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JAMES MATTHEW KLIEWER
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NEOLIBERAL NATIVES: PROJECTIONS, DISRUPTIONS, AND SURVIVANCE WITHIN CASINO NARRATIVES

A THESIS APPROVED FOR
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BY

Dr. Joshua Nelson, Chair

Dr. Amanda Cobb-Greetham

Mr. Sunrise Tippeconnic

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This work is dedicated to my uncle, Taylor Heydman—the man who instilled in me a critical view of institutions at an early age.

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-Matt Kliewer

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Abstract

Upon the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988, Indian gaming has been at the forefront of Native American discourses regarding sovereignty, self-determination, and economic development. Gaming operations hold the preeminent place in popular culture figurations of Indigeneity, essentially eliminating other concerns from narratives of indigenous/non-indigenous relations. Much work has been done on the lack of authentic portrayal of indigenous peoples in a variety of cultural mediums, but portrayals of gaming and particularly the Natives who run those gaming operations have begun to fill the limiting space once reserved for the noble and violent savage imagery of the past centuries.

Throughout the course of this study I will be examining the casino figure Alex Longshadow in *Banshee,* in juxtaposition to Gerald Vizenor's novel *Heirs of Columbus* and the television series *Longmire,* narratives I view as survivance narratives, or, "narrative[s] [of] resistance that creates a sense of presence over absence, nihility and victimry" (Vizenor *Survivance* 1). These surviance narratives, then, refute more tropic figurations of the Casino figure represented in this study through the character of Alex Longshadow in *Banshee.* Utilizing Chadwick Allen's trans-Indigenous methodology and Shari Huhndorf's transnational scholarship to examine the unique comparative positioning of these characters, exposing how different mediums and authors interpolate and/or refute colonialist neoliberal characterizations regarding gaming.

Neoliberal Natives: Projections, Disruptions, and Survivance within Casino Narratives

Introduction

In 2000, Scott Lyons claimed that, "Indigenous people, who in some senses are now forming a global movement . . .may constitute the world's most adamant refusal of current expansions of global capitalism and imperialism that plague so many and benefit so few" (Lyons 462). Since appearing in his article "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?" the description of this global movement embodies a multitude of vibrant political and cultural movements aimed at critiquing and resistance global capitalism. As a result, the study of Indigenous cultures privileging Indigenous expression has proliferated, beginning with the publication of Craig Womack's *Red on Red* in 1998, and subsequently embracing Indigenous peoples and knowledges on a global scale. The second half of Lyons' declaration has likewise translated into a strong political movement of anti-capitalist Indigenous resistance. On this front, however, the appearance of a unified theory of Native American and Indigenous responses to capitalism has largely taken placed on the ground at the activist level, without a high degree of attention paid to the academic study of these intersections of culture and capitalism.

Since Lyons' assertion, the ways in which economics and capitalism have been discussed within Indigenous critical frameworks have primarily attributed capitalism as yet another facet of colonialism, deserving equal (if not less) attention than other issues such as environment destruction, cultural appropriation and legal battles regarding sovereignty. Clearly, capitalism not only informs these aforementioned issues, but also

often forms the primary colonial motivation for the parturition of these issues. As capitalism has evolved to a self-referential social, cultural and political system known in scholarly discourse as neoliberalism, these scholarly concerns must also evolve so as to treat neoliberalism as not just another symptom of colonialism, but its primary mechanism.

Upon the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988, Indian gaming has been at the forefront of Native American discourses regarding sovereignty, self-determination, and economic development. Gaming operations hold the preeminent place in popular culture figurations of Indigeneity, essentially eliminating other concerns from narratives of indigenous/non-indigenous relations. Much work has been done on the lack of authentic portrayal of indigenous peoples in a variety of cultural mediums, but portrayals of gaming and particularly the Natives who run those gaming operations have begun to fill the limiting space once reserved for the noble and violent savage imagery of the past centuries. These portrayals reflect hegemonic values, as "[T]he 'Indian' is most often a series of rhetorical constructions that suit the purposes of the people who create them" (King 24). Reflecting neoliberal philosophies, these images of Indigeneity have become interpolated into every rhetorical sphere, to the point that legal analysts Steven Light and Kathryn Rand have astutely surmised that "what is said about tribal gaming reflects the vigorous political activity, primarily at the tribal, state, and local levels, that is reshaping federal Indian law and policy. For better or worse, Indian gaming determines how we talk about tribes today—and how we talk about tribes governs how we act on Indian gaming" (Light 122). Not only has Native gaming heavily influenced the rhetorical space regarding Indigeneity in the United

States, it has effectively become one of the central spheres in which those discourses must take place.

As with anything in Native studies, the issue of Native gaming is one full of contradictions, paradoxes and split opinions. Supported by Ronald Reagan's administration to offset massive cuts in federal support to tribal nations (Wilkes 141), Indian gaming has been widely characterized as a success internally. Indian income has grown at a rate higher than the United States as a whole, poverty rates have dropped in gaming areas, unemployment has dropped, and all major housing statistics have shown improvement as a result of gaming operations (Wilkes 145). Still, the practice of Indian gaming has led to racialist depictions of the "Casino Indian" in popular culture and political discourse, and gaming has taken over as the most recognizable indication of tribal nations' sovereign status. Increasingly prevalent in popular media--serialized television, film and literature--these casino characters offer unique insight into the manners in which neoliberalism has reconstructed Indigeneity in the cultural conscious.

Craig Womack tells us that it is our responsibility to ask the difficult questions in this field—and the ways in which neoliberalism affects efforts of sovereignty and self-determination offer some of the most complex and important questions in contemporary Native Studies. Why then, has the structural analysis of neoliberalism remained largely absent from much of Native scholarship? To begin to interrogate such questions, then, requires a methodology of literary and cultural analysis that privileges economic and materialist readings. Such a methodology does not require a complete replacement or even critique the rightfully influential scholars who utilize nationalist

and trans-Indigenous methods to analyze literature. These schools of thought have proven effective tools in furthering discourses of sovereignty and self-determination.

Instead, I view this economic framework as an important supplement to these schools, as neoliberalism now forms the primary determinant and characteristic of the movements of the nation-state in the globalized era. While historical and cultural trends in the construction of the image of Indigeneity in hegemonic consciousness has been well-studied by scholars such as Robert Berkhoffer, Roy Harvey Pearce, and Richard Slotkin, the influence of economic factors on those images has been woefully neglected. As neoliberalism has become the reference point for all political and cultural movement over the last four decades, the image of the Indian has assumed characteristics of economic repressions, particularly the speculative gambling associated with neoliberal markets, the violence of "free" flowing capital and constant movement toward development. Within a neoliberal materialist framework, the temporal forward movement of development a stands as "a paradoxical term in the lexicon of neoliberalism . . . it remains an incredibly powerful notion, guiding how countless actors imagine and practices their lives, from government executives and city planners to community organizers and the person in the street" (45). The all-encompassing construction of agency inherent within these ideologies of development and capital movement infiltrates all aspects of modern life. As such, to begin to examine Indigenous realities within the globalized world requires an understanding of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism has become both an exigent and contentious term within politics and academia. Simultaneously mammoth in its web of influence and invisible to many practical points of analysis, defining neoliberalism occurs more in description of its effects than in terms of its process. As Matthew Eagleton-Price states, “there is no way of neatly encapsulating what has now become a kind of catch-all expression” (xiii). Often times synonymous with the terms “modern capitalism,” “late capitalism” or “globalization,” neoliberalism contains many complex relations between the political, economic, and cultural spheres of metropolitan nations which are then exported, sometimes with devastating consequences, to the margin.

While essentially describing the connections between modern economic and social relations, neoliberalism has undergone the same type of ambiguous bloating as *postmodern*, describing all aspects of the current human and global condition as desired by a given author. While neoliberalism remains too nebulous to firmly or concisely define, David Harvey’s *Brief History of Neoliberalism* offers sign-posts that delineate neoliberalism from previous historical iterations of capitalism. Perhaps the two most important aspects of neoliberalism are the correlation of individual freedom with deregulated trade and global markets and an increasing focus on divesting power from previously powerful entities like the sovereign nation into the hands of the economic elite (Harvey 7). The concept of “individual freedom” has historically proven to have “a seemingly endless capacity to be recycled in arguments that seek to defend capitalism” (82). Moreover, the extension of these “freedoms” to corporations has “restored power to a narrowly defined capitalist class” (Harvey). The combination of elite control of capital and individual freedom have become the primary markers of neoliberalism,

finding philosophical root in “the assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade is a cardinal feature of neoliberal thinking” (Harvey 7). By this logic, any attempt to regulate a market or divest resources from a corporate entity becomes an attack on individual freedom. Rhetorically, this allows for those most disenfranchised by neoliberalism to staunchly defend the mechanisms of their own disenfranchisement.

Historically, the rise of neoliberalism and the era of self-determination within Native American tribes occur within the same decade. Harvey claims that the time between 1978 and 1980 mark the beginning of the neoliberal era, while tribes were experiencing regrowth after the destructive Termination and Relocation period from 1945-1960. Over the course of the next 40 years, as Native American tribes were offered more legal protection and economic opportunities as a result of the IGRA and other legislation such as the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, neoliberalism had already become the prevailing economic and political hegemonic power:

> The process of neoliberalization has . . . entailed much ‘creative destruction,’ not only of prior institutional frameworks and powers (even challenging traditional forms of state sovereignty) but also of divisions of labour, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart (Harvey 3).

The proliferation of new markets as a result of the IGRA have brought about a necessity of examining tribal economies, governance and cultural products with an understanding of neoliberalism—both in the ways that neoliberalism informs non-Native views of Native culture and the ways in which neoliberalism has infiltrated tribal nations. Particularly relevant to these discussions are issues of land, incorporation of tribal

nations and divisions of labor, all of which require more voluminous study than provided here. Instead, the manners in which neoliberalism has shaped Indigenous portrayals in cultural mediums and the manners in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists have resisted these portrayals through narratives of survivance will be of primary concern to this work.

The global impetus behind neoliberal trade disenfranchises the power and conception of the nation, as "state sovereignty over commodity and capital movements is willingly surrendered to the global market" (66). Within Indigenous theoretical practices, this represents a particularly troubling turn as the nation has been such a powerful uniting force amongst Native peoples and theorists (see Weaver, Warrior, Womack). While this may still be the case, the idea of the "nation" or even the nation-to-nation legal compact between the United States and tribes does not seem to address the shifting nature of the global political and economic landscapes brought forth by neoliberalism. Therefore, in order to examine neoliberalism within an Indigenous framework, the utilization of a trans-Indigenous lens becomes necessary, primarily informed by the works of Chadwick Allen and Shari Huhndorf.

An important development in the early 1990s in Native American Indian literary theory revolved around the incorporation of nationalism into Native discourses to privilege tribal-centric perspectives in the study of tribal literatures. The concepts put forward by the American Indian Literary Nationalists have continued to serve as a foundational theoretical orientation for the study of Indigenous literatures. More recently, transnational and trans-Indigenous methodologies have grown from literary nationalism to address concerns that transcend national and tribal boundaries.

According to Huhndorf, “movements of capital and empire . . . have refashioned indigenous cultural expression along with social and political structures “(2). As neoliberalism has shifted economic practices outside of national structures and transformed the relations between sovereign tribal nations and the colonial metropolis, Indigenous methodologies have also shifted away from more established conceptions of nationalism. Where the American Indian Literary Nationalist privileged local expression to recover and interpret texts, the transnational, or trans-Indigenous methodologies put forth by Allen and Huhndorf account for the complexities inherent in a globalized society. While the privileging of these local interpretations rightfully provides agency to internal interpretation, Huhndorf argues, “the local itself [is] shaped by rather than outside of global capitalism and imperialism” (11). Complicating the parameters of tribal and national borders, Huhndorf’s trans-national methodology shifts focus from an inductive nationalist model to account for the interpretation of global systems such as neoliberalism.

While Huhndorf remains highly critical of the American Indian Literary Nationalist movement, Allen’s trans-Indigenous methodology does not require a refutation of literary nationalism, as the trans-Indigenous lens provides a methodology to “develop a version of Indigenous literary studies that locates itself firmly in the specificity of the Indigenous local while always remaining cognizant of the complexity of the relevant Indigenous global” (xix). For my purposes, that orientation toward the global will occur through an incorporation of neoliberalism as representative of the complex global—a system that simultaneously constructs and reforms global markets and nations. As Allen and Huhndorf view the tribal local as continuously shifting based

on the Indigenous global, inverting studies to first consider global colonial apparatuses can produce new and insightful readings of the Indigenous local. While this trans-Indigenous turn does undertake important work by examining global economic structures, it has yet to provide an analysis of the ways in which the colonial apparatuses have responded to the implicit threat of Indigeneity to neoliberalism.

Returning to Lyons' original assertion of Native resistance as key to disrupting global capitalism, the very existence of Native sovereignty and tribal nations within the United States undermines the entire system of property and exchange upon which neoliberalism relies. As the United States has been the primary agent of globalizing capitalist markets, neoliberal ideology and American imperialism overlap to the point of indistinguishability. Challenges to the colonial United States naturally implicate neoliberal structures, as well:

> Because U.S. title to much of the land within the nation's borders remains tenuous even according to its own laws, Native land claims also disrupt U.S. geopolitical boundaries and counter the global movement of capital and empire that supports colonial nation-states (Huhndorf 16).

The mythology on which neoliberalism relies, that of continuous development and progress, must necessarily hide or disguise the treatment of Indigenous peoples, as the economic disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples for development seems a global constant. This being the case, the ways in which the colonial apparatuses have attempted to coopt Indigeneity to supplant such a threat warrants study. This analysis requires deep investigations into the ways in which the figuration of Indigeneity has changed in the non-Native consciousness as a response to neoliberalism. To begin this work, the examination of a relatively recent tropic character, the scheming Native

Casino owner, displays one way in which Indigeneity has been saddled with non-Native anxieties inherent within neoliberalism.

When removed from indigenous rhetorical spaces and placed within the hegemonic narrative of cultural and legal discourse, the Native gaming and the gambling industry that has blossomed since the passage of IGRA holds a precarious position of representing an unchecked neoliberal agenda. This often occurs in political discourse and through a personification in popular culture referred to by Celeste Lacroix as the "Casino Indian." Light and Rand further this analysis by concluding that, "Now, by far the most frequent allusions to Native Americans are on mainstream television shows like *The Simpsons, The Sopranos,* and *South Park*—and whether it's the subject of an entire episode or a single punch line, the reference invariably has to do with tribal gaming" (Light 36). The anxieties inherent in the rise of the neoliberal state have manifested themselves across genre and cultural media and are now so embedded in cultural production that the reification of this image is often unquestioned.

The figuration of Indian identity as a method of defining non-Native "self" in contradiction to the dark figure of the "other" has been well theorized in both postcolonial and indigenous specific criticism. The work of Robert Berkhofer, Louis Owens and Roy Harvey Pearce, in particular, historicized the development of a national American consciousness formed through opposition to the dynamic figure of the Native in the national imaginary. While both offer important and insightful analysis of the everchanging figure of the Indian in White consciousness, Berkhofer's assertion that modern Native Americans and their concerns are rarely represented with any degree of accuracy. The process of resignification of "Indianess" to suit hegemonic national

myths has a long history, one where Louis Owen posits “the American Indian in the world consciousness has become not only a static artifact but more importantly, I think, a contested space, a place of signification to be emptied out and reinhabited by Euramerica” (Owens 5). To further expound upon these theorists, the figure of the Indian in colonial narratives has long been to comment upon whiteness—whether through Iron Eyes Cody as a rallying cry for white environmentalists or the many savage Natives gunned down by American hero John Wayne, the native in most naratives produced externally speak more to the condition of white America than Native America. Within the figure of the casino figure, this character is at once representative of an economic model that molds national national what? and an uncanny distancing of neoliberal ideals onto Native peoples—a double representing both the historical imaginary and the contemporary repressions of neoliberalism. Ironically, Native characters have become the “place of signification” where anxieties regarding an unsustainable global economic system have found root.

Throughout the course of this study I will be examining the casino figure Alex Longshadow in *Banshee,* in juxtaposition to Gerald Vizenor’s novel *Heirs of Columbus* and the television series *Longmire* as survivance narratives, “narrative[s] [of] resistance that creates a sense of presence over absence, nihility and victimry” (Vizenor *Survivance* 1), refuting more tropic figurations of the Casino figure represented in this study through the character of Alex Longshadow in *Banshee. Heirs* functions as a codice of tribal knowledge that strategically utilizes neoliberal strategies as an act of survivance. Meanwhile, *Banshee* and *Longmire* both present their casino figure for a largely non-Native audience, with *Banshee* incorporating racialist colonialist narratives

into the figure of Alex Kinaho, with Jacob Nighthorse in *Longmire* providing another unique look at the ways in which neoliberalism can be coopted as an act of survivance.

Utilizing Chadwick Allen's trans-Indigenous methodology, the unique comparative positioning of these characters and the crossing of these genres should help to expose how different mediums and authors interpolate and/or refute colonialist neoliberal characterizations regarding gaming. The expansion of this analysis from purely literature into serialized television allows for an analysis of different genres conceived under different economic conditions: "When we conceive written literatures within a more expansive, inclusive context of Indigenous arts, the alphabetic text becomes simply one option within a large field of self-representation" (Allen xxiii).

Serialized television, more so than film or literature, does not offer the same avenues of coalition and activist-driven studios or literary publishers. Distribution of serialized television relies on a handful of major corporations accepting a pilot, without the strong independent movement that has arisen in film.

Ultimately, this work will investigate the same character with varying degrees of adherence to neoliberal structures based on the positionality of the author(s) toward Indigenous issues: one more familiar in its Pearcian violence and savagery in Alex Longshadow, juxtaposed with the survivance figures of Stone Columbus and Jacob Nighthorse.

It's important to note that gambling and gaming are not concepts specifically rooted in capitalist definitional models. Indeed, the notion of gaming holds incredible significance in the formation of identity and group dynamics within many indigenous

communities: “Traditionally, it served to preserve culture and ceremonies, redistribute wealth, and teach traditional values to community members and children” (Luna-Firebaugh 75). Traditional conceptions of Indian gaming, then, represent a far departure from the Trumpian neoliberal casino owner that has become popularized as an image of casino culture. In fact, through a traditional view, gaming represents a practice antithetical to the growth of wealth and capital, despite the portrayal of greed and deception that modern iterations of gaming figures embody.

Despite both internal and external criticisms, the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 has brought many positive changes to Tribal Nations and their economies—providing the unique access to markets through a satirical distillation of the neoliberalism to its roots of winners and losers, while simultaneously allowing tribes to maintain traditional values regarding gaming and wealth distribution. Because tribes own 100% of their casinos as required by the IGRA, the distribution of wealth follows the more traditional model of Indian gaming practices than the shareholder model of neoliberalism. Through the passage of the IGRA, tribes have been able to invest in “intensified local government expenditure on social, health, educational, cultural, and environmental programs and on reservation economic diversification” (Spilde 15). In Oklahoma, for instance, recent figures gathered for the S*tatewide Economic Impacts from Oklahoma Tribal Government Gaming – 2015 Annual Impact* indicates that tribal gaming output in 2014 equaled $4.2 billion, including the addition of 2,883 jobs and $155 million dollars of growth in the construction industry (OIGA 4). **T**he communal benefits of Indian gaming extend beyond tribal communities, as well. While non-Native critics tend to have a hard time shifting their perceptions of Native gaming from the

capitalist zero-sum game of winners and losers to accurately represent tribal gaming as it positively impacts both Natives and non-Native, “The evidence keeps mounting that Indian gaming also benefits non-Indians, but the argument around “who wins” continues on in spite of the facts” (Spilde16). These earnings benefit not just the tribes themselves, primarily in the form of infrastructure and education, but also non-Natives living within the state or area**.** According to the same OIGA report, “Oklahoma Tribes have paid the State a total of $980 million in Exclusivity Fees since 2006.” These fees, which are paid on a monthly basis through state compact, go specifically to state education, general revenue and assistance for mental health and addiction services (OIGA 17).

While indicating the high degree of success of tribal gaming within several tribes, these figures do tend to mask many tribal economic realities. Katherine Spilde and Jonathan Taylor claim that, “To talk about billions and billions of dollars” and “thousands upon thousands of jobs” reduces and homogenizes a wide variety of experience and masks the uneven social returns to gaming in tribal life” (20-1). Gaming is by no means a utopic pursuit, as economic conditions for Indigenous peoples continue to remain dire in many regions of the world. Still, while the process of measuring the true impact of tribal gaming since the passage of the IGRA provides multitudes of quantitative data that seemingly contradicts the narratives regarding issues facing native communities, the data does display Indian gaming’s “inextricability from self-determination” (21). As such, if Indian gaming is inextricable from self-determination then these cultural products that racialize these figures subsequently impact sovereignty efforts. Economic evidence of benefits only extends so far in

challenging the double stigma of racialist colonialist portrayals of Indigeneity tied in with an industry that triggers much of the same Christian moralist paternalism that has historically stood as justification for the seizing of sovereignty. Refuting the demonization of Indian gaming by critically analyzing ways in which the gaming industry and its practioners are portrayed becomes an important act of survivance.

Figuring Sovereignty as Criminality

Indicative of the projection of unchecked neoliberalism and its violent mechanisms onto the figure of the Native casino owner, *Banshee* takes place in the one-horse town of Banshee, Pennsylvania, where the interests of Ukrainian gangsters, Philadelphia drug rings, and a group of renowned burglars all collide to form the thrilling plot-lines that trade in stylistic hyperviolence, sex scenes and nudity reserved for premium cable, and big action set-pieces. Each of the aforementioned criminal elements revolve around Anthony Starr's character, a former thief pretending to be recently deceased sheriff Lucas Hood. Having walked into the role of chief law enforcement officer of Banshee, the false Sheriff Hood[1] takes it upon himself to clean up Banshee from the already present crime factions that ravage the town with impunity.

Along with the criminal elements outside of Banshee, at the heart of the more localized criminal factions are Kai Proctor and his niece Rebecca—two banished Amish who maintain a semi-incestuous relationship. The juxtaposition of the piety associated with prevailing societal views of the Amish and the violence and criminality wrought by the Proctors doubles to underscore religious hypocrisy and to instill a sense of

[1] Who from this point forward will be referred to as Hood in this essay, as Starr's character has no original name before assuming Lucas Hood's identity.

otherness to these criminals. Kai, the criminal patriarch, maintains a pseudo religious outlook to justify his activities, while Rebecca becomes increasingly portrayed as a sex-crazed sociopath.

Along with the Proctors, the primary antagonist throughout three running seasons of Banshee is the Kinaho tribe, a fictitious tribe run for the majority of the series by the Longshadow family. Although located in Pennsylvania, the Kinaho tribe derives much of its costuming and aesthetic from a pastiche of Southwest stereotypes (The Kinaho tribal council wears large turquoise rings and cowboy hats). The showrunners seemingly rely on a fictitious tribe as a means of avoiding the necessary discourse with tribes regarding representation in film and television. By skipping this necessary step, showrunners Schikler and Tropper take vast liberties with their portrayals of indigeneity, ranging from ill-informed to abhorrently offensive. The Longshadows and the Kinaho tribal council are portrayed as guileless neoliberals, using the casino as a front for criminal activity such as prostitution, kidnapping and drug trafficking. Alex Longshadow, having inherited his chiefdom from his deceased father, must continuously battle with his council to prove his merit as chief. The expansion of the Kinaho casino functions as the primary goal for the Longshadow family, and after many attempts at sabotage both internally and externally, Alex Longshadow is killed graphically in this attempt.

A mix of traditional belief in his immortality, his slick dressing, his ruthless corporate ways, and cold calculation, Alex Longshadow begins to function as what Celeste Lacroix has termed the “Casino Indian.” Having roots in the stereotype of the ignoble savage, this new stereotypical figuration:

> signal[s] both the changed economic, political, and social circumstances of some tribes and the concomitant fear and anger this new power seems to have elicited in the cultural discourse about Native Americans . . . a new and more virulent form of racism that is reflected in the media stereotype of the ‘‘Casino Indian.’’ (Lacroix 3).

Alex meets all three criteria Lacroix establishes for the stereotype of the Casino Indian. He exploits his culture for monetary gains, he leads his tribe as an immoral and ruthless chief, and his own tribal council calls into question his? Indian authenticity (11-16). As Lacroix posits, these types of anxieties expressed in the media are not uncommon. Reflecting colonial fears and anxieties of Indian economic self-determination, Longshadow kidnaps young white women, uses tribal sovereignty for personal profit and remains outside of reprisal by the white male hero in Hood. The narrative of *Banshee* displays an interpolation of various competing discourses surrounding Native gaming. Allowing tribes to conduct legal gambling has produced a virulent backlash, often times intermixing colonialist discourse with such political concerns. Some state legislators, like Slade Gorton of Washington State, have “sought to force tribes to surrender their sovereign immunity in federal courts for cases brought by non-Indians, tried to impose federal taxes on Indian gaming revenues, and would have liked to deny money to tribes if their income was above a certain level” (Wilkins 169). The transposition of these anxieties into popular culture mediums allows the *Banshee* showrunners to tap into the deeply held anxieties of their fairly homogenous audience.

Because of the powers granted in the IGRA, these more contemporary forms of racialist discourses surrounding Indian gaming have appeared in a variety of media sources. In *Banshee*, when Rebecca questions Kai about his interest in obtaining a stake in the Kinaho casino, Kai asserts that he wants to use the casino’s unique sovereign

status as a shield against law enforcement ("Ways to Bury a Man"). This, of course, is a particularly common misrepresentation of the IGRA, and one to which *Banshee* attributes a large amount of narrative capital. While casinos do have the reputation for increased criminal activity, the utilization of Native sovereignty established by the IGRA to shield one from criminal prosecution is rendered impotent by "[a] central feature of the IGRA . . . 18 U.S.C.A. ∮ 1166. That section extends all state laws pertaining to gambling, including but not limited to criminal provisions, into Indian country" (Canby 373). Not only does the show produce an ill-informed portrayal of Native sovereignty, but the figuration of sovereignty as inherently criminal and exploitive finds root in racialist political discourses regarding gaming. Much of *Banshee* contains ideological remnants of settler anxiety regarding Natives Americans, whether that be stereotypical violent savagery or the "Casino Indian." The particular manner in which criminality is portrayed as an almost natural consequence of increased economic agency within Indigenous communities are clearly evident in the character of Longshadow.

Heirs of Columbus: Gaming as Survivance

While these portrayals of Casino runners that offer racialist depictions of Indigeneity that associate greed and criminality with Native gaming have become the prevailing narrative concerning Native gaming, there are several instances of this character emblematizing efforts of survivance. Due to the complex nature of Indian Gaming and its impacts on Native American, many distinct narratives produced by Native authors have appeared both in favor of and in opposition to the IGRA. Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus* offers a strong characterization of Indian Gaming as a tool

to enhance sovereignty and gain self-determination. The main protagonist of Vizenor's novel, Stone Columbus, a descendant of Christopher Columbus, first establishes a casino for his unique tribe of Columbus's heirs, claiming Columbus has Mayan ancestry. This ancestral claim and Columbus's sexual relation with the Native American woman, Samana, provide the *Heirs of Columbus* their tribal heritage which they ultimately utilize to establish a tribal casino on a boat: "Beatrice Lord, the federal judge, ruled in favor of the unusual casino and sanctioned the reservation on an anchor; she so admired the imagination and certitude of the founder that she announced the court decisions from the wild sterncastle of the *Santa Maria Casino* on Columbus Day" (7). The *Santa Maria* and its partner ships the Nina and the Pinta, a restaurant and a duty-free shop respectively, are moored on a lake, anchored to the land by both the federal judge's admission of their sovereignty and their own intelligence to permeate the borders of land and water and the United States and Canada. The strategic disruption of national boundaries displays the transnational and trans-Indigenous tactic of capital through gaming as a tool to further sovereignty.

This first iteration of sovereignty provided by Vizenor—that requiring the signature of Beatrice Lord, merely works to solidify the Heirs in the U.S. legal system, but for the Heirs, "'[t]he notion of tribal sovereignty is not confiscable, or earth bound; sovereignty is neither fence nor feathers. The essence of sovereignty is imaginative, an original tribal trope, communal and spiritual, an idea that is more than metes and bounds in treatises.'" (7). Once again, we see the importance of imagination, both in the formal recognition of sovereignty and the inherent sovereignty that transcends colonial structures. Within the text, then, constructed images mark the "essence of sovereignty,"

both in the way these images "impress" Beatrice Lord and the transformation of image to trope, solidifying sovereignty in a "communal and spiritual" manner that does not require the recognition of treatises.

Within *Heirs of Columbus,* sovereignty relies on tribal imagination and the powerful construction of images to reinforce sovereignty. During a trial to determine sovereignty, Stone claims that "'Sovereignty is a natural tribal right, not a benefaction or grant from proud flesh patricians, the heirs are sovereign" (78). Once sovereignty is granted to the Heirs, first by Beatrice Lord and then later in the novel, the heirs immediately construct casinos so that the image of their sovereignty is both visible and spectacular. It is in the very creation of images and metaphors of tribal sovereignty that the heirs establish their power outside of the colonial system.

Much of the antagonistic narrative of *Heirs* takes place within the judicial system, where, "Stones and air have a hard time being heard, much less being represented in court" institutions such as "Corporate bodies, universities, churches, and ships at sea cannot speak either, but they have standing'" (78). The complementation of corporate bodies with more sacred spaces of churches, and in this text, ships, provides specific commentary on the legal system's connectivity with neoliberal apparatuses. Preceding the granting of First Amendment rights to corporations in *Citizens United v. FEC*, Vizenor presciently anticipates a neoliberal legal apparatus designed to privilege neoliberal voices and ignore Native narratives. Moving outside Vizenor's text into the political implications addressed within Stone's trial, the deprivileging of tribal voices in favor of corporate entities metanarratively explains the process by which Native Casino figures are stripped of tribal identity in order to espouse a hyperbolic neoliberal agenda.

Without reference to specific tribal metaphors, traditional notions of gaming or realistic tribal practices, these figures preceding Stone Columbus in narrative discourse move back and forth between the polar missing words. Moving forward with this lens, we can view the subsequent refiguration of the Casino figure as another attempt to subvert tribal narratives in favor of neoliberal more missing words In opposition to neoliberal structures of capital gains, these metaphors challenge legal colonial structures within the text. Within the text, Stone and the Heirs stand trial against hegemonic apparatuses, particularly the court. Ultimately the trial's stakes focus on narrative and self-representation, as "the rules of a legal culture rule out tribal stories and abolish chance in favor of causative binaries'" (82). Here we see the slippage of law and policy regarding Native sovereignty into the cultural realm. The "rules of a legal culture" not only superimpose an ideological structure on more concrete life, but on the stories of a tribe as well. Vizenor comments on the standard ways in which Indians are portrayed, as well as the limitous structure of the Western novel, both conventions which he attempts to subvert throughout *Heirs* and his other works. The fact that these binaries are causative points to the non-Native projection of the Native forming the basis of policy and portrayal of Nativeness. Furthermore, it is specifically the recovery of stories that allows for breakage in "causative binaries," binaries which continuously shift given economic conditions, yet always deprivilege Natives.

The narrative of inevitable disappearance becomes enmeshed with economic practices, as failure to conform to the newer economic practices signals a shift away from civilization. The linkage of civilization as a whole to an economic system shows the proliferation of neoliberalism as a political and social model. One institution in the

text that closely adheres to neoliberal and colonial principles is the Brotherhood of American Explorers, a group whose intention is to focus on tribes' "economic development" and "assimilation" (49). Through control of discourse and narrative, the Brotherhood supposes many of the same stereotypes investigated by Berkhofer and Pearce, but with a more specific focus on economic assimilation. A favorite of this group is the Indian Agent Henry Rowe Schoolcraft who "preached that their denigration was unavoidable because 'civilization had more of the principles of endurance and progress than barbarism, because Christianity was superior to paganism; industry to idleness; agriculture to hunting; letters to hieroglyphics; truth to error.' He did not see the humor of tribal stories or the Indian as a 'man of anticipation'" (49). Progress, in an economic sense, relates to the increase of the Gross Domestic Product, a fundamental necessity for the maintenance of the neoliberal system. Schoolcraft's ignorance to the humor of tribal stories marks him as an outsider, with the binaries presented within his quoted written texts pointing to his acceptance of neoliberal institutions. Economic development and assimilation are intricately linked in this passage, as they are within actual colonial practices. When these binaries are deconstructed, however, the slippage between progress and barbarism points to the most fundamental contradiction of the utopian vision of neoliberalism, namely the violence and inequality inherent within neoliberalism.

Content Analysis: The Trickster Jacob Nighthorse

As Vizenor allows for his characters to apply their trickster tactics to subvert colonial structures, *Heirs* does not, then, provide strategic characterization *within* a colonial system of meaning. To compliment *Heirs,* the television series *Longmire* offers

a narrative of survivance by first creating and then subverting the Casino Indian figure reminiscent of Alex Longshadow. Based on mystery novels by Craig Johnson, *Longmire* offers a hybrid mix of neoliberal skill with a direct focus on improving tribal conditions on the Cheyenne reservation, as well as more ambitious trans-Indigenous alliances. Through Jacob Nighthorse, *Longmire* is able to subvert the racialist portrayals embodied by *Banshee*, while utilizing Vizenor's survivance in a more accessible and trans-Indigenous manner.

Each episode of *Longmire* presents a new case to the grizzled Walt Longmire and his deputies, often times requiring the use of Traditional knowledge supplied by Cheyenne barkeep Henry Standing Bear. While there is often a new case every episode, the recurring storyline and tension in the show revolve around the Longmire's sheriff department and their various ongoing legal and personal battles with the Cheyenne tribe. Walt Longmire, a character emblematic of the John Wayne tradition, seems to be a reformed version of his ancestral predecessors. Walt understands some Cheyenne language and ceremonial knowledge. He is, in a sense, what Geary Hobson refers to as a "white shaman" (Hobson 5)[2]

Over the course of the series, Walt's key antagonist is Jacob Nighthorse, the main operator of the Four Arrows Casino on the Cheyenne Reservation. On the surface, and for much of the first three seasons, Nighthorse is presented to the audience as the typical "Casino Indian." What separates *Longmire* from these aforementioned racist portrayals is the tribal specificity and sometimes sympathetic portrayals of Nighthorse.

[2] While Hobson primarily focuses his critiques on poets appropriating Native culture (often times without actual knowledge of Native practices) Michael Fitzgerald likewise characterizes Walker from *Walker Texas Ranger* as characteristic of Hobson's white shaman figure

The rounding of Nighthorse's character serves the narrative well, but Walt fails to acknowledge Nighthorse as anything but a tropic villain. The economic success of the casino and the subsequent establishment of a legal clinic to benefit the tribe merely cause Walt to further distrust Nighthorse.

While *Banshee* and series investigated by Lacroix vacillate between supposed comedic satire and racist fear-mongering displayed through their casino figures, Nighthorse truly believes he is benefiting his tribal community, and the audience has only Walt Longmire to contradict this claim. In one of many exchanges in which Walt falsely accuses Nighthorse of a crime, Longmire becomes offended when Nighthorse cites Walt's lack of jurisdiction on the Cheyenne Reservation:

> Longmire: You think you're smarter than me.
>
> Nighthorse: I think you are blinded by your prejudice.
>
> Longmire: I'm prejudiced?
>
> Nighthorse: How else would you explain it? The years you've spent trying to keep me from succeeding trying to fabricate some grand criminal conspiracy when all I've done is try to help my community. ("Ashes")

This interchange, while potentially designed to frustrate a non-Native audience over the limits of Walt's ability to suspend sovereignty, displays what appears to be Nighthorse's true motives. The difference between Nighthorse and the other figures within this same characterization is the seeming truth of Nighthorse's convictions of helping his community. He invests in the community, practices ceremonies, builds a legal clinic, and he genuinely seems to care for the fate of the Cheyenne people. Preliminarily blamed for the largest criminal endeavor of the show, the murder of Walt's wife, that criminal characterization contradicts Nighthorse's actions throughout

the show—his aversion to allowing the Irish mob to conduct business in the casino, his support of Henry's attempts to reclaim The Red Pony, and his hiring of Cady. Each of these displays attempts to solidify and protect Cheyenne sovereignty, both economically and politically from outside criminal and colonial forces. Through a contrapuntal reading, Walt Longmire represents a direct threat to his ideological mission.

This reading gains further meaning as Nighthorse's supposed villainy becomes called into question as the series progresses. Originally positioned as the corrupt pit-boss who may have had a hand in the murder of Walt Longmire's wife, Nighthorse is ultimately innocent of involvement in this murder, and several other crimes Walt accuses him of throughout the series. From a contrapuntal perspective, the tenacity of Walt's pursuit of Nighthorse looks to be mired in persecution and racialist assumptions of criminality. From the beginning of the series, Walt opposes the building of a casino on Cheyenne land for fear that the casino would bring in an element of criminality to Absaroka County, potentially disturbing his conservative solitude and the quaint atmosphere and character of small-town Wyoming. Wrapped in this concern we see a racist generalization of Native gaming operations and a xenophobic fear of outsiders contaminating the purity of Walt's rural isolation.

As a result of this stark conservatism, Walt and Nighthorse begin an ironic battle representing Walt's pastoral rurality attempting to remain free of the corrupting forces of modernity and capitalism. While much of the rivalry consists of Walt accusing Nighthorse of crimes and subsequently going to vast vigilante lengths to prove Nighthorse's guilt, eventually this conflict escalates to a clash the writers *Longmire* equate to Little Bighorn. In the most direct confrontation between Walt and Nighthorse,

Nighthorse and his men circle Walt's house with their trucks and weapons late at night. Walt greets them on the porch with a shotgun, where Nighthorse steps out of his oversized truck and greets Walt, stating,

> Nighthorse: Tell me Sheriff. General Custer looked out over the field at Little Bighorn. Do you think he had a moment to reflect?
>
> Longmire: I suspect.
>
> Nighthorse: How do you think he characterized his failure in his own mind. Do you think he felt he had underestimated the Indians? Overestimated himself?
>
> Longmire: What do you want, Jacob?
>
> Nighthorse: I just want to talk. No lawyers. No bullshit. ("Down")

Having been previously harassed via legal disputes over sovereignty, Nighthorse removes the dispute between himself and Longmire from that of a legal discourse, instead insisting upon a space and a discourse in which legitimacy does not depend upon consent from a domineering sovereign. By choosing the space and the "no bullshit" nature of this meeting, Nighthorse assumes the role of the sovereign in the discourse, as he is the one with "the power of proclaiming a state of exception and, therefore, of suspending the order's own validity, then 'the sovereign stands outside the juridical order and, nevertheless, belongs to it, since it is up to him to decide if the constitution is to be suspended'" (Agamben 15). Often times in *Longmire,* Walt knowingly disregards tribal sovereignty in order to serve a warrant, arrest a Native American, or deal out vigilante justice. In this instance, however, it is Nighthorse who calls for the suspension of "bullshit" and legalities. By taking this conversation outside the confines of his own specifically legal sovereignty, Nighthorse removes himself from the defensive position of defending sovereignty and instead places the conflict in a

space where he and Walt can stand similarly sovereign, outside of the colonial legal apparatus.

Having completed this spatial subversion into an indeterminate space, the exchange continues with Longmire claiming he wants Nighthorse's "head on a pike" with Nighthorse truly imploring Longmire for the reasons of his hostility. Then, finally naming his true motivation behind his pursuit of Nighthorse, Longmire accuses Nighthorse of murdering his wife, admitting his Wayne-esque revenge narrative. Surprised, Nighthorse responds,

> Nighthorse: Well, let me put your mind at ease. I don't kill women and children. In fact, in my experience, in the experience of my people, that's been more of a white man's strategy.
>
> Longmire: **You once said you intended to fight the white man on his terms.**
>
> Nighthorse: **And I will, harnessing the power of the almighty dollar. With casinos. You took our land, you killed us with guns and disease, you lied to us. Shame on you. But we were naïve, we were gullible. We never came together as a people, so shame on us. Look around you, Walt. Cheyenne. Blackfoot. Sioux, Cherokee, could it be! We are no longer a beaten, drunken vanishing people. We are united. We will not be harassed and intimidated. These men have my back. And I have theirs.** ("Down" Emphasis Mine)

Throughout this exchange there are several telling moments that reveal the efficacy of a contrapuntal reading. Nighthorse's continuous comparison of Longmire to Custer calls into question the supposed authority invested in Walt by local, state and national governments. This allusion to a sovereign invested so heavily in narcissistic quests and violence does mirror Longmire. While Walt has long been presented as the hero of *Longmire* in opposition to Nighthorse, in this exchange we see a notable subversion of the tropic characterization of Indian savagism: Nighthorse and his group do not kill

women and children, while Longmire fantasizes about putting Nighthorse's "head on a pike." Nighthorse does not need to utilize violence to defeat Walt, merely embrace his economically superior position.

Furthermore, and most Nighthorse fighting the white man "on his terms" through the exploitation of capitalism and the casino operates within the trickster tradition of survivance established by Gerald Vizenor and expanded by Malea Powell, who claims narratives of survivance can be used to "consciously or unconsciously . . .in order to reimagine and, literally, refigure 'the Indian.' It is this use that . . . transforms their object status within colonial discourse into a subject status, a presence instead of an absence" (Powell 400). By utilizing a strategy that is "always ironic" to fight the colonizers, namely the utilization of neoliberal forces and capitalist desire for accumulating capital through speculative games, Nighthorse becomes a fully realized character, not just a foil for Walt. Nighthorse's utilization of trickster strategies of "harnessing the almighty dollar" to build inter-tribal coalitions specifically challenge the narrative of Native Americans as a "beaten, drunken vanishing people." While Walt has fought against the opening of the casino, his loss signals a revitalization of both the Cheyenne and inter-tribal communities within the show.

Moving Forward: A Methodology

The integration of Vizenor's survivance tactics into the character Jacob Nighthorse allows for a greater degree of correction and accessibility than potentially offered by Vizenor's *Heirs.* While *Longmire* does often cite traditional and internal knowledge to form procedural plots, the show does not code knowledge in a way that signals insider and outsider viewership. As the Indian in the cultural imagination is

never necessarily a product of realistic representation, the greater accessibility of a survivance tactic that challenges one of the more popular recent conceptions of the Indian remains an invaluable narrative tool. Nighthorse represents an image of gaming based in sovereignty and Native agency, while other contemporary figurations of this character trend primarily toward reinforcing stereotypes of hybridized savagism in conjunction with the settler colonialist anxieties surrounding the proliferation of neoliberalism. Having seen these anxieties negatively push American politics to the normalization of extreme platforms rooted in xenophobia, isolationism and white supremacy, the reflection of Indigenous realities grounded in issues of sovereignty have been and will continue to be an exigent concern within Indigenous Studies. Rejecting the projection of the baggage of neoliberalism's violent repressions marks a new and vital goal in Native American and Indigenous representation, one that will continue to exhibit ramifications in regard to Native American sovereignty.

The narrative battle against the neoliberalization of Native characters in literature and television requires subversive acts of resistance within all realms of production. At the level of creation, these need to be grounded characterizations based in an understanding of IGRA and the complexities of tribal sovereignty. Ultimately, this allows for the critiquing, but not stigmatizing, of such an important aspect of contemporary tribal lives and economies. It is the gaming industry and the corruption that it brings with it, not the Natives who participate in that process, that *Longmire* perhaps views as inherently criminal, a small yet important step toward more fully realized Native portrayals in popular culture. As this character continues to take on new iterations within a variety of cultural mediums, a critical methodology for examining,

critiquing, and potentially reforming or rereading these characters becomes a fundamental requirement within Native American literary and cultural scholarship. By reading *Longmire* and *Heirs of Columbus* as complimentary texts to narratively challenge colonialist texts like *Banshee*, we might begin to form an embryotic methodology for examining gambling and gaming within both Indigenous and external rhetorics in terms of the ways in which the characters challenge or embody neoliberal practices.

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