"In the Shallows of a Lake that Goes on Forever": Reconstructing Native Becoming in Stephen Graham Jones's *Mapping the Interior*

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> father of ash. father of a past without a mouth. he who ate too much of / the sunset.
>
> What is it to live, to suffer, and, above all, to love in an emotionally inflexible world fashioned to produce men who eat "too much of the sunset?" We are haunted by that turning point, brought back to it again and again. But it doesn't once and for all consign us to a ravaged life. There is more to be said; there is another mode of life to inhabit.
>
> - Billy-Ray Belcourt

In the introduction to *Masculindians: Conversations about Indigenous Manhood*, Sam McKegney offers the title concept in an attempt to capture reductive representations of Indigenous masculinities within settler culture.[1] As McKegney explains, settler stereotypes produce images of Native men as "the noble savage and the bloodthirsty warrior" and their offshoots: "the ecological medicine man, the corrupt band councilor, and the drunken absentee" (1). Such figures, as Sarah Kent observes, have always been marked for death. "The *masculindian* is always dead before he arrives," Kent claims, because "there is no futurity for the figure of the *masculindian*" (123). Taiaiake Alfred likewise sees such figures as "meant to be killed" because they fuel settler fantasies of violence that in turn perpetuate the violent erasure of actual Native men (79). The line

between the "actual" and the image in these discussions reflects their grounding in the concept of simulations.[2] McKegney sees the "masculindian" as a tool for revealing settler cultural simulacra, akin to Gerald Vizenor's conception of the Indian as simulation from *Manifest Manners*, and offers it as a way to meet the "urgent need" to "grapple with both Indianness and masculinity" (3).[3] Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, in their introduction to *Indigenous Men and Masculinities*, contextualize the urgency of these critiques within statistical evidence of health disparity, victimization, and violence and argue that negative and limiting representations of Indigenous men stem from "the hegemonic masculinity that is perpetuated through white supremacist patriarchy and conveyed by education, news, and entertainment institutions" (9).[4] "As a result of the colonization of their lands, minds, and bodies," Innes and Anderson continue, "many Indigenous men not only come to accept these perceptions but also come to internalize them" (10). As these arguments make clear, Native masculinities as imagined within settler fantasies of violence and erasure are unlivable. The question that rises to the surface among all of these arguments, then, is how to repair masculinities in order to locate, as Kent puts it, "a liveable ontology for Indigenous masculinity" (122).

However, to the extent that questions of repair posit a "deficit model" of masculinity, as Jessica Perea argues in her essay on Iñupiaq men and masculinities, they reflect an animating sense of crisis that pervades the field of men's studies.[5] The notion of a deficit within contemporary masculinities, Perea suggests, tends to "assume that there was once one universal and honorable way to be a man" (127). Expressive of the orientation of men's studies toward deeply essentializing notions of gender that index masculinity to qualities supposedly inherent to bodies understood as male, the universalizing discourse of men's studies belies a fundamentally conservative orientation toward "past" models of masculinity within which one might find an

"honorable way to be a man" that could be recovered and redeployed.[6] Such deficit models arguably animate Innes and Anderson's thinking about how to break from "cycles of dysfunction" that they see as endemic to "white supremacist heteropatriarchal masculine identities" while retaining masculinity as a core concept that can be disarticulated from narratives of "indigenous deficiency," in Daniel Heath Justice's terms (2).[7] McKegney's "cautious commitment to the ongoing prescience of masculinity" likewise suggests that deficit models animate some discussions of recovery throughout the collection, particularly when such concepts are grounded in "traditional" conceptualizations of gendered roles that one can recover or "dig up" (4).[8]

As McKegney notes, however, such questions are fraught from the outset with concerns over "the pull of gender essentialism, biological determinism, and what Vizenor calls the 'faux science' of 'race'" (3). Added to these problematics, in his recent *Carrying the Burden of Peace*, McKegney further cautions "vigilance" against the threat of what he calls "corrosive inheritances" of heteropatriarchy: "homophobia, misogyny, and/or hypermasculinity" (xxii-xxiii). Considering McKegney's cautions, how might the notion of "corrosive inheritances" further complicate efforts to recover past masculinities or to reawaken gendered knowledges imagined as flowing through one's blood? In the context of a discussion regarding recovering rites of passage into manhood, Richard Van Camp, whose novel *The Lesser Blessed* is often cited in conversations about Indigenous masculinities, explains "I love to ask people . . . 'When did you know you were a man? When did you feel that body wake up inside your blood?'" (188). Offered as an alternative to settler stories of becoming gendered, Van Camp's sense of a body "waking up" in the blood suggests a view of the body as what Lisa Tattonetti has recently called a "somatic archive of Indigenous knowledge" (78). Drawing on studies of trauma and affect, Tattoneti reads "N. Scott Momaday's trope of

memory in the blood" as an early encapsulation of more recent scientific studies of affective inheritance that suggests "historical trauma persists within the body at a cellular level" and that as a result we might also speculate that "survival mechanisms" likewise persist and flow as "memories in the blood" (78-79). Van Camp's sense of manhood "awakening" in the blood may suggest "blood memory" as a kind of sociosomatic inheritance that one's body and oneself becomes. Though Van Camp imagines the body waking up in one's blood as a "survival mechanism," in the sense of waking up to the potential knowledges carried in one's blood, how might this way of imagining blood also work to solidify conceptual links between masculinity as a "lived cluster of meanings" in McKegney's phrasing (5), and "manhood" as a supposedly essential biological quality lying in wait in one's blood?

The "masculindian" or other ways of naming colonialist formations of Indigenous manhood, imagined as simulacra of settler culture or as distracting and damaging layers of settler history that have accumulated around and thus obfuscated core notions of Indigenous manhood beneath, appear as different versions of Van Camp's image of a masculine body in one's blood waiting to be awakened. Though not always presented through such metaphors, arguments that one's experience of life is an experience of aberration that has thwarted the potential to become otherwise posit that an otherwise nevertheless exists but has not yet found the catalyst that will precipitate its actualization. From a perspective oriented toward deconstructing and dismantling the permeation of settler heteropatriarchy and racialized formations within which Indigeneity becomes "Indianness," such lines of critique are necessary interventions into the continual barrage of misrepresentations and their effects on everyday ways of living. But how might those same ways of thinking about gender, particularly with respect to "manhood" and "tradition," flow alongside settler chronobiopolitical narratives wherein "failure to become" is viewed as an aberration

that, to paraphrase Billy-Ray Belcourt, consigns one to a ravaged life? How are the imagined "failures" variously configured within notions of futureless Native masculinities also stories of "squandered potential" as Junior, protagonist of Stephen Graham Jones's *Mapping the Interior*, imagines them (16)? And what happens when such narratives are fused with notions of dormancy, and "squandered potential" becomes a way of figuring masculine "failure" in terms of heredity and biology, as something that "awakens" in one's blood? What lies in wait "inside" within these ways of storying Native masculinities?

Mapping the Interior is a narrative of "squandered potential," but not in the ways those terms are typically deployed. Junior tells the story of his adolescence as being shaped around his father's absence from his life and the stories of "squandered potential" (16) offered to explain that absence. The main narrative sequences take place between Junior's twelfth and thirteenth birthdays. Throughout them, Junior experiences sleepwalking episodes during which he begins to see a silhouette figure he believes to be his father returned from the dead. Junior theorizes sleepwalking, however, in a way that destabilizes his—and readers'—certainty as to the content of his vision:

> To sleepwalk is to be inhabited, yes, but not by something else, so much. What you're inhabited by, what's kicking one foot in front of the other, its yourself. . . If anything, being inhabited by yourself like that, what it tells you is that there's a real you squirming down inside you, trying all through the day to pull up the surface, look out. But it can only get that done when your defenses are down. When you're sleeping. (12)

The "real you" Junior imagines bears striking resemblance to Van Camp's images of dormant masculinity and through that image Jones situates Junior's experience of the silhouette figure he sees as the beginnings of a "dim shape" he feels himself becoming

(99). That dim shape—a silhouette outline of a fancydancer that recurs throughout the narrative (14, 52, 62, 69, 88-89, 91)—is drawn around details from stories that color Junior's imagination of his father's life. As his aunts tell it, Junior's father wanted to be a fancydancer as a boy but the world got in the way. Instead of becoming a dancer, Junior's father kept "living [his] high school years five years after high school" (30), and was found dead in a lake on the reservation by the time Junior was four. Recalling his aunt's description of his father as being "how you talk about dead people… especially dead Indians," Junior notes that such talk is "all about squandered potential, not actual accomplishments" (16). Junior's reflections frame the narrative of his becoming-masculine as a process of becoming a silhouette story of "squandered potential" and cast his adolescence as a period in which that "potential" begins to wake up. Unfolded through metaphors of "life cycles" and chrysalides (107, 46), Jones imagines Junior as living through determinist models of Native masculinity that posit "potential" as a hereditable content that one will perpetually fail to actualize as one "develops" into an adulthood shaped by talk about "dead Indians" (16). Through Junior's story and the storyworld in which Jones wraps Junior's experiences, Jones highlights the relationship between story—how one narrates the possible and the impossible—and becoming. Talk about "dead Indians" forecloses on futures in which one might *live* otherwise, Jones suggests, because living otherwise appears impossible to actualize within stories of "squandered potential" (16).

Although *Mapping* may appear to follow the general shape of critiques of Indigenous masculinities as overdetermined models that nevertheless "produce very real men," in Brenden Hokowhitu's phrase ("Taxonomies" 81), the silhouette figure Junior imagines himself becoming challenges notions of "internalized" colonial models of masculinity and deeply problematizes the search for reparable and recoverable models of manhood. The figure Junior imagines first as the fancydancer his father

always wanted to be in life eventually takes on monstrously vampiric form and feeds on Junior's brother Dino's blood (88-89). *Mapping* illustrates that this figure, decidedly not a figure of repair, likewise lies dormant in stories of "blood." Stories in which possible masculinities are narrated as "either penetrative or extractive," as Daniel Heath Justice observes, represent a "catastrophic failure of the imagination and a huge ethical breach" ("Fighting Shame" 145). It is out of this kind of "tradition," storied through narratives of "squandered potential" as a "life cycle," that Jones suggests vampiric silhouettes emerge. Cast through a father who feeds on his son's blood, Jones links the critical frame of an absent future to the notion of potential as something one inherits through blood and then actualizes into "accomplishments" or "squanders" into the next generation's inheritance. *Mapping*'s dark portrayal of Native masculinity as a vampiric cycle of self-destruction nevertheless holds out peoplehood and kinship as possible alternatives to the self-sustaining cycles of extractive violence that try to drain those concepts of their future.[9]

In this vein, *Mapping* imagines living and feeling through the conceptual knots of masculinity, Indianness, and blood in ways that foreground the inescapable tethers of such concepts to essentialist and biologically determinative racial constructs. Throughout the narrative these constructs figure as a generic "Indianness" with which Junior identifies and through which Junior apprehends the silhouette figure he believes to be his father's rematerialized potential. As already dead or death-bound, the silhouette figure Junior perceives suggests the influences of "masculindian" constructs. The narrative's conceptualization of generic Indianness as patrilineal inheritance, however, complicates such readings. Junior remembers his father as a man who "never danced. He didn't go to pow-wows" was "neither a throwback nor a fallback. He didn't speak the language, didn't know the stories, and didn't care that he didn't" (14). In terms of relations to land, Junior recalls his father joining fire crews "not to protect any

ancestral land" but because he could sell the fire service-issued pants to hunters in the fall (14). Of his father's childhood, Junior imagines that "When you grow up in Indian country, the TV tells you how to be Indian" (15). He recalls his aunts explaining that when "his eyes were still big with dreams" Junior's father had been "really into bows and arrows and headbands," "the exciting part of your heritage" that Junior wryly observes "you can always find at the gift shop" (15). Of specific stories or tribal traditions, Junior recalls them only in terms of stories from the "old-time Indian days" (107), which he often dismisses as childish in the same breath (101). Taken together, these details suggest that the stories of "dead Indians" Junior inherits, and out of which he tries to discern the shape of the man he feels himself becoming, profoundly shape Junior's retrospective narration of his becoming-masculine.

Stories that take shape within structures of assimilative erasure, as Jones illustrates, foreclose on the ability to talk about the dead's "actual accomplishments" because such accomplishments appear otherwise unremarkable against "tradition"— speaking the language, dancing, and relating to one's ancestral territory— as a horizon of expectation. However, that Junior imagines *these* traditions as uninheritable further underscores the narrative's critique of blood metaphors in relation to masculinities and Indigeneity. *Mapping* here suggests that inheritance and Indigeneity (at least as imagined through language and land as important orientations of peoplehood) are not equivalent; but generic "Indianness" and the discursive frame within which it becomes a way of talking about impossible futures is imagined to flow through patrilineal lines of descent.[10]

What gets in the way of the "future" and what creates the conditions within which Junior imagines his father's return as a vampire who feeds on Dino is presented in the narrative as simply "the world" that finds and "does its thing" to Native men (98). At once an image of ambient and free-floating violence, "the world" also suggests

quotidian routines. In this vein, simply living—growing into adulthood—"does its thing." Junior's world is filled with detective shows (56, 81), bus stop and school violence (26, 39, 57-58), ferocious, rabid dogs (29, 42-55), an enraged and potentially homicidal neighbor who Junior may or may not have murdered in self-defense (70-75), an abusive sheriff's deputy (74-75), and the threatening rematerialization of his father-as-vampire (80-89). "The world" thus presents Junior with a near constant barrage of extractive and violent models of masculinity that become the background against which he perceives his father's return and his relationship to his father's silhouette form. The background, as Mark Rifkin develops the concept in *Beyond Settler Time*, "serves less as an inert setting than as the condition of possibility for registering action, change, survival… Absent a background, nothing can figure in or as the foreground and be available for attention, perception, or acknowledgement" (11). To the extent that violence is "the background," in this sense, of the world in which Junior lives, his father's "squandered potential," suggested by the fancydance regalia the figure appears to wear, figures in the foreground as the shape of Junior's becoming. In contradistinction to the tendency to assume "internalization" within critical discussions of Indigenous models of masculinity, *Mapping* suggests settler violence is the background condition of possibility against which masculinities in general can figure. Jones thus critiques notions of "tradition" as a recuperative well for Native masculinities because the concepts of "tradition" and "masculinity" appear inextricable from the background violence against which they take form.

Part of what the "world" of broader settler violence does, Jones suggests, is reproduce a patriarchal orientation toward women and, in *Mapping*, toward stories of peoplehood, kinship, and land. Junior's family lives in a modular home "down in the flats" off the reservation (100). Noting the difference between a modular home and a "trailer," Junior explains that a modular house "stays there, more or less" while "a

trailer. . . can still roam if need be" (18). Junior's mother, though, refers to "home" as the reservation, explaining at one point that "if we were back home, everybody would be saying" that Junior looks like his father (37). Despite her fear for what her sons might become on the reservation, she remembers it as a place of kinship and peoplehood. "Unlike Dad," Junior recalls, "she wasn't still living her high school years five years after high school. But she did have her own sisters, and one brother still alive, and aunts and uncles and cousins and the rest, kind of like a net she could fall back into, if she ever needed them" (30). "The rest" suggests a broad "net" of relations and relationships. However, the background patriarchal violence against which her sons' futures appear fated to follow their father's also does its thing to her memories and sensations of kinship. As Junior narrates the memory, his mother felt these relations to have become a form of currency she was compelled to trade if she wanted to keep her sons alive: "But she cashed all that in. Because, she said, she didn't want either one of us drowning in water we didn't have to drown in, someday" (30). The scene suggests that the broader world of settler violence in which Junior experiences himself is the world in which his mother experienced her networks of relations as fungible for her son's potential futures. The narrative ironically casts these choices as likewise subject to "talk about… dead Indians" (16), though, because such potentials as might have been possible on the reservation remain obfuscated against the violence of dispossession.

Though Jones is not explicit about *Mapping*'s relationship to specific stories or lands, the narrative action resonates with Blackfeet story in ways that suggest an alternative "background" for the narrative action, one that is obscured, or rendered in "silhouette" through the "world" that "does its thing."[11] Junior recounts experiences within, between, and across what Rosalyn LaPier describes as "three dimensions" of the universe within Blackfeet knowledge: "the Above world, the Below World, and the Water world" (26). LaPier explains that these dimensions are understood to be

"parallel… existing side by side and separate. But they were also interconnected and permeable" (26). Junior's experiences in various spaces throughout the narrative including in a lake on the reservation at the narrative's conclusion (91-92), a scene to which I return below, may allude to Blackfeet conceptualizations of multidimensionality. Further, it is also possible that *Mapping*'s plot alludes to Blackfeet stories of supernatural beings who, as LaPier writes, "transcended" the three dimensions, "such as Napiwa, Kotoyissa, and Paie" (27). LaPier explains:

> Napiwa, or Old Man, is a supernatural being who as far as we know has lived forever. He was foolish, petty, and greedy. He lived life in the extreme, always wanting too much or too little. Katoyissa, or Blood Clot, was a superhero who travelled the Below world, ridding it of monsters to make it safer for the Niitsitapi, or humans. And Paie, or Scar Face, played a similar role in the Above world. He became a superhero for his role in travelling the Above world, ridding it of evil beings to make it safe for the beings in the Above world. (27)

The superhero, whether as an image or as an action figure, recurs throughout *Mapping* (26, 32, 69, 82-83, 90-91, 106),[12] and is often figured as a bridge between moments set in different "levels" of the house—whether below or above—as well as being represented as a key element of Junior's transportation to the lake in which he confronts his father (90-91). Additionally, Junior recalls his father in terms similar to LaPier's characterization of Napiwa or Old Man through a story of "the old-time Indian days" in which "a father died, but then he came back. He was different when he came back, he was hungry, he was selfish, but that's just because he already had all that in him when he died, I know. It's because he carried it with him into the lake that night" (105). Junior, likewise, suggests LaPier's characterization of Katoyissa because he imagines himself as "the one who fought the monster" for Dino, "for all of us" (104). Similarly, in a scene where Junior lays outside at night and feels for the moment an

urge to fly his brother Dino's superhero action figure against a backdrop of stars (69), Jones may be alluding to Blackfeet stories of Paie, or Scar Face that LaPier describes as a "superhero" of the above world.

To the extent that Blackfeet notions of multidimensionality and entities within Blackfeet story might make up the structure of Junior's experiences they suggest the superimposition of competing backgrounds. Yet, when such suggestions appear in the text, Junior dismisses them as childlike fantasy: as when he resists the urge to fly Dino's superhero against the stars because he "wasn't a kid anymore" (69); or when following Junior's description of encountering his father in the lake, he imagines a conventional close to "a lot of Indian stories"—in which his mother "gathers [the boys] in her arms" and "the moon or a deer or a star" comes down "making everything whole again"—as being from "a long time ago" "before we all grew up" (101). Junior's consistent dismissals of the potential resonance of Blackfeet story echo his earlier sense of the way one talks about "dead Indians" (16). Through the suggestion that knowing Blackfeet story, or more generally the stories of one's people, might help Junior re-narrate and reframe his sense of himself in relation to his people, Jones offers dismissal of that potential as a kind of deadness. Whether in the sense that something within Junior that would be otherwise receptive to story has been killed by a world hostile to it or that through growing into adulthood Junior was encouraged to become "dead to" potentialities in excess of settler framings of "the world," Jones casts this sort of deadness as the orientation of "properly" acculturated Native men—"dead Indians" in the novel's idiom—who believe their potential to become otherwise has already been "squandered."

To the extent that such stories *could* have provided a sense of the world as existing otherwise than as represented in the broader settler imaginary, they represent talk of "squandered potential" against the reality of "actual accomplishments" (16).

The "actual" in this sense refers to the "real world" (103) in which causal connections between actions and outcomes appear self-evident and discrete. The contrast between "real" and childlike ways of placing experience within a broader narrative framework—such as Junior's sense of "reality" as an unfolding forensic narrative juxtaposed to "Indian" story as childlike fantasy one grows out of as "the world" "does its thing" (98)—points to the dramatic irony between Junior's story and the storyworld *Mapping* wraps around him. Through Junior's ambivalent relation to Blackfeet storying, Jones highlights the extent to which he experiences becoming-masculine as a process that requires distancing himself from "story" in ways that translate the potential of Blackfeet storying to help situate his lived experience into a relic of outdated "Indianness" "from a long time ago" (101).

Given the suggestion of Blackfeet story as a possible background against which to orient Junior's experience of becoming-masculine, his distance from those stories stands out in sharp relief. He imagines that distance spatially—as being "nearly a whole state away" from the reservation—and temporally as stories emanating from a past long ago (101). Junior's feeling estranged from place and story suggests the narrative's presentation of masculinity and generic Indianness unfolds in part through a critique of settler time. Within settler timelines, lived relations to place, people, and land are often narrated as "of a past" incommensurable with a present understood as "a neutral, common frame" against which other ways of conceptualizing or sensing time appear either as aberrations or as different ways of conceiving of what is ultimately the same temporal plane (Rifkin, *Beyond* 3).[13] Part of Junior's struggle to understand his father's potential reemergence throughout the narrative and to reconcile it with his own feelings of becoming the silhouette he perceives comes from his difficulty reconciling the possibility of their occurring simultaneously in different places and times. Viewed from a temporal frame of reference in which the present always succeeds the past and

moves toward the future, reemergent figures such as the silhouette Junior experiences appear to "haunt" from a past that breaks into or disrupts the present.[14] However, Junior's experience of space and time collapses when he confronts the materialized silhouette and attempts to drown it by plunging Dino's superhero action figure into the kitchen sink. "It slipped into the cold water, and then—" Junior recalls, "—and then the water, it was lapping all around us. Around both of us… We were on the reservation… We were in the shallows of the lake" (91-92). Breaking the section on either side of the em dash, Jones graphically illustrates Junior's experience of moving through space and time. Notably, the water and the superhero figure—suggesting allusions to elements of Blackfeet story and multidimensionality—combine to transport Junior to a lake on the reservation where he experiences mysteriously having become an adult confronting his father's conventionally human form in the moments before he drowned (90-92). Within the temporal frame of Junior's story, this sequence of events would have taken place at least nine years earlier when Junior and Dino would have been four and one respectively. At the time, Junior was in the hospital "nearly dying of pneumonia" (13). As such, reconciling the experience through the rubric of the conventional present appears impossible. However, the event is narrated as though it occurs in "real time" in the same way as any other scene, and thus suggests that Junior experiences this moment as a moment of multidimensionality.

From this frame of reference, the events within the sequence in the lake become possible turning points that present alternative ways of inhabiting one's relationship to land and peoplehood. In the lake he sees his father, "'Park' in this memory," who recognizes him as "Junior" (92, 94). Junior is determined to drown Park in order to "save Dino. No matter how much it hurt" (95). As Junior pummels Park, he is interrupted for a moment by Park's striking question: "'What are you… What are we *doing*, Junior, man?'" Despite the question, Junior presses ahead with the actions he

believes to be fated, and drowns his father "in the shallows of a lake that goes on forever" (103). However, Jones leaves open the possibility that the question Park poses is part of the central structure that tethers Junior to this moment and keeps the determinative cycle going, a structure reproduced as Park's and Junior's "spitting image," Collin (103).

The feeling of being tethered to a place one is compelled to revisit and a moment one is compelled to relive is another way of signaling the determinist conjunction of racial formations and discourses of impossibility Jones describes as "squandered potential" and the way one talks about "dead Indians" (16). Through the image of a tetherball pole (33), which Junior years later finds still standing near the site of their burned-down-years-ago modular home when he returns with Dino in hopes of re-cycling the process (105), Jones illustrates the scene of Junior's memories as an anchorage that ensures his eventual return. Importantly, this anchorage is off reservation, and within the terms through which the book presents something like landedness in relation to peoplehood, it is "outside" the boundaries of the "net" of people and relations Junior's mother imagines there (30). Thus, in geopolitical terms, Junior is tethered to a place that appears to keep him away from his people. However, despite not knowing the precise location of "the flats" where *Mapping* takes place, the extent of Blackfeet homelands encompasses the better part of present-day northern Montana, the majority of which was recognized by the U.S. as Blackfeet territory in an 1855 treaty with the Blackfoot Confederacy.[15] The contrast between "the reservation" and "the flats" highlights the clustered effects and affects produced by the successive encroachments on and dispossessions of Blackfeet territory since the 1855 treaty, including especially the "ceded strip" that today makes up part of Glacier National Park.[16] In this vein, figuring the reservation as "home" as opposed to imagining "home" to extend beyond the reservation boundary suggests that the confluence of

settler geopolitics, jurisprudence, and dispossession has severed Junior's experience of relations to family and kin from his experience of land and territory. In other words, as a policy object and geopolitical boundary the reservation is not equivalent to homeland, but the homelands on "the flats" don't feel like home. The image of the tetherball pole that keeps Junior anchored to a space he experiences as a home that is less than home figures this disjuncture, and through it Jones suggests that among the "things" the world does as it stories "dead Indians" into being is deaden the sense of connection to land and place by tethering the notion of authentic and authenticating peoplehood to the reservation in ways that allow for re-narrating off-reservation space as devoid of relations that sustain peoplehood.

Imagined as, in Billy J. Stratton's terms, "a spectral frontier landscape" where the neighbors are murderous and their dogs are even more so ("Habitations"), the tetherball-poll-as-anchorage further suggests that this off-reservation space has become an origin point from which models of vampiric masculinity emerge and remerge. Try as he might to get away, the strings attaching bodies to unlivable lives anchored to a landscape storied as a zone of erasure and disappearance will always pull Junior back to the center. Temporally, returning to the scene suggests a cyclical story in orbit around a fixed point, but the temporal fixity I would argue actually straightens the temporality of the scene around patrilineal descent in a way that sees "return" as successive rather than cyclical. In this sense, Jones presents the two settings, "the reservation" and the modular homesite, as different temporal backgrounds against which Junior's experience of time likewise shifts. Jones thus illustrates the ways in which the notion of the "background" as that which enables figures to appear in the foreground can also be applied to time as, in Rifkin's terms, "the conditions of emergence for particular temporal sensations" (*Beyond* 24). In the "shallows of a lake that goes on forever," Junior experiences multidimensional realities

in which choices affecting the sensation of duration ("forever") in relation to becoming can be made. At the modular homesite, in contrast, Junior experiences a unidimensional present that is "tethered" to a past which in turn determines the rhythms and sensations of the future to the extent that a future can be imagined beyond the story of "squandered potential."

Shifting frames of reference thus shift the ways temporal sequences can be imagined, and from which multidimensionality and multiple temporalities can be imagined as coextensive but not co-determinative nor mutually exclusive. Jones illustrates this possibility through expanding the notion of inhabitance Junior experiences as sleepwalking earlier in the narrative. After being transported into the water, Junior recalls: "And then it hit me: the same way that, when sleepwalking, I was kind of inhabiting *myself*, that's what I was doing here. Just, now I was inhabiting someone *else*. Someone before… I had access to this truck owner's memories, too, and remembered them like they'd *happened* to me" (92). The lake and the water enable Junior to experience forms of collective temporal sequence as potentially expressive of a collective sensation of peoplehood. Jones imagines this element of *Mapping*'s alternate temporality through Junior's sense of relation to "Every fourth person on our reservation," who also is named "Junior," "like the same stupid person is trying life after life until he gets it right at last" (94). From this frame of reference, "life after life" suggests an expansive network of mutually unfolding attempts to live otherwise that Junior experiences and seemingly inhabits collectively. Through the moment of collective temporal experience, Jones suggests that Junior senses a connection to peoplehood otherwise unavailable to him from other frames of reference and against other temporal backgrounds. Park's question, "What are we *doing*?" stands out as a moment in which Junior *could* have recognized the "we" as stretching beyond paternal lineage, and thus beyond fathers and sons and blood, to encompass a

broader "net" of people represented in the narrative as "the reservation" but figured throughout as suggestive of kinship that transcends the boundaries imposed on Native space.

To the extent that something like a Blackfeet surround might be understood to form an alternative temporal and phenomenological background in *Mapping*, Jones suggests that recognizing it depends on the stories and memories to which one has access. As I have argued throughout, the language of "squandered potential" is the story through which Junior apprehends and imagines his father's absence and his relationship to it as he recalls becoming-masculine. That story narrates Junior's life as a "cycle" that turns within the racial formation of generic Indianness. Within that formation, "potential" is imagined as inheritable through blood and inevitably "squandered" through the ways the "world" "does its thing" in situating masculinity against a background of settler violence where Native becoming appears in silhouette, an outline suggestive of hopelessly obfuscated content. Within such storyscapes, notions of "tradition" appear anchored to the past in ways that cannot be actualized in the present and sensations of peoplehood and land feel epiphenomenal. Figures such as McKegney's "Masculindian" appear as already marked for death, signifying in Kent's terms a kind of living-as-walking-dead inextricable from "colonialism's reliance on necropolitics" or "the governmental determination of the disposability of certain subjects" (122). The search for ways to live through such stories—to find liveable ontologies, to recall Kent's phrase—appears bound to the genre conventions of settler storytelling, as Junior's forensic search for clues that might help him solve the mystery of his father's absence and yield new facts with which to reconstruct his life illustrates. As Glen Coulthard notes, discursive formations are "not neutral; they 'construct' the topic and objects of our knowledge; they govern 'the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about.' They also influence how ideas are 'put

into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others.'" (103). Hokowhitu reminds us that "the construction of masculinities through the discursive terrain of colonial masculinity produces very real men, who inhabit history, who embody and thus make real the discursive field, who bring to life the world of forms so to speak" ("Taxonomies" 81), and that such constructs often "conceal [their] genesis" as "cultural fictions" ("Producing" 31). When such fictions take as their terrain heteropartiarchal "discourses and policies," Rifkin argues, they "generate the impression of a sphere of life whose contours are biologically determined (since they supposedly are necessary for human reproduction itself) that exists independently of all forms of political determination, negotiation, and contestation" ("Around 1978," 173). As *Mapping* illustrates throughout, stories figuring Native masculinities through a language of "squandered potential," including critical narratives in which "death" is the outcome for the "simulations" that stalk settler imaginaries, are inevitably stories of violence against becoming otherwise because such stories aim to reconstruct becoming around the supposedly self-evident neutrality of heteropatriarchy.

Violent settler storyscapes like these are a part of how the "world" "does its thing" through the language of "squandered potential," an everyday form of biopolitics which Jones clearly couches as a critique of racist narratives of Indigenous deficiency. Jones imagines the violence of such narratives viscerally through a father figure returned to feed on his son's blood. Importantly, the son on which the father feeds is imagined as "already slowing down, or, really, topping out" (87). The silhouette figure needs Dino because, Jones suggests, the figure's feedings have arrested Dino's cognitive abilities and as such he has retained his childhood imagination against the world that has "done its thing" to Junior and Junior's father. Dino's "blood" is thus pure potential, in the narrative's frame, from which men who haven't become in life what they'd hope to become as children, like Junior's father, can

return to find energy for a new beginning. Couched throughout as a heroic effort to save Dino from the monster, Junior's choice to sacrifice Dino in hopes of bringing back his own son Collin betrays Junior's intentions (106). Junior makes this decision at the site of the modular home, anchored to the geotemporal location from which his frame of reference forecloses on his ability to acknowledge notions of connection or peoplehood that lie outside the lines of patrilineal descent. Jones offers the scene through another indictment of the "world" that does its thing. Junior explains:

> in the movies, after you beat up the bad guy… then all the injuries it inflicted, they heal right up. That's not how it works in the real world. Here's one way it can work in the real world: the son you accidentally father at a pow-wow in South Dakota grows into the spitting image of a man you remember sitting in the shallows of a lake that goes on forever. Like to remind me what I did, what I'd had to do. (103)

Junior's sense of what he "had to do" is another way of representing the notion of a phenomenal background of experience. Against the background of broader settler violence, erasure, and dispossession, what presents itself in the foreground is further violence construed as a painful and impossible zero-sum choice.

Focused on "life cycles" as images of biological determinism, *Mapping*'s imagined return of the father to feed on the son illustrates the ways blood metaphors rely on the presumption of biological essentialism for their meaning. Through a sustained cycle of emergence, violence, and absence, the men in *Mapping* offer a dark illustration of what it might be like to live through essentialist narratives of "Indianness" as blood. The recurrent motif of "squandered potential" likewise plays into rhetorical tropes of tragedy and the vanishing Indian embedded in notions of blood and racialized forms of kinship and family. The threat that one's blood will "run out" makes blood a valuable resource. Imagining a vampiric father figure who needs Dino's blood,

"something inside him" (87), "inside of Dino's bones" (84), to get solid enough to live as he was supposed to, Jones illustrates the ways in which bodies and blood can be situated as resources whose "content" becomes "extractable" as sustenance for a future that seems otherwise impossible without it. Junior recalls a moment when he began to realize what the silhouette figure wanted and what it would eventually take:

> I always thought—I think anybody would think this—that when you come back from the dead like he had, that you're either out to get whoever made you dead, or you're there because you miss your people, are there to help them somehow.
>
> The way it was turning out, it was that you could maybe come back, be what you'd always wanted to be, but to do that, you had to latch on to your people and drink them dry, leave them husks. After that, you could walk off into your new life, your second chance. With no family to hold you back. (80)

The passage illustrates the conceptual translation of kinship into blood that is part and parcel of the discursive production of "Indianness" as a racial formation that abets processes of dispossession and removal. Part of the ways the structures of dispossession perpetuate themselves, the passage suggests, is through mapping colonial models of extraction onto paths to becoming "what you'd always wanted to be" when whatever one wants to be appears impossible to become in life (80). The sense of the impossible is sustained, Jones suggests, through "cycles" of vampiric heteropatriarchal relationships configured as the past returned to drain the future of life. Reconstructing the same set of facts reproduces the same set of assemblages. To break from such "cycles," one has to tell a different story. As Jones has written elsewhere, "If you wrap yourself in the right story, everything makes sense" ("Werewolf" 7).

Mapping highlights the tension between settler stories of futureless becoming and the potential of Blackfeet story to ground narratives in an otherwise actualizable set of conditions within which different stories than those of vampiric fathers and drowning sons might be told. Junior's father "didn't know the stories, and didn't care that he didn't" (14). "Stories," writes Louis Owens, "make the world knowable and inhabitable. Stories make the world, period… Silence a people's stories and you erase a culture. To have graphic evidence of this phenomenon, all we have to do is look at a map" (210-211). *Mapping the Interior* closes with this sense of story as what makes the world inhabitable and how the topography of one's map can detail the ways dispossession shapes the contours of bodies and experiences. Junior's map charts violence, dispossession, and dislocation as stories of erasure and "squandered potential." *Mapping the Interior* calls for different stories than those in which Native men appear already marked for death. Jones suggests that these different stories are not found in "tradition," nor in "blood," but in the way the water in a kitchen sink might lead to the "shallows of a lake that goes on forever" (103).

Notes:

[1] For the first epigraph, see Belcourt, *This Wound is a World*, p. 9. For the second epigraph, see Belcourt, *A History of My Brief Body*, p. 14. McKegney has also developed and applied the notion of the "masculindian" in other essays. See McKegney, "Masculindians"; "'pain, pleasure, shame. Shame.'"; and "'Beautiful Hunters with Strong Medicine.'"

[2] McKegney's sense that the "masculinidian" is a simulation reflects Jean Baudrillard's conceptualization of the simulation from *Simulation and Simulacra* as the "generation by models of a real without origin or reality" (1).

[3] For Vizenor's elaboration of simulations and hyperreality in relation to settler representations of Native people(s), see "Postindian Warriors," in *Manifest Manners*, pp. 1-44; for definitions of Vizenor's terminology, see *Fugitive Poses*, pp. 14-17; for a useful reading of the complex philosophical structure within which Vizenor deploys these terms, see Hume, "Gerald Vizenor's Metaphysics."

[4] "Hegemonic masculinity" as Innes and Anderson use the term refers to the dominant representation of idealized masculinity within a given cultural formation, in this case settler whiteness in the U.S. and Canada. Australian sociologist R. W. Connell is widely credited with having coined the term in the 1980s. For Connell's articulations of the concept, see *Masculinities* and *Gender and Power*.

[5] Perea alludes to a lengthy body of scholarship that has since the 1980s announced and theorized a "crisis" in masculinity, particularly (though often unnamed as such) white heterosexual masculinity in the U.S. For selected examples of this work, see Faludi; Kimmel, *Angry* and *Manhood*; Kaufman; and Malin. For a consideration of how U.S. fiction has represented white masculinity in crisis, see Robinson.

[6] For an example of this line of inquiry within studies of euromerican masculinities, see Kimmel, *Manhood*.

[7] In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Justice gathers damaging settler narratives through which Native peoples have been characterized under "the story of Indigenous deficiency" (2), which he writes "seems to me an externalization of settler colonial guilt and shame" (4). For an elaboration of the many narratives Justice gathers under the phrase, see pp. 2-4.

[8] Considering tradition as outside of or apart from the structures through which settler superintendence is articulated raises difficult questions over the meaning and "content" of tradition. As Mark Rifkin argues in *When Did Indians Become Straight?*, "The citation of tradition does not itself guarantee that whatever is being designated remains unaffected by or exterior to settler socialities and governance; moreover, such formulations of tradition can function as a way of legitimizing native identity in ways that ultimately confirm, in [Taiaiake] Alfred's terms, liberal 'values and objectives.' Native feminists have explored the ways that contemporary articulations of peoplehood can rely on heteropatriarchal ideologies which are inherited from imperial policy but cast as key elements of tradition" (21). For the further elaboration of the critique, see pp. 17-25. Also see Barker, *Native Acts*; Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, pp. 79-103; and Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*.

[9] I use the term "peoplehood" to describe the novel's imagined alternative social formation in response to the novel's explicit avoidance of tribally specific markers. "Peoplehood" in its broadest sense also names social formations that are not dependent on lineal descent, federal recognition, geopolitical boundaries such as reservations, proximity to settler cultural imaginaries and figurations of "Indianness," nor to ethnological or anthropological imaginaries of cultural authenticity. For a discussion of peoplehood in this sense as a way of theorizing sovereignty, see Holm,

Pearson, and Chavis; for a discussion of peoplehood as a hermeneutic for Native literary studies, see Stratton and Washburn.

[10] Though not explicitly framed or addressed as such, *Mapping*'s critique of blood metaphors as ways to understand Native masculinities may also offer an implicit critique of blood metaphors as deployed within policy frameworks, especially blood quantum policies, used to determine Native identity. The Blackfeet Nation, of which Jones is an enrolled member, currently sets one-quarter Blackfeet blood as its enrollment criteria; however, this requirement has been challenged in the mid-1990s and again in the early 2010s as members of the Blackfeet Nation and "descendants," a term designating those without sufficient ancestry to enroll under extant blood quantum requirements, petitioned to change the policy from blood quantum to lineal descent. For reporting of these protests, see Redman, "Blackfeet—Fractioned Identity"; and Murry, "Tribe Split Over Blood Quantum Measurement." In his history of Blackfeet political organization since allotment, Paul Rosier notes that "blood" has been a key axis of factionalism among tribal members; see *Rebirth*. See also McFee, *Modern Blackfeet*. On the broader relationship of "blood" and blood metaphors, race and racial science, and Native peoples, see Tallbear.

[11] *Mapping* does not reference a specific location nor specific people(s). Some elements of the setting, however, suggest references to the Blackfeet Reservation, the boundaries of which border northwestern Montana to the east and south, the Canadian province of Alberta to the north, and Glacier National Park, a part of Blackfeet homelands and a continually contested boundary, to the west. Lakes within Glacier National Park, as LaPier writes, are prominent spaces within Blackfeet story. On Blackfeet lands and the political history of Glacier National Park, see Spence, *Dispossessing*, especially pp. 71-100; and Craig, Yung, and Borie, "Blackfeet Belong." *Mapping*'s ambiguous setting resonates with Jones's writing and comments regarding Indigenous identity and the critical reception of his and other Native writers' work. In "Letter to a Just-Starting-Out Indian Writer—And Maybe to Myself," Jones is sharply critical of the ways Indigeneity can overdetermine a work's literary value, foreclose on analyses of craft, and lock Native writers into exoticized market constructions (xi-xvi). However, Jones has also said, as Billy J. Stratton writes in "Come for the Icing, Stay for the Cake," that "because he is a Blackfeet person, his writings are necessarily Blackfeet and, more broadly, Native in their composition and literary significance. All of the stories he writes and shares emerge out of and draw significance from just such a Native understanding of the world, articulating a consciousness inextricably informed by his ancestry, travels, and experiences" (11).

[12] See also Jones's graphic novella, *My Hero* (2017).

[13] In *Beyond Settler Time*, Rifkin explores the relationship between theories of time and duration and conceptualizations of sovereignty and self-determination. In an effort to move beyond the supposed impasse of "modern" and "traditional," as one such way of naming temporal incommensurability, Rifkin argues for a conceptualization of temporal multiplicity that allows for "discrepant temporalities that can be understood as affecting each other, as all open to change, and yet as not equivalent or mergeable into a neutral, common frame—call it time, modernity, history, or the present." (3). For further elaboration of the concept, see esp. "Indigenous Orientations," pp. 1-47.

[14] Reviewers of *Mapping* have read the text in terms of haunting almost exclusively. For example, Sean Guynes reads *Mapping* as tracing "cycles of poverty, violence, and colonialism; of place, space, and time; of genre; of the expectations placed on contemporary Native authors—of being (and being made to be) Indian" (71). John Langan sees the novella as a "ghost story" as much as a "tale of haunting" and the "absences that bend and warp our lives" including especially the paternal absence at the core of the narrative, which Langan notes through reference to Junior's name, which "describes him in relation to someone else." Mark Springer likewise situates *Mapping* as a ghost story about "the ways in which the past forever haunts the present," and couches such haunting in terms of intergenerational trauma and "old wounds" that "never heal." Billy J. Stratton, in his review of the novel for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, sees the novella's "haunting" as central to its representation of the lines between past and present and the inhabitances that such temporal clashes engender, and reads its characters as living on "the margins of a spectral frontier landscape" that suggests an "uncanny, almost Gothic American West."

[15] On October 17, 1855, members of the Piegan, Blood, Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, Nez Perce, and Flathead tribes and a delegation of U.S. officials and Indian Agents signed the "Treaty with the Blackfoot Indians." Article 4 of the treaty designates Blackfeet lands as follows: "the tract of country lying within lines drawn from Hell Gate or Medicine Rock Passes, in an easterly direction, to the nearest source of the Muscle Shell River, thence down said river to its mouth, thence down the channel of the Missouri River to the mouth of Milk River, thence due north to the forty-ninth parallel, thence due west on said parallel to the main range of the Rocky Mountains, and thence southerly along said range to the place of the beginning, shall be the territory of the Blackfoot nation, over which said nation shall exercise exclusive control, excepting as may be otherwise provided in this treaty." For the full text of the 1855 treaty, see blackfeetnation.com/government/treaties.

[16] On September 26, 1895, members of the Blackfeet nation entered into an agreement to sell the mountain portion of their reservation lands, part of what is today

Glacier National Park, to the United States for $1.5 million. For the full text of the agreement, see blackfeetnation.com/government/treaties. For a history of the events leading to the agreement and its aftermath, see Spence and Rosier.

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