

Dancing on
Borrowed Ground

19/8/17 - 16/9/17

Chloe Cooper
Elizabeth Haines
Just Books
Contrapoints
William Raban
Dylan AT Miner

10th Belfast
Anarchist Bookfair

9/9/17

Dancing on Borrowed Ground reclaims a little bit of land for those who seek to resist the dogma and dictats of hegemonic orders. It asserts a love of plurality and disavowal of the hubristic cruelty of normative non-think, seeking freedom in solidarity and respect. The exhibition celebrates a bridging of the theoretical divide between self-creation and communal harmony by producing a site for radical discourse and contemplation. Artists Chloe Cooper, Elizabeth Haines, Contrapoints, William Raban and Dylan AT Miner undermine authority and agitate for alternative becomings. Their work - performative, documentary, academic and activist - illuminating contemporary political practice and rendering the world anew by fostering unity through dialogue and spurring on transformation through positive action. Catalyst Arts will also host the 10th Belfast Anarchist Bookfair, organised by the Just Books Solidarity Centre, encouraging visitors to cast off the pernicious shackles of repressive regimes by liberating their critical consciousness in this celebratory gathering of activists.

A Catalyst Arts exhibition featuring: Chloe Cooper, Elizabeth Haines, Just Books, Contrapoints, William Raban, Dylan AT Miner.

Open 11am-5pm, Tuesday- Saturday, 19/8/17 - 16/9/17, 5 College Court, Belfast.

AN ODE TO SATANIC LINE DANCING was performed by Chloe Cooper in collaboration with Queer Space Belfast on the 16th of August.

THE 10th BELFAST ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR, hosted by Just Books, takes place on the 9th of September.

Funded by the Arts Council Northern Ireland, the National Lottery, Catalyst Arts and Just Books.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Artists

Chloe Cooper is an artist whose performative interrogations of sexuality, imagery and politics bring an infectious critical curiosity to bear on the world by asking us to consider our actions and how we relate to others. She co-leads a sex re-education research project called Bedfellows with Phoebe Davies and Jenny Moore and works with groups of people to respond to what the hell is going on.

Elizabeth Haines is a researcher based at the University of Bristol and the Science Museum. Her interests focus on the ways in which technologies (from plant breeding techniques, to hand-drawn maps) produce patterns in our experiences and behaviours. In collaboration with Just Books, Haines will be exploring their library as a monument to the time clawed back from daily life and re-invested in an anarchist future.

Just Books is a Belfast based Anarchist activist group, resource centre and book shop which is always at the heart of the fight for a better world. For the exhibition they have collaborated with both Chloe Cooper and Elizabeth Haines to create new works, as well as presenting past and present literature. They will be hosting the 10th Belfast Anarchist Bookfair on the 9th of September in the gallery.

Contrapoints is an American YouTuber - imagine the political situation that would arise in a world where journalists and academics were given no more credence than the loudest person in the pub, and you'll have some insight into the strange universe of YouTube political punditry. New media have radically democratized the distribution of information, but at the expense of traditional media gatekeeping and consensus. This new chaos opens up some frightening possibilities; for instance, isolated people with racist and authoritarian views can now unite in an online community and acquire confidence and strength in numbers. Contrapoints' videos are an effort to cope with this situation, to confront the mouthpieces of the "alt-right" - the loose association of trolls and pundits who cloak far-right ideology in irony and memes. She appropriates some of their own strategies - playfulness, irony, the false pretense that politics is "just a joke" - to create an opposing social justice narrative, while also steering away from the sanctimony that sometimes impedes activist rhetoric.

Dylan A.T. Miner is a Wiisaakodewinini (Métis) artist, activist, and scholar. Miner is currently Director of American Indian and Indigenous Studies and Associate Professor in the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities at Michigan State University, adjunct curator of Indigenous art at the MSU Museum and a founding member of the Justseeds artists collective. He has worked with institutions including: National Museum of the American Indian (Smithsonian Institution); the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; École supérieure des beaux-arts in Nantes; the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture; Rabbit Island; and the Santa Fe Art Institute. His book *Creating Aztlán: Chicano*

Art, Indigenous Sovereignty, and Lowriding Across Turtle Island was published in 2014 by the University of Arizona Press. Miner is currently completing a book on Indigenous Aesthetics: Art, Activism, Autonomy.

William Raban is an artist filmmaker who has exhibited worldwide in both art and film contexts. Initially known for his landscape and expanded cinema films of the 1970s, Raban's landscape interests, were framed in the 80s towards a more historical and socio-political context: the history of London and the Thames. Reminiscent of Humphrey Jennings' wartime films, Raban's films from the 90s onwards look at the island of Britain and its people, in the context of the global economy and the effects of urban change. He is currently Professor of Film at the London College of Communication (University of the Arts London).

Extended descriptions of artworks

(see floorplan on back page)

Chloe Cooper 1

***AN ODE TO SATANIC LINE DANCING* (2017)**

(Chloe Cooper in collaboration with Queer Space Belfast)

When then Democratic Unionist Party leader and Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church, Ian Paisley dubbed line dancing 'sinful' in 2001, Queer Space Belfast responded by arranging a night of Satanic Line Dancing. To celebrate this funny fuck-you and to contextualise it within other instances of dance as protest, members of Queer Space Belfast were invited to Catalyst to line dance once again, this time wearing boots customised with their own political expressions.

Thanks to D & D dynamic Dance New-line and Fitness for a mighty fine time!

Chloe Cooper 2

***WORDS ARE THE SEX I'M WILLING TO OPT BACK INTO* (2017)**

Photographs of the Talking sex: talking serious, talking dirty chapter of Sue O'Sullivan and Pratibha Parmar's Lesbians Talk (Safer) Sex being read upstairs in Just Books, at Arrivals in Belfast International Airport and in the resource room at Catalyst. It's sensual, it's cerebral, it's political, it's personal - verbs have never tasted so good.

Chloe Cooper 3

***I SAW IT IN THE MORNING ON MY WAY TO WORK AND BY LUNCHTIME IT WAS GONE* (2017)**

An attempt to make visual a verbal description given by Queer Space Belfast member Gareth Lee of an intervention to a World Cup billboard on Great Victoria Street.

Thanks to Gareth for coming along to Just Books to share some of his memories of LGBT activism in Belfast.

Elizabeth Haines 1

***THE LIBRARY CARRIED BY THE VOICE* (2017)**

Audio recording of the first chapter of Kropotkin's *Conquest of Bread*, read aloud by Just Book's reading group, stretched to sound out over a full day. The readers' voices mingle the author's language with sound waves that begin in their body. The resultant hum becomes a monument to the human effort that has produced and reproduced the library. In Kropotkin's words "a long record of sleepless nights"... for which knowledge should be recognised as "common property, born of the past and present".

Elizabeth Haines 2

***I AM THE WEE BLACK BOOKE OF BELFAST ANARCHISM* (2017)**

[Sound piece to be recorded at the Anarchist Bookfair]

On the 9th September at the Book Fair, Elizabeth Haines will record a collaborative audiobook of *A Wee Black Booke of Belfast Anarchism*, by Máirtín Ó Catháin. Those at the fair will be invited to lend their voices to the history of political struggle in the city. See accompanying text here below.

I am the Wee Black Book of Belfast Anarchism

Books sometimes seem to have the uncanny effect of prolonging the author's life. They give the illusion that you are able to overcome distance and to meet people beyond their graves. As objects they outlive us, surviving beyond human lifespans and the time of the body and the voice. Now that information is an instant and global currency, books seem more like us: imperfect, finite, dog-eared, stained. You can't summon them up (like wikipedia genies), you have to go and visit them (like your gran). And they don't have the apparently effortless persistence of digital information: eventually each copy will disintegrate or be destroyed. In the process of digitisation, many older books have in fact been destroyed, spines broken to feed the scanner. Their digital souls may — or may not — be available for inspection on Googlebooks.

This gloomy image, definitely more morose than nostalgic, has been made worse by the fact that nearly all the secondhand books I buy nowadays are ex-library copies. I have come to think of the library as a body of ideas and dreams existing in a constant state of struggle against entropy. And insect predators. Over the last few years I've been reading a lot about colonial Africa, and own one secondhand book that is riddled with termite holes. This book would have been gassed on its return to the UK from tropical climes. In my house it's clothes moths that are the problem.

But while this gives me great worry about the demise of books, it also makes the sound of books read aloud more defiant. When books are read aloud, words tick like the

hands of the clock, are tied to the column of air inside the chest, and fundamentally reconnect with life and human pace.

This pace isn't always comfortable. I remember moments when class reading-aloud at school felt like a straitjacket on my mind, as I kept falling into the cracks in between the words, barely clinging to the author's chain of thought. Librivox, the biggest public collection of reading-aloud, has both the encyclopaedic ambitions and terrible flaws that characterise utopian projects. As often as one reader's performance is able to capture and inspire me, another's voice soothes me into a kind of gentle madness. I end up jogging along in the sound, or obsessed with the ambient noise of the household in their recording. Librivox is also a catalogue of readers getting tangled up in sentences that were never really meant for the voice, that have too many ideas, too many ifs, too many sos, and too many therefores, pushed between two dots.

Still though, returning to a human voice, adjusting our attention to their pronunciation heightens the sense of the reader as an individual. It gives us time to notice people's reading habits. What sacrifices have they offered for curiosity's sake? The acoustics of their small apartment, or suburban birdsong make me wonder. How have they squeezed a moment of preparation into the time spent on public transport to or from work? Why do they keep reading in the short spaces of time that are available between the constraints of getting by, getting other people by, and the constraint of sleep?

Paradoxically, the further magic of reading aloud is an act of alchemy on the separateness of human subjects. Reading aloud turns 'the' reader from an anyone into a person of particular identity. At the same time, and by the same magical act, the author is summoned into that same body.

In Fahrenheit 451, the hero meets the 'book people' who have all taken up a book as their own, and have become known by the book's title. There's some pleasure and amusement in the doubleness of people going by the name 'Pride and Prejudice' or 'Machiavelli's The Prince'. But that set-up ignores the third person in the reading-aloud part. The listener is also there. A live wire, the one who can turn the book into a conversation by virtue of their ability to interrupt and ask questions, sings over the top of the reading, or issues an 'Amen' of agreement. The conversation carries the library, a book is more than the echoes of a monologue. Keeping a passage of text in the present requires the continued efforts (stacked up) of tens, or hundreds, or thousands of people. Especially the self-published and hand printed works that make up the canon of anarchist activism.

The chanting sound in the exhibition is produced by stretching out the Just Books reading-group's recording of the first chapter of Kropotkin's Conquest of Bread. I hope it will give a sense of how individual voices and lives accumulate in a library, hanging beyond the normal time of things (but only just, and when termites and clothes moths allow). On the 9th September we'll produce a audiobook version of 'A Wee Black Booke of Belfast Anarchism'. The author, Máirtín Ó Catháin, might be with us to read a bit himself. The rest will be recorded by those attending the bookfair. Layers of voices lend texture to the layers of biographical history in that book, and the full-throated collective endeavour to change Belfast for the better.

Just Books

JUST BOOKS ARCHIVE AND CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

A range of Northern Irish Anarchist literature from the 1980s to present day.

THE 10th BELFAST ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR (09/09/17)

Talks, workshops, discussions:

1.00pm Abolish Prisons

"Mass incarceration is not a solution to unemployment, nor is it a solution to the vast array of social problems that are hidden away in a rapidly growing network of prisons and jails. However, the great majority of people have been tricked into believing in the efficacy of imprisonment, even though the historical record clearly demonstrates that prisons do not work." Angela Davis.

Panel with Joe Conlon, Joanne Donnelly (JFC2), Sean Dubh (Derry Anarchists, WSM, IWW) and Manchester No Prisons.

2.15pm The Worms Who Saved the World

Kevin Doyle on his childrens book with a radical message. Based on the very real campaign for public access to the Old Head of Kinsale.

3.30pm The Spectres of Loyalty: History, Memory and the Moral Economy of Loyalty

Dr. Christopher J. V. Loughlin - Did the Ulster Unionist Party create a 'monolithic regime' in Northern Ireland? Were the 'linen lords' of Belfast bourgeois or aristocratic? And what impact did class politics, labour and anti-sectarianism have on the regime constructed in the province? Using the manuscript to be published by Palgrave MacMillan later in the year, this paper will discuss the 'moral economy of loyalty' in Northern Ireland, 1921-72, the history of loyalty on the islands and the contemporary spectres of loyalty.

4.45pm The Life and Ideas of Michael Bakunin

Tony Zurbrugg - Bakunin was a contemporary of Marx, propagator of Anarchist Socialism and an active promoter of the International Workers' Association (IWA). Ultimately clashing with Marx and the authoritarian wing of the international Bakunin argued for International workers' solidarity, change involving rural and industrial workers, and a Libertarian or Anarchist form of Socialism with federated accountable democratic organisations responsible to the grassroots. The editor of the recently published "Bakunin: Selected Texts 1868-1875" talks about the life and ideas of often, unjustly, maligned Mikhail Bakunin.

6.00pm Syndicalism in Ireland

Capitalism is bringing the world to the brink of extinction while governments everywhere, even "left" governments, prove time and again that they are the lackies of the bosses. Our panel looks at the anti- and non parliamentary alternative offered by syndicalism.

Panel with Jason Brannigan (Organise!), Dek Keenan (IWW) and IWU.

Stalls: AK Press; artbiaoife; Barricade Distribution; Empty Cages Collective; Haymarket Books; Just Books; Larne House Visitors Group; Live Deliciously - scrummy vegan deliciousness; Organise!; Pluto Press; Rally for Choice; IWW.

Contrapoints 1

WHAT THE ALT-RIGHT FEARS (2017), video 12:26 mins

A couple months before making this video I had made another video titled “Why White Nationalism Is Wrong,” in which I tried to explain rationally why, well, white nationalism is wrong. That video was targeted by the /pol/ forum on the imageboard 8chan—a notorious venue for fascist and far-right trolls (many of whom are also, bizarrely, anime fans, anime fandom being the original purpose of the board). The video received over a thousand Nazi comments, many of which appear in this video, which is partially a response to that incident.

I initially set out seeking to make another factual video debunking some popular white nationalist claims—that a rampage of Muslim rapists posing as refugees is sweeping across Europe, that a Jewish conspiracy is encouraging open borders and low white birthrates with the aim of exterminating the white population, and so on. But as I was writing the script I realized that these sorts of beliefs are grounded in paranoia and hate, not factual claims. So instead I take a more playful approach, combining mockery, ironic fashy costumes, and some appeals to the benefits of living in an ethnically diverse society.

Contrapoints 2

ALPHA MALES (2016), video 13:42 mins

The “response video” is a popular genre among self-styled YouTube pundits. You take a video by another creator, excerpt segments of the original video, and intersperse them with your own commentary. This video is a response to a YouTuber called “TheGoldenOne,” whose amusingly eccentric Viking persona masks a sincere commitment to fascist ideology. Part parody and part commentary, this video explores the complex connections between masculinity and far-right politics while simultaneously poking fun at the “alpha male” posturing of pick-up artists and other “manosphere” groups.

Contrapoints 3

BALTIMORE: ANATOMY OF AN UPRISING (2017), video 17:58 mins

On April 12, 2015 the Baltimore Police Department arrested a 25-year-old black man named Freddie Gray. During transport to the police station, Gray fell into a coma resulting from a spinal injury that led to his death one week later. Protests erupted in Baltimore over the next several days, eventually turning violent after escalating conflicts with riot police. All charges against the officers involved in Freddie Gray’s death have since been dropped.

I watched the news coverage of the protests from Chicago, where I lived at the time (I moved to Baltimore shortly afterward). As a white American, I noticed that many

white people around me had an intensely hostile attitude toward the protests, an attitude often laced with racist insinuations that “violent thugs” had taken over and were destroying the city. This video is an attempt to combat these attitudes by contextualizing the Baltimore uprising and exploring the history of racial injustice that led up to it.

William Raban

TIME AND THE WAVE (2013), video 13mins

Commissioned by the Museum of London, *The Houseless Shadow* (2011) is a night-time ethnography exposing the plight of the homeless in central London that formed the end piece to the Dickens and London exhibition at the Museum of London December 2011 – June 2012. Whilst researching that film, I came across Dickens’s rare essay *Trading in Death* written on the occasion of the Duke of Wellington’s state funeral in 1852. I resolved to use passages from the essay for the ending of *Time and the Wave* to accompany shots of Margaret Thatcher’s ceremonial funeral.

The paradox of the present as a time that cannot be reflected upon until it has already become past, seems consistent with the idea of thinking about the passage of time as the movement within a wave, where the individual particles of water remain static despite an illusion of movement upon the surface. Might not the succession of events in daily life pertain to a similar form of illusory movement? *Time and the Wave* engages with this paradox by focusing on key London events filmed in 2012 and 2013: the opening of Westfield Shopping Centre at Stratford, the Saint Paul’s Occupy protest movement, the Queen’s Jubilee Thames pageant and the funeral of Margaret Thatcher to expose Britain during the crisis of late capitalism.

Dylan AT Miner 1

GESTURE OF SOLIDARITY (2017), Serigraphs on fabric with copper pipes.

Initially created for an exhibition in Detroit titled ‘To Build Up Invincible,’ these banners are part of a larger series of 24 banners and 1,000 wool pennants. Throughout his career, Wiisaakodewinini (Métis) artist Dylan Miner has consistently created pennants, directly referencing the historical use of pennants and banners by labor unions and radical social movements. Signage, particularly banners and pennants, have a long history within labor and social justice movements in North America, as they do in Europe. However, Miner transforms these agitprop objects in poetic and nuanced ways. For the banners in ‘To Build Up Invincible,’ Miner has conducted archival research and selected poetic fragments from the transcripts of 1930s Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) radio broadcasts on WEXL in Detroit. Similarly, the pennants which are not included in this exhibition in Belfast, which include ten designs in editions of 100 each, are borrowed from handwritten letters of labor activist and artist Carlos Cortéz.

Dylan AT Miner 2

GAAGEGOO DABAKAANAN MIINIWAA DEBENJIGEJIG : NO BORDERS, INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY (2015), text below.

Reproduced in the appendix of this catalogue, this publication appeared online in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* (2015) [see decolonization.wordpress.com] as well as in print in *We are Aztlán! Chicana Histories in the Northern Borderlands* (Washington State University Press, 2017) [see wsupress.wsu.edu/product/we-are-aztlan]

“No fences, no borders. Free movement for all.”

During the mid-1990s, I frequently crossed the Canada-USA border—as was common for youth living in the borderlands—to go to clubs and restaurants and, more importantly, for punk and hardcore music shows. I was an art student (and later, art school dropout) living in Detroit, on the U.S. side of the Detroit River, just across the Medicine Line from Windsor, Ontario. Before the arrival of Europeans in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this place was called Waawiyaataanong, “at the curved shores.” Historically, Waawiyaataanong was—and remains—an intertribal space, where Kikapawa (Kickapoo), Meskwaki (Fox), Sauk (Sac), Wendat (Wyandot or Huron), Anishinaabeg (Odawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibwe), Miami, Mascouten, Métis, and other peoples gathered or settled at various times. Today, Detroit remains a vibrant urban Indigenous center.

In 1996, following the release of Propagandhi’s second album, *Less Talk, More Rock*, I decided to cross the Ambassador Bridge and see the Winnipeg-based punk band play a show somewhere in southern Ontario (maybe London or Guelph or Hamilton, I don’t recall). Traveling with an Arab-American friend, we were stopped and questioned for potential gang involvement. This border stoppage delayed us enough so that we barely made the show—that was what seemed important to us at the time, as teenage punks. Although I am an Indigenous person, my white privilege (or what might be better called “light-skin privilege”—a topic that light-skinned Indigenous and Latinxs should talk more about) and class privilege allow me to cross the border with less violence than brown-skinned Indigenous peoples, Latinxs, Arabs, Black folks, and other people of color. Although borders are inherently violent, settler-colonial nation-states enact border violence in ways that are not distributed equally.

Historian Jürgen Osterhammel defines colonialism as “a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and minority foreign invaders.” He continues: “Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule.” The systemization of colonialism enables racist, classist, and heteropatriarchal structures to infiltrate nearly everything, while the interconnectedness of these machinations may, at times, be hidden by the system itself. The xenophobic language of Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign is only the most recent articulation to lay this bare.

Here on Makaanak-minis, what we may call Turtle Island or the Américas, we are all very much still contained within colonial structures and their hegemonic reproduction. While independence movements of the twentieth century offered self-determination for many former colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, the United States and Canada—as nation-states—remain colonial powers in which Indigenous nations are legally constructed as dependent entities within the settler-colonial nation-state.

Historian Patrick Wolfe distinguishes between the systematized workings of colonialism, on the one hand, and those of settler colonialism, on the other. Wolfe writes that “the primary object of settler-colonization is the land itself rather than the surplus value to be derived from mixing native labour with it. Though, in practice, Indigenous labour was indispensable to Europeans, settler-colonization is at base a winner-takes-all project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but, replacement.” Settler-colonialism is, at its core, a project of land appropriation, destruction of societies, and the repopulating of Indigenous territories.

In the so-called “New World,” we could argue that French and Spanish colonial projects expanded through more classical examples of colonialism, while British “colonialism” more actively employed strategies of direct land and resource appropriation that accelerated after the “colonies” gained political “independence”. Of course, as Wolfe argues, these colonialisms often used both strategies, one of exploitation and one of replacement. It is important to recognize that the “American Revolution” was “won” by settlers, not Indigenous or colonized peoples, and that Anglo-Americans then pursued an aggressive project of Euro-American expansionism, land appropriation, and replacement. Manifest Destiny required the creation of legal and economic systems that permitted European colonists and their descendants to become legal title-holders of the land. Manifest Destiny is, quite simply, settler colonialism. However, both projects—colonialism and settler colonialism—are also integrated with the racializing logics and the employment of colorism, the practice of discriminating against darker skinned individuals. And both colonialisms—as systems and as structures—employed racialization, blood quantum laws, and colorism within their own regimes. We can see the violent ramifications of these practices in some Indigenous and Latinx communities. On the one hand, many tribal communities continue to use blood quantum policies in determining who is eligible for enrollment; on the other, light skin (as a marker of being less Indian and less African) is commonly viewed as a positive. How do we undermine these racist and colonial logics that impede so much of what we do?

Remembering my own border-crossing experiences, and thinking about my current work as an artist-activist-intellectual, brings to mind one particular eighty-eight second Propagandhi song, “Fuck the Border.” As these Winnipeggers proclaimed in their searing song: “No fences, no borders. Free movement for all. Fuck the border.” There is no ambiguity here. The anarchist orientation of certain sub-genres of 1990s hardcore helped me, as a youth, understand the implications of global capitalism and the intersectionality of colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy, among other structural oppressions. Bands like Propagandhi, Los Crudos, Limp Wrist, Chokehold, and Bikini Kill were particularly relevant to me at one time or another. Punk was simultaneously an epistemology and an ontology. However, what does punk have to do with Indigenous sovereignty, migration, and to the Canada-USA border? This is a question that I have asked myself for over two decades and one that I hope in this chapter to begin to think through.

While my own political commitments are quite similar to those articulated in Propagandhi's "Fuck the Border" song, as an adult with daughters attending university and secondary school I have struggled to find ways to talk about radical political positions that may complicate the simplicity of North American sound bites. Academics love to complicate what are often, in reality, not overly-complicated issues; inversely, the news media frequently overly-simplifies what may, in fact, be complicated. My own activism has likewise emerged from a place of direct opposition, an epistemology that does not always facilitate a way of being that understands my own hegemonic complicity. So the question becomes: how can we think about the intersectionality of our own lives—our various privileges and oppressions—without reducing the potential for everything to be linked in a network of ambiguities?

What is crucial to my thinking here is how, as a teenager and young adult, I was unable to fully comprehend the manner that colonial and capitalist ways of being in the world restrained my own ability to think (and act) outside them. The border—as a manifestation of the settler-colonial and capitalist nation-state—constrained my own being and, in turn, constrained my capacity to think beyond the limits of its own borders. Although I may ask this question frequently, I earnestly inquire if we can truly think outside or beyond the limits of colonialism? In his articulation of the "coloniality of power," Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano would tell us, in fact, that we cannot.

In the 1990s, I screamed "Fuck the Border" because it had very real implications on the lives of my ancestors and those of my partner, Estrella Torrez. My paternal ancestors crisscrossed the Canada-USA border and literally fought against its creation, while Estrella is the child of migrant farmworkers and was herself a seasonal laborer and student (and then teacher) in schools for migrant children. Her family has been in what is now the United States since time immemorial, but as is commonly said: "they didn't cross the border, the border crossed them."

Saying "Fuck the Border" was a cathartic and medicinal act that, although I did not name it such at the time, moved me towards decolonization. But, are decolonization and healing the same for those who can easily cross borders with little or no trouble (or, more likely, do not need/want to cross borders to leave the USA or Canada)? What about the individuals and communities that are violently affected by these same borders? I cannot help but think about those Mexican and Central American migrants who die—some might say structurally murdered—while migrating north in response to the contemporary ramifications of centuries of colonialism and capitalist globalization.

By saying "Fuck the Border," or voicing similar political provocations, are we actually moving toward a decolonized border and immigration practice? Are we individually and collectively seeking to create a world where Indigenous sovereignty exists beyond the limits of the settler-colonial nation-state? While I would not hesitate to say no, I do believe that in hearing this song—and the radical political ontologies associated with it—many middle-class and suburban settler-youth began to challenge their own privilege, even if they did not seek to fully dismantle a system that gave them this privilege in the first place.

As Sartre reminds us, "colonialism is a system" and, as such, we are all implicated in its vicious systemization. Colonialism is violent to both colonizer and colonized, as Fanon and others have long noted. Sartre writes that "when we talk of the 'colonial system,' we must be clear about what we mean. It is not an abstract mechanism. The system exists,

it functions; the infernal cycle of colonialism is a reality. But this reality is embodied in a million colonists, children and grandchildren of colonists, who have been shaped by colonialism and who think, speak and act according to the very principles of the colonial system.” To some extent, colonialism has shaped and informed every single one of us and our ancestors, whether Indigenous, settler, or arrivant. As Caribbean intellectual Aimé Césaire acknowledged in the early 1950s, colonization “dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it.”

On Mikinaak-minis (Turtle Island), and I am not certain that Sartre or Fanon—or their peers—fully understood how colonialism functioned in this hemisphere, we are all implicated in settler colonialism as a structure. Recent work by Audra Simpson and Glen Coulthard, among other Indigenous scholars—often in the pages of *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*—have brought earlier anti-colonial theorists into conversation with the uniquely North American variant of settler-colonialism. Coulthard argues, with credit to anticolonial theorist and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon “that the reproduction of a colonial structure of dominance like Canada’s rests on its ability to entice Indigenous peoples to come to identify, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly asymmetrical and non-reciprocal forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the colonial-state and society.” Coulthard and Simpson both advocate the refusal of colonial forms of recognition and governmentality.

Since we—Indigenous, settlers, and arrivants alike—are physically located on Indigenous lands and yet still situated within settler colonial nation-states, we must fully understand what it means to say “Fuck the Border” and the implications that this statement has on both Indigenous, settler, arrivant, and mixed communities. While, I may no longer walk around yelling “Fuck the Border,” the political ontology embedded in Propagandhi’s song nevertheless assists me in understanding how settler-colonial and capitalist structures seek to disaggregate various parts of an otherwise intersectional structure. Moreover, this song may help us think about how these colonial systems (and settler-colonial structures) should not be intellectually unlinked. Rather, understanding them as an integrated unit shows how they must be simultaneously and reciprocally dismantled, not attacked on the isolated or individual level. If intersectionality helps us understand various oppressions and privileges, it will also help us understand the inseparability of structural and systematic inequalities.

Immigration policy—in the USA, Canada, and even Mexico—cannot be understood outside a history of longer and deeper systemic and systematic appropriation of Indigenous lands, seizure of resources, and denial of sovereignty. As Coulthard argues, we must also acknowledge the establishment of violent assimilative systems to convince Indigenous people that they were/are Canadians, Americans, or Mexicans. To identify with the nation-state is to undermine the capacity for authentic Indigenous governmentality. At the beginning of the 2016 presidential election season, Republican presidential hopeful Rand Paul said that, “I think assimilation is an amazing thing. A good example of how even in our country assimilation didn’t happen and it’s been a disaster for the people has been the Native American population on the reservations. If they were assimilated, within a decade they’d probably be doing as well as the rest of us.” Contextualization is not even needed to understand how Rand understands the workings of hegemonic systems and what this means.

In North America, settler colonialism is, in fact, the system. The question becomes, I think, how do we dismantle the many-headed hydra of settler colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy? How do we work to revitalize Indigenous sovereignties—including aesthetics and artistic articulations of sovereignty—in ways that acknowledge how capitalist-globalization precipitates migrations across settler-colonial borders by Indigenous, detribalized, and other oppressed peoples? What does it mean when Indigenous people migrate onto the traditional homelands of other Indigenous people? Moreover, can ever escape the systematization of colonialism, as Sartre convincingly writes, or the colonality of power, as Quijano has it?

Enacting Sovereignty, or Imagining Away the Colonial Nation-State

I have been accused of imagining or wishing away the settler nation-state. At first I did not fully know what this critique even meant, but have grown to embrace this criticism coming from a very limited way of being in the world. As I have heard this response to my work a few times now, I think it means that my line of thought imagines that we can somehow live as if the settler-colonial nation-state is not always in control. While I understand the limits of settler-colonial and capitalist hegemony, I wonder why we cannot live in ways that are not fully contained by it. While this criticism was, at some point, a hurtful one (I am not certain why I felt inadequate for this challenge), I now wear this critique as an honor and intentionally work in ways that creatively seek to dismantle the nation-state, while also imagining a world without it.

Is it a contradiction to understand that colonialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and associated structures are always encapsulating us, but simultaneously try to locate and exacerbate fissures in their structure? Or better yet, can we imagine a world without limitations and commence building new worlds – based in the teachings of the ancestors – that are not overdetermined or delimited by settler-colonial and capitalist constraints? Can I acknowledge the presence of existing systems, but live as if they are not in control? I am not a political scientist or a politician, and do not arrive at this proposition as one committed to “politics” as we know them. Instead, I ask if we should not all be imagining a world where nation-states and corporations do not control things. What is the meaning of our collective existence if we cannot imagine something beyond colonial ontology?

As an artist, my task is not to simply work inside the contours of this existing world and its political and ontological structures. Artists must fundamentally express ambiguity, while creating tangible works that exist both inside and outside structural limitations. It is for this very reason that I have been thinking through and writing about “Indigenous Aesthetic Sovereignty,” a concept similar to that printed on a T-shirt in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective (ACC). On this shirt, the ACC advocates “Activating Indigenous Creative Sovereignty.”

What aesthetic or creative sovereignty means, exactly, is unclear. The opacity of Indigenous sovereignty is part of what makes it, as a concept, so powerful. Just as Idle No More was not entirely fixed, so too is Indigenous sovereignty somewhat indeterminate. It must be noted that sovereignty, in this context, is shorthand for self-determination or self-governance or autonomy and should not be understood

in its purely Westphalian interpretation. Westphalian sovereignty is a principle of international law which holds that nation states maintain sovereign power over their own territories and domestic affairs. This principle came to prominence in Western Europe following the Peace of Westphalia (1648). Through colonial and imperial interventions, Westphalian sovereignty emerged as the dominant practice.

Indigenous sovereignties existed long before—and will long after—the nation-state became the dominant global polity. As a political manifestation that emerges from within Indigenous ontologies, Indigenous sovereignty is not limited by the nation-state, even if the settler-nation-state can still exert authority over it. While I am committed to reclaiming “aesthetics” (can we talk about aesthetic self-determination?) from its colonization by Kantian thinkers, both the ACC (a multiplicity of voices, of which I am a member) and I understand that there is an undeniable relationship between Indigenous sovereignty and the maintenance or revitalization of Indigenous aesthetics. All of this exists within colonialism and capitalism and heteropatriarchy, but is not contained by it. I guess that is what I am trying to get at here: the nation-state can, in fact, be imagined away, if only we envisage living without it.

Being utopian and desiring a place for true Indigenous liberation does not come from a place of naivety. To not imagine a way of being that is simultaneously beyond and before (and after) colonialism, is much more naïve. I have read Fanon and understand the “pitfalls of national consciousness”. Even so, imagining that “otro mundo es posible, (to borrow from Marcos and the Zapatistas), is what we must all be struggling for. Didn’t the Zapatistas imagine away the nation-state, while also working within it? If you read the EZLN communiqués, you will certainly see how the Zapatistas imagined away the nation-state and, at the same time, created alternative governance models (caracoles).

As I write this chapter, Indigenous communities are continuously forced to assert themselves against capitalist and colonial encroachment. In the unceded territory commonly known as British Columbia, Canada, the Unist’ot’en Camp is protecting the interests of Shkaakaamikwe (Mother Earth) by exercising their own sovereignty to stop the encroachment of big oil in their traditional territory. In Anishinaabewaki, the Indigenous lands that we know by the Dakota name Mne Sota (Minnesota), Anishinaabe harvesters are confronting the Minnesota state government as it interferes in their harvesting of manoomin (wild rice) and giigoonyag (fish).

Would imagining away the nation-state mean that you or I, or folks harvesting manoomin in Minnesota, or that the Unist’ot’en resistance to oil pipelines, would not face state confrontation or enforcement by the nation-state? Likely no. Does the presence of continuous and uninterrupted self-governance by Indigenous nations or tribes or bands somehow exist outside the presence of the settler-colonial nation-state? Of course not. However, thinking (and living) beyond the limits of the nation-state can do something else. What would happen if we collectively imagine true sovereignty—or something else that better describes Indigenous autonomy and self-determination? I believe that it is up to us—and the ancestors and spirits and rocks and land and water, among others—to prefigure something else.

Debenjigejig, Indigenous Sovereignty

In my utopian desire to prefigure better and more just ways of being in this world, I consistently turn to the ways that Xicanx (Indigenous Mexican-Americans) and Wiisaakodewiniwag (Otepemisiwak or Métis or Michif) communities have imagined away the border since its very inception. These communities have consistently asked if borders must exist. In a similar way, can't we collectively imagine a non-colonial ontology where borders are not needed? I see the creative imagining of a non-colonial way of being as central to the work I do. If we cannot imagine a way of living beyond the limitations of the nation-state (or any imposed limitation), we are doomed to not only destroy Shkaakaamikwe, but also annihilate ourselves in the process.

At various points in time, my paternal ancestors travelled the vast expanses of Mikinaak-minis, using the rivers and lakes as pathways. Because they so intimately knew both aki (land) and nibi (water), settlers employed them—as was common of Wiisaakodewiniwag at the time—to serve on survey expeditions and as translators. While geopolitical borders meant little to First Nations people and their Halfbreed cousins, the segmentation and privatization of land ownership was paramount to colonial agents and the system they imposed.

Mapping and ownership over the land, as an abstract and inanimate object, was what settlers so greatly desired. Inversely, kinship and land-use was (and still is) far more important for Indigenous communities. These are very disparate ways of relating to the land and distinct ways of being in the world. Each respective relationship—one based on ownership, the other on usage and relationality—forms the core of two conflicting modes of sovereignty and the polities that then emerge from them.

As has been frequently noted, Indigenous communities were (and still are) stewards of the land and territories were commonly shared—a concept that Western nation-states and their settler-colonial administrators cannot comprehend. Indigenous territoriality was not a monolithic and individual claim. Alliances and confederacies were (and are) common across Mikinaak-minis. Although we shouldn't pretend as if war and conflict never occurred, we should also recognize that how we understand sovereignty (that is as a form of Westphalian sovereignty) and its unique form of territoriality is a colonial imposition. If decolonization, anti-colonialism, and the non-colonial are not simply metaphors, as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang write, then we need to imagine modes of understanding Indigenous "sovereignty" beyond dominant juridical and political systems. For me, this begins with imagining something else. As an artist, that is what I do.

Currently, at least according to Wikipedia, there are five ongoing border disputes, with many more historical ones, between Canada and USA. The very presence of a Wikipedia page titled "List of areas disputed by Canada and the United States" reflects this ongoing problem of how contemporary nation-states imagine their boundaries. Isn't this border supposed to be a non-conflictive one? Unfortunately, the Canada-USA border, like all geopolitical borders, is violent and conflictive. However, the structures and discourses circulating around the Mexico-USA border are even more violent. The Canada-USA border masks its violence better than the border located

twenty-five-hundred kilometers to the south. Contemporary “crises” have their origin in continual colonialism and capitalism, there is no denying this.

The Canada-USA and the Mexico-USA borders share many similarities with other geopolitical borders. But even when borders are not militarized or viewed as conflictive, the border—by its very presence—enacts a certain power over individuals and especially over Indigenous and migratory peoples. As an indigenist, that is, someone who takes Indigenous issues as their utmost priority, I am particularly concerned with the violent imposition of geopolitical boundaries and the nation-states that impose them. With the ongoing impact of climate change on Indigenous communities, as well as the eminent threat of armed violence and the economic clash of capitalism, Indigenous capacities to self-determine are quickly being further and further eroded.

In July 2015, the Haudenosaunee Women’s lacrosse team withdrew from the Federation of International Lacrosse U19 World Championship held in Edinburgh, Scotland. In 2010, the Haudenosaunee Men’s team—commonly known as the Iroquois Nationals—also withdrew from the World Lacrosse Championships in Manchester, England. On both occasions, European governments failed to recognize the legitimacy of Indigenous passports, asking instead that each player submit either a Canadian or U.S. passport in conjunction with their Haudenosaunee one. On both occasions, Indigenous sovereignty was challenged and, in the face of global transnational migration, Indigenous presence was denied. Inversely, in 2015, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy stamped the passports of members of the English national lacrosse, welcoming them to Onondaga territory for the World Indoor Lacrosse Championship .

We are in the midst of a never-ending settler-colonial barrage against Indigenous peoples and their abilities to self-govern, maintain Indigenous political and economic structures, and travel in traditional and contemporary ways. Border and immigration policies across the continent are indicative of this. Since the initial arrival of Europeans to this continent, immigration and Indigenous sovereignty have been irreducibly linked. In many ways, it has not been Indigenous peoples who have made this so, rather it emerges from the settler-colonial logics of Manifest Destiny and Canadian Confederation. While many Indigenous communities are fundamentally linked by and through seasonal and other migration patterns, the cementing of geopolitical boundaries between different nation-states significantly impedes this ability, if not ending it completely. Two decades after Propagandhi taught me to sing along to “Fuck the Border,” I am inclined to, once again, reflect upon these words and their ongoing relevance today. Shall we continue to uncover ways to resist the border and its imposition on each of us?

Over the course of the three years, I created a series of projects coming from an Indigenous understanding of the Canada-USA border. These were commissioned by curator Srimoyee Mitra for an exhibition cycle at the Art Gallery of Windsor titled Border Cultures. In 2013, for the first Border Cultures exhibition, I created a series of screen-printed posters, in addition to an installation and mobile screen printing units with Indigenous and Latinx youth on both sides of the border. The posters, printed in the art gallery during the exhibition’s opening, included the text “Gaagegoo Dabakaana[n]” and “Debenjigijig.”

As is common when I work on a project, I asked an elder how I would say a particular English-language idea in Anishinaabemowin. As a language-learner, I still need to

make direct translations, knowing the futility of this task, but also acknowledge the power in my attempts to move beyond my colonial language usage. These posters communicated “No Borders” and “Indigenous Sovereignty.” While a small and seemingly insignificant act, on some level these collective actions sought to undermine the power of the border and imagine a world without it.

In an art gallery, geographically located on the Detroit River on the Canada side of the settler-colonial border, a small group of Indigenous, settlers, and arrivants collectively printed posters in Anishinaabe language text that called for the dissolution of borders and assertion of Indigenous sovereignty. Working and acting collectively, we were struggling for a world without borders and where Indigenous sovereignty was not limited. Now, a few years later as I continue to imagine ways of being in this world, I think I had better ask an elder how to say “No fences, no borders. Free movement for all.”

NOTES

1 The North American Indian Association of Detroit, established in 1936, is perhaps the oldest Indian center in the United States. The history

2 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 1997), 1.

3 *Ibid.*, 17.

4 Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Continuum, 1999), 165.

5 Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Nepentla: Views From the South* 1 (3) (200): 533–580.

6 Jean-Paul Sartre, “Colonialism is a System,” in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2001 [1964]), 9–19.

7 Sartre, 17.

8 As Chickasaw literary scholar Jodi A. Byrd writes, arrivants is a term that she borrows “from African Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite to signify those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe.” Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xix.

9 Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Robin D.G. Kelley (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000 [1955]), 41.

10 Glen Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Politics of Recognition’ in Canada,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 6 (2007): 439.

11 Julian Brave NoiseCat. “Rand Paul Thinks ‘Lack Of Assimilation’ Is Native Americans’ Problem,” *Huffington Post*, September 3, 2015. www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/rand-paul-assimilation-native-americans_us_55e8986fe4b0b7a9633c4edc

12 Idle No More is an ongoing Indigenous social movement that began in late-2012. The movement, named by three Indigenous women (Nina Wilson, Sylvia McAdam, and Jessica Gordon) and one settler ally (Sheelah Mclean), in response to anti-Indigenous and anti-environmental

policies of then Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper. Idle No More became a loose set of pro-Indigenous activities in Canada and the US, as well as throughout the Fourth World.

13 Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture," in *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Books, (2004 [1963]): 145–80.

14 Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.

15 See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_areas_disputed_by_Canada_and_the_United_States

16 Sam Laskaris, "Passports Rejected: Haudenosaunee Women's LAX Withdraws from World Championships," *Indian Country Today*, July 20, 2015. indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/07/20/passports-rejected-haudenosaunee-womens-lax-withdraws-world-championships-161139

17 Thomas Kaplan, "Iroquois Defeated by Passport Dispute," *New York Times*, July 16, 2010. www.nytimes.com/2010/07/17/sports/17lacrosse.html?_r=0

18 Sarah Moses, "Team England arrives on Onondaga Nation to get passports stamped," *Syracuse.com*, September 13, 2015.

www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2015/09/team_england_arrives_on_onondaga_nation_to_get_passports_stamped.html

