

## **THE ABORIGINAL INTELLECTUAL IN JEANNETTE ARMSTRONG'S *WHISPERING IN SHADOWS*: BETWEEN INDIGENOUS LOCALISM AND GLOBALIZATION**

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### **Abstract / Résumé**

The narrative arch of Jeannette Armstrong's latest novel *Whispering in Shadows* (2000) follows the life journey of Penny Jackson, an Okanagan painter, poet, activist and single mother of three. This paper considers the predicament that Penny faces as an Indigenous intellectual. More specifically it examines Penny's commitment to fighting globalization through her art and activist work as a call for a return to Aboriginal localism and as a model for recovering and maintaining the particularities of Indigenous difference in a global era.

L'arc narratif du dernier roman de Jeannette Armstrong, *Whispering in Shadows* (2000), présente le cheminement de la vie de Penny Jackson, peintre, poète, militante et mère chef de famille de trois enfants de la région de l'Okanagan. L'article examine la situation difficile de Penny à titre d'intellectuelle autochtone. Plus particulièrement, il examine l'engagement de Penny qui lutte contre la mondialisation avec son art et son militantisme en lançant un appel en faveur d'un retour à un localisme autochtone et en proposant un modèle de récupération et de maintien des particularités autochtones dans une ère de mondialisation.

Globalization and conceptions of new world order represent different sorts of challenges for Indigenous peoples. While being on the margins of the world has dire consequences, being incorporated within the world's marketplace has different implications and in turn requires the mounting of new forms of resistance.

- Linda Tuhiwai Smith *Decolonizing Methodologies*

## Methodologies

Jeannette Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows*, published in 2001, mounts a new form of resistance against the incorporation of Indigenous peoples into the world's marketplace by tracking specific and localized effects of globalization on Indigenous communities. The narrative arch follows the life journey of Penny Jackson, an Okanagan painter, poet, activist and single mother of three attempting to find her way out of "this huge darkness...looming world-wide and consuming everything good" (188). Through her national and international travel, Penny experiences the continuing "legacy of racial genocide" (Ryga 9) in a global age, but her actions also call to mind, as Thomas King puts it, "how traditional wisdom and customs can suggest ways to conduct oneself in the present" (111). Penny's life and work, especially her art and activism, much like Armstrong's own activist work and political leanings, articulate the particularities of what it means to exist as an Aboriginal woman in a global age. This paper considers the predicament of the Indigenous intellectual. More specifically it examines Penny's commitment to fighting globalization through her art and activist work as a call for a return to Aboriginal localism and as a model for recovering and maintaining the particularities of Indigenous difference in a global era.

In many ways, *Whispering in Shadows* continues the project of Armstrong's first novel *Slash* (1985). Like *Slash*, *Whispering in Shadows* represents another stage in the evolution of Native literature as written art form. In its address of national and international Indigenous oppression within our current phase of globalization, this text continues the process of decolonization. It is Native literature from beginning to end in that it focuses on the plight of Native peoples, but because it flirts with genre and resists easy assimilation, it does not fit into any existing mould of Native literature. Polyphonic in nature, it is both portrait of the activist and portrait of the artist, fiction and non-fiction.

To appreciate the complexity of Penny's strategies, it is important to contextualize localism and globalization. Locating globalization within a larger history, Stuart Hall explains that the newer and more insidious<sup>1</sup> forms of globalization are based in global mass culture. Global mass

culture remains centered in the West and relies on a particular form of homogenization.<sup>2</sup> The “constituent elements” (176) of contemporary globalization include the decline of the nation-state (175), greater internationalization of the economy (175), and multinational production (176). The fast, media driven underpinnings of this system cross linguistic frontiers quickly and efficiently and speak to its audience with unprecedented immediacy.<sup>3</sup> With the advent of global mass culture, there is rejuvenated scholarly interest in small scale movements rooted in “place” such as regionalisms and localisms as sites of resistance to the homogenizing meta-narratives of globalization.<sup>4</sup> According to Arif Dirlik, the last two decades have seen a proliferation of local movements as “the primary (if not the only) expression of resistance to domination” (22), and knowable “face-to-face communities,” as Hall observes, remain places where people can reclaim diversity by locating and grounding their ethnicity (184).

My theoretical framework relies on Dirlik, Hall and Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake’s depictions of localism, but also links this theory to Aboriginal depictions of community and local knowledge as it is presented in *Whispering in Shadows*. Additionally, I turn to Indigenous critics such as Lee Maracle, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Armand Ruffo to shed further light on the Aboriginal local. I am drawn to Dirlik’s definition of the local as “the site of resistance to capital, and as the location for imagining alternative possibilities for the future” (22). I am also drawn to Wilson and Dissanayake’s positing of the local as an “interstitial space ...of alternative imagining” (7). These authors insist that if the local is to be a working concept it must dismiss tradition and convention and be open to, as Frank Davey puts it, “internal differentiation by other ideologies” (16). A complete dismissal of tradition, however, would be counter-productive to time-honoured Aboriginal models of family and community which place a high value on reciprocity, diversity, interdependence, and mutual respect. As far as Native critics such as Maracle are concerned, the original models are not the problem. Rather, it is colonialism that has had such devastating effects on Aboriginal community systems and which has reduced Aboriginal communities to “a sub-standard definition of normal, which leads [or has lead] to a sensibility of defeat” (IX).

Increasingly, critics such as Frank Davey and Herb Wylie are looking at re-configured notions of the region and regionalism as “strategic political and cultural sites for democratic resistance to global assumptions” (Davey 16). However, for Indigenous First Nations, regionalism, even in a re-configured form, is not the most productive site for examining imperialist assumptions and colonialist practices. Though *Whispering in Shad-*

ows embraces ideals of regional autonomy and Aboriginal self-determination, it does not turn to the regional, but to “the local” as a site for opening up “internal differentiation by other ideologies” of the transnational sort (Davey 16). Though the local remains both “promise and predicament” (Dirlik 22), it is a more productive site for working through Indigenous oppression in a global era because it moves beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and toward global rather than national “configurations of power and culture” (Miyoshi 79). One fear of the local, as Dirlik explains it, is that “insistence on local “purity” may well serve as excuses for a reactionary revival of older forms of oppression as women in particular have been quick to point out in India and among Indigenous peoples’ movements in North America” (38). Dirlik’s claim contradicts Armstrong and Maracle’s expressed reverence of women and women’s wisdom within their respective Okanagan and Squamish communities. These competing points of view reveal a tension between Aboriginal tradition and modernity. Dirlik’s term “critical localism” may prove to be a useful paradigm for “working out” these “fundamental contradictions” (23). Critical localism can help to conceptualize the Aboriginal local as a complex site which has the potential to acknowledge and articulate the history of colonialism and to offer an alternative means of governance.<sup>5</sup>

Aboriginal activists, artists, orators and community members face the challenge of recovering and maintaining the positive and valuable aspects of Aboriginal tradition in a modern world. Penny’s continued attention to the local challenges colonial paradigms of state-imposed geographical identification and reclaims regionalism from the clutches of the nation-state in order to refigure it into a localism specific to Aboriginal issues.<sup>6</sup> For example, on a Greenpeace expedition to the Five Valley Coast of Vancouver Island to protest the clear cutting of old growth forests by multinational companies on Native lands, Penny articulates how colonialism continues to impinge on local Indigenous communities when she tells Jim, the head organizer, that Indigenous peoples are frustrated because “the resources are controlled by governments who license out their extraction. Nobody is willing to return local control” (108). Penny’s call for a return to the Aboriginal local further crystallizes through her subsequent statement that “better decisions would be made if people who lived here were in control” (108). The Aboriginal local, as Penny constructs it, is not an idyllic blank slate, free of disjuncture, but rather, a messy and tumultuous site in which tradition and modernity negotiate co-existence. In this sense, Penny’s depiction of the Aboriginal local is both realistic and valuable since it not only serves as a site of promise, but also “as the site of negotiation to abolish inequality and oppression

inherited from the past” (Dirlik 38).

Before delving too far into Armstrong’s sociological depictions of the local, I want to briefly foreground the style and aesthetics of *Whispering in Shadows* as a novel. This novel is most definitely a vehicle for Armstrong’s own political agenda, which sometimes results in rather didactic passages that read more like political tract and sociological analysis than prose. However, the poetic inserts, the fragments from Penny’s journals, and the finely crafted lyrical meditations emerging from Penny’s artistic sensibilities manage to interweave Native spirituality, memory and nature to balance out the political feel of the text. Take for example, the following poetic meditation in which Penny’s extraordinary sense of “colour and composition,” emerge as she watches:

The morning sun, outlined in magenta...creeping over the ridges, slanting red-gold shafts down into the valley. The mountain tops, still white with snow, shine in the strange light. It casts a warmth over the dark green of the trees before fading into the deep blue and then into the softer teal and mauve tones of the distant peaks. On the rounded sides of the nearest mountains, swatches of white unmelted snow glow a brilliant pink in this light. (Armstrong *Whispering* 36)

Another aesthetic signature of the text is the way in which Penny is constructed as a self-image of Armstrong. Penny, like Armstrong grows up immersed in the traditional teachings of the Okanagan and earns a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Victoria. Like Armstrong, she too is a painter and poet who commits her life to fighting globalization and promoting Indigenous rights. Armstrong herself is an “advocate of a healthy environment and social change.... She has served as consultant to many environmentalist and social change organizations... and has published numerous articles on the impacts of globalization” (Armstrong “A Radically Different World View is Possible” 3).<sup>7</sup> Yet, despite these resemblances, *Whispering in Shadows* is neither autobiography, nor non-fiction, nor memoir; rather it is a work of fiction. Writing herself into Penny’s character, Armstrong partially draws, perhaps unwittingly, on the French “roman à clef” tradition. Roman à clef refers to a novel with autobiographical elements. According to the *Encyclopedia of the Novel*, roman à clef literally translates as “novel with a key.” It is “a subgenre of the novel that presents actual people in the guise of fictional characters. When readers identify the historical individuals and events that form the basis of a roman à clef, they unlock the novel’s hidden (or not so hidden) meaning” (1). In other words, when the reader decodes the narrative’s signifiers, the underlying meaning of the novel becomes clear. It is important to note that Armstrong does not fully adopt

the conventions of the roman à clef. The plot cannot be easily mapped onto a concrete historical event or linked to any specific historical figure, rather it is Penny's third person narration that tracks and articulates how this amorphous thing we call globalization transforms and ultimately disfigures the individual and social body. Knowing that Penny embodies autobiographical aspects of Armstrong does not present a readily apparent "key" to unlocking this novel's underlying meaning. I note these as points of significance because adopting yet subverting an accepted European literary tradition maintains Armstrong's commitment to resistance strategies and points to the dynamic evolution of Native literary tactics.<sup>8</sup> In any case, the fictional license afforded by the roman à clef allows Armstrong to express her own political agenda from a personalized perspective, and also to explore the role and potential of the Indigenous intellectual. So while Armstrong writes aspects of herself into Penny, Penny also represents a fictionalized extension of Armstrong. Penny is not only an artist, activist, lover, mother and community member, she is also, to use Antonio Gramsci's term, an "organic" intellectual (Gramsci) who is fully attuned to the social and economic conditions of her people. This attunement is central to her ability to translate the local/global divide into a localism that is highly specific yet supple at the same time. Constructing Penny as a complex and multifaceted intellectual artist writes against essentialist notions of Aboriginal identity and fosters questions around the idea and role of the Indigenous intellectual.

Resituating Gramsci's essay on the formation of intellectuals within a diasporic and postcolonial context, Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan offers a valuable framework for contextualizing Penny's intellectual work. Radhakrishnan re-configures Gramsci's argument that all human beings are intellectuals into one that distinguishes between what he calls the "general intellectual" and the "professional" or "specific intellectual" (67). Penny is, undoubtedly a "general intellectual" according to Radhakrishnan's construct. She is as well versed in traditional Okanagan teachings, conceptions and experiences, as she is in anti-colonial, anti-globalization, Marxist, and feminist intellectual frameworks. What is at stake in Armstrong's construction of Penny as a general intellectual, according to Radhakrishnan's argument is the "representative and representational connection between theory and constituency" (65). On this topic, Radhakrishnan further elaborates: "Should the ethnic theorist be empowered to speak on behalf of the collectivity? ... Do the interests of the ethnic theorist, who teaches, publishes, and disseminates theory ...coincide with the interests of the collectivity?" (65)

Penny's preethnic history and her ties to the reserve and Okanagan

traditions ensure that her interests as an ethnic or Native theorist coincide with the interests of the Aboriginal collective. As a single Indigenous mother who has grown up on the reserve, Penny has what Dirlík would call the type of deeply rooted “local consciousness” (41) necessary as a basis for any sort of resistance movement. Penny is keenly attuned to the struggles of her people because she has lived and not simply studied the flaws of the Canadian political system. She knows all too well the reality of single motherhood on the reserve, the “living hand-to-mouth...trying to keep the kids in clothes and food” (Armstrong *Whispering* 57) and “how hard it is to get a decent job if you are a woman or worse a NATIVE” (58). She literally embodies the kind of anti-racist, feminist, and anti-colonial philosophy that Roxanna Ng declares is necessary to mount “a successful resistance against global capital” (Ng in “Deconstructing Race, Deconstructing Racism: a Conversation Between Jeanette Armstrong and Roxanna Ng” 2005; 38).

Radhakrishnan maintains that two questions need to be raised with respect to Gramsci’s analysis.<sup>9</sup> First, does contemporary “professionalization” have the same meaning today as it did for Gramsci? To answer this question, he argues that Foucault’s cautionary comments about power “need to be taken seriously” (67). Second, what is “the relationship of the organic intellectual to her own traditional prehistory” (67). In other words, if Penny fits Gramsci’s notion of the organic intellectual, which by definition she does, then, as Radhakrishnan asks, what is “the manner in which the “ethnic” intellectual is implicated in the “colorless” and, to many, “the colored” or preethnic past. The question of genealogy remains to be answered” (67). Indeed, questions of genealogy around Penny’s own education and her role as an Indigenous intellectual are deeply complex issues and I do not purport to do justice to them in a single paper. As mentioned earlier, Penny’s education begins on the reserve. She is schooled in traditional Okanagan language and practices. As a young, single mother, Penny leaves the reserve with her children to attend University in Victoria where she studies painting and political science. This migration causes considerable cultural displacement, but is also what affords her the opportunity to distinguish the Okanagan view of “sustainable societies” in which “extended family and community are inseparable”<sup>10</sup> (Armstrong “I Stand With You Against the Disorder” 6) from the ecological devastation, rootlessness and alienation she experiences in the urban setting. While university training in the fine arts, humanities and social sciences enhances her political awareness and puts her in touch with a larger anti-globalization movement, theory without applied action is meaningless for Penny.<sup>11</sup> It is through this dislocation that Penny begins to situate herself as an intellectual committed to the

concerns of local Aboriginal communities.

The function of research, methodology, theory and action are complex issues for Indigenous communities, especially since “the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (Smith 2). Theory, and by extension the theorist, presents a paradox for Indigenous peoples. On the one hand, theory as Smith explains it, is integral to providing the “space to plan, to strategize, to take greater control over our resistances. The language of a theory can also be used as a way of organising and determining action. It helps us interpret what is being told to us, and to predict the consequences of what is being promised” (38). On the other hand, as David, Penny’s partner conveys, theory that remains simply theory is frustrating when “there is so much to be done on these issues.... The thing about Indigenous Peoples rights” he says, is that it is “really not just theory. People are suffering worldwide. Indigenous peoples are suffering the worst.... You can’t just talk about it. You have to do things about it” (Armstrong *Whispering* 144-145). Through a lifetime commitment to local, grassroots activism Penny finds a means of translating theory into action in a manner that ensures her goals as an Indigenous spokeswoman coincide with the best interests of the Indigenous communities for whom she speaks. Penny’s immediate constituency is the local Okanagan and her early activist work puts her in touch with her most intimate local. For example, through her Greenpeace work in British Columbia she comes in contact with the concerns of the Okanagan, and the NitNat peoples (the People of the Mist) of Vancouver’s Five Valley coast. But Penny’s Indigenous networking is not contained within national borders. “The world’s Indigenous populations” as Smith reminds us “belong to a network of [colonized] peoples” (7) and Penny’s identity predisposes her toward Radhakrishnan’s “transethnic network” (65) of Indigenous peoples who, to continue with Smith’s line of thinking, “share experiences as peoples who have been subjected to the colonization of their lands and cultures” (7). Through her global travel and “transethnic network[ing]” Penny also observes how the story of globalization plays out for the Mayan men and women of San Cristobel in Mexico and for the less advantaged citizens of inner city Los Angeles.

As Heike Härting notes, Penny’s traveling becomes a sort of “globe trotting” that begins locally and extends globally. For Härting this globe trotting constitutes a new trope of transnationalism which tracks three main areas of injustice: first the dispossession of Indigenous lands through transnational corporations and NAFTA; second, the ecological and social ramifications of the development and restructuring of Indigenous lands under the auspice of progress; and third, the ways in which

“globalization connives with or “plots” narratives of deliberate social and economic underdevelopment and reinvents itself as the sign and carrier of the good and just society” (262). Tracking the local and “[b]reaking the illusion of western development and progress as a world order” (Armstrong *Whispering* 189) configures what Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake refer to as a “global/local [nexus]” (6), a nexus that tracks the space of global disorientation and challenges “Western universality as standard, centre, and dominant knowledge” (6).

According to Dirlik, the most serious challenge facing resistance/ liberation movements is how to resist assimilation of the local into global companies (41). In order to have a significant impact, resistance must be simultaneously rooted in local/ translocal consciousness and action. The difficulty is how to achieve a consciousness and activism that is rooted in one’s most immediate local and simultaneously cognizant of the local conditions and concerns of other local communities on a global scale. Penny’s visit to the Mayan coffee co-operative in the Chiapas region of Mexico provides a model which overcomes this dilemma by uniting local consciousness and translocal action through a system of Indigenous fair trade. The Mayans are experiencing economic hardship as a result of market shutout, free trade restrictions and NAFTA. Oil and gas has been discovered in their region, generating increased multinational interest and further endangerment of their lands and culture. Surprisingly, out of this “multidimensionally conflicted social space of global contradiction” (Wilson and Dissanayake 6-7), Penny and her team devise a fair trade proposal rooted in shared Indigenous values of spiritual work, trust, and mutual assistance (Armstrong *Whispering* 183). The purposed system of trade would align Indigenous co-operatives in the United States with the Mayan co-operative in Mexico. The idea would be to cover costs of living, such as those incurred by transportation, roasting and packaging, to share the profits equally, and to provide some income to members of each local organization. By connecting “local problems to global solutions” (Wilson and Dissanayake 3), this proposal taps into “local motion,”<sup>12</sup> to configure “collective agency, [and] geopolitical location on the trajectory of transcultural/transnational informations and commodity flows” without subsuming the local into the global (6). A transnational solidarity of trade which privileges Indigenous rights and harnesses control of “transnational flows and globally dispersed work chains” (3) posits an alternative to patriarchal capitalism and provides a model for Indigenous recovery and mediation.

Penny is not just an activist, she is also an artist, and through her art she finds another means of intervention and mediation. Penny’s paintings challenge the perceptions of the Native artist “locked into” as

Armand Ruffo puts it, an “anachronistic past” (Ruffo 112), and taking her art into a public forum exposes “what it means to be a people under siege” (109). For instance, after viewing two of Penny’s paintings “Moist Moon and Twisted Steel Grid” and “Cracked Earth and Crystal,” at a gallery showing, a fan approaches Penny. The ensuing scene proves to be more of an interrogation than a conversation on equal footing. The fan begins by asking:

“I hope you don’t mind me asking this question. But I wanted to know why you decided to work in a purely contemporary format”

“As opposed to what?”

“Well, you are Native American aren’t you?”

“Native American? Oh yeah, that’s the term used in the US. Is there a Native American format?”

“Oh no. But it seems that most Native American artists incorporate or reconstruct symbolism from their heritage into their works.” (127)

What emerges from this well-meaning fan’s comments is the impulse to name, and to slot Native composition into an acceptable genre as accorded by her Western gaze. Her words and actions exemplify what Smith talks about when she says that “othered” peoples, Indigenous peoples, and people of colour, however they are named, cast a shadow in the Western imagination (14). To appropriate one of Thomas King’s phrases Penny is “not the Indian” this fan “had in mind” (31).

As an artist, Penny’s central commitment has been to “the way colour moves [and] speaks” (127). She wants to be afforded the freedom to create, to be an artist, to experiment with the aesthetics of painting without the constraints of her Native identity dictating every brushstroke and enslaving her within the fictitious<sup>13</sup> cliché of the “deeply ecological” (127) and misty-eyed Native *American* artist.<sup>14</sup> Penny’s response to this attempted enslavement: “*I’m gonna damn well paint arrows ploughing into spandex!*” (127) is an act of resistance and what Kimberley Benston refers to as the “impulse to unname” (153). This desire is a “transcendent” urge to “undo all categories, all metonymies and reifications, and thrust the self beyond received patterns and relationships into a stance of unchallenged authority” (153). Piercing sleek modern images of spandex with anachronistic images from her ethnic heritage challenges

inscribed notions of Native artistic practice and is a sublime act of “radical unnamings” that challenges the “labels formulated by the master society,” (Benston 151) breaks the “‘plot’ of influence,” (153) and distinguishes Penny as a distinct “preethnic” individual. Highlighting the fact that her ethnic identity is a construct that has been forced upon her by an oppressor frees Penny from what Maracle describes as the “chains which were welded to [her] by a history neither [she] nor her ancestors created” (Maracle VIII). Whether we are a Native or a non-Native readership, Penny’s art, and the resistance strategies which emerge from bringing this art into certain public forums, can help us realize our own “Others” and the colonial history bound up in the creation of that “Otherness.”

One of the most profound spaces of resistance and hope which emerge through Penny’s relentless search for an answer to the disparity she observes around her is the Aboriginal local. Community from the Okanagan perspective plays a central role in an individual’s well-being: “Our most serious teaching,” Armstrong explains, “is that community comes first in our choices, then family, and then ourselves as individuals, because without community and family we are truly not human” (“I Stand With You Against the Disorder” 3). The kind of community Penny describes fulfills a deep desire for intimacy, interconnectedness, and sharing (274), and presents a stark contrast to the “placelessness”<sup>15</sup> of modern communities, where “[c]ontingent rather than necessary ties connect the people and the place” (Entrikin xi). The strength of tradition and the bonds between the individuals comprising Penny’s local community is well conveyed by the scene that depicts Penny and her family’s return to the Okanagan. The community holds a drum ceremony to welcome them home:

The drum starts the round dance song and Penny and her daughter begin the steps inside the circle of people, around the giveaway tarp on the grass. The people stand to shake their hands and to hug them one by one. The sage pot sends out its musky scent and covers them with its cleansing power. The smiling faces of her people, all around, greet her and her children. Her eyes fill and she feels like her tears will fall. (135)

Penny’s internal meditations following this scene further convey the strength and bond within the community:

*I forgot how this feels. It’s like we’re being embraced by something so strong yet so gentle. Oh, my people. You are my medicine.... I commit myself to honour you and to do all that I can, that there will always be community, in this way, here and wherever such community thrives. I give myself*

*back to this land, our home.* (135)

Aboriginal community, then, is about family, yet it is more than just family, it is a “thing deeper and more enduring than any one of us” (273) and something “which we need to make us whole” (273). Community is tradition, sustainability and belonging.

Through her art and activism, Penny negotiates the difficult terrain of the Indigenous ethnic intellectual through what Wilson and Dissanayake call the transnational imaginary, “the *as-yet-unfigured* horizon of contemporary cultural production by which national spaces/ identities of political allegiance and economic regulation are being undone and imagined communities are being reshaped” (6).<sup>16</sup> This transnational imaginary allows Penny to transform spaces of marginalization into “spaces of resistance and hope” (Smith 4).<sup>17</sup> Penny’s initial reaction to the global situation had been to “throw herself into the fray and rage as loud as” she could (190) and with her paintings and her words to scream until her throat was raw and there was only silence (190, 197). But as she matures and continues to examine the “global/local nexus” (Wilson and Dissanayake 3), she realizes that the potential for Indigenous recovery and mediation is not about linking global solutions to local problems, but rather in linking local solutions to global problems. The ultimate space of resistance for Penny is rooted in a localism that remains true to her most intimate Okanagan teachings, but which is also open to internal differentiation by other ideologies, namely those which she encounters through her “globe trotting” in “communities...still connected to the land in a healthy way” (147). Penny’s transethnic networking provides intriguing alternatives for Indigenous solidarity and vitality within our current phase of imperialism.

To conclude, *Whispering in Shadows* is a novel rooted in Aboriginal praxis, community, art and activism and constructs the Aboriginal local as a site of solidarity. Armstrong is, to use Lee Maracle’s words, one of “a number of amazing women struggling to re-create and re-build the family systems of the past” (X). It is through her construction of Penny Jackson as an ardent community supporter and tireless Indigenous activist, rooted in traditional ways of knowing and belonging, that Armstrong participates in the task of re-covering and re-imagining Aboriginal community. On the one hand, Penny’s story is a scathing indictment of global capitalism and continuing forms of colonization. On the other hand, Penny’s journey demonstrates that globalization has many meanings, and that not all of them are negative as these increased possibilities of communication, global solidarity, and global cultural exchange demonstrate. Penny’s journey also reveals how the oppressive aspects of global capitalism, such as fragmentation and marginalization, can, through

local/ translocal consciousness and action, be turned into potentially liberating channels of Indigenous self-governance and trade. Penny's depictions of Indigenous communities as a places rooted in traditions of sustainability and interdependency tells a different story, a story that encourages us to imagine a world which does "not depend so much on oppositions as [it does] on co-operations" (King 110).

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### **Notes**

1. Hall explains that globalization is insidious in that it recognizes it can only rule through other local capitals, alongside and in tandem with political elites: "It does not attempt to obliterate them; it operates through them. It has to hold the whole framework of globalization in place and simultaneously police that system: it stage-manages independence within it." See Hall's "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shomat. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 179.
2. The particular form of homogenization upon which global mass culture relies is, according to Hall "never absolutely complete, and it does not work for completeness...it is located in the increasing and ongoing concentration of culture and other forms of capital. But it is now a form of capital that realizes it can only rule through other local capitals, rule alongside and in partnership with other economic and political elites. It has to hold a whole framework of globalization in place and simultaneously police that system: it stage-manages independence within it, so to speak" (179). See Hall's "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity" (180).
3. The technologies of global mass culture, (internet, satellite and television) are not limited by national boundaries; yet, these same technologies can still be mediated and manipulated by the nation See Hall's "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity" (178).
4. As Hall explains, the local has re-emerged out of a sense of

urgency: “[I]n the face of the global postmodern, globalized forces have, as it were, destroyed the identities of specific places, absorbed them into a postmodern flux of diversity” See Hall’s “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity” (184).

5. The promises of the local, according to Dirlik, are its potential to imagine “alternative possibilities for the future” (22), and to act “as the site of resistance to capital” (22). The predicaments of the local involve determining how well the local “serves as the site of negotiation to abolish inequality and oppression inherited from the past, which is the condition of any promise it may have for the future” (38), and how to resist assimilation of the local into the global. For a more in depth explanation of the promise and predicament of the local, see Dirlik’s “The Global in the Local.” *Global/Local: Cultural Revolution and the Transnational Imaginary*. Ed. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake. Durham; London: Duke UP, 1996. 21-45
6. The biographical notes from Armstrong’s article “A Radically Different World View is Possible” convey that Armstrong was “recently named as a recipient for the Buffett Award. The Buffett Award for Indigenous Leadership developed as a program in 2000, and 2003 marks its third year of Ecotrust’s expression of high regard and support to tribal leaders with lands and waters where salmon live or lived. Jeannette was nominated by the centre for Ecoliteracy, in California” See Armstrong’s article “A Radically Different World View is Possible: The gift economy Inside and Outside of Patriarchal Capitalism.” Abstract. *International Conference on the Gift Economy* Nov 12-14, 2004 Las Vegas, Nevada. 23 Nov. 2005 < <http://www.gifteconomyconference.com/pages/Armstrong.html> >.
7. During a discussion of this paper, Dr. Donna Penne suggested that perhaps Armstrong is not working with a new genre, but rather with a deeply rooted Indigenous oral tradition and style. Dr. Penne’s comment highlights the complexity and depth of the colonial gaze, which I am of course aware of, but not entirely immune to. Although it was not my intention to commit a further act of colonization by labeling Armstrong’s style as “new,” I think Dr. Penne’s point highlights the importance and need for continual attention to decolonization and to the language habits, including those of literary classification, that play a part in the process of colonization. This point arose during the School of English and Theatre Studies Ph.D. Colloquium, 3 Feb., 2006, Wilfred Laurier University.
8. In his essay on “The Formation of Intellectuals” (1949) Gramsci postulates that every individual has the capacity to be an intellectual in that, but not every individual chooses to undertake intellectu-

alism as a life calling. Gramsci distinguishes between the traditional and organic intellectual, explaining that the traditional intellectual derives from past and present class relations and tends to conceal these relations (3). The organic intellectual, in contrast, derives from direct contact with social and economic conditions of a certain class, and is defined by his or her “function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong” (3). See Antonio Gramsci’s “The Intellectuals.” *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Translated and Edited by Ed. Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith. London; New York: International Publishers, 1971. 3-23.

9. Armstrong further explains that the strongest solidarity comes from individuals “bound together by land, blood and love.” See Armstrong’s “I Stand With You Against the Disorder.” *Yes! Online February 2006 Winter 2006 Issue: Spiritual Uprising*. 22 Nov. 2005 <<http://www.yesmagazine.com/article.asp?ID=1346>>
10. The perceived crisis of modernity according to Nicholas Entrikin involves a gap in consciousness between a relatively subjective point of view, and a relatively objective point of view. Penny’s perceived gap between theory and applied action is an example of an emergent tension between Indigenous tradition and modernity. For a more detailed explanation see Entrikin’s treatise on the tensions between tradition and modernity *The Betweenness of Place: Toward a Geography of Modernity*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1991.
11. Wilson and Dissanayake explain “local motion” as a Hawaiian expression for place bound tactics (Wilson and Dissanayake 6). See Wilson and Dissanayake’s “Introduction: Tracking the Global/ Local.” *Global/Local Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996. 1-18.
12. “Enslaving fiction” is Kimberley Benston’s phrase. See Benston’s article “I Yam What I Am: The Topos of Un(Naming) in Afro-American Literature.” *Black Literature and Literary Theory*. Ed. Henry Louis. Gates, Jr. New York: Methuen, 1984. 151-72.
13. I have italicized the latter half of Native American in this instance to highlight the fan’s assumption that Penny self-identifies as Native American and cannot break from this notion, even after Penny clearly implies that she is not simply Native American. *Whispering in Shadows* 127.
14. Nicholas Entrikin uses the term “placelessness” in reference to “the creation of standardized landscapes that diminish the differences among places, signifies one aspect of the loss of meaning in the modern world” (57). See Entrikin’s treatise on the tensions between

tradition and modernity *The Betweenness of Place: Toward a Geography of Modernity*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1991.

15. I am interested in the imaginative possibilities of re-figuring community invoked by Wilson and Dissanayake's term the "*as-yet-unfigured* horizon of contemporary cultural production." These authors define this horizon as a prospect in "which national spaces/identities of political allegiance and economic regulation are being undone and imagined communities of modernity are being reshaped at the macropolitical (global) and micropolitical (cultural) levels of everyday existence." See Wilson and Dissanayake's "Introduction: Tracking the Global/ Local" (6).
16. *Whispering in Shadows* conveys the insidious reaches and devastating effects of colonialism. The past, the present, the local and the global, community life, culture, language and social practices are all spaces of marginalization. By conveying the strength of local Indigenous resistance movements happening worldwide, Armstrong transforms spaces of "marginalization" into spaces of resistance and hope. I have drawn this paragraph from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's quote: "To acquiesce is to lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us. To resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve what we were and remake ourselves. The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices – all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope." See Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London; New York: University of Otago Press, 1999 (4).

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