Tracing the Transits of Empire: “Mohawk Warriors” and “Iraqi Insurgents” in Canadian Newspapers

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Drawing on Jodi Byrd’s foundational theoretical intervention in The Transit of Empire (2011), my study compares Canadian media coverage of the Oka Crisis of 1990 to the Iraqi Insurgency of 2003. Specifically, I demonstrate how images of female sexual vulnerability were used as tropes to anchor particular constructions of the “Mohawk Warrior” and the “Iraqi Insurgent” as a masculine threat that provoked the deeply gendered violence of white-settler militarism. Beyond merely cataloguing the forms of racism prevalent in Canadian media coverage, my methodology interrogates rape culture as a travelling settler technology currently being deployed in the imperial arena.

Introduction

In the United States, the Indian is the original enemy combatant who cannot be grieved. –Jodi Byrd (2011, xviii)

There is little resemblance between the colonizer’s Indian and the real human beings who are Indigenous to this land. –Emma LaRocque (2010, 16)

Because the war on terror is waged from stolen land, invocations of Indianness are everywhere in the vocabularies of its violence. I am thinking here of the “Apache” helicopter, the “Tomahawk” missile, the use of the code-name “Geronimo” to signal the death of Osama bin Laden, and even the cowboyish performance of U.S. President George W. Bush in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq in March of 2003 (LaDuke 2011). As Susan Faludi noted, the president appeared during this time to be “dutifully working his way through the Western cliché checklist: ‘smoke ’em out of their holes’; ‘hunt ’em down’; ‘go it alone’; ‘wanted: dead or alive’” (Faludi 2003). Indeed, many scholars have argued (quite convincingly) that these symbolic deployments of Indianness give American military violence a coherence and continuity that rests upon its settler colonial foundations: for example, Kevin Bruyneel has suggested that “settler memory” functions by “habitually invoking settler colonialism in a manner that blurs the line between past and present, thus further re-inscribing the practices of present day settler violence and dispossession” (2016, 351); Boyd Cothran has moved this analysis beyond the discursive realm through his research in Remembering the Modoc War (2014), which historicized the connections between the U.S. Indian Wars and the war on terror as not only cultural or social, but as juridical and legal in nature. Cothran recalls that, when drafting the infamous “torture memos” of 2002, the U.S. Department of Justice relied on an 1873 decision by Attorney General George S. Williams regarding the treatment of the Modoc people as
stateless enemy combatants in the era of the Indian Wars (2014, 77). In *The Transit of Empire*—the monograph from which this paper borrows its title—Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd argued for the importance of this particular moment in U.S. legal and military history, writing that: “The Modoc, and by extension all who can be made ‘Indian’ in the transit of empire, can be killed without being murdered [...] as a result, citizens of American Indian nations become in this moment the origin of the stateless terrorist combatant within U.S. enunciations of sovereignty” (2011, 227).

Byrd’s articulation of the “transit of empire” as a process through which targets of U.S. militarism are imbued with Indianness has been a productive and even foundational intervention that has been taken up by many critical theorists of note. For example, in a previous volume of this journal, Billy-Ray Belcourt drew on Byrd’s *Transit of Empire* as way to articulate how “indigeneity circulates as a feral signifier in colonial economies of meaning-making” (2016, 23). Byrd’s work also dovetails neatly with Audra Simpson’s *Mohawk Interruptus*, wherein Simpson theorizes the implications of “political life across the borders of settler states” (2014). This article reflects an effort to think about how transits of empire and (re)deployments of Indianness function in a Canadian context to shape settler understandings of American imperial violence. My method will be discourse analysis in the broad sense and will be enacted through an interrogation of Canadian newspaper coverage of two key events: the Oka Crisis of 1990 and the Iraqi Insurgency following the American invasion of Iraq in March of 2003. In comparing Canadian coverage of the Oka Crisis—an armed Indigenous resistance movement in Canada that I review later in this paper—with representations of American military conflicts in Iraq, I hope to map the transits of empire that encourage Canadians to racialize stateless enemy combatants with reference to their particular national history of settler colonial violence. In short, my argument is that Canadians came to understand the American occupation of Iraq with reference to our own occupation of Indigenous lands. In making this case, I will privilege example over elaboration and rely on Canadian newspaper passages to illustrate the way in which representations of Mohawk Warriors have long informed Canadian understandings of terrorism, national security, and the legitimacy of settler military violence. An example, therefore, is in order.

Roughly one week after the bombing of the World Trade Centers (WTC) in February of 1993, the *Ottawa Citizen* ran an article by journalist David Harris, who issued the following warning to his readers:

> The New York World Trade Centre bombing opens a brutal chapter in terror warfare and carries a stern message for Canadians. No longer are civilian targets off limits in the worldwide terror offensive... Aboriginal issues will inspire other single-issue violence. Native extremists linked to the Oka Crisis are thought by some security officials to be stockpiling weapons—from heavy machine guns to armor-piercing shells and armored personnel vehicles—for terrorist warfare (1993, A9).

This passage, with its almost anachronistic vocabulary replete with words and imagery associated with the war on terror, suggests a kind of Canadian genealogy between the spectral threat of “Islamic terrorism” and settler anxieties over Indigenous resistance. More expressly, the passage reveals the extent to which the Oka Crisis of 1990 was a foundational event that shaped Canadian understandings of political violence, terrorism, and extremism. Indeed, one cannot meaningfully understand and unpack the regimes of racist representation that attend
the war on terror without locating them firmly in their settler colonial configurations. Such assemblages construct all stateless enemy combatants according to a settler colonial script wherein the Indian serves as the template or backdrop against which (white) settler military violence is rendered disciplinary, defensive of white women, and in the interests of Indigenous or Iraqi women.

A necessary reference here is certainly the Indian captivity narrative, wherein the “Indian Brave” emerges darkly from the woods to steal a white woman from her tranquil, ahistorical, settler locale (thereby provoking the disciplinary and chivalrous violence of the white male settler (Derounian-Stodola 1998, 29-32; Carter 1997, 15). Indeed, productions of images of female vulnerability and the military responses for which they garner support have always been central to the establishment and maintenance of settler colonies and settler imperial projects. This perhaps explains why Colonel Mark Tillman, former pilot of Air Force One, was widely reported to have lamented that “they caught us with our pants down” when describing the 9/11 attacks (quoted in Thompson 2011), suggesting via a sexual metaphor that American masculinity or national security had been feminized or wrongfully violated. As we shall see, these kinds of deeply gendered and sexualized metaphors were extremely common in Canadian newspaper coverage of the Oka Crisis and Iraqi Insurgency and served to construct Indigenous and Iraqi men as threats to national, as well as female, bodies. Indigenous feminists have long theorized this propensity of colonialist and racializing discourses to focus on gender (Allen 1986; Acoose 1995; Maracle 1996; Smith 2005). As Paula Gunn Allen explained in The Sacred Hoop, settler projects were only successful when white men were able “to mislead white women, and themselves, into believing that their treatment of women was superior to the treatment of the men of the group which they consider savage” (1986, 18). In tracking these representational regimes across Canadian newspaper coverage of military interventions in a settler colonial and American imperial setting, I hope to conclude with a coherent analysis that traces the transits of empire as they travel across the borders of settler states and between different targets of settler military violence.

A History of the so-called “Oka Crisis”

In 1961, the community council of Oka—a small municipality in southern Quebec—planned to build a golf course on Indigenous lands. The Mohawk community of Kanehsatá:ke quickly responded by issuing a legal claim citing their historical use of the region as a homeland, hunting territory, and ceremonial burial site (Alfred 1992). The claim was denied by the Office of Native Claims and a nine-hole golf course was built in bad faith. In 1989, the mayor of Oka announced city plans to expand the illegal golf course by adding nine more holes. Furthermore, he announced his intention to have a large portion of the pine forest (hereafter, the Pines) at Kanehsatá:ke cut down so that a middle-class housing project could be constructed (Pindera and York 1991). Having already exhausted all available legal avenues, a handful of Mohawk and Indigenous activists took to the Pines on 10 March, 1990 to defend the land. On 11 July, 1990 La Sûreté du Québec (SQ) (the provincial police force) attempted a violent forced dispersal of the standoff. Tear-gas canisters and flash-bang grenades were fired into the crowds of Mohawk men, women, and children. The SQ used the same crowd control tactics employed by provincial and national policing institutions at Restigouche, Lac Barriere, and Burnt Church—all sites of Indigenous resistance. Similar tactics, as well as more deadly ones, would also be employed at
the Gustafsen Lake Standoff that turned fatally violent on 11 September, 1995 (a significant date with respect to the purposes of this study). However, Baker argues that contemporary artists’ representations of animals have developed from using animals as only symbols or objects, instead using animals as subject, object, and medium in order to engage with their often ambivalent and complex place in the world (Baker 2013, p. 19). In this way, contemporary animal art is now a field in which it is somewhat unclear how this field can usefully contribute to questions of human/animal relations or knowledge of the non-human world (Baker 2006, 70). Therefore, whilst animal representation in art (or as art, in many cases) is not a new phenomenon, the artists’ own attitude towards the animal world is a major feature in their work. Baker’s characterization of most contemporary animal art is that it does not raise a simple question of what the presence of animals in art can do or say about the work. Rather, it blends both aesthetic and ethical strands of criticism, making it genuinely difficult to coherently address the multiplicity of arguments, questions, and problems that arise through a consideration of the work (Baker 2006, 70). This characterization resonates within Singer’s practice, which engages with the problematic of animal representation in contemporary art. Much of her taxidermied works present an ambiguous and disconcertingly violent response to the question of whether animal representation and the “use” of animals as artistic material can productively address the animal-human relationship, without reaffirming humanist notions of superiority and power over animals and the environment.

When an SQ officer was killed either by friendly- or cross-fire, Premier of Quebec Robert Bourassa invoked section 275 of the Canadian National Defence Act and the 22nd Royal Regiment of the Canadian Army (the ‘Vain-Doos’) were called in. Bayonets were fixed to Colt Canada C7 assault rifles, and Leviathan Light Armoured Vehicles (LAV-IIIIs) were fitted with machine gun turrets and rolled through the streets of southern Quebec. Hearing of this assault and firefight, the Mohawk peoples of the nearby community of Kahnawá:ke shut down a bridge in solidarity with those already under siege. For 78 days, the stand-off stretched on while negotiations remained largely stagnant. In her own reflections on the Oka Crisis, Simpson recalls that “anyone who watched the evening news or spoke to people in Kahnawá:ke or Kanehsata:ke could see, during the Oka Crisis the women were the primary negotiators with the Sûreté du Québec and then the Canadian armed forces” (2014, 149). As we shall see later in this paper, however, the representation of Mohawk Warriors by Canadian media was a profoundly gendered signifying practice that not only erased the central role of Mohawk and Indigenous women in the resistance, but also pathologized male participation in a fashion consistent with logics of settler colonial heteropatriarchy.

On 26 September 1990, Mohawk Warriors and other land defenders attempted to peacefully end the standoff by burning their weapons and walking out of the Pines unarmed. The settler Canadian military did not accept this peaceful resolution and instead chose to forcefully apprehend and arrest all people leaving the camp. The vicious treatment of these Mohawk men, women, and children can be seen in Alanis Obomsawin’s documentary film *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), wherein a fourteen-year-old girl (future Olympian Waneek Horn-Miller) was bayonetted in the chest while protecting her baby sister from the violent assault of settler soldiers.

The legacy of the Oka Crisis has been complex, though it is certainly fair to problematize the construction of the event as a “crisis.” Though it was a violent period of extreme hostilities and tension that I believe continues to shape Canadian anxieties surrounding political violence,
terrorism, and security it was also a generative moment in terms of strengthening supra-tribal affiliations, relations, solidarities, and confederacies amongst Indigenous peoples (Thanh Ha 2000). As Simpson wrote in Mohawk Interruptus, moreover, “the Oka Crisis illustrates the violent, vigorous defense of territory and the centrality of Mohawk women to that process” (2014, 148). And yet, the intensely masculinist imagery of the Oka Crisis—with Mohawk Warriors facing down Canadian soldiers—has also become an iconic series of representations that continue to provoke complex colonial anxieties in the settler population. For example, the most widely reproduced image from the Oka Crisis—the famous “face-to-face” photograph that features Canadian Private Patrick Cloutier in a tense stare-down with Warrior Brad Larocque—has an unsettling story behind it relevant to this study: that is, in the years following the Oka Crisis, Cloutier was arrested for possession of cocaine and impaired driving; following his discharge from the army, he had a short career as an actor in an adult film that offered a pornographic parody of the standoff (Allen 2014). The politics (or, perhaps, irony) of Cloutier’s iconography, drug use, and sexual labour will become more relevant later in this paper when reviewing the regimes of representation used to construct Mohawk Warriors and Iraqi Insurgents as indulgent, degenerate, and ruled by baser instincts. Before moving on to this discourse analysis, I will presently review the history of the so-called “Iraqi Insurgency.”

Reviewing the “Iraqi Insurgency”

During the two months of Operation Desert Storm in January and February of 1991, American fighter jets destroyed water purification facilities in Iraq’s urban centres (Lando 2008, 89-91). After Saddam Hussein’s forces were defeated and expelled from Kuwait as a consequence of this military invasion, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a series of resolutions placing embargoes and sanctions on Iraq (UNSC August 15, 1991; UNSC, September 15, 1991; UNSC April 14, 1995). These sanctions made it nearly impossible for Iraq to import chlorine and other chemical resources/equipment that allowed for the purification of water. Thus, in the five years following the Gulf War, over 500,000 Iraqi children died from preventable causes such as dysentery, starvation, or a lack of access to sterile medical equipment (UNICEF 1998). In 1995, the ill-fated Oil for Food Program was struck as a response to these horrifying death rates. The corrupt Oil for Food regime did little to address the material conditions for Iraqi citizens (Lando 2008, 189-191). The program persisted until March of 2003 when George W. Bush declared war on Iraq to the stated disapproval of the United Nations. Three days later, the United States Air Force began bombing raids as ground troops of coalition forces marched into Iraq.

On 1 May 2003, President Bush infamously appeared in a flight suit on an aircraft carrier and declared “mission accomplished” in Iraq. A month later, riots and demonstrations against American occupation surfaced in Baghdad and military attacks on U.S. troops began to occur with increasing frequency (Chehab 2006, 105-120; Allawi 2007, 240). By August of 2003, the Insurgency was in full effect as embassies, mosques, marketplaces, and American military outposts became frequent targets of attack. One year after the invasion, American troops were chased out of Fallujah by Insurgents who were heavily armed, well-organized, and highly motivated (Galbraith 2006, 4-14; Allawi 2008). In January of 2004, the al-Mada newspaper in Baghdad published a story on the corruption of the Oil for Food program and uncovered a bureaucratic assault on Iraqi well-being that implicated many American corporations and
individuals (Gold 2004, 84). In April of the same year, photos depicting the sexual abuse of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison served to further delegitimize the occupation in the eyes of Iraqi citizens and added fuel to the so-called Insurgency’s fire (Danner 2004; Butler 2009, 88-95). A year after this torture scandal, Insurgents took part in a full-scale assault on Abu Ghraib prison and killed many U.S. troops in an attack that can only be considered retributive in light of its historical context. The occupation of American forces fuelled sectarian conflicts and drew influential leaders to the region, who publicly committed themselves to waging war to rid Iraq of occupying troops. One of these leaders, Abu-Musab Al-Zarqawi, will be discussed in more detail later in this paper.

Mohawk Warriors as Masculine Threats

Both “Mohawk Warriors” and “Iraqi Insurgents” were immediately constructed by Canadian newspapers as masked and veiled terrorists who did not believe in democracy and who posed a sexual threat to women everywhere. For example, then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney referred to the land defenders as “terrorists” soon after they took to the Pines; in conversation with the media concerning the so-called “crisis,” Quebec premier Robert Bourassa claimed that “the toughest challenge for any government in the western world, in our world, is to defend democracy against people who do not believe in democracy” (Smyth 2000, 65). Unsurprisingly, Canadian newspapers were less restrained in their alarmist construction of the land defenders. The Globe and Mail, for example, retold a harrowing story that carried with it all the tropes of a captivity narrative: “I was chased out of my house by (Mohawk) Warriors with machine guns,’ Susanne Imbeau said, ‘my children saw that, and now they are scared of Indians […] We lived here all our lives, and now we feel like we’ve been raped” (August 2, 1990). In quoting a white French-Canadian settler woman who invoked rape as a means of articulating her experience at the hands of Indigenous land defenders, the Globe and Mail was participating in a very old colonial practice of recruiting images of (white) female sexual vulnerability to manufacture settler support for military violence against Indigenous bodies, uprisings, and communities. Consequently, Indigenous men in general and Mohawk men in particular became depicted as deeply violent towards Indigenous women, thereby signifying Indigenous masculinities as a threat to the safety and security of white women. Of course, this discursive practice also constructed the military response of the state within the trope of “white men saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak 1994, 93). Interestingly, an editorial by the late Richard Wagamese was widely printed in the Windsor Star, Vancouver Sun, Montreal Gazette, and Calgary Herald; in his editorial, Wagamese included the following passage which described a crowd of Mohawk men shouting down a Mohawk woman who dared to speak at a community event:

Suddenly, the quiet venom that had been directed towards the governments of Quebec and Canada, the military, media and 500 years of history was redirected toward her...After a tirade that lasted perhaps two minutes, her face drained of color, her eyes welled with sudden tears and her spirit was visibly shaken, eroded and wounded. She left us without a word (Wagamese 1992, B2).
Regardless of the author’s intentions, the printing of this editorial across so wide a platform helped to paint Mohawk Warriors as gendered threats who were oppressive to Indigenous women and also threatened the possibility of peace, order, and good government in Canada. Depictions of this sort were so numerous across Canadian media outlets and political discourses that labouring on many more examples would risk reproducing what I am trying to resist in this paper; nonetheless, a few more examples are necessary here to fully establish the extent to which these discursive practices were recruited as hegemonic devices to construct the land defence at Oka as a “crisis” that provoked immediate disciplinary violence from the settler state’s police force and standing army.

In September of 1990, the Ottawa Citizen ran an article with the title “Unfair Fights: Women of Oka Under Siege, Too.” The article’s author, Susan Riley, put the following question to her audience: “If the female militants of Oka were the outriders for a culture more egalitarian than our own, why are most of the native organizations in this country led by men?” Riley and the Citizen were not the only journalist and newspaper team to construct the Mohawk land defence movement as a group of rowdy and violent men oppressing their own women and children. The Toronto Star, for example, ran an article insisting that “[Aboriginal] Self-government should not mean the tyranny of armed youth over elders, women and children” (Bourrie 1990). Again, I linger here on these constructions not to be salacious, but to underscore to readers that the terrorist threat, who stockpiles weapons and threatens to impose conditions of sexual unfreedom on women, is a trope that has colonial foundations. We will now turn to its imperialist iterations and its deployment in coverage of the so-called “Insurgency” in Iraq.

Inventing the “Iraqi Insurgent”

Discourses surrounding the war on terror have also been productive of some blatant articulations of the dark, masculine, terrorist, male “Other” who threatens to impose on women conditions of unfreedom. Laura Bush’s claim that the war on terror is also “a fight for the rights and dignity of women” seems relevant here, as does her insistence that “terrorists” want to impose their way of life on western women as well:

Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror—not only because our hearts break for the women and children of Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan, we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us (quoted in Yaqoob 2008, 150).

Of course, for my purposes, the language here of “civilized people” is not coincidental or insignificant, as it discloses the way in which settler subjectivities come to understand themselves as civilized over and against the very gendered barbarism of non-white Others. More importantly, however, we see in this articulation of the war on terror the same well-worn colonial strategy of depicting aggressive military violence as a chivalrous gesture that secures both white and non-white women from the tyranny of “uncivilized” men. While this is generally the case when settlers talk about the war on terror, it was especially the case when Canadian journalists covered the Iraqi Insurgency.
Unsurprisingly, then, many Canadian newspapers assisted the Bush family in their ideological work and constructed Iraqi Insurgents resisting American invasion as sexual threats to women everywhere. Take for example the following depiction of life for a woman in Baghdad during the Iraqi Insurgency, which comes from the *Edmonton Journal* in December of 2006:

Browsing the shelves of a cosmetics store in the Karrada shopping district, Zahra Khalid felt giddy at the sight of Alberto shampoo and Miss Rose eye shadow, blusher[,] and powder. Before leaving her house, she had covered her body in a billowing black abaya and wrapped a black head scarf around her thick brown hair. She had asked her brother to drive. She had done all the things that a woman living in Baghdad is supposed to do these days to avoid drawing attention to herself. [...] Life has become more difficult for most Iraqis since the February bombing of a Shiite Muslim mosque in Samarra sparked a rise in sectarian killings and overall lawlessness. For many women, though, it has become unbearable. As Islamic fundamentalism seeps into society and sectarian warfare escalates, more and more women live in fear of being kidnapped or raped (Trejos 2006, D11).

The politics of white knighthood are on full display in the passage above: settler masculinity is constructed as a way to free non-white women from their Indigenous forms of patriarchy, which leave them veiled, unsatisfied, wretched, and subject to male sexual violence. Again, the language here is not coincidental: Islamic fundamentalism “seeps” into society in the words of the journalist, thus signifying a putrid or toxic problem that has to be cleaned up. The description of Mohawk men as “venomous,” I believe, served similar purposes of constructing non-settler masculinities as biological (and therefore as sexual) contaminants.

This signifying practice contributed towards constructing the Insurgency and by extension all Arab-Muslim men in the region as patriarchs who are much more violent to women than their white male counterparts. In the coverage of the Insurgency, for example, newspapers cited a presumed difference in gender relations as proof that the war in Iraq was a just war. This longer passage from a telling article in the *Montreal Gazette* is worth quoting in full:

Remember what Laura Bush said recently? “The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.” I couldn’t agree more. But I wonder whether Laura Bush has met Martha McSally. Martha McSally - excuse me, Lt.-Col. Martha McSally - is the United States’s highest-ranking female fighter pilot. She’s a graduate of the Air Force Academy, a champion triathlete, a pilot who flies the search and rescue mission over Iraq. If you crash in Iraq, she comes to get you. But when McSally goes off the base, she is required to wear an abaya, a long black robe covering her from head to foot. The woman who flies a plane is not allowed to drive a car. This leader of men cannot travel without a male escort. The American combat fighter must sit in the back seat. (Goodman 2001, B7)

Analogous to the construction of French-Canadian women as victims of Mohawk sexual aggression in the early 1990s, this depiction of a western woman reduced to a lowly status of unfreedom in Iraq is a production of an image of female vulnerability designed to manufacture consent for imperial invasions and occupations. The queer politics here are also difficult to miss: in rendering the western female subject as more successfully masculine than the Insurgent (i.e., Martha is a fighter, an athlete, a pilot, a hero, etc.), the article queered both white women and Iraqi men in accordance with the power relations of imperialism. That such a manly woman is made to sit in the back seat by comparatively womanly men is recruited as an
image of agitation and queer provocation to set things straight, so to speak. This rendering of Arab-Muslim men as feminized or queered by masculine women is also uncomfortably overt in the example of Lynndie England—the female U.S. soldier pictured in many of the sexual torture photos leaked from Abu Ghraib (McKelvey 2007). Such examples point to the unsettling centrality of sexual violence, heteropatriarchy, and gender to the racist imaginaries of settler militarism.

"Lasagna" and Zarqawi

In order to demonstrate the similar racialization techniques applied to both Mohawk Warriors and Iraqi Insurgents, it is useful to focus on two individuals who became the centre of much media coverage: Ronald “Lasagna” Cross and Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi. As we shall see, both men were presented to a Canadian readership as essentially the same stereotype: the dark, perverse, masked, and monstrous male Other who is a threat precisely because he fails to embody western masculinity.

The Toronto Star reported that Mohawk Warrior Ronald Cross “was so frequently photographed that some days it seemed he was the only Mohawk behind the Oka barricades” (Henton 1991, J20). Using Cross as a symbolic representation of all Mohawk men, Canadian newspapers deployed the stereotype of the “drunken Indian”; for example, the Ottawa Citizen and Halifax Daily News reported that he “stumbled into the Oka Crisis” and that “Lasagna's Trip to Detox Landed him at Oka” (April 12, 1993; April 20, 1993). The Montreal Gazette gave the following account of Ronald “Lasagna” Cross:

To his family and friends, Cross is a carefree party animal who likes to ride his black Yamaha motorcycle, hunt in Ste. Lucie and play golf. When he's partying, he sometimes loses his temper - a trait that led to the arrest of Cross and his brother Terry in a bar on Mother's Day. (Thompson 1990, A6)

This article presented Cross as a kind of hard-drinking, motorcycle-riding renegade, which was consistent with other representations of “Lasagna” across Canadian newspapers. Though this particular depiction arguably borders on the Romantic, constructions of the Warriors as renegades were used elsewhere to much more overtly racist ends that openly garnered settler support for racial violence. Take for example this altogether aggressive passage from an article printed in the Toronto Star in the midst of the Oka Crisis: “There are probably 40 of them at the core and they are the renegades […] the law means nothing to them unless it’s in their own interests. They're troublemakers and they should be dealt with like the Black Panthers were” (Nov 24, 1990, A2; emphasis added). Important in this passage is the inclusion of the “Black Panthers” in the construction of the monstrous male Other who disrespects democracy and poses a security threat to the settler state. Though differences in the racialization processes targeting Indigenous, Black, and other peoples of colour occur and must be attended to in the creation of a robust critique of settler white supremacy, similarities may also prove instructive; for example, revisiting the “motorcycle” passage above, we can note that it also constructs “Lasagna” as a bad son who missed Mother’s Day. As we know from constant constructions of Black fatherhood as absent or pathological, this construction of the racialized male as a familial
failure appears to be a mainstay of white supremacist racialization (Coles and Green, 2010). As we shall see, representations of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi followed similar signifying practices.

Zarqawi’s involvement in resisting the occupation was also constructed by Canadian newspapers as the function of a predilection for fighting and drinking. For example, *The Globe and Mail* wrote of Zarqawi that he was “initially a brawling, hard-drinking young man” who then “embraced Islam with the same fervency that he had shown for alcohol” (Koring 2005, A14). Zarqawi was said to be a “radical nut bar,” a “sick and depraved bastard,” a “perversion of Islam,” “the leader of the thugs,” and a producer of “snuff films” (Gormley 2004, A2). *The National Post* had this to say on the biggest figure of the Insurgency:

Zarqawi was Islamist trailer trash, a crude man whose love of violence was unvarnished, organic, perhaps perversely sexual. But Zarqawi was a man of his age: he is a big red dot on the graph charting the Islamic world’s moral free fall since modernity began battering traditional Muslim ethics, with ever-increasing effectiveness after World War One. (Gerecht 2006, A24)

Admittedly, there is an intensity to constructions of Zarqawi as a dysfunctional and depraved sexual subject that far exceeds the latent constructions of Cross as a perverse or monstrous being; nonetheless, the similarity between constructions of Mohawk Warriors and Iraqi Insurgents is, I believe, striking. Beneath the explicit construction of both Cross and Zarqawi as alcoholics lies a more implicit construction of the resistance movements themselves as forms of savage indulgence akin to (or used as a substitute for) consuming alcohol. Like the construction of Cross as a golfer, the depiction of Zarqawi as a drinker also serves to attack the authenticity of his identity as a Muslim man. In placing Zarqawi on the “chart” of the “moral free fall” of the “Islamic world” (always a dubious distinction), the journalist also tried to construct the resistance as an already-failed movement. In fact, if one reads a large swath of this sort of coverage, one begins to notice a very common tactic of describing one seemingly innocuous signifier of consumptive modernity on the “terrorist” body as a means of constructing the entire resistance movement as always already defeated. For example, newspapers pointed out that Zarqawi could be seen “wearing New Balance tennis shoes” in videos that he released, whereas Cross was fixed between the polarities of barbarity and civility when newspapers said that he “stood quietly sipping a 7-Up” at one of his legal hearings (El-Tablawy 2006, A4; MacLeod 1992, A1). Because sneakers and soda pop correspond to a symbolic order of modernity and the white western subject, references to these objects served to displace and alienate Cross and Zarqawi from the legitimate context of their own movements.

In keeping with the logic of constructing the male terrorist Other as a monstrous and perverse being who emerges from a plane of alterity, Canadian coverage of the Crisis and the Insurgency focused often on Cross and Zarqawi as a way of suggesting these resistance movements were neither truly Mohawk nor Iraqi. For example, newspapers noted often that “Lasagna” was not from Canada; that he had been raised by an “Italian-American mother [...] in Brooklyn, New York” and that he had spent years “cross-scaling Manhattan construction sites as an ironworker (his former occupation)” before “stumbling into the Oka Crisis” (*Halifax Daily News* April 20, 1993; *The Ottawa Citizen* April 12, 1993). This representation of Cross bolstered an attitude expressed by Mulroney, who said of those land defenders in the Pines: “some of them are not even citizens of Canada!” (quoted in Simpson 2014, 152; and Obomsawin, 1993). Similarly, Zarqawi was described as a “Jordanian-born militant [who] was the leader of [...] the
foreign-fighter wing of the insurgency” (MacKinnon 2006, A1). Many newspapers used some variation of this theme and referred often to “Abu Musab Zarqawi’s foreign-led Al-Qa’ida in Iraq” (Knickmeyer, 2007, A16). The logic in these constructions of Cross and Zarqawi as “foreign” served to further instill readings of each resistance movement as coming from elsewhere, as invasive, and as hostile. When newspapers later reported on the sometimes fatal violence done to Mohawk Warriors or Iraqi Insurgents, the figures of Cross and Zarqawi (as they were represented in previous coverage) helped to suggest that this kind of colonialist and imperialist violence was not being visited on Indigenous or Iraqi bodies who belonged in those particular spaces, but that militaristic assaults on Mohawk and Iraqi bodies were a consequence of “terrorists” being put in their place, so to speak, by settler militaristic violence. This emplacing or re-aligning might be read as a straightening or re-orienting in the context of Queer theory, speaking of a connection between settler coloniality and heteronormativity (Morgensen 2011); alternatively, it can also be understood as the transiting of a colonizing logic of Indigenous elimination founded on coercive configurations of “race, space, and the law” that produced excesses of violence such as the Pass System (Wolfe 2006; Razack 2002; Williams 2015); better yet, we can synthesize these understandings to theorize that acts of colonial discourse are always already heterosexist in nature, just as heterosexist discourses similarly serve to produce and uphold settler social regimes and domesticities (Carter 2008; Morgensen, 2011). In this and every other example discussed above, the transiting of Indianness is made possible by the proliferation of not only colonialist and racist discourses, but by the hegemonic normativity of settler gender relations and the construction of all alternatives as a threat to the security of the national and female body.

Conclusion

The war on terror is made possible by the continued dispossession of Indigenous lands and the ongoing non-recognition and negation of Indigenous sovereignties by settler states and societies. Thus, to critique the war on terror and the racialization of Arab-Muslim peoples without acknowledging their embeddedness in and relationship to ongoing settler colonial histories of anti-Indigenous violence (both material and representational) is to reproduce the same politics of erasure and coloniality that made the transiting of Indianness and the war on terror possible in the first place. To do so is not only ethically suspect, but also creates analytical difficulties and theoretical problems for those attempting to understand and unpack the racialization of Arab-Muslim peoples within the imperial logics of the war on terror. This is precisely because the regimes of representation and legal states of exception to which targets of U.S. empire are subject are always already founded on the negation of Indigenous nations and peoplehoods.

In Mohawk Interruptus, Simpson contends that “the Warriors at Oka became the synecdoche for Mohawks in general” and that the image of the “masked, camouflaged, Mohawk Warrior […] symbolized in the eyes of the Canadian government a contemporary, militant, lawless savagery” (Simpson 2014, 151). Given the cross-over or high degree of consistency between Canadian coverage of the Oka Crisis and the Iraqi Insurgency, I think it is possible and even productive to theorize the Mohawk Warrior as represented in Canadian newspapers as a synecdoche for more than just Mohawk or Indigenous peoples: indeed, the symbolic provocation to settler order, reason, and sovereignty embodied by the image of the “masked,
Tracing the Transits of Empire: “Mohawk Warriors” and “Iraqi Insurgents” in Canadian Newspapers

Travis Hay

"Mohawk Warrior" can be read as foundational to contemporary Canadian understandings of national security, terrorism, extremism, and violence. In this way, transits of Indianness across the political borders of the American and Canadian settler states pass through a historico-cultural lens consistent with the forms of settler occupation and Indigenous dispossession in that region. Accordingly, settler scholars have to attend to the liminal positioning of our own regimes of racism, representation, and coloniality and think, as Simpson has in Mohawk Interruptus, “across the borders of settler states.”

Scholars such as Simpson, Byrd, and Belcourt offer rather sharp critical tools in theorizing Indianness or Indigeneity as a transited, circulated, and endlessly (re)deployed essence that is cathected any time settler colonial states pursue imperial ventures; however, when representations of American imperial violence are printed in Canadian newspapers, the politics and purposes of transits of Indianness become analytically more complex. Thus, what I hope to have accomplished in the above was to have made a coherent critique of the way in which deployments of Indianness transit across the borders of settler states, across oceanic bodies of water, and across structures of settler feeling that have their own national, regional, and historical specificities: when settler Canadians made sense out of the violent occupation of Iraq by the U.S. military, they did so with reference to their own violent occupation of Mohawk lands. Accordingly, I submit that it is difficult and perhaps impossible to understand Canadian perceptions of the war on terror in a meaningful or robust way without at the same time making an effort to understand how American imperial violence is rendered coherent to Canadians with reference to colonial economies of meaning-making that position the Indian or Mohawk Warrior as “the original enemy combatant who cannot be grieved.”

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