

TERRA – TERROR – TERRORISM?: LAND, COLONIZATION, AND PROTEST IN CANADIAN ABORIGINAL LITERATURE

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Abstract / Résumé

This paper takes the 25th anniversary of the Canadian Constitution of 1982 as a starting point to discuss its meaning and consequences for Aboriginal people in Canada. This discussion leads to a review of the land claim settlement process, encouraged by the *Constitution Act*, pending land claims, and Aboriginal protest against appropriation of contested lands. The paper furthermore looks at the media coverage of this protest that was often biased and created and/or reinforced the image of the 'terrorist warrior.' In a second part, the paper examines how these issues are contextualized in four texts by Canadian Aboriginal writers: Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*, Lee Maracle's *Sundogs*, Jordan Wheeler's "Red Waves," and Richard Wagamese's *A Quality of Light*. These texts make clear that Aboriginal protest is related to the issue of the dispossession of Aboriginal land, and ensuing violence to the state's reaction to such protest which became slandered as (terrorist) violence.

L'article utilise le 25^e anniversaire de la Constitution canadienne de 1982 comme prétexte d'une discussion de sa signification et de ses conséquences pour les peuples autochtones au Canada. La discussion mène à un examen du processus de règlement des revendications territoriales, qui a été favorisé par la *Loi constitutionnelle* de 1982, des revendications territoriales à régler et des protestations autochtones contre l'appropriation des terres contestées. L'article examine aussi la couverture médiatique des protestations, qui était souvent biaisée et qui a créé ou renforcé l'image du « guerrier terroriste ». Dans une deuxième partie, l'article étudie la contextualisation des questions ci-dessus en examinant quatre textes d'écrivains autochtones canadiens, soit *Slash* de Jeannette Armstrong, *Sundogs* de Lee Maracle, *Red Waves* de Jordan Wheeler et *A Quality of Light* de Richard Wagamese. Les écrits indiquent clairement que les protestations des Autochtones sont liées à la dépossession de leurs terres et à la violence qui a suivi la réaction du gouvernement à de telles protestations, qui ont été diffamées comme de la violence (terroriste).

1. Introduction

Canada celebrated the 25th anniversary of its Constitution this year. This paper takes this as a starting point to discuss the meaning and consequences of the Canadian Constitution of 1982 for Aboriginal people in Canada. This discussion leads to a review of the land claim settlement process, encouraged by the *Constitution Act*, pending land claims, and Aboriginal protest against appropriation of contested lands. Some protests evolved into (un)armed encounters between Canadian forces, police, and protesters. In this context media coverage was often biased and created and/or reinforced the image of the ‘terrorist warrior.’ The paper addresses Aboriginal protest against development of ‘unceded’ land and illuminates the historical background of such conflicts. It furthermore looks at the media coverage of this protest and how it harkens back to historical representation of Aboriginal people. In a second part, the paper examines how these issues are contextualized in four texts by Canadian Aboriginal writers, which present an Aboriginal view on these issues. Jeannette Armstrong’s *Slash* and Lee Maracle’s *Sundogs* deal among others with the *Constitution Act*, the Meech Lake Accord, the Oka crisis, and ensuing political unrest. Jordan Wheeler’s “Red Waves” and Richard Wagamese’s *A Quality of Light* contextualize ‘terrorism’ in two different ways. Three of these texts make clear that Aboriginal protest is related to the issue of the dispossession of Aboriginal land, and ensuing violence to the state’s reaction to such protest which became slandered as (terrorist) violence. The texts were chosen because they contextualize Aboriginal politics after the *Constitution Act* and the spectre of Aboriginal terrorism created through the media coverage of protests.

2. The *Constitution Act* and the Land Issue

When the Trudeau Government initiated the process to patriate the Constitution, the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB), at that time the national Aboriginal political body, recognized the opportunity to “assert their role as another order of government.”¹ However, the NIB was excluded from the constitutional talks in 1979 and 1981 when the majority of provinces agreed upon an amending formula and the terms of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that neglected recognition of women’s equality rights and Native rights.² Hence women’s and Aboriginal organizations lobbied vigorously for an inclusion of their rights. Such initiatives included, for example, the 1981 Constitution Caravan, organized by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, where trainloads of Aboriginal people travelled from British Columbia to Ottawa in order to voice their demand that Native rights be guaranteed in the Canadian Constitution.³

Both lobbying groups finally succeeded. The *Canada Constitution Act* of 1982 ensured the recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights in section 25, stating: “The guarantee of this Charter of certain rights and freedoms shall not be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any Aboriginal, treaty or other rights or freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada....” And it reaffirmed these rights in section 35 (1): “The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.” The *Act’s* definition of ‘Aboriginal people’ included Indian, Inuit, and Métis people in section 35 (2). This was a legal success for non-status Indians. Furthermore, section 35 (4) held that these rights “are guaranteed equally to male and female persons,”⁴ a clause that, together with section 15 (1) on equality rights, stood in direct opposition to the gender discriminatory section 6 of *The Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians... of 1869* (later the *Indian Act*) which ruled that all Indian women marrying outside their band or a non-Indian would lose their band membership and Indian status respectively.⁵ This contradiction led to the reinstatement of Aboriginal women, who had lost their status, with Bill C-31 in 1985, which ruled that nobody should gain or lose Indian status through marriage, and Aboriginal women could reclaim their Indian status and band membership.

In this respect the 1982 *Constitution Act* was a clear legal success for Aboriginal people. But it failed to specify “existing aboriginal and treaty rights,” which were to be negotiated and defined in a series of First Ministers’ Conferences in cooperation with Aboriginal organizations. And yet, these rights have been left to the Canadian courts to interpret.⁶ Following the legal enshrinement of their rights in the Constitution, Aboriginal representatives at subsequent constitutional conferences held that they were entitled to redress their land claims and negotiation of self-government. This position was supported by the Penner Commission of 1983.⁷ But there was no progress on the issue of self-government as the Premiers of the western provinces would not recognize Aboriginal self-government in principle.⁸ The same Premiers though, in what appears to be a double standard, were ready to adopt the Meech Lake Accord in 1987, “which contained commitments of astonishing vagueness to Quebec’s ‘distinct society.’”⁹ In the three years that followed all provinces had to ratify the Accord in order for it to become law. In Manitoba, as one of the last provinces to ratify, this ratification could only pass in a unanimous decision of the legislature. In a heroic stand for Aboriginal rights, land claims, and self-government, the New Democratic Party MLA Elijah Harper defeated the Accord with his seminal ‘no’ in 1990. He said later: “We blocked the accord because it posed a threat to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have no quarrel with Quebec.

But we're a distinct society too, and we've fought for many years for the basic rights that Quebec takes for granted, such as participating in constitutional talks."¹⁰

Although land claims were encouraged by the *Constitution Act*, the land claim settlement process was extremely slow and the Office of Native Claims declined to consider land claims that arose from pre-Confederation incidents.¹¹ Likewise, a lack of clarity over Aboriginal title exists, and the claimed relinquishments of title to certain sections of land during colonization remain heavily challenged by concerned Aboriginal groups. For example, the Six Nations assert that they never ceded land title over the Kanesatake territory, granted to them by the French and British Crowns, to the religious order of the Sulpicians, which claimed the land as theirs. The Sulpicians, in turn, transferred the property to the government, and in 1947 the Oka municipality expropriated the Mohawk land and started selling parcels to non-Aboriginal individuals.¹² Two land claims of the Kanesatake Hodeñoosaunee were turned down, and one was pending when the Oka crisis occurred in 1990. In defence of a sacred burial ground and a sacred grove of pines, the Pines, against the extension of an existing private golf course, the Kanesatake Mohawks initially occupied a dirt road leading through the Pines to the golf course. After the Swat Team of the *Sûreté du Québec* (SQ) raided the Pines, resulting in the death of Corporal Marcel Lemay, the situation escalated and the Mohawks then barricaded a major highway and initiated a 78-day stand-off with a tense armed confrontation between the defenders of the Pines and the SQ and the Canadian army. This incident plunged Canada into a major political crisis and split the country into two halves.

In Ontario, land and a burial ground belonging to the Stoney Point Band on the shore of Lake Huron were expropriated in 1942 under the *War Measures Act* by the Department of National Defense in order to build the army camp of Ipperwash. Several attempts by the band to reclaim the land after the war were fruitless. In 1995 a group of thirty protesters built barricades at nearby Ipperwash Provincial Park "to underline their land claim and to protest the destruction of the burial ground."¹³ The Ontario Provincial Police moved in on the unarmed protesters, and one of the leaders of the protest, Dudley George, was shot dead. Likewise, in the Caledonia area, the so-called Haldimand Tract, "the land six miles on either side of the Grand River from its mouth to its source," was formally granted to the Hodeñoosaunee in 1784 "in recognition of the fact that their alliance with the British during the American War of Independence had cost them their ancestral lands in New York State."¹⁴ Because of continual settler encroachment and confiscation by the Federal and Provincial governments, the present Caledonia Six

Nations Reserve encompasses only five percent of the 950,000 acres originally granted to them.¹⁵ In February 2006 the Hodeñoosañee decided to protest against the construction of a housing estate by the developer Henco on unceded land adjoining their Reserve and to “re-possess the so-called Douglas Creek estate.”¹⁶ This protest, always unarmed, also escalated to a stand-off, with the protesters erecting barricades on a highway. As in the two previous instances, ugly confrontations between protesters and residents, a police raid where force and tasers were used, and the continuous threatening and overwhelming presence and surveillance by police in riot gear all ensued. The reclamation protest is still going on to this day.¹⁷ It is also worth noting that for this contested section of land, a land claim resolution amenable to all parties is still pending.

In a similar way, protests against infringements of Aboriginal rights, such as those in Restigouche, PQ (1981) and Burnt Church, NB (2000), where people were exercising their Aboriginal rights to fish salmon and lobster, as well as the continual Aboriginal protest against clear-cutting in British Columbia and Grassy Narrows, an area north of Kenora in Ontario,¹⁸ make clear that Aboriginal and treaty rights and Aboriginal title are largely contested. Moreover, these events show a growing self-confidence that has allowed Aboriginal people to battle colonial injustices and to demand that their rights be recognized.

3. Terrorism and Colonialist Terror

Terrorism in historical and contemporary discourses has many faces: from state terrorism of totalitarian regimes, to terrorism in guerrilla warfare and liberation movements, left- and right-wing terrorism of individuals and groups to achieve their political objectives, religious fundamentalist terrorism, racially-motivated terror, and terrorism incited by national and global political and economical inequalities. With regard to such various forms of ‘terrorism,’ the questions arise: Who defines ‘terrorism’? And who sees an act of threat or violence as terrorist and who sees the same as an act for the advancement of a political cause? Beau Grosscup argues that the Western image of ‘terrorism’ is built upon cultural stereotypes, serves political and ideological agendas, and has monopolized Western public discourses. During the cold war era, terrorism was largely identified as philosophically and ideologically inspired by leftist and revolutionary thinkers and financed, facilitated, and controlled by Eastern countries, specifically the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the socialist ideological stronghold, the West redesigned the imagery of global threat and strove to organize the New World order as aligned with its own interests.¹⁹ In line with the

introduction of the concepts 'rogue regime' and 'global intifada',²⁰ Islamic-inspired terrorism emerging from 'undemocratic,' 'fundamentalist,' and 'inherently barbaric' nations was established as the major threat to Western democracies, much like the leftist-inspired and sponsored terrorism of the previous era, both supposedly intending to subvert Western democracies. While the Cold War discourse on narco-terrorism linked Soviet-sponsored leftist guerrillas with drug operations in Latin America, the post-Cold War discourse drops the premise of Soviet sponsorship and adds Islamic 'fundamentalist' regimes to the list of narco-terrorist states.²¹ Grosscup holds: "The 'insidious' imagery surrounding narco-terrorism allows the big power architects of the new world order to justify their intervention into the affairs of the designated 'rogue regimes' even if it means the elimination of the right to national sovereignty and territorial borders."²² These discourses on terrorism, constructed and carried by politicians, academics, experts, the media and film industry, so Grosscup contends, are coloured in black and white, are monolithic and biased representations, and serve Western democracies to rationalize their political agendas and to "orchestrate a new world order poised to protect western capitalist, specifically American interests above all others."²³

Derived from the Latin *terrere* ('to frighten'), the term 'terror'²⁴ was introduced into European language use via French, and its first English usage was documented in 1528. The term 'terrorism' (systematically exercised terror) acquired political meaning during the French Revolution, when the Jacobin government adopted a "policy of terror" in 1793 and decreed mass guillotine executions of suspected traitors.²⁵ The first American use of the term can be traced to an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* (I.113/1) in 1858 that addressed various forms of 'terrorism' launched at defenceless settlers.²⁶ *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines 'terror' as "1. Intense, overpowering fear.... 2. One that instills intense fear.... 3. The ability to instill intense fear.... 4. Violence committed or threatened by a group to intimidate or coerce a population, as for military or political purposes. 5. *Informal* An annoying or intolerable pest." Likewise to 'terrorize' is: "1. To fill or overpower with terror; terrify. 2. To coerce by intimidation or fear." 'Terrorism' is defined as: "The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons." And lastly a 'terrorist' is "[o]ne that engages in acts or an act of terrorism."²⁷ *Safire's Political Dictionary* determines 'terrorism' as "persuasion by fear; the intimidation of society by a small group, using as its weapon that society's repugnance at the murder of innocents."²⁸ William

Safire thus includes more plainly the latent fact that terrorism involves innocent victims and spells out their death as 'murder,' and, moreover, he attests to the fact that terrorism has its effect not only through threatened and committed violence but also through the reaction of the public. In this line of thought it becomes most urgent to ask how terrorism is defined and portrayed and how the public is influenced in its reaction to 'terrorism.' Unmistakably, the mass media play an important part in constructing, fortifying, and disseminating images and 'generally-accepted' definitions of 'terrorists' and 'terrorism.'

There are various definitions of terrorism in diverse political discourses and all nation states have their own legal definitions. Canada's anti-terrorism legislation of 2001 defines a "terrorist activity" as an action that takes place either within or outside of Canada that: "1. is an offence under one of the 10 United Nations anti-terrorism conventions or protocols; or 2. is taken or threatened for political, religious or ideological purposes and threatens the public or national security by killing, seriously harming or endangering a person, causing substantial property damage that is likely to seriously harm other people or by interfering with or disrupting an essential service, facility or system."²⁹ The United States government's legal definition reads: "The term 'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."³⁰ The US approach to the phenomenon of terrorism seems familiar as it defines for individuals what they see reflected in the daily news where the agents of terrorist acts are limited to individuals and groups whose acts are directed against national systems. The Canadian approach clearly adheres to the UN definition, an approach the US is not taking, which is also reflected in its foreign politics, specifically the current Iraq War. Harry Henderson, in his book *Global Terrorism: The Complete Reference Guide*, points out that such definitions (mainly the US-American), which underlie most discussions of terrorism, are incomplete as they fail "to explain how terrorism relates to other forms of violence or to violent action by government itself."³¹ Drawing upon Noam Chomsky, he holds that discussions of terrorism have to encompass both, political violence instigated by groups fighting against governments as well as terrorist actions taken by governments themselves, in order to be able to understand such acts, the response of the target government, and likewise the effects of such violence on the political climate of the society.³² However, in hindsight of this argument, in his survey of international terrorism, Henderson only discusses totalitarian regimes under dictatorship of political figures such as Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, and Pinochet as state terrorism.

What is missing is a discussion of terrorist actions inflicted by one nation upon another during historical processes of colonization.

The *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism* at least concedes that the global establishment of European empires beginning in the 18th century “involved the widescale use of terror.”³³ It views European colonialist warfare in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australia as using terror tactics, such as hunting down, killing, or forcing onto reservations the Indigenous populations and burning villages and crops in order to subdue hostile civilian populations.³⁴ In reference to North America, it holds that colonial contact was dominated by violence, following the bloody Spanish conquest and search for gold and the no less bloody Anglo-European imperialist appropriation of North America involving numerous massacres.³⁵ Yet, it explicitly emphasizes reciprocal terror when it says: “Both American Indians and settlers used deliberate acts of terror in an effort to intimidate the opposition and preserve two very different ways of life.”³⁶ It is known that retaliatory acts of terror did happen, but it can never be stressed enough that colonial power relations and the historical fact that Europe invaded the territories of North American sovereign nations have to be considered in such discussions. Similarly, the colonial conquest of Australia was marked by “organised colonial terror” and “atrocious acts of cruelty” with massacres, punitive “bushwack” expeditions, and retaliatory violence.³⁷ Barry Morris says: “For men like Threlkeld [a missionary], the frontier existed as a space of terror, where indiscriminate and callous acts of violence were perpetrated against Aborigines.... For others, the frontier was a space of terror created by the disposition and the predations of the Aborigines themselves.”³⁸ The monolithic and biased representation of Aborigines legitimized colonialist warfare and justified greater terror through violence as reaction to Aborigine acts of violence: “The cultural representations of Aborigines empowering them as treacherous beings devoid of mercy and pity, in effect authorised and inspired greater acts of terror.”³⁹

In view of accepted definitions, the colonialist wars could be understood as ‘terrorist warfare’ insofar as threats and acts of violence perpetrated by colonizing forces were ‘unlawful’ attacks on sovereign nations with the objectives of intimidating and subjugating the Indigenous population and of appropriating natural resources and territories. These definitions emphasize threats and acts of violence directed against ‘non-combatant’ or ‘innocent’ victims; this aspect of the definitions holds true for colonialist warfare with respect to the fact that the full force of cruel military violence that had been perpetrated upon Indigenous populations triggered retaliatory acts of violence and involved innocent victims on both sides. The aspect of accepted definitions that expli-

cates that such acts of violence are inflicted to transmit an intimidating, symbolic message to the rest of the target group holds true insofar as massacres of and attacks on defenceless groups were targeted to annihilate these groups and at the same time to frighten the rest of Indigenous populations into complying with colonial politics. Vice versa Indigenous retaliatory acts of violence were targeted at the rest of the settler populations and their governments in order to induce them into discontinuing these politics. During colonialist wars, times of existential insecurities and political complexities, there were defenceless and innocent victims on both sides, and violence was used by both sides as a tool to intimidate. As suggested above, considering that European explorers, missionaries, settlers, and armed forces moved in upon North American territories, it becomes obvious that they thus caused colonialist warfare. As a result, the definitions of 'terrorism' as "premeditated, politically motivated violence" and "as taken or threatened for political, religious or ideological purposes" superimposed on aggressive strategies used during the colonization of the Americas, such as the systematic destruction of food sources, introduction of smallpox-infected blankets, large-scale killing and enslavement of the Indigenous population, brutal massacres, and forceful removal of Indigenous groups from their territories and their confinement to Reservations, could allow one to speak of terrorist colonialist warfare committed and endorsed by Euro-North American governments.

4. The Media and 'Indian Terrorists'

As indicated above, the media play an important role in constructing and disseminating the stereotypical trope of barbarous, menacing, and lawless terrorists threatening Western democracies, causing and taking advantage of global disorder and instability. Corroborating other scholars' findings, Peter McLaren reasons:

In our hyper-fragmented and postmodern culture, democracy is secured through the power to control consciousness and to semiotize and discipline bodies by mapping and manipulating sounds, images and information and forcing identity to take refuge in forms of subjectivity increasingly experienced as isolated and separate from larger social contexts. The idea of democratic citizenship has now become synonymous with the private, consuming citizen and the increasing subalternization of the "other."⁴⁰

More adamantly and echoing Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 'epistemic violence',⁴¹ Morris emphasizes the correlation between representation and violence characteristic of colonial relations: "I see representation

itself as a constitutive form of violence, and violence is itself mediated and constituted by representation."⁴²

Since the beginning of colonization, Aboriginal people of North America have been represented through a Eurocentric lens, i.e. they have been seen and shown within the philosophical and ideological framework of the colonizer with its self-understood and 'naturalized' European superiority. In consequence, Canadian media coverage of Aboriginal protests and conflicts, such as the ones discussed above, was often self-servingly biased, failing to present historical background information that would serve to illuminate the reasons justifying such protests. Robert Harding explains that "[s]tereotypical representations of Aboriginal people are often cued by headlines," and on the basis of a study analyzing mainstream news media coverage about the events at Oka in 1990 by Lorna Roth, Bev Nelson, and Marie David, he argues that "the news media uncritically adopted 'government discourses of thuggery and terrorism,' effectively associating all Mohawk people with violence."⁴³ Roth, Nelson, and David conclude that the media coverage of the Oka crisis "abysmally failed" to provide objective and neutral information/representation and was exemplary of information (mis)management, "media distortions, misrepresentations, and stereotypes," among others also due to the journalists' lack of historio-political background knowledge on Aboriginal issues and sensitive cross-cultural understanding and relational skills.⁴⁴ As Safire puts it plainly: "The words that describe terrorists [or that denote individuals as terrorists] reflect the bias of the describer."⁴⁵

The Canadian 'media warrior' in army fatigue and inciting terror was born in the media coverage of the Oka conflict. Then, Canadian military consultants characterized the protesting Mohawks as 'terrorists,' confirmed at a military debriefing of the media coverage of the Oka crisis on 16 November 1990.⁴⁶ Using the media hype⁴⁷ for their own ends to disseminate their messages, the masked protesters in camouflage with 'powerful and significant symbols,' "uttering perfect sound bytes in a confrontational manner," and "appropriating television's own vernacular," created "new personae along the flat lines of the television cartoon caricature."⁴⁸ These altero- and self-constructions of Mohawk protesters as 'terrorists' and 'warriors' was taken up and focused on by the media, while at the same time other, more peaceful-looking and -acting, protesters were largely ignored. Roth, Nelson, and David hold: "Lumped together into a single homogeneous and monolithic category by the media, the Mohawk Warrior was represented as a symbol for all Mohawks who believed in the reasons for the protest in Kanehsatake. [...] In focusing on the Warrior and ignoring the less TV-flashy ordinary person,

the Mohawk traditionalist and the local citizen trying to follow her or his conscience about the land issue faded into the media background.”⁴⁹ This construct ‘terrorist warrior’ lurks in discursive media archives and appears when- and wherever Aboriginal protest is represented. It is the ideological savage Indian, or bloodthirsty devil, re-born in present neo-colonial discourses. Gail Guthrie Valaskakis says:

In television and newsprint and political cartoons, media’s warriors were transformed primitives, monolithic representations of Indian activists: the military masculine, criminalized through association with terrorism and epitomized in the ultimate warrior, Ronald Cross. Cross, code-named “Lasagna,” became both the darling of the media and, through the dynamic process of re-appropriating identity, what one reporter called, “a media slut.”⁵⁰

Here Valaskakis underlines the fact that mainstream media coverage latently associates Aboriginal protesters with the notion of ‘inciting terror’ or ‘terrorizing’ their ‘opponents’: police and army forces, logging truck drivers, non-Aboriginal fishermen, and peaceful non-Aboriginal Canadian citizens that reside on and around contested lands. In such media coverage, protest is predominantly linked with militarism. This individually-inflicted and localized ‘terror’ becomes deferred to an abstract notion of ‘Aboriginal terrorism,’ flaring up here and there and pos-



Images like these abounded in the Canadian news media during the Oka crisis. They were instrumental in constructing the ‘terrorist warrior’ trope. Photographs by Robert Gailbraith.⁵⁴

ing a threat to the status quo of non-Aboriginal Canadian society, which too easily forgets that their nation is built on land expropriated from its Indigenous population to whom, as Michael Keefer pointedly makes clear, Canada “has large unpaid ethical and material obligations.”⁵¹

Rosemary Coombe holds that these Oka ‘media warriors’ become “floating signifiers,” images that are “endlessly reproduced and circulated by mass media.”⁵² They are “woven into the cultural texture of Indian Country, where they thread through the narratives of remembered heritage and emergent popular culture.”⁵³ This signifying process of the Aboriginal protester is highly selective as it gives an incomplete picture of the signified: it is connoted only with the acts of dressing in military style, carrying a gun or waving a Mohawk flag (in itself a disturbing sign of dissent from the nation state and assertion of Aboriginal sovereignty), and exuding anger; all other possible connotations of an Aboriginal man are usually absent. If the signifier ‘terrorist warrior’ stands metonymically for Aboriginal protest, then this signifying process is selective in the same way; connotations of other forms of protests at the same or different locales, like prayer vigils, negotiations, and peaceful demonstrations, are often neglected and the connotation ‘militant protest’ is stressed.



Mohawk Warrior surrounded by reporters, Oka, 1990. Photograph by Robert Fréchette, in *Ciel Variable* 14, Hier 4, 1990. Montreal, Quebec. (Original caption from Valasakakis 2005)⁵⁵

The two images below represent those ‘media warriors’ as they pervaded the mass media during Oka, showing (armed) Mohawk warriors facing soldiers and waving the Mohawk flag. The third image (a photograph of the same situation as the first image, taken from another position and with a wider focus) is the metatext to the two earlier images. Better than the first, it shows how a warrior is surrounded and sought after and how his image is ‘craved’ by journalists. The image portrays very well the media hunger for sensationalist images of ‘unlawful’ warriors in army fatigue.



This image of the Caledonia protest is prone to evoke Oka connotations and thus the protest can easily be associated with militant conflict and unlawful, armed protesters.⁶¹

Because the signifier ‘gun-toting warrior’ has floated in the Canadian public conscience since Oka, the signifying process in the media coverage of post-Oka protests refers back to Oka and opens up the connotations of militant conflict and the armed warrior in camouflage. It follows that all Aboriginal protest and protesters, including the majority comprised of the peaceful and unarmed, appear within the referential



Confrontations between protesters, police and residents during the Caledonia protest.⁶²



An angry protester shouts at Marie Trainer, mayor of Haldimand County, during the Caledonia protest⁶³



Confrontations between protesters and residents of the area during the Caledonia protest.⁶⁴

framework of Oka and are cast according to these earlier images as antagonizing, unlawful, and militant. Although the Caledonia protest has been unarmed at all times, the public opinion about the protesters, partly influenced by ethnocentric and anti-Native thought, saw them as ‘terrorists.’ Tom Keefer holds : “Slick media savvy personalities like Gary McHale have organized dozens of rallies and public meetings based on David Duke-typed arguments against ‘two-tiered justice where they have effectively demanded ‘equal rights for whites’ who are seen as oppressed because the Canadian state has not moved in to stop the ‘terrorist’ natives.”⁵⁶ ‘Colonel Custer,’ a Caledonia resident, expressed what seemed to be the general opinion among area residents and said in an interview: “Of course the Natives with their bandannas and their faces covered up look like a bunch of little terrorists.”⁵⁷ The fact that bandannas, covered faces, and pseudo-camouflage clothing qualify Aboriginal people to be defined as ‘terrorists’ reveals the deeply-ingrained associative chain ‘Aboriginal protester – armed, unlawful – terrorist.’ The Aboriginal negotiators in conflicts often do not get the screen time to issue comprehensive statements about the reasons why protest takes place and why peace negotiations might have failed. They often appear in short sound bytes in which their final statement of rejection is repeated. Also, images of angry, sometimes violent Aboriginal men and women, shouting at and/or attacking non-Aboriginal individuals, police officers, and government officials dominate the media coverage. Not surprisingly, the media coverage of the Caledonia protest has been similarly largely biased and hostile toward the protesters. Tom Keefer states: “The media has been quite bad on this whole issue the whole time. Obviously a large part of this is the internalized racist perspective of the Canadian mass media, and especially the local media outlets who represent settler communities who feel directly threatened by the reclamation.”⁵⁸

Recently, a *Globe and Mail* headline repeated the Canadian armed forces’ rhetoric that associates Aboriginal people with terrorism: “Forces’ terror manual lists Natives with Hezbollah.” While being critical of the Canadian army’s counterinsurgency manual that “lumps” Aboriginal people with “the Tamil Tigers, Hezbollah and the Islamic Jihad,” the article indirectly denotes organizations like the Mohawk Warrior Society as “[r]adical natives.”⁵⁹ Harding concludes:

While direct comparisons in the news media between Aboriginal people engaged in civil disobedience and Islamic terrorists are uncommon, there are a number of parallels in how both groups are portrayed in news texts. Both are typically cast in the role of “other,” are depicted as subscribing to values that are in conflict with those of mainstream

EuroCanadian society, and are represented as a threat to democracy, “our” standard of living and, indeed, “our” very social order.⁶⁰

Since the media, when covering Aboriginal protest, construct and focus on such signifiers as ‘gun-toting warriors,’ ‘stubborn negotiators,’ and ‘angry, violent, and hysterical Indians,’ the ideological stereotypical representation of Aboriginal people enters a new quality at the turn of the century. The overbearing images of Aboriginal individuals threatening Canadian police, residents of contested areas, and consequently non-Aboriginal existence in Canada and its status-quo in general, do not serve to find the necessary common ground between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canada.

According to accepted definitions, as well as the Canadian and US-American legal definitions, the association of armed or unarmed Aboriginal protesters with ‘terrorists’ and ‘terrorism’ becomes obsolete, since Aboriginal protests are indeed politically motivated but not “premeditated violence against non-combatant targets,” a definition that presupposes an attack on human or material targets. Nor are they premeditated acts of “killing, seriously harming or endangering a person.” As Oka and Caledonia have shown, however, protests that escalate for various reasons can cause substantial property damage or disrupt essential facilities, which, nonetheless, does not qualify such protests as terrorism. The notion of Aboriginal protesters ‘inciting terror’ in or ‘terrorizing’ their immediate ‘opponents,’ and, in turn, through the media dissemination of the ‘warrior’ images, the Canadian public, is more complicated. Certainly, the recurring image of Aboriginal men in army fatigues, and in the case of Oka, carrying guns, can create feelings of intense fear, but one must consider the fact that the spatial framework for this produced image is a locale that these carriers of the signifier ‘terrorist warrior’ are out to *defend* against mainstream appropriation for economic purposes, be it a golf course, a housing estate, or the extraction of lumber. The ‘opponents’ in these ‘acts of terrorizing’ are the police and/or army *moving in* upon the supposed ‘terrorists’ in order to disperse their protest. The ‘terrorists’ *remain* in a specific locale, whereas government forces *move in their direction*. The second part of the Canadian legal definition of ‘terrorist activity’ could, upon first view, apply to some forms of Aboriginal protest. However, this definition remains unclear about the direction of a threatening, or violent, activity. As stated above, Aboriginal protest against clear-cutting, business developments on unceded land, or the infringement upon Aboriginal fishing rights, is *localized*, i.e. tied to a specific piece of traditional land. Aboriginal protest is not aimed at seriously harming other people or damaging prop-

erty, or threatening public or national security through this protest. Moreover, the protest stays localized and does not move in a direction of targets, which is, apparently, a presupposed condition for part two of Canada's legal definition of a 'terrorist activity.' It rather seems that the construction of and focus on the image of the 'terrorist warrior' by the media is more instrumental in inciting terror than the acts of protest and defence themselves. Just as the ideological bloodthirsty devil of 18th and 19th century colonial discourses legitimized aggressive expansionist politics, this construction of the 'media warrior' and overemphasis on the 'militant, lawless Indian' in the representation of conflicts serves to justify Canada's often militant overreaction to initially peaceful protests that have sadly left two Canadian citizens dead.

Quite contrary to the 'media warrior' exuding violence and terror, historian J.R. Miller emphasizes that "one of the most potent weapons that Native people had used since the 1830s to defeat efforts to coerce and mistreat them" was "passive resistance."⁶⁵ In the same vein Six Nations Elder Hazel Silversmith stated in an eloquent message addressed to the local newspapers in Grand River and Caledonia in April 2006: "We have been accused of inciting a war, and yet who are the ones with the guns, threatening to come in and remove our women and children. To arrest and make criminals out of us. Who are the ones who have helicopters flying overhead, and an abundance of police presence [...]."⁶⁶ Likewise, many Aboriginal scholars associate the politics of the Canadian government with actions of terror. For example, Lenore Keeshig-Tobias in her political essay "After Oka – How Has Canada Changed?" defines police and army actions at Oka as "harassment" and states that the "[w]arrior" is a figment of your imagination."⁶⁷ Howard Adams in *A Tortured People: The Politics of Colonization* declares that Canadian invasion and expropriation of Métis and Indian territories "revealed the vilest of Euro-Canadian imperialism" and that the convictions and hangings of Métis and Indian leaders ensuing Aboriginal resistance were "the most extraordinary acts of violence, terror and perversion."⁶⁸

This discussion does not intend to discursively point the finger and, as a way of countering discursive media attacks, simply define the colonization of the North American continent as imperialist 'terrorism'; neither does it intend to qualify those actions of police and army upon Aboriginal protests as acts inciting terror. Rather, it intends to refute the discursive trope of 'Aboriginal terrorists.' At the same time, the author intends to draw attention to the fact that it is important to consider who has the power to create images that can be associated with terror, to whom these images become attached, and to whose benefit they function.

5. Aboriginal Views of Protest

Since September 1999 Aboriginal people in Canada have had a media outlet, an Aboriginal television channel with a country-wide broadcast license. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) has the capacity to present the Aboriginal perspective in the coverage of such protests and conflicts. Likewise, Aboriginal filmmakers such as Alanis Obomsawin have created documentaries that counter such media images, embed these conflicts in their historical context, and give a human face to these 'warriors' and 'terrorists' in order to manifest the reasons for protest and conflict.⁶⁹ Also, Aboriginal writers have created works that contextualize Aboriginal politics and protest and take aim at the discursive construction of the 'terrorist warrior' in public discourse.

Jeannette Armstrong's novel *Slash* (1985), the first to be written by an Aboriginal author in Canada, has two narrative threads: one narrates the protagonist Thomas Kelasket's intellectual and spiritual journey toward an understanding of colonial relations and politics in North America, of Aboriginal philosophy and values, and of his own place in Aboriginal culture and in its struggle toward decolonization. The other, through the figure of Thomas, nicknamed Slash, gives an account of Aboriginal political struggle from the late 1960s until the early 1980s, including seminal events like the "Trail of Broken Treaties," the occupation of Wounded Knee, fish-in demonstrations and road blockades in BC, land claim protests, the occupation of BIA and DIA offices in Washington D.C. and Vancouver, and the Constitution Caravan to Ottawa in 1981. In his childhood, Slash painfully learns that the traditional values and way of life he grew up in cannot endure in a society that imposes a Western political system and its philosophy and values upon the colonized: he is caught in the chasm between a traditional Aboriginal culture that he deeply respects and the promises of a Western material world and 'progressive democracy' that he does not yet understand. He becomes a stranger to his family and a drifter; he is constantly on the run on the fringes of the Aboriginal political struggle all over North America. He is not fully immersed in the political struggle as he has a gut feeling for the Aboriginal cause but does not always understand the objectives of singular activities, nor fully agrees with the movements and politics of the leadership. He often has a sensation of something being missing or wrong. As a hanger-on in the movement, he feels uneasy about the sometimes violent protest and the sexism among the activists that he, however, participates in himself. In the same vein as his comrades, his political activism becomes a safety valve for his frustration and anger over the effects of colonization and the demise and powerlessness of his people. He

feels empty, devoid of cultural values and a clear understanding of how colonial conditions and Aboriginal inferiority within the mainstream can be overcome. He needs to be on the protest trail in order to learn what he really fights for and how the struggle can advance the Aboriginal cause and acknowledgement of Aboriginal existence and rights by the mainstream: "I have no feelings inside of me.... 'A lot of us don't have any answers.... It's ones like us that understand what we are fighting, because it's also a fight inside each of us. We know we have to somehow continue to fight.'"⁷⁰ Only through contact with women activists, spiritual leaders, and his eventual homecoming can he heal and become a whole and healthy person immersed in his culture and modern society.

Through the character of Slash, his witnessing of tumultuous events, political debates, and his search for answers, Armstrong shows readers the various rifts in Aboriginal protest movements over political strategies, over which land claims to pursue, and over how to communicate Aboriginal sovereignty to the government. On the issue of Aboriginal inclusion in constitutional talks, land rights, and sovereignty, she presents two Aboriginal positions that are diametrically opposed but each one understandable and coherent. Slash argues:

"We don't need your constitution, B.C. is all Indian land."
...How much clearer can it be? We don't need anybody's constitution, what we have is our own already. We hold rights to the land and to nationhood. We just need to have it recognized.... [O]ur people really want to have our rights recognized with our ownership over the land understood. That is what we mean by settlement of land claims and rights. That's not what the government means. They mean extinguishment and sell out. I, for one, am against that. If they never settle the land claims question, that's fine with me. It still belongs to us. It leaves something for our descendants. Someday they will achieve their rightful inheritance if things are left that way.⁷¹

His wife Maeg, by contrast, holds:

"Slash, I think it's important we do get some rights into the constitution. We will have a real rough trail ahead of us if we don't. We can't survive assimilation on such a large scale, and in so short a time, if we are forced to be treated equally with the rest of Canada. Equal rights is no rights, as you well know. That's what we will face if we don't try to secure some aboriginal rights. Extinction, ethnocide, genocide; it is a reality right now.... Your way doesn't guarantee anything but

opposition and resistance, and maybe that someday our descendants might be able to get a better deal. Your way guarantees years of bitter struggle."⁷²

Armstrong also pinpoints that Canada cannot expect a singular, unified Aboriginal voice in political negotiations, because there are so many different Aboriginal nations that have different (colonial) histories and culturally different ways of understanding and dealing with issues. The author does not provide solutions. But, by outlining various views of politics and strategies through her characters, she succeeds in explaining why there are often disagreements between different nations and within political organisations and movements. She thus neutralizes the contemporary cliché of muddled Aboriginal politics. Occasional disunity and fragmentation are not the markers of political inability, but are conditioned by colonial history and the imposition of a Western political system and philosophy.

The text goes on to take issue with the media presentation of Aboriginal protests. During a caravan from Vancouver to Ottawa to protest and educate about the state of Aboriginal Canada, "[t]he papers headlined that Indians were going to go into Ottawa with bombs strapped to their bodies in a suicide mission, if their demands to be heard were not met."⁷³ And later, "a statement had been issued to the R.C.M.P. which said that Indian people were the biggest threat to national security since the F.L.Q. thing in Quebec."⁷⁴ The author juxtaposes her critical contextualization of media practices that associate Aboriginal protesters with terrorists to Slash's view of AIM members and protesters:

"They ain't war mongers at all. They really believe strong in every person being created by the same One. But there are lots of things really wrong and they aim to change them things for the better. To make people understand them wrongs and change is all they set out to do, not make war. It's always the others that force the situation and make it violent. I know, I seen it. Them guys just don't back down until their point is made."⁷⁵

His character is drawn as a metonymy of the inner conflicts, despondency, disillusionment, frustration, and uprootedness of the Aboriginal population in general who face inequalities pertaining to all aspects of relations between Aboriginal and mainstream Canada. Like Slash, they have to negotiate traditional and Western values, have to heal from the effects of colonization and rebuild functional communities, and have to find healthy ways to struggle for decolonization and acknowledgement as part of the Canadian mainstream.

Lee Maracle's novel *Sundogs* (1992) also has two narrative strands:

one narrates the main character Marianne's emancipation from political ignorance into a human being who is aware of colonial history and the Aboriginal cause. The other outlines the political events around the Meech Lake Accord and Oka in 1990. Marianne is a sociology student, works in the office of an Aboriginal organisation, and although she grew up in a stable and caring family, she feels numb, incomplete, and excluded. She is emotionally withdrawn from her family, but at the same time feels so much rage against something she cannot define. Her mom is not well versed in politics either but has a strong gut feeling about historical and present colonial injustices. She regularly rails at the television, or better at politicians and foremost the Premier that appear on television, sometimes gesturing with a broom. She yells at one journalist that is interviewing an Aboriginal politician on Meech Lake: "Asking too much? My good lady, you got the whole damn country, all of its resources by dint of the bayonet and now you accuse us of wanting too much."⁷⁶ In her conversations with the television, she also betrays some witty black humour: "The dollar will drop if Elijah succeeds,' the Prime Minister says.... 'My dear fellow,' my mother informs the Prime Minister after he made this remark. 'We have no dollars, so it doesn't scare us a bit. We never wanted your damn dollars. Your money is filthy. We want our homeland. Even a fool such as yourself can figure that out.'"⁷⁷ She has her own personal theory about a secret genocide plot put in place by the Canadian government that still tries all it can do to eradicate Aboriginal people. This theory might be understood as symbolic of the experienced marginalization through and dominance of the Canadian mainstream. Marianne is sceptical about this theory and dismisses it almost condescendingly.

But the ecstasy among people in the office and her family because of Elijah Harper's stand in the Manitoba Parliament dissolves Marianne's numbness and her alienation; she gains the ability to love and feel life; all of a sudden she has a place in her family and in society and she feels renewed as a whole human being:

I am not wiser about the raw facts of Elijah's actions but I understand his significance. I feel exonerated for a crime that I never committed. I feel like my entire lineage since these people came has been on trial. We have steadily insisted on our innocence and now we have been granted a reprieve. Work begins to mean something to me. I can fall in love, with my nieces, nephews, my mother, this man at work, our entire people. We all become worthy of love. I feel invincible, womanly, seductive, and beautiful. At the same time, I want to weep because I know I have never felt this way be-

fore.⁷⁸

Marianne now also understands her mother's genocidal plot theory and starts to take her seriously. She goes beyond her mom's theory and realizes that this genocide is tied to land theft, and the loss of land to the demise and low self-esteem of her people. "What is the precise nature of encroachment? It can't be simplified to some plot of genocide, I know this, but the encroachment is so steady, so thorough, so complete that I can't separate out the pieces of it. I can't pull the encroachment out and disconnect it from conscious genocide. Land. Land. We are landless."⁷⁹ Together with thirty other youth, Marianne embarks upon a protest run from Penticton to Oka, demanding that the government "[e]nd the siege of sovereign Mohawks."⁸⁰ It is on this run that she begins to see how her own self-image and the self-image of Aboriginal people are entwined in colonial discourse. Poverty, high suicide and high school drop out rates, substance abuse, and family violence are physical and empirical realities conditioned by colonial politics but even more so by the epistemological violence of colonial discourse that views, explains, and represents the 'colonial other.' Colonization of the mind is the continuous terror that Aboriginal Canada experiences. Through continual physical exhaustion and the energies emanating from unified political actions, Marianne begins to comprehend this discursive violence, can re-direct her rage, and translate it into spiritual strength. It is her personal ceremony for intellectual, political, and spiritual awakening.

Maracle draws a parallel between the attack on a car convoy bringing Elders, women, and children out of Kahnawake by a non-Aboriginal crowd during the Oka crisis, when her running protagonist is attacked by a group of boys who throw rocks at her. The Kahnawake people's terror is given voice through Marianne and her fellow runners' terror:

Stones hail from the arms of men whose eyes are filled with hate. Run...carry out the run. We have to make it. Stones drop. Run...carry the feather. We have to make it. Missiles of hate rain all around my frail body. Run...carry peace. Peace...run...peace, sweat for peace. Rocks lock legs in cages of hate. Hate, acid hate, red hot hate...twisted hate... run, the hate from my legs. Run rage swollen in muscles, inspired by stones, run it far away. Shouts...epithets... 'squaw'...high school hallways... 'ugly wench'... 'go home.' Run, run, run for peace. Feather, sweat, small things, rage rising, looms large, small things burn rage from my soul. Run, run, run for peace. Run for squaws, feathers, small things and great love.... There is horror written on the face of the man I pass the feather to. Horror paints the bronze of the

men in the back of the truck a khaki hue.⁸¹

This stream of consciousness shows how Marianne's condition at the moment of the attack is reduced to the mental and physical experience of pain from exhaustion and the immense wave of hate she encounters that triggers recollections of racism in high school. She is incapable of complex thoughts; there is only her body, the rocks, and hate rooted in racism. Only later comes the revelation that racism and hate are not free-floating phenomena, but were nurtured in more than five hundred years of colonization, beginning with the Eurocentric understanding of the self as superior and civilized and the encountered other as inferior and savage, and were developed further because of self-serving blanks, inaccuracies, and misrepresentation in historical and contemporary colonial discourses.

Maracle diagnoses mainstream Canada's ignorance about, and biases and hostilities toward Aboriginal people as pain and grief; Canada does not acknowledge Aboriginal people on an equal basis, which in turn causes pain in the individual. According to Aboriginal philosophy only an individual with a harmonious relation to its entire surroundings can be whole and healthy. Mainstream Canada misses this harmonious link to Aboriginal Canada and is thus pathologized. "That's the sociology of being Canadian. Undernourished and mal fed. Canadians are fed lies that blind them to their own truth and the light of human worthiness is doused by notions of superiority that inflames their distorted character. This process creates an artificial and tenuous loyalty to hierarchy which is essentially murderous. The undernourishment cycle diminishes worthiness and translates itself into racism."⁸² Marianne now sees that both Aboriginal and mainstream Canada have to make conscious efforts to learn how prejudices and animosities came to exist in order to achieve a healthy coexistence based on equality and mutual understanding:

These boys are the bearers of hate; they are not the originators. Some one poured pain into their small bodies, translated pain into hate for bronze, for dark and persuaded them stone would relieve them. Hate is old decadent pain left to rot in the souls of men who have no language to translate grief into new life, into bright rainbows of living colour. Pained men without rainbows of truth, vision, hate.... Violence begins with the distortion of our ways, the distortion of the meaning of our ways. From that springboard comes the stones. Those white boys are distorted boys, victims of their own violent perception of who they are and who we are.⁸³

Also in this text, neocolonial encroachment upon Aboriginal land is given

as the reason for political protest: “The warriors of Kanesatake know the attack on their grandmothers’ graves; the evidence of our genocide is an assault on their will to live. They take up arms, not to deprive anyone of their life, but to show the world they are dead serious about living. We stand behind them, not because we want to hurt anyone but we are all dead serious about living.”⁸⁴ Similarly to *Slash*, in this novel the protagonist stands metonymically for Aboriginal people who feel the pain of dysfunctional families and communities, the rejection and animosity of the mainstream, often without being capable of critical reflection upon the larger picture, including Canada’s colonial history. They politically and spiritually re-awaken through Harper’s stand, through protest movements and political action, as well as incisive protests such as Oka: “If Elijah upset Canada, he upset me a great deal more. His message to us was profoundly simple; we are worth fighting for, we are worth caring for, we are worthy.... The Warriors turned us all around and made us reconsider ourselves.”⁸⁵

Even more so than in *Slash*, the horror characters experience comes from Canadian politics and its handling of protests, and from the media representation of Aboriginal protest. During the Oka conflict, “[t]he press fills its pages with broadcasts full of ridiculous comments about how this is not going to do our land claims struggle any good, etc. Not a word about the shame the Quebec government and the town of Oka should feel about golfing on other people’s graves.”⁸⁶ Marianne’s mom “cries in front of the television each night, powerless to express the horror and deep sadness she feels.”⁸⁷ On one such a night, she shouts at the Premier of Quebec:

“Don’t you dare touch one hair on those boys’ heads, damn you. You have done everything to us: robbed us, raped us, pillaged us, until we are no more. No more. No morals, no culture, just a bunch of raggedy Indians. Indians, not even people. A mistake. No identity.” She drops to the sofa and sobs.... She recovers instantly, gets up, collapses, then yells at the top of her lungs, “I’ll fix you! I’ll fix you!” and she throws one of the millions of stones the kids have collected at the television. A blue light flashes and the T.V. lets go a moan, then all is still, but for the terrified breathing of Momma’s audience.⁸⁸

Marianne’s mother now understands that Aboriginal people have no autonomy over their existence and their image; they *are* what Canada *makes* them to be: Indians are made by Canada. Marianne’s outlet for rage is her run and her catharsis is the endurance of the stone attack, while her mother’s venting of rage takes the form of her railing at the

television, with her catharsis being its destruction. If we defer her mother's action into the larger referential framework of mainstream media representation of Aboriginal protests, then we can ascertain that the text destroys the floating signifiers of the 'terrorist warrior,' the 'stubborn negotiator,' and the 'angry, hysterical Indian' of the media.

In Jordan Wheeler's novella "Red Waves" (1989) a series of 'terrorist bombs' destroy St. Jean's Basilica in Montreal, a Labatt's brewery in Toronto, and a Hudson's Bay Company department store in Winnipeg, with no person injured or killed. The symbolic significance of these buildings points to an Aboriginal terrorist group, as the church, alcohol, and the Hudson's Bay Company were major dynamizing forces in the colonization of Canada and "have done irreparable damage to Native people."⁸⁹ These acts communicate to non-Aboriginal Canada that it needs to acknowledge the poor state of Aboriginal Canada as a consequence of colonial history and that it needs to act upon it. Consequently, the next target is the DIAND office in Winnipeg, where the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs is visiting. The night before the bombing, the group called ARM gets busted: Tracy and Cliff are shot dead, Frank is arrested, and John, having luckily left the house just prior to the raid, escapes. He carries out the mission on his own, because he has a hidden agenda himself.

When John was little he and his mother were hitchhiking home from a protest camp when they got picked up by an RCMP car. The officer raped and killed his mom, with John being the only witness. He is traumatized for life. This RCMP officer is now the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Cyrus Jameson. Armed and wired with explosives, John holds the minister hostage. What he does not know is that his friend Frank was a CSIS mole planted in the group in order to find the people in charge of the bombings, who, it turns out, (unbeknownst to the group) are headed by the minister himself. The minister's agenda was to denigrate the Aboriginal cause in public discourse and thus to be able to push an assimilationist bill through parliament, reminiscent of the White Paper in 1969. This bill triggers massive protests and a demonstration outside the DIAND office in Winnipeg. Partly referring back to earlier protests and partly outlining a vision of future protests, Wheeler designs the novella's protest as peaceful, as uniting active and disillusioned people, young and old, urban and Reserve Indians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as well as linking the social with the political: "More placards come out: 'Get Jameson Out of Indian Affairs,' 'Red Power is Back.' A sense of community spirit is developing. Faces are cheerful, but determined. An old man wearing a buckskin jacket walks between two teenagers in black leather jackets and punk haircuts. It is a social event,

where acquaintances are renewed, and a political event where people are united.”⁹⁰

In contrast to the two earlier texts, Wheeler does not criticize the mainstream media but creates a Canada in the late 1980s with an autonomous Aboriginal media institution, the Native Communications Network (NCN), that also makes Aboriginal feature films on a regular basis. With this fictitious media network, Wheeler adamantly makes clear how necessary self-controlled Aboriginal media institutions are to compensate for and counter mainstream media representation and/or negligence of Aboriginal issues and how much such media help to create a more positive Aboriginal self-image. Also, his vision anticipates the founding of APTN and various Aboriginal film companies that create both documentary and feature films. Wayne Weenusk, John’s younger brother, works for NCN as a film producer and journalist. After his brother is killed during his occupation of the DIAND office, Wayne covers the incident for NCN. He does not demonize the terrorists but instead indicates that all terrorist acts are not free-floating phenomena but are motivated by political and most often historical reasons: “John Weenusk was a terrorist. He fought for what he believed in.”⁹¹ He finishes his coverage as follows:

“A hundred years ago we were the ‘Native problem,’ shuffled onto Reserves in the hope that we would go away, but we didn’t. We fought against oppression. We fought with knives and rifles, we fought with our hearts, we fought to get educated, and we fought in the courts. John Weenusk fought another battle and died in victory. Cyrus Jameson will go to prison. Native people have won their chance to be their own masters again.”⁹²

His covering of the events suggests that self-controlled Aboriginal media coverage will take into account background information, will avoid cultural biases and rather educate about Aboriginal culture, and, above all, will not lose sight of colonial legacies in contemporary Canada.

John, the terrorist, is a fourfold loser in this scheme: as an Aboriginal person he lost his land and sovereignty, as a boy he lost his mother at the hands of the RCMP officer/minister, as a person he loses his life through sniper shots, and as a warrior he loses his dignity. His honest fight for the Aboriginal cause is ridiculed because he is commissioned and paid by the force that he battles. His determination to struggle for a better Canada is abused, while the government plants terrorism for its own ends.

In Richard Wagamese’s novel *A Quality of Light* (1997), two characters struggle to find their identity and place in society. Joshua is an Abo-

iginal boy growing up in a sheltered, very religious, non-Aboriginal home, totally ignorant of his culture. By regularly spending time with an Elder on a Reserve, it is late in his youth that he learns about his culture and thus develops a healthy syncretism. His non-Aboriginal friend Johnny grows up in a dysfunctional home with an alcoholic father. He wants nothing more than to be someone else and invents himself as an Indian warrior, reading political literature, going on the protest trail, and spending six years in a traditional camp. Years later, when Johnny occupies the DIAND office in Calgary in the summer of 1990, having placed several bombs in the building, armed to his teeth, and taking hostages, Joshua is called in as a negotiator. Johnny is dressed in jeans, beaded buckskin vest, moccasins, a feather in his braids, and war paint on his face. He demands that the Canadian armed forces retreat from the barricades at Oka, that a special sitting of the House of Commons deal with the situation at Oka, and furthermore that a special investigation take place through the UN and an International Human Rights Tribunal and that it look at the Indian ‘third world’⁹³ in Canada.⁹⁴ He claims that Oka is a farce, because Canada has its army face its own citizens, and “[t]he farce being that the Mohawks are defending sacred ground and their right to perpetuate their spiritual and cultural way. The army is defending a golf course and their right to inexpensive green fees.”⁹⁵ Due to the fact that Johnny’s logic sees demonstrations, negotiations, and protest as ineffective means to make clear the Aboriginal position in issues of rights, land, and politics, he needs to create a theatrical analogy; he plays a trick on his hostages and the public and *stages* an occupation in order to make people understand colonial history. The whole occupation is a fake, the bombs are fake, and Johnny’s outfit is a half-fake: it is an expression of his self-image as a warrior and ridicule of that self-image at the same time through its exaggeration. As a ‘representative’ of the Aboriginal people, he ‘conquers’ non-Aboriginal government workers, ties them up, subjects them to his control, and infringes upon their individual rights by creating this reversed situation of power and powerlessness. He explains to Joshua:

“So this occupation is built on the same lies. Rightness. Power. Destiny. The people who are the victims of this occupation, the apparent victims anyway, are in this room here,” he said, indicating the boardroom. “They’re sitting here hog-tied. Incapable of motion. All of their rights are gone. In all of this great country, they’re forced to stay in one small piece of it. They have no political voice. They’re only recognized as humans when I bequeath a little humanity. They’re under my *care* because I arrived here with power. I conquered. And

I conquered with *lies*. I made them less by making myself more. And that's all okay to me as long as I can still believe that I'm right, that power gives me the right, that it's my destiny as a warrior and that history is a tool for justification. This fourth floor starting to sound a little like North America? Like Canada?" he asked.⁹⁶

Through his demands he communicates his message to mainstream Canada and his support of the Mohawks of Kanesatake and Kahnawake. But through this staging of a fake occupation he makes himself vulnerable in contrast to his violent appearance. He is not the terrorist that he seems to be. He certainly is not to Joshua, who only feels terror when he sees the snipers: "At the commissionaires' desk I tuned in to the CBC broadcast from outside the building. It showed the doors in the distance and swept to the tops of buildings across the street to show snipers aiming at the doorway. For the first time I feel real terror."⁹⁷

Johnny says that the media construct the 'Indians as victims' and the 'Indians as terrorists': "Josh, the media only want to hear from Indians when they're either dead, dying or complaining. We don't have to wear war paint anymore because the media paints it on us themselves whenever we push for something."⁹⁸ As Johnny does not trust the media, he writes his own press statement about his occupation to be read by Joshua upon Johnny's surrender. It declares that the colonial legacies of violence, drunkenness, cultural alienation, and racism have poisoned Aboriginal people, and that the atrophy of Aboriginal cultural ways, languages, teachings, and communities as well as their anger, pain, and denial have to be overcome in order to regain functional and inclusive communities.⁹⁹ Upon his surrender outside of the building, Johnny is riddled with sniper bullets when he pulls out two small pistols he forgot to hand to Joshua when disarming himself. It is not clear whether he really forgot, or whether he stages his heroic death as a 'warrior' in public before running news cameras.

The text is not critical of the 'White-gone-Indian' phenomenon discussed and criticized so widely by (Aboriginal) scholars and spokespeople, nor does it question the fact that Johnny acts for the Aboriginal cause on his own without the endorsement of the Aboriginal community. It does not deconstruct Johnny's self-image as a warrior; and Joshua's and Johnny's comrade Staatz' acceptance of this 'white warrior' self-image sanctions it. In Johnny's press statement the text holds that not skin and blood but heart, mind, and conscience make someone a warrior: "I am a warrior of conscience. A warrior of heart and mind. You don't need to be an Indian to assume that role – just human."¹⁰⁰ Throughout the novel, Wagamese takes issue with essentialist

ideas about Indianness, as Johnny has to get past his romantic Indian warrior image. Joshua's Aboriginal identity, although having grown up in a non-Aboriginal environment, is taken for granted, while Johnny learns Aboriginal values during his journey through Aboriginal North America in traditional camps and on the protest trail. With this constellation, Wagamese questions accepted understandings of Indianness and suggests that Aboriginal identity must be negotiated individually.

6. Concluding Remarks

The four authors create fictional characters that are involved in historical struggles for Aboriginal sovereignty and rights.¹⁰¹ In *Slash* and *Sundogs*, the main characters gain the ability to love and live as whole and healthy human beings through their political enlightenment and activism. In the same vein, more extreme political activism and the target government's reaction to it changes forever the lives of the protagonists in "Red Waves" and *A Quality of Light*. Thus, the texts indicate that the human condition and (personal) politics are intricately intertwined for many Aboriginal people. In this sense, it might be said that they call for political enlightenment and emancipation of all of Aboriginal Canada as a precondition for the struggle for recognition and equality. The texts paint Aboriginal protest as legitimized and as necessary results of colonial history and power relations in Canada. They make unmistakably clear that Aboriginal protest and ('unlawful') political activism are a reaction to the 'unlawful' appropriation of Aboriginal land. In all of these texts the authors take issue with misconceptions about Aboriginal protest and redefine assumptions about 'inciting terror' and 'terrorism' in public discourse. Their texts assume the position of power to assign the act of 'inciting terror' and 'terrorist activities' to non-Aboriginal individuals, to Canadian politics and its handling of conflicts, and to the epistemological violence of colonial discourse. Moreover, they pinpoint that the media latently incite terror through their (often) biased news coverage and by focusing on and perpetuating the trope of the 'terrorist warrior.'

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Notes

1. Miller, 2000, 348.
2. Miller, 2000, 349-350.
3. "Dispossession and Resistance in BC," online.
4. "The Constitution Act, 1982," online.
5. Venne, 1981, 12.
6. Cf. the Delgamuukw Decision of 1997 that was most instrumental for its expansive definition of Aboriginal title (Miller, 2000, 373). Seminal court rulings that clarified Aboriginal rights were, for example, the 1973 Calder case and the 1996 Van der Peet, Gladstone, and N.T.C. Smokehouse Ltd decisions ("Landmark Cases," online).
7. The Penner Committee was a Special Committee of the House of Commons on Indian self-government, established in 1983. In its report it recommended that the right to self-government be enshrined in the Constitution (Miller, 2000, 352). The Trudeau government recognized the recommendation in general, "introduced framework legislation for implementing self-government, but failed to get it beyond first reading before its exit from office in 1984" (361). However, the Mulroney government changed political course and turned back to the 1978 policy that favoured the implementation of municipal-style self-government at the band level. Most Aboriginal groups, however, reject this form of self-government as inadequate and dangerous as it limits their responsibilities and control in areas necessary to adopt economic development and social programs that are aligned with their values and philosophies (361-362).
8. Miller, 2000, 351.
9. Miller, 2000, 352.
10. Harper qtd. in Miller, 2000, 377.
11. Miller, 2000, 352-353.
12. Miller, 2000, 354-355.
13. "Ipperwash," online.
14. M. Keefer, 2007, 183.
15. T. Keefer qtd. in M. Keefer, 2007, 183.
16. M. Keefer, 2007, 183.
17. I thank Tom Keefer for his helpful information on this protest.
18. Since December 2002, Grassy Narrows band members have maintained a continuous blockade camp at Slant Lake. They also "sometimes show up unannounced on other bush roads, blocking logging equipment with their vehicles, campfires and bodies. These 'roving blockades' usually last a few days and disrupt timber operations with their unpredictability" ("Christian Peacemaker Teams – Grassy

- Narrows [Asubpeeschoseewagong],” online).
19. Grosscup, 1995, 23-25.
 20. Grosscup explains that the term ‘rogue regimes’ is a carefully chosen symbol for the ‘source’ of instability and threat in the post-Cold War world. He says: “For the would-be architects of the new world order, in particular the United States, the label ‘rogue regimes’ encapsulates the behaviour of those regional powers whose activities are likely to be wayward, out of bounds and thus not in line with the ground rules set by the powerful states.” He further says that the term ‘global intifada’ was coined in order to “heighten the specter of global Islamic revolt and define Islam in monolithic/reductionist/threat/imagery” (Grosscup, 1995, 25, 28).
 21. Grosscup, 1995, 22-29.
 22. Grosscup, 1995, 29.
 23. Grosscup, 1995, 29.
 24. ‘Terra’ and ‘terror’ have two different roots etymologically.
 25. Schmid, 1997, 11.
 26. Safire, 3rd ed. 1978, 719; Sperber/Trittschuh, 2nd ed. 1964, 452.
 27. *The American Heritage Dictionary*, online.
 28. Safire, 3rd ed. 1978, 719.
 29. “Canada Fights Terrorism at Home,” online.
 30. Henderson, 2001, 4.
 31. Henderson, 2001, 5.
 32. Henderson, 2001, 5.
 33. Shaw, 1997, 54.
 34. Shaw, 1997, 54.
 35. Brumwell, 1997, 46-47.
 36. Brumwell, 1997, 47.
 37. Morris, 1992, 77, 79.
 38. Morris, 1992, 77.
 39. Morris, 1992, 86.
 40. McLaren, 1993, 98.
 41. Cf. Spivak, (1988) 1994, 76.
 42. Morris, 1992, 72.
 43. Roth/Nelson/David qtd. in Harding and Harding 2007a, 52.
 44. Roth/Nelson/David, 1995, 51-52, 75.
 45. Safire, 3rd ed. 1978, 719.
 46. Roth/Nelson/David, 1995, 76, 80.
 47. This media hype is best shown through the fact that revenues for advertisement during life coverage from the Pines soared tremendously (Roth/Nelson/David, 1995, 77).
 48. Roth/Nelson/David, 1995, 58-59.

49. Roth/Nelson/David, 1995, 76-77.
50. Valaskakis, 1993, online, and Pindera qtd. in Valaskakis, 1993, online.
51. M. Keefer, 2007, 171.
52. Coombe qtd. in Valaskakis, 2005, 42.
53. Valaskakis, 2005, 42.
54. MacLaine/Baxendale, 1990.
55. Valaskakis, 2005, 40.
56. T. Keefer, 2007a, 115.
57. 'Colonel Custer' qtd. in T. Keefer, 2006 video footage.
58. T. Keefer, 2007b.
59. Curry, 2007, A1.
60. Harding, 2007b.
61. "Aboriginal protesters remove Caledonia blockade," online.
62. "Police hurt, swarmed in Caledonia clash," online.
63. "Mayor's comments anger aboriginal protesters in Caledonia stand-off," online.
64. "Tensions flare as Caledonia standoff continues," online.
65. Miller, 2000, 376.
66. Silversmith qtd. in M. Keefer, 2007, 183.
67. Keeshig-Tobias, 1992, 234-235.
68. Adams, 1995, 8.
69. Alanis Obomsawin *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), *My Name Is Kahenttiosta* (1995), *Spudwrench – Kahnawake Man* (1997), *Rocks at Whiskey Trench* (2000).
70. Armstrong, 1992, 164-165.
71. Armstrong, 1992, 241-242.
72. Armstrong, 1992, 243.
73. Armstrong, 1992, 155.
74. Armstrong, 1992, 181.
75. Armstrong, 1992, 110.
76. Maracle, 1992, 48.
77. Maracle, 1992, 78-79.
78. Maracle, 1992, 69.
79. Maracle, 1992, 155-156.
80. Maracle, 1992, 173.
81. Maracle, 1992, 181-182.
82. Maracle, 1992, 195.
83. Maracle, 1992, 181-182, 191.
84. Maracle, 1992, 163.
85. Maracle, 1992, 77, 207.
86. Maracle, 1992, 126.
87. Maracle, 1992, 126.

88. Maracle, 1992, 135.
89. Wheeler, 1994, 81.
90. Wheeler, 1994, 136.
91. Wheeler, 1994, 153.
92. Wheeler, 1994, 153.
93. Here Wagamese pinpoints the third world conditions on many Reserves. However, for Aboriginal people in Canada and the United States, the term 'fourth world' is established in academic discussions. It was introduced by George Manuel and Michael Posluns (1974) and describes nations that are subject to imperial domination within the nations that colonized their traditional territories.
94. Wagamese, 1997, 14.
95. Wagamese, 1997, 299.
96. Wagamese, 1997, 288; emphasis in original.
97. Wagamese, 1997, 309.
98. Wagamese, 1997, 303.
99. Wagamese, 1997, 318-319.
100. Wagamese, 1997, 319.
101. There is also a short story by Drew Hayden Taylor, "A Blurry Image on the Six O'Clock News," that marginally deals with the Aboriginal protest at Oka. It tells the story of a non-Aboriginal woman spotting her Aboriginal ex-husband on television behind the barricades and thereupon trying to contact him. Since this text concentrates on the personal relationship between the two and not so much on the political struggle, it was not considered for analysis in this article.

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