 described it as having “two objects”: “First, the location of the Indians upon fixed reservations, so that the pioneers and settlers may be freed from the terrors of wandering hostile tribes; and second, an earnest effort at their civilization, so that they may themselves be elevated in the scale of humanity.”¹⁰⁵ As Goeman suggests of this legacy, “Rather than construct a healthy relationship to land and place, colonial spatial structures inhibit it by constricting Native mobilities and pathologizing mobile Native bodies.”¹⁰⁶ The production of Indian realness, including its role in the assessment of bodies and lineages, relies on the reservation as a privileged space through which to determine the boundaries of belonging and authenticity.¹⁰⁷

The novel addresses such dynamics with respect to both the Chemehuevi and the Sand Lizards. A pair of sisters Sister Salt befriends at the construction site—Maytha and Vedna—return to the Chemehuevi reservation and are greeted with suspicion by their Christianized neighbors. When lands on the reservation are flooded as a result of the backup from the dam being built on the Colorado, the local Chemehuevi minister lays the responsibility on the sisters: “they heard a man’s voice call out behind them: the wantonness and drunkenness of them and others had angered God so much he sent this flood!”; “While he mopped at his forehead and caught his breath he glared at them; they were not really Chemehuevis but Lagunas and didn’t belong there. They were damned, contaminated—a risk to all others” (435). The sisters’ entry into the space appears as a change that results in destruction, as a result of both their “wantonness” and their failure to fit a particular reproductive line—not being full-blood Chemehuevi and thus “contaminated.”¹⁰⁸ Despite extensive, ongoing histories of kinship among groups in the region, especially given pre-reservation patterns of decentralized leadership and flexible matrices of relation, the minister and his supporters insist on proper lineage as a condition of belonging to the space of the reservation.¹⁰⁹ The institutionalized terms of authenticity produced through Indian policy engender, in Vizenor’s terms, “simulations of manifest manners . . . [that] become the real without a referent to an actual tribal remembrance,” and as Deborah Miranda suggests in *Bad Indians*, “my tribe must reinvent ourselves—rather than try to copy what isn’t there in the first place.”¹¹⁰ The sisters’ ostensibly mixed parentage and putative licentiousness become construed as improper divergences from what is taken to be the straight line of Chemehuevi descent and inheritance, as forms of sexual impropriety (including marrying outside the “tribe”) that deviate from a (retrospectively constructed) Chemehuevi history imagined as pure.¹¹¹ Similarly, “at Parker [the Colorado River Indian reservation], if some poor person had even one parent who was Chemehuevi or Mohave, the others might jeer and tell

them to go back to their own reservation.” Moreover, those of Sand Lizard heritage on the reservation “were married to people of other tribes[,] . . . went to church every Sunday[,] and spoke English,” and while they “did not turn Sister Salt away, . . . they shook their heads and whispered . . . about the young Sand Lizard woman . . . [who] lived out in the hills too long” (205). Those who, like Grandma Fleet’s family, refused to reside on the reservation or to assent to the civilizing imperatives implemented there appear as out of sync with respect to the narrative of Sand Lizard development that arises in the wake of the creation of the reservation.

Not only do other Chemehuevis and Sand Lizards adopt forms of supposedly enlightened home and family life that direct them away from “wanton” dissipation, but those *straightened* modes of living inculcated on-reservation enact a temporal framing—a retroactive sense of lineage—that pathologizes and deauthenticates kinds of Indigenous experience that do not fit the social, spatial, and spiritual coordinates of the identities realized through Indian policy. Within the terms of the civilization program, those practices and lifeways cast as tradition appear as anachronisms to be superseded, but from that same perspective tradition provides a sense of developmental movement in being narrated as an inheritance from a prior time, tracing a line of Indianness heading toward modernization. In this way the reservation system generates lines that demarcate the boundaries of Native space, which then provide the frame for a particular genealogical and chronological model of *tribal* identity. Discussing the dismissal of claims to be Native by particular peoples (especially those on the east coast), Daniel Justice observes in “‘Go Away, Water!’” that “the line of logic used by many anti-Native forces, namely, that blood quantum and phenotypically ‘Indian’ features are the fullest measure of cultural authenticity[,] . . . [means] that those who are lacking in these qualities are, by definition, no longer Indian—if they ever were.”¹¹² Through its depiction of conflicts over occupancy of reservation space, the novel indicates how the historical sense of progress along a timeline (which provides the context for notions of hybridization) emerges in connection with a naturalizing image of heterofamilial reproduction.

Setting the Ghost Dance just outside Needles allows Silko implicitly to draw on that town’s characterization in the late nineteenth century as an extra-reservation space of moral depravity. In their annual reports, agents for the Colorado River Indian reservation repeatedly note the scope of Mohave inhabitation in Needles, indicating that it regularly equaled or exceeded the number of residents on the reservation proper. The very fact of not being contained within the reservation is understood as contributing to this population’s general disorder, including their sexual perversity and participation in practices

that supposedly have been eliminated on the reservation. The characterizations of those living in the vicinity of Needles include the following: “Year by year the Mohaves at the Needles and the Hualapais situated along the line of the railroad are degenerating and growing worse morally. They are not only spreading syphilis among themselves but among the whites as well”; “The Mohaves living in the vicinity of Needles and Fort Mohave are in deplorable condition as to morals and progress toward civilization. . . . They retain all their old-time superstition and barbarous customs and have added to them the vices of a border railroad and mining town”; “These are the same tribe and kindred; in many cases brother, sister and near kindred, yet at Needles one sees savage life with all its horrors, its crime, its disease, its superstitions, its barbarisms, its utter hopelessness.”¹¹³ Needles, then, stands as the limit of reservation governance, indicating forms of occupancy and sociality that exceed the reach of control by the Indian agent and that therefore appear as lacking proper (familial) order. As portrayed in the novel, the version of the Ghost Dance that arises in this region defies the sense of lineal generational succession and the limiting conception of biological and property inheritance around which such succession is organized. Instead, the Messiah ceremony offers a temporal assemblage that suggests the presence of a multiplicity of relationships that remain at hand and actively in process. It facilitates a potentially vast network in which each person participates and on which he or she might draw in the present, like the extra-reservation social geographies that make possible the Native community surrounding Needles.

This vision and experience of expansive relation runs counter to the U.S. government’s efforts to normalize its jurisdictional and property mappings through official citation of monogamous marital union as the model of national life and time. *Gardens* explores how understandings of desire, generationality, and the organization of the family are enmeshed with legal orderings of space. Silko addresses the ways the chronobiopolitics of heteroreproductive lineage (and the generational transmission of racial Indianness) abet and are animated by the chronogeopolitics of assertions of U.S. sovereignty. In other words, the dominant timeline of Indian development (including when read as leading toward hybridization) depends on treating the contours of U.S. jurisdiction as, in Merleau-Ponty’s terms, the “fixed points” or background against which to perceive temporal movement.¹¹⁴

One of the most significant intimations of that nexus in the novel, albeit a subtle one, lies in Silko’s invocation of the sustained U.S. assault on Mormonism. In addition to noting that Mormons participated in the Messiah dance in Needles (14, 29), the text indicates that the husband and sister wives of a

Mormon friend of Grandma Fleet's, Mrs. Van Wagnen, had been arrested: "The old church had been brushed aside by demons, she said. But Grandma Fleet thought maybe the other Mormons got tired of resisting the U.S. government. The government said only one wife, and now the new church said one wife, so the old Mormons moved to remote locations. For years and years, the U.S. soldiers chased Mormons when they weren't chasing Indians" (38).¹¹⁵ After we hear that Mrs. Van Wagnen's husband has been murdered by members of the reformed Mormon Church, the narrator observes, "The U.S. government had been after the old Mormons for a long time, killing their men and burning their farms wherever they went until they escaped to the west," adding, "Old Mormons believed they were related to the Indians" (44). Through these moments, the novel alludes to the government's decades-long attack on the Mormon Church for its support of polygamy and for its perceived attempt to form a separate government on U.S. territory not amenable to federal jurisdiction, which culminated in the church's official renunciation of polygamy in 1890 and the admission of Utah to statehood in 1896.¹¹⁶ In the twenty-five years before statehood, well over two thousand criminal cases were filed, almost entirely for crimes related to sexual and marital relationships.¹¹⁷ The text links the persecution and self-understandings of Mormons to Native people(s), and this connection is affirmed by a statement by John Randolph Tucker, one of the sponsors of a crucial piece of anti-Mormon legislation passed in the same year as the General Allotment Act (1887): "We dissolve tribal relations of the Indians in order to make the Indian a good citizen; so we shatter the fabric of this church organization in order to make each member a free citizen of the Territory of Utah."¹¹⁸ The wrongness of Indian and Mormon sociosexual life indicates an eruption of barbarism, of an anachronistic communalism, within the space of the nation. That threat to retard or reverse the forward movement of the country requires an overwhelming show of force in order to "shatter" those modes of life so that they can be reassembled in ways that fit the terms and temporalities of U.S. citizenship, themselves consistent with the legal geographies of the state.¹¹⁹ While the mention of Mormons in the novel suggests that they suffer because of their resemblance to Indians, such references also highlight how the supposed challenge that Indians pose to national futurity—the straight line of national development—lies in their putative failure to conform to proper forms of reproductive generationality, ordered around the procreative line of the nuclear family.¹²⁰

Silko explores the potential for less rigidly lineal, privatizing, and property-oriented ways of conceptualizing and experiencing time—ones more conso-

nant with the text's account of the Ghost Dance—through discussion of Sand Lizard notions of sexual relation. The narrator observes that, in response to Sister Salt's ribald humor, "Maytha and Vedna giggled . . . ; she was like the old-time people their mother talked about—before the missionaries came. In those days, the Chemehuevis really knew how to enjoy one another; only Sand Lizards knew how to enjoy sex more, Maytha joked, and Sister Salt nodded proudly. It was true: Sand Lizards practiced sex the way they all used to, before the missionaries came" (206).¹²¹ Rather than being a forbidden topic, eroticism is a source of joy, one that indicates possibilities for continuity and camaraderie among varied peoples.¹²² Such feelings about the expression of desire indicate notions of interpersonal and intergroup relation that do not fit the heteronormative framework of genealogical transmission institutionalized within Indian policy. Not only is sensual pleasure not inherently limited to, in Dana Luciano's terms, *reprosexual* ends, but it engenders nondiscrete modes of imbrication that facilitate the construction of extended social networks.¹²³ In explaining what Sister Salt describes as "Sand Lizards' wild sexual practices," the text notes, "Sand Lizard mothers gave birth to Sand Lizard babies no matter which man they lay with; the Sand Lizard mother's body changed everything to Sand Lizard inside her. Little Sand Lizards had different markings, and some were lighter or darker, but they were all Sand Lizards. Sex with strangers was valued for alliances and friendships that might be made" (202).¹²⁴ This vision of Sand Lizard identity offers, in Justice's terms, "an understanding of a common social interdependence within the community, the tribal web of kinship rights and responsibilities that link the People, the land, and the cosmos together in an ongoing and dynamic system of mutually affecting relationships."¹²⁵ Such relations do not depend on a sense of inheritance, in the sense of something in particular passed from generation to generation that makes a person Sand Lizard.

Rather, there are various kinds of relationships instituted through intercourse, all significant whether procreative or not, and Sand Lizard-ness exists within this multiplicity of (sorts of) connections. With respect to Sister Salt's participation in sex work at the construction site on the Colorado, the text notes, "Preachers condemned the sale of sex, but Sister always felt happy after her walks with the men. . . . Naked on the river sand she always felt as free and joyous as that River Girl character in the old stories the twins heard at Laguna" about how River Girl's relationships with various entities allowed her people to receive vital goods like venison and buffalo (400).¹²⁶ In addition, the text earlier remarks, "The old-time Sand Lizard people believed sex with strangers was advantageous because it created a happy atmosphere to benefit commerce

and exchange with strangers. Grandma said it was simply good manners” (219). The resulting expansive web of relations certainly exceeds the geographies of the reservation, the heteronormative parameters of reservation residence and the official calculus of Indianness, and the idea of the nuclear family as the explicit or implicit model for the transmission of indigeneity. Notions of power in the region can themselves be characterized as weblike, including what have been termed the modes of syncretism at play in the Ghost Dance, and when one thinks back to the attempts to generate intimacy through the Messiah dance with those who have passed on, this nonnuclear assemblage greatly extends the potential reach of a reference like “ancestors.”¹²⁷ Also, during the Messiah dance itself, as noted earlier, the text indicates participants’ desire to commune with “their dear ones and beloved ancestors” and “their beloved family members and friends” (23), refusing to understand the matrix of cross-temporal connection as one defined by even the most capacious conception of family. The prophetic power of the Messiah dance, then, lies in its capacity to express, condense, and extend the “whole perceptual context” of Sand Lizard sensation, which includes expansive and flexible notions of relation and belonging.¹²⁸

What grounds a Sand Lizard sense of self is, literally, the ground—connection to the old dunes. Those of Sand Lizard descent who moved to the reservation and acquired standing there through marriage have ceased to be in contact with those in the dunes, a break enforced by settler authorities (49). That severing is what constitutes a rupture in Sand Lizard time—or, more precisely, what institutes lineal inheritance as the paradigmatic way of experiencing temporality. By contrast, the dunes orient cross-time connection for Sand Lizard people, with guidance about how to live responsibly in that place being transmitted between generations of women.¹²⁹ That knowledge, though, can be understood as an enduring intimacy with place, as the center around which possibilities for belonging and becoming pivot. The porousness of Sand Lizard identity does not indicate the absence of a notion of indigeneity. Miranda suggests in “A Gynostemic Revolution,” particularly of the text’s portrayal of Hattie’s connection with Indigo, “Let me be clear: Silko is not advocating a cavalier philosophy in which who we are and where we come from is not important, or worse, that anyone can make up an ‘Indian name,’ help out a few needy Indians, and ‘become’ instantly indigenus.”¹³⁰ Rather, to be Sand Lizard entails a continuing connection with the dunes themselves:

Grandma Fleet told them the old gardens had always been there. The old-time people found the gardens already growing, planted by the Sand Liz-

ard, a relative of Grandfather Snake, who invited his niece to settle there and cultivate her seeds. Sand Lizard wanted her children to share. . . . The first ripe fruit of each harvest belongs to the spirits of our beloved ancestors, who come to us as rain; the second ripe fruit should go to the birds and wild animals, in gratitude for their restraint in sparing the seeds and sprouts earlier in the season. (14–15)

This gratitude to the Sand Lizard for creating the gardens and to various other beings for the ongoing modes of interspecies sharing that make possible continued life there offers something less like familial legacy than like a profound sense of the multiplicity always already at play within this site and a sense that the present remains permeated by such chronologically extended and disjointed forms of mutuality. Inhabiting the gardens over time, then, functions less like a generationally iterated property claim for a particular “Indian tribe” than as an indication of the extent of a people’s enmeshment in the shifting networks through which this place is (re)created. Their collective sense of duration emerges out of the shared background of the garden itself, and the webs of connection through which the place and their relationship to it are sustained serve as an expression of what I have been characterizing as temporal sovereignty (in contrast to the forms of Native governance officially recognized as such by the United States). As the narrator observes, “the people called themselves Sand Lizard’s children; they lived there for a long time” (15).

As in *Indian Killer* the Ghost Dance in *Gardens* can be seen as further catalyzing and materializing existing, everyday kinds of feeling. It prophetically intensifies ordinary forms of cross-temporal sensation, an experience of the present as actively permeated by other times. The novel suggests that such temporal sensations remain at odds with the forms of Indian identity engendered within the reservation-era context, where a group’s past, present, and future came to be understood as organized around properly directed modes of (racialized) procreation—the (re)production of Indian flesh. Within Indian policy’s frame of reference, dominant models of lineal genealogy become the implicit basis for conceptualizing movement through time. The novel’s portrayal of the Messiah dance emphasizes a set of temporal principles and experiences that do not fit the generational unfolding of heterofamilial lineage, thereby producing a queer effect. The Messiah dance suggests the operation of a complex and expansive matrix of relation that neither aligns with the vision of Indian realness projected through the reservation system nor obeys a temporality of inheritance. *Gardens* offers a vision in which nonnuclear modes of pleasure and connection (to persons and nonhuman entities), as well as nonpropertied

modes of inhabitation, enable experiences of time as an immanent multiplicity (versus a chronological evolution)—a set of affects oriented by a commitment to connection to the land and most powerfully accessed and conveyed through prophecy.

Beyond Settler Death-Worlds

Silko presents the Ghost Dance in its manifestation in the Arizona-California border region as assembling a heterogeneous network that crosses seemingly disparate time periods and does not obey the forms of genealogical straightness and inheritance that characterize the nuclear family. Instead, prophecy opens the present to both the past and the future (and the transits among them), thwarting the sense of a developmental trajectory in which the past moves toward the future as a linear, or historicist, sequence. As contrasted with the popular association of the Ghost Dance with death, specifically the massacre at Wounded Knee, *Gardens* presents Wovoka's vision as expressing and amplifying the conditions of possibility for further life. More than enabling contact with those who have died, Wovoka's prophecy promises a remaking of the earth such that it can continue to sustain human survival, as against what the novel casts as the necropolitics of Euramerican modernity.¹³¹ Uncoupling Native identity from the procreative transmission of Indianness, as organized around the forms of tribal alignment institutionalized through the reservation system, the text opens up the range of possibilities for envisioning what it means to sustain indigeneity as an ongoing form of incipency. In the version represented in the novel, the Messiah dance illustrates and enhances a broader everyday tendency toward connection, recontextualization, and creation that gains orientation not through reference to lineal familial inheritance but through an enduring, capacious connection to and (re)creation of place. This continuum of birth and becoming, expressed perhaps most directly through the novel's account of the movement and meaning of seeds, differs both from heteronormative genealogy as well as Euro-American notions of newness, which the text suggests are predicated on the destruction of what is.

The novel emphasizes the Ghost Dance's powers of rejuvenation by differentiating it from the forms of decimation that characterize Euro-American development. Several critics have noted the distinction in the text between the search for commercially viable forms of rareness—through seizures of plants from “exotic” locations and processes of grafting them onto more familiar ones—and the movement of people and seeds represented by Indigo (to which I will turn shortly).¹³² Before Edward's introduction to Indigo (who is found in

the garden of their house in Riverside, California, by his wife, Hattie, after Indigo ran away from the boarding school to which she had been sent), he took part in a failed expedition to Brazil in search of rare orchids, during which he received a wound that left him impotent. Edward's journey illustrates the ways that the pursuit of newness within European and American economies entails the production of devastation.¹³³ He was accompanied on the trip by two men, one of whom, Mr. Vicks, was sent by the English Department of Agriculture to steal samples of rubber plants to combat the blight that "was destroying Britain's great Far Eastern rubber plantations" (129). The other, Mr. Eliot, ends up setting fire to an entire valley in order to prevent anyone from a rival company from gaining access to a particular species of orchid: "Rival hybridizers would be stymied when they sent out their plant collectors now that this Pará River site was destroyed" (142). The incineration of this habitat parallels earlier forms of murderous violence against Indigenous peoples of the region: "Now, Indians knew the value of wild orchids, but frequently white brokers came upriver and demanded their entire stock of a species to corner the market. Indians who did not cooperate were flogged or tortured, much as they were at the Brazilian and Colombia rubber stations," themselves often built on the sites of villages that had been burned and cleared of their former inhabitants (133). The creation of novelty as a commodity, as a salable experience of newness, requires a kind of exclusivity that necessitates practices of elimination. In order to manufacture the rareness that engenders a sense of something as unique, other examples of that item must be obliterated. Moreover, in this vein, newness indicates the extraction of something from one context and its distribution and appreciation as an anomaly within other sites (as opposed to integrating a once-alien object into the shifting series of relations that constitute the place of its arrival). The appearance of an exotic addition from elsewhere, or the aura of alienation that leads one to experience something as exotic, then, enables the feeling of futurity as rupture, a disjunction between what was and what will be that retains the continuity of dominant frames of reference while generating the sensation of the unexpected. The novel indicates, though, that such an impression of change for the privileged consumers of these fetishized objects depends on the actual shattering of environments and lifeways for those from whose lands newness is extracted as an exploitable resource.

In this sense Silko presents the Euro-American movement toward the future as necropolitical. Achille Mbembe characterizes *necropolitics* as "the ultimate expression of sovereignty" through "the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die," and one of the chief expressions of such power is through "the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence

in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*.”¹³⁴ In addition to noting the de facto seizures of Native land in the name of industrial progress, *Gardens* further depicts the maelstrom of violence unleashed against those who do not conform to normative lifeways.¹³⁵ When Indigo and Sister Salt go in search of their mother after Grandma Fleet’s death, they reach the home of Mrs. Van Wagnen, their grandmother’s Mormon friend who had participated in the Ghost Dance, only to find the house burned to the ground, the food thrown on the ground to spoil, and the fruit orchards chopped down. Sister Salt thinks of the pointedness of this assault: “If this was what the white people did to one another, then truly she and the Sand Lizard people and all other Indians were lucky to survive at all. These destroyers were out to kill every living being, even the Messiah and his dancers” (61). The intensity of this assault brands whites as “destroyers” fully prepared to annihilate all modes of life that deviate from sanctioned patterns of intimacy, occupancy, and association. Not only does Mrs. Van Wagnen represent the broader Mormon challenge to national monogamy and sovereignty discussed earlier, but her connections with Native people via the Ghost Dance indicate a potentially dangerous set of alliances that must be utterly foreclosed. Similarly, the text later emphasizes the brutality of Hattie’s assault and rape by local white men, apparently motivated by her attempt to bring provisions to people on the Chemehuevi reservation, an attack that nearly kills her (456–58), and just before the end of the novel, Sister Salt and Indigo return to the dunes from Needles to find that “terrible things had been done at the spring” by “strangers,” including “hack[ing] to death” both the snake that lived there and the apricot trees Grandma Fleet had planted (476). While not characterized as official acts by agents of the state, these last two scenes combine with the previous instances to suggest a broader pattern in which the assertion, imposition, and maintenance of settler sovereignty entail the attempted elimination of the conditions of life for countervailing social formations, particularly those of Indigenous peoples.¹³⁶ That system(at)ic exertion of the capacity to make die becomes justified as part of producing progress, creating the conditions of (settler) futurity through the eradication of obstructive impasses. Against such a background, reservations function as spaces of anomaly to which Indianness can be consigned as a temporal oddity, aberration, and/or vestigial artifact even as it is straightened into modes of tribal lineage.

The novel suggests that the Messiah and his family serve as objects of necropolitical state violence (being pursued by the soldiers, with the dancers subject to arrest and removal), but also as an alternative to it, offering an experience of temporality not organized around ostensibly progress- and novelty-

generating modes of devastation. Through dancing, “the used-up lands would be made whole again and the elk and the herds of buffalo killed off would return”; “great storms would purify the Earth of her destroyers,” while “the winds would dry up all the white people and all the Indians who followed the white man’s ways, and they would blow away with the dust” (23). The need for such transformation arises from the fact that “the invaders made the Earth get old and want to die” (26). From this perspective, the Ghost Dance activates the potential for more life, engendering such possibilities through both the return of the ancestors and the extension of the conditions for the survival of humans and nonhuman entities alike. Over the course of the novel, several characters offer versions of the sentiment that “to go on living is far more painful than death” (51), suggesting that the existing circumstances generated under U.S. rule, more than being simply oppressive, are, in fact, unlivable.¹³⁷ Silko’s rejoinder to the narrative of U.S. national history as the unfolding of unending improvement, then, lies in the depiction of national time as an increasing expansion of spheres of extinction, obliteration, and bereavement. In contrast, Wovoka’s vision as articulated in the novel bears within it an experience of the relation between the past, present, and future as one of interdependence, in which the movement forward in time cannot be understood as an extraction of something of value from the useless, discardable husk in which it is encased.

Moreover, the past does not so much recede as itself potentially function as a horizon for unfolding dynamics of being and becoming. As Shari Huhndorf argues with respect to Indigo’s travel from Riverside, to New York, to Europe, the “journey from west to east . . . reverses the direction of conventional frontier narratives (such as Frederick Jackson Turner’s) of the ‘settlement’ of North America. It is also a journey backward in time to white America’s European origins,” and in this movement “Indigo believes she is following the path of the Messiah and his family on her own trek through Europe.”¹³⁸ When on her transatlantic voyage, Indigo thinks, “She was crossing the same ocean that the Messiah crossed long ago on his way to Jerusalem. After they tried to kill him, he returned over the dark moving water. . . . She took heart because the Messiah and his followers visited the east and returned; she would too” (197); at several other points the narrative indicates that the Messiah and his family periodically traveled “east” (see 55, 122, 265, 277, 285). The movement of the Messiah entails a process of “return,” in which what’s to come appears less as the result of a unidirectional telos (such as in the Hegelian frontier narrative of history moving west) than as something of a doubling back on what already had been, which then serves as the site of further possibility.¹³⁹ The novel develops that sense of ongoing contact with what was: what from a chronological

and historicist perspective would be *the past* remains immanently within the expansive and shifting network of relationships that constitutes continuing life, as a potentially generative set of forces, trajectories, presences. The Ghost Dance in *Gardens*, then, enacts a process of becoming in which the putative past is not that which is behind or which progressively withdraws. Instead, chronologically prior relations of influence, interdependence, and animation help orient actions and movements in the present, providing an active frame of reference for them.¹⁴⁰ Unlike a notion of inheritance or origin, an increasingly remote point from which something descends, prophecy expresses, highlights, coalesces, and intensifies a sense of cross-temporal imbrication—not as nostalgic or melancholic desire for return to what is gone but, playing on David Scott’s notion of the “former future,” as what might be termed the past incipient, a potential for further emergence.¹⁴¹

Indigo’s trip abroad expresses this sensibility in her introduction to recently discovered ancient European places and figures of spiritual power in Bath and Corsica. These incarnations of fertility include “amulets of ivory and bronze in the shapes of breasts” (257), a stone carved in the shape of “a human vulva” (290), objects with “concentric circles” that “represented the pubic triangle” (291), and “a snake-headed figure with human arms and breasts” nursing a baby snake (296). Literally buried under later buildings or dense overgrowth, these sites and objects return as inspiring instantiations of the potential for fecundity in the present; in doing so, they suggest not so much normative heteroreproductivity as a ubiquitous capacity for creation.¹⁴² Those encounters repeatedly remind Indigo of the Messiah and his family and of Sand Lizard relationships with Grandfather Snake at the old garden, and in this way, Silko indicates connections between geographically and chronologically disparate materializations of spirit, challenging Edward’s notion of civilizational inheritance in which Europe appears as the most advanced: “It was just as well Indigo missed the serpent figures. The child was from a culture of snake worshipers and there was no sense in confusing her with the impression the old Europeans were no better than red Indians or black Africans who prayed to snakes. Hattie agreed; they must help the child adjust to the world she was in now” (302). If for Hattie and Edward “now” indicates a coherent present of Euro-American progress along a singular timeline of development in which nonwhite peoples remain backward (and in need of disciplining and tutoring in order to catch up), the *now* of the fertility figures and the Ghost Dance suggests a world permeated and animated by *then*—movements, beings, relationships, forces, and social formations from a chronologically prior period. Some critics have suggested that this similarity between European and Native expressions of the potential

for creation and emergence illustrates “a form of serpentine matriarchal spirituality [that] binds peoples across nations and across time,” one that “telescopes complex waves of conquest into one relationship” while “becom[ing] a way of not having to address questions of cultural translatability.”¹⁴³ However, the resonance among these formations might be considered less an essential unity, one often characterized as myth (as opposed to history), than an indication of a broader potential for the prophetic emergence of the past in the present as part of the (re)generation of life—a potential that extends beyond the peoples of the Great Basin or those on lands claimed by the United States. Such linkage refuses the ontological reduction of the Ghost Dance to a set of regionally specific *beliefs* while also indicating possibilities for moving toward the future other than those at play in the necropolitics of Euro-American instantiations of time as modernity.

The novel’s discussion of the movement and replanting of seeds offers a concrete example of how the Ghost Dance’s spirit of incipience and its cross-time affiliations express and amplify ordinary practices and tendencies. Silko distinguishes such everyday modes of emergence from both the (commercialized) pursuit of novelty and the unfolding of (heterofamilial) lineage. Throughout her travels Indigo gathers or is given seeds from virtually every location she visits, from Hattie and Edward’s garden, to Long Island, to Bath and Corsica. In doing so, she is inspired by Grandma Fleet, who “always advised the girls to collect as many new seeds as they could carry home. The more strange and unknown the plant, the more interested Grandma Fleet was; she loved to collect and trade seeds. Others did not grow a plant unless it was food or medicine, but Sand Lizards planted seeds to see what would come; Sand Lizards ate nearly everything anyway, and Grandma said they never found a plant they couldn’t use for some purpose” (83–84). More than serving a specific delimited purpose or adding something unique to the landscape, seeds indicate potential. They bear within themselves the history of the place(s) from which they come, and the ecological dynamics that nurtured them there, while opening toward an unpredictable future. As with notions of power in the region discussed previously, seeds here suggest flux and action, a fundamental sense of movement that attaches to the possibility of life. Not knowing “what would come” means that seeds exceed a particular reproductive economy in which the goal is the transmission of the same—the conveyance of patrimony. Instead, they allow for the emergence of something different from what came before, less developmental trajectory or exotic newness than a contribution to the diversity immanent within growth itself. That variability, the quotidian rejuvenation of the already complex and changing organic and inorganic matrix that is the dunes, opens possibilities for

action in the world (“never found a plant they couldn’t use for some purpose”) without necessarily enacting a radical break within extant practices and ways of being.¹⁴⁴ While the novel often expresses something like an ethos of balance, in that it refuses a commercialized extractive relation to land and resources (in ways I will discuss further), Silko displaces a static notion of ecology in which equilibrium is paradigmatic, instead emphasizing the constant process of alteration as itself crucial to the maintenance and extension of life.¹⁴⁵

Continuity and change are not readily differentiable, in the sense that there is not a clear event of rupture that could definitively mark the onset of the new. Past and future seem to overlap and interpenetrate—like in the *Ghost Dance* itself. From the perspective of Wovoka’s vision as presented in the novel, the land itself is used up owing to the effects of exploitation by “the invaders” who made “the Earth . . . want to die,” and in bringing the possibility of further life, seeds gathered from elsewhere simultaneously suggest a movement back toward a more fecund time and a movement forward toward achieving sustainable subsistence for unborn generations. In teaching the sisters to leave enough beans on the ground for “the old gardens . . . [to] reseed themselves,” Grandma Fleet tells Indigo, “Don’t worry. Some hungry animal will eat what’s left of you and off you’ll go again, alive as ever, now part of the creature who ate you” (51). Introducing new seeds, then, does not so much engender innovation—uniqueness for its own sake—as amplify the potential for the conversion of death into life, a temporality organized not so much around progression as around the maintenance of an expansive matrix of relation (like the web of alliances formed by sex). As Stephanie Li argues, the novel “draw[s] explicit parallels between the act of gardening and that of mothering,” with procreation suggesting less a linear unfolding than an enfolding within a multivectoral network, and the planting of once-alien seeds within the garden materializes in a different key the sense of ancestors and descendants as coparticipants within the time of the Messiah dance.¹⁴⁶

The novel’s emphasis on the presence of seeds from elsewhere, and their transport across sometimes vast distances (at one point Indigo thinks, “Seeds must be among the greatest travelers of all” [291]), works against the account of both the *Ghost Dance* and Native placemaking more broadly as the desire for a return to a pristine past or to something that could count as origin. In discussing Hualapai Ghost Dancing, which provided the inspiration for the novel’s account, Henry F. Dobyns and Robert C. Euler note that “the Pai [another name for the Hualapai] placed the recovery of their land at the heart of their concept of the ghost dance movement,” but they then suggest that the Hualapai “like other ghost dancing Indians . . . wanted to return to the good days

gone by[,] . . . to retrieve [their] former assets and the lifeway that went with them.”¹⁴⁷ To the extent that the Ghost Dance both arises out of and further animates Native connections to place that exceed the terms of the reservation system, it appears here as a yearning for the return of a bygone era unsullied by settler presence. By contrast, in the novel the seeds and their movement suggest a revitalization of the land, a regeneration that is not merely repetition; they activate the capacity for further life and becoming toward which the Ghost Dance is also oriented. Discussing the geographies offered in Native women’s writing, Goeman argues, “(Re)mapping is not just about regaining that which was lost and returning to an original and pure point in history, but instead understanding the processes that have defined our current spatialities in order to sustain vibrant Native futures.” She later adds that “healing is not linked to an original, stagnant home . . . but returning to a specific land and a community that is always in the process of creation.”¹⁴⁸ The future appears less as novelty or an evolutionary shift away from what came before than as the continuing potential for creation itself, as a process of drawing on past and present patterns as reservoirs in whatever ways that they can enable efforts to stave off settler-induced modes of death and destruction. The novel’s portrayal of seeds suggests a particular way of “reckon[ing] with an environment,” such that the potential for action in the present appears not as replicating the past but as holding the current moment open to possibilities that are both emergent and residual—a prophetic sense of latency that does not run in only one direction.¹⁴⁹

If Sand Lizard identity and placemaking in the text occur through the building and sustaining of an expansive web of relations with other persons and places, these practices and understandings remain oriented by a persistent commitment to the dunes as the space of home. The bringing of plants from elsewhere (whether hundreds of miles away or across an ocean) to the dunes enacts its own temporality, one that is not so much restorative or recursive as rooted. The dunes provide a meeting point for the varied itineraries of Sand Lizard people, including their encounters with other Indigenous peoples and the violences of settlement. The gardens, then, provide a nexus for connecting chronologically disparate events and movements to each other, through which they are woven together as part of Sand Lizard being and becoming. This process incorporates Sand Lizard trajectories that lead them elsewhere (such as Indigo’s gathering of seeds through travel or Sister Salt’s erotic alliances and the child that results), but they remain oriented by their continued turning back toward the dunes themselves, which continue to provide the background against which to figure their experiences of movement. Mobility and occupancy, then, do not appear here as antagonistic or opposed. Instead, the time of seed-gathering

travel merges back into the time of residence in the dunes because the former was always shaped around making possible the latter. The future life projected through the gathering of seeds occurs within a frame of reference in which the gardens serve as the privileged site of Sand Lizard temporality.¹⁵⁰

While exceeding the space of the reservation, Native identity remains centered in place. As opposed to the reproductive unfolding of lineage, a sense of descent from an origin that itself is projected backward from the *tribal* spaces produced by Indian policy, indigeneity appears in the novel as a capacious network through which various persons, practices, elements, and events are affectively interwoven in processes that remain in flux, if oriented to a particular homeland. From this perspective, time functions not as a succession of moments in a direct causal chain, a view that can lead to the notion of the new as the decimation of the old which helps drive and validate the necropolitical violence of Euro-American development. Instead, time is a multiplicity in which what is chronologically past materializes as part of and helps influence present dynamics of continual becoming. That potential reaches its most explicit form in the novel through the Messiah dance, which prophetically expresses and intensifies the quotidian capacity for intense and intimate relations across chronological time. Rather than serving as a period marker for the end of meaningful Native opposition to settler rule (via the Wounded Knee massacre), the Ghost Dance in *Gardens* indicates enduring possibilities for regeneration through everyday modes of emergence that do not obey the heteroreproductive lineality through which settler governance constitutes, regulates, and curtails Indian realness.

Both Alexie and Silko displace the inevitability of settler time. In these texts prophecy enacts forms of temporal relation that do not fit the developmental frame of post-Enlightenment historicism. The novels address the violences perpetrated by projections of futurity that take the normalization and extension of non-native occupation as an unquestionable orienting frame, as the background against which to mark the movement of time and the advent of the new. Such conceptions of historical unfolding cast Native peoples as anachronisms of one form or another. Moreover, the texts explore how these visions of development in time circulate accounts of Indianness that are largely bound to the tribally specific space of the reservation, creating kinds of realness that imagine few options for Native people(s), constrain the possibilities for Indigenous self-determination, and work to derealize (make invisible and less available) alternative means of expressing and living indigeneity. In contrast, the Ghost Dance expresses modes of temporality in which the connection between the past, present, and future need not be one of contiguous, causal sequence.

Rather, the work of prophecy lies in its ability to stimulate and coalesce a nonsuccessive relation between persistence and potential—the ability of *was*, *is*, and *will be* to enter into complex exchanges with each other that do not follow an inherent progression from one to the other. In *Indian Killer* the relation among chronologically disparate moments—the ways these conjunctures are oriented toward each other—enables a process of transformation by which the Ghost Dance gives material form to modes of Native rage. It gains momentum from while further animating quotidian experiences at odds with those realized through non-native narratives of Indianness. Less a syncopation than an overlay, prophetic temporality in *Gardens in the Dunes* intensifies quotidian Native experiences of time as a capacious network, one in which connections less succeed each other (on the model of the straight line of inheritance) than become enfolded or enmeshed in ways oriented around being and becoming in a particular homeland.

In these enmeshments, entanglements, resonances, and projections across time, the kinds of prophetic temporality circulating around and through the Ghost Dance enact a kind of becoming that is not contingent on the supersession of what's come before. What from a chronological assessment belongs to the past here appears as actively influencing the future (and vice versa), and thus, what would usually be considered residual serves as a vehicle for emergence and becoming, such that the horizon for the future can entail an orientation toward the past. Prophecy in these texts involves the potential for a given moment in time to be permeated by noncontiguous moments and presences, whether understood as a kind of periodicity, an actualization of potentials that have been foretold, the intermittent presence of ancestors and other beings, and/or a renewable and flexible matrix of relationships. In this way the present neither replaces the past nor extracts something from it that provides a kernel that can be transformed in order to generate the future, whose very status as future in this formulation (as the prospect of the new) depends on its difference and separation from the past.

The conception or experience of indigeneity as other than lineal unfolding does not fit within the terms of a model of Native identity as that which persists from the past, as that which always must be fundamentally oriented around its priorness to the settler state.¹⁵¹ That very insistence on priorness—an existence as landed political entities whose claims precede those of the state formed on top of them and through their domestication—operates as a key part of arguments for recognizing Native sovereignty and self-determination. Yet the emphasis on such a relation to the past as the mode of legitimizing contemporary articulations of peoplehood can perpetuate the sense of Indigenous

peoples as inherently belated, while also casting any break in the self-same continuity of Native identity, collectivity, and territoriality as indicative of peoples having ceased to exist as such. In this vein, tradition serves as the sign that guarantees Native authenticity, but as Alexie's novel indicates, such narratives of Indian realness usually operate as a retrospective projection—a form of settler simulation. Insisting on the modernness of Native people(s), their inhabitation of a shared present with non-natives, though, does not remedy this problem. As discussed in chapter 1, to the extent that modernity (or modernities) functions as the frame in which to recognize Native people's and peoples' existence in time, they remain subjected to the violences and vicissitudes of settler recognition. They remain affectable others whose contemporaneity must always be in question and consistently deferred, a frame of reference in which settlement implicitly functions as the background against which to register presentness.¹⁵² By contrast, in Alexie's and Silko's texts, what could be characterized as tradition appears not as a vestige but as chronologically discontinuous forms of knowledge, experience, memory, extrahuman force, and relationship that can become realized in the now in spectacular and quotidian ways that are potentially transformative, individually and collectively. From this perspective self-determination appears less as a particular and properly modern mode of performing peoplehood than as the expression of the multiplicity of Indigenous peoples' ways of being and becoming.