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Narratives of Resistance: Reweaving Indigenous Epistemologies through Technology and Storytelling in Power's A Council of Dolls

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Abstract

This study expands the paradigm of literary research by analysing indigenous narratives of Native Americans, represented in *A Council of Dolls* by Mona Susan Power. The novel portrays colonial history, the exploitation of natives through missionary evangelism operated by Indian boarding schools, structured upon repressive Western ideals. The research analyzes experiences of native Americans in reclaiming their cultural epistemic sovereignty through three main characters of the novel, Sissy, Lilian and Blanche, accompanied by their dolls, who function as indigenous futuristic gadgets that help them unveil deeply rooted truths of colonial appropriation. The study analyzes novel through the theoretical perspective of Indigenous Futurisms, proposed by Grace L. Dillon. Dillon's concept of resisting against the fabricated narratives through indigenous technology, ancestral knowledge, native slipstream, indigenous conceptions of temporality and spatiality, enriches the exploration of the novel. The research aims to empower indigenous communities to restore their true indigenous narratives in the contemporary era by exercising their indigenous culture, values, traditions, and language. The research highlights the great need for autonomous indigenous educational systems rooted in indigenous sovereignty to heal the generational traumas of boarding schools. The study lays the groundwork for future explorations of marginalized voices through the framework of Indigenous Futurisms.

Keywords: Indigenous Futurisms, Indian Boarding Schools, Native Americans, Western Ideologies, Indigenous Narratives.

Introduction

The exploration and reclamation of indigenous culture is one of the most thriving trends in the contemporary literary research paradigm. Numerous indigenous authors have corroborated this literary dimension by radically reweaving their indigenous epistemologies through literary works. All previously existing literature focused on resisting fabricated narratives, their prejudiced representation, and cultural erasure from history. Grace L. Dillon, an American academic and author, revolutionised the indigenous discourse by introducing an innovative notion of Indigenous Futurisms. It is an artistic, literary, or theoretical movement that envisions the future through indigenous narratives, intricately intermixing ancestral knowledge with fantasy,

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science, fiction, and speculative elements. It focuses on the restoration of the indigenous cultural sovereignty of tribal communities by reviving their tragic past, renewing their struggling present, and asserting their presence in a progressive future through contemporary means, mainly technology and fantasy. This research analyzes these concepts through *A Council of Dolls* (2023) by Mona Susan Power, which mainly centers on reinforcing and imagining native agency through indigenous technology. Indigenous technology pertains to the indigenous tools, techniques, and knowledge systems created by native people over generations that weave their epistemological threads of culture and nationhood. It includes spiritual legacy, intergenerational knowledge, rhetorical powers of oratory, traditions, rituals, significance of native language, cyclical timelines, cosmological relations, myths, memory, and resilience. The study also focuses on the significance of autonomous and indigenous education systems and their futuristic importance in combating the generational trauma of Indian Boarding Schools that operated settler annihilation. The research aims to explore the journey of reclaiming cultural epistemic sovereignty through a detailed textual analysis of the novel through the radical perspective of Indigenous Futurisms.

Mona Susan Power is an American author, born and raised in Chicago. Her tribal and cultural roots belonged to the Dakota, a native tribe of North America. She is a registered member of federally recognised native American tribes in North Dakota and South Dakota. Susan Kelly Power, her mother, was a native American activist. The major rationale behind the establishment of the American Indian Center was the assistance of native American people who grappled with issues of unemployment, homelessness, and identity crisis after the Indian Relocation Act of 1956. The Indian Relocation Act was a U.S. Federal government initiative to encourage urban relocation, though voluntary, but it was a manipulative and strategic tool to marginalize the indigenous people and shape them by enforcing assimilation into the white American culture by abandoning their tribal, cultural, and ancestral affiliations. Power's father built a career in publishing as a sales agent. Power's parents' careers shaped her imagination and motivation to work for the native Americans. After her short-lived tenure in law, Power embraced the idea of becoming a writer. *The Grass Power* (1994), Power’s debut novel, to the most recent novel, *A Council of Dolls* (2023), she placed significant emphasis on her efforts to articulate the idiosyncratic concerns of native Americans.

A Council of Dolls is a powerful narrative that exposes the stark realities of White colonizers by portraying the traumatic experiences of indigenous Americans who encountered forced assimilation in the disguise of urban relocation and its fake glory. It is Power’s remarkable contribution to reclaim native cultural heritage by representing it through the first-person perspective of three Dakhóta women, Sissy, Lilian and Cora, belonging to three different generations. Power employed the indigenous technology in reaction to Western technology and science to revitalise the indigeneity

and explore the lingering effects of trauma consequent to colonialist oppression. The narrative is shaped by the indigenous elements, cyclical timeline, fantasy and supernatural characters, ancestral spirituality, and traditions that empower the characters to resist the dominant narratives of white Americans. Power exposed the reality of Indian Boarding schools in mainstream cities, Chicago, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania, as the machinery of assimilation retained by the colonizers to uproot the cultural sovereignty of indigenous Americans by enforcing restrictions on their native languages and cultures.

The retrospective introspection begins with Sissy in part one of the novel, set in the 1960s. She is presented as a little girl living in Chicago with a mentally disturbed and physically abusive mother, named Lillian. Instead of technical gadgets, Power, aligning with aspects of Indigenous Futurisms, operated against the colonial oppression and exclusionary approach by employing the dolls as active agents. Ethel, the black doll of Sissy in the first part of the novel, acts as her constant companion and saviour who protects her from the ancestral affiliations and intergenerational trauma of her mother. In the second part, the novel reassesses the past in the 1930s by reflecting on the childhood of Lilian and exposing the reality of a Catholic boarding school in Bismarck, run by cruel and racist nuns, employing missionary coercion and forced Christianisation. In the third part, the novel revisits the past experiences of native Americans in 1910 through Cora, Lilian's mother, and her doll Winona, who witnessed the Whitestone Hill Massacre in 1863. Power unveils the indigenous cultural erasure of the people of the Dakhóta tribe at the hands of colonial systems like Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. In the fourth part of the novel and the author's note, Power expresses her literary efforts and journey in articulating the past and present cultural sovereignty of indigenous people who are powerful enough to assert their cultural presence in the future.

Theoretical Framework

The research employs an innovative theoretical framework by applying the theory of Indigenous Futurisms, currently trending in the field of research. This study particularly applies the radical ideas of Grace L. Dillon. She is of Anishinaabe and European background. Dillon introduced the visionary concept of Indigenous Futurisms in *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (Dillon, 2012). This book is a collection of works of various international and indigenous authors from North America, the Caribbean, and Australia. It asserts the substantial role of Native science fiction and indigenous knowledge in opposing its preconceived notions as mythical and primitive by the Western discourses. Dillon argues, while, for decades, science and technology were adopted to colonise native Americans, the indigenous people, chiefly the non-white authors can challenge these fixed hegemonic ideologies by exercising indigenous-led science fiction to imagine and claim future not stabilized as unidimensional, operated by white Westerns, but having diverse inclusive approach that gives space to multiple indigenous futures,

which refers to the plurality of the term "futures", which Dillon futuristically employed. Dillon envisions that for years native writers, scholars and theorists have reflected upon the traumas of colonization and focused solely on the woeful conditions of indigenous people but in contemporary era, to regain and assert the command of contemporary discourse, indigenous groups must utilise science and fiction to reclaim their cultural sovereignty by reviving their traditional indigenous knowledge systems which, Judy M. Iseke (Métis) and Leisa Desmoulins described as "integrated epistemological systems taught through indigenous pedagogies that support an understanding of an interconnected world and our places within it," integrating "ideas that are commonly referred to as scientific knowledge" (Iseke & Desmoulins, 2015, p. 31). Dillon, in *Walking the Clouds,* her famous anthology, motivates indigenous communities to create balance through their powerful weapon, intergenerational storytelling, "Native apocalyptic storytelling, then, shows the ruptures, the scars, and the trauma in its effort ultimately to provide healing and a return to bimaadiziwin, "the state of balance" (Dillon, 2012).

The major element of indigenous knowledge systems is the native slipstream. Dillon defined native slipstream as "a species of speculative fiction within the sf realm, infusing stories with elements such as time travel, alternate realities, multiverses, and alternative histories" (Dillon, 2012, p. 30), while integrating collective indigenous values into the narrative framework. Furthermore, Dillon theorizes that "native slipstream perceives time as a continuum encompassing pasts, presents, and futures, flowing together like currents in a navigable stream. This perspective mirrors nonlinear thinking about space-time" (p. 30). The nuanced native conceptions of temporality and spatiality reject fixed Western epistemologies, allowing the concepts of multiverse, fantasy, intergenerational knowledge, and collective narrative memory in native science fiction.

Research statement

The research aims to explore the journey of native Americans in the novel *A Counc*il *of Dolls*. It focuses mainly on their journey of reclaiming their cultural epistemic sovereignty. The research examines the significance of oral storytelling and indigenous technology in reasserting their indigenous narratives that Western systems tried to eliminate by enforcing their dominant ideologies.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the role of Indian boarding schools in indigenous repression
- To examine the elements of indigenous technology employed in the novel
- To analyze the journey of cultural resistance against state-sanctioned narratives

Research Questions

- How does A *Council of Dolls* unveil missionary evangelism of Indian boarding schools?
- Which elements of indigenous technology are employed in A *Council of Dolls?*
- How do native Americans reclaim their lost cultural epistemic sovereignty?

Significance of the Study

This research reinforces an inclusive approach by exploring and reclaiming the narrative of an indigenous group of particular ethnicities, American natives. The research aims to empower the indigenous nations to resist against the dominant ideologies by reclaiming their past, present, and anticipating a bright future. The study provides an innovative research approach by applying a distinct theoretical lens, Indigenous Futurisms. The research only focuses on the exploration of the journey of an indigenous group to restore their cultural identity through expressing and practicing their native traditions and rituals. The research specifically analyzes the novel through one particular theoretical lens and dimension. It can be explored through a psychoanalytic perspective, investigating how colonial oppression operates psychologically. The research can be expanded by applying trauma theory to explore the traumatic experiences of indigenous Americans. The novel can be analyzed through feminist perspectives by focusing on the significant role of women in reclaiming their cultural identity. It can also be examined through Foucault's concept of knowledge and power to demonstrate the dominant and fabricated narratives imposed by hegemonic ideologies of colonizers who hold major knowledge systems.

Delimitations of the Study

The study only focuses on the analysis of *A Council of Dolls,* examined through a particular theoretical perspective of Indigenous Futurisms, proposed by Grace Dillon. The research only focuses on the contemporary indigenous narrative of Native Americans. The novel can be analyzed through various other theoretical lenses. It can be analyzed through a feminist perspective, psychoanalytic analysis, and trauma theory.

Review of the Literature

Fricke (2019), in a scholarly essay, explores the theory of Indigenous Futurisms, proposed by Grace Dillon, which refers to reimagining future and past, not as people's wishful remediation but perseverance of ancestral knowledge that survives against the forces of genocide or war, through Indigenous epistemologies, aesthetics, and resistance narratives. Originally rooted in comparative literature and cultural studies,

it has now extended to incorporate the visual arts. Indigenous futurist artists, mainly Ryan Singer, Skawennati, and Jeffrey Veregge, adopt new media (digital art, VR) as well as traditional forms (beadwork, painting) to criticise colonialism, environmental degradation, genocide, and institutional racism. These works intermix science fiction narrative devices with tribal histories, ancestral knowledge, and aesthetics to reclaim cultural survivance and resistance against Western colonial narratives. Fricke emphasizes that Indigenous Futurisms is not centered on fantasy or escapism but reclamation of temporal and spatial indigenous narratives, illustrating how indigenous communities have endured apocalyptic realities. Scholars argue that the term "Indigenous" is politically more encompassing than "Native American," as it contributes to the inclusive approach of Indigenous Futurisms and gives rise to global Indigenous solidarity. Indigenous Futurisms does not derive from Western Futurism, which corresponds with misogyny and nationalism and fixed ideologies rooted in prejudices, but instead offers speculative counter-narratives that challenge Western discourses and envision alternative, decolonial futures (Fricke, 2019).

Hoque (2017) explores through imagination, critique, and activism, the use of speculative technology to recenter indigenous narratives, simultaneously critiquing settler colonial structures in Canada. Hoque presents a speculative scenario of a future society where holographic elders narrate indigenous stories (intergenerational oral storytelling), erased by colonial powers, at public places, street corners, and offices. People with optometric and auditory augmentation experience this content through RFID (radio-frequency identification chips) embedded in their belongings and clothing. Hoque then draws a parallel to today's Canada, where indigenous people are victims of systemic prejudice, violence, and colonial erasure, which causes poor health, education gaps, and loss of communal identity. Hoque asserts that speculative design can be employed as a tool for activism and resistance. She alludes to contemporary applications of indigenous speculative storytelling, like Adrian Duke's Wikipedia App, a crowdsourced app that allows users to access oral histories, audio, video, and pictures, linking indigenous stories to particular places in Vancouver. Hoque believes that indigenous storytelling is not a passive gadget, because the use of speculative design, technology, and storytelling is a powerfully political and active tool of decolonisation that resists racism, colonialism, and systemic inequality while imagining an alternative future. Hoque explains that Indigenous Futurisms blurs the lines between neglected past, enduring present, and future, creating cyclical and relational spatial and temporal dimensions that reflect indigenous narratives. She asserts that the goal is not just to imagine new futures but to unveil unsettling realities of the present (Hoque, 2017).

Elwood (2024) argues that futures are not neutral or abstract as they are deeply rooted in narratives regarding history, land, race, identity, and resistance. Scholars like Cornum (2023) and Purifoy (2021) describe that future narratives are not easily guaranteed; they only sustain when indigenous communities, Black, Dalits, Latinx,

disabled, or queer, resist violence, oppression, and erasure and imagine the future through creative means. Elwood alludes to writers like Octavia Butler, N.K. Jemisin and Nnedi Okorafor employed speculative fiction not merely as fantasy or imagination but as a critical analytical framework to challenge the dominant fixed Western ideologies. Black and Indigenous Futurisms reject Western ideas of linear progress directed towards technology or modernity. Geomedia, deep integration of digital media with physical space, despite its claims of universal benefits, is criticized for excluding marginalized communities, while Afrofuturism and Indigenous Futurisms offer alternative digital practices, like community-driven storytelling, blogs, forums, and social media that aid collective imaginations of the future by indigenous groups. Black and Indigenous Futurisms offer dynamic epistemologies and practices that transform our notions regarding time, space, technology, and politics of future-making (Elwood, 2024).

Tateyuskanskan (2023) highlights that one of the gravest harms American society has inflicted upon Native children is the trauma caused by the federal boarding school system. The schools were not merely educational systems but missionary agents that were designed to erase indigenous roots, culture, and identity by targeting vulnerable children, known as wakaneja (sacred beings or little ones). The U.S government employed inhumane policies to retrieve land and resources from Native tribes. Tateyuskanskan claims that writers from Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires), like Power, play a significant role in narrating the painful truth about the tragic history of native Americans. Through *A Council of Dolls,* she represents a strong portrayal of Oyate (the Nation)'s ways of survivance, healing despite enduring generations of trauma. The novel represents the story of three generations of women, Cora, Lillian and Sissy, and their comforting partners, their dolls. It exposes the boarding schools that operated from around 1819 to 1969, segregated children from their families, culture, and community, which led to intergenerational trauma. The novel represents the sufferings of native children, from lack of medical help, hard labour, physical violence, which even caused deaths, and children were secretly buried in graves, and families were left unanswered. These policies led to the loss of culture, language, and spiritual practices. Still, American society doesn't entirely acknowledge or redeem these appalling transgressions (Tateyuskanskan, 2023).

Patterson (2023) examines how Indian boarding schools destabilised indigenous, traditional family and gender roles within Native communities. Men, who were traditionally considered as the protectors of their families and communities, were instead trained in skills such as farming and other feminine tasks that were typically performed in Native American societies. This tragic shift devalued their sense of masculinity even further, especially because fathers were powerless to prevent their children from being taken away to these schools. Weaver (2019) described this traumatic experience by mentioning how native men were marginalized and how this suppression heavily charged them emotionally and psychologically. Despite this

widespread disruption, one traditional family role remained relatively stable: the role of grandparents and elders in transferring cultural values, teachings, and traditions across generations. The boarding school attendance largely impacted this connection, as children had little to no contact with their grandparents. In addition to this loss, the prohibition of Indigenous languages and the punishment of students for their articulation resulted in many survivors not transmitting their languages to their own children (Gantt, 2016, p. 14).

Indigenous education continues to be a worldwide issue, with colonised nations consistently reflecting poorer outcomes for Indigenous students (McCarty & Nicholas, 2012). The dominant framing of underachievement, low Year 12 completions, and higher education disparities (Griffin & Trudgett, 2018), often diverts responsibility from institutions (Shay & Oliver, 2021). As Shay et al. (2023) argue, Indigenous education is multifaceted, which integrates curriculum design, community connection, and Indigenous staffing, though it remains grappling with tensions between Western frameworks and Indigenous paradigms (Nakata, 2007). Lowe et al. (2019) synthesize a thorough review of research by foregrounding Indigenous voices, while Moodie et al. (2021) investigate epistemic questions like what is considered success, what is accepted as proof, and whose voices matter. These questions examine the research process itself, mainly focusing on who is responsible for the production of knowledge. The framework of Indigenous Futurisms established itself as a framework that resists settler narratives of Indigenous erasure (Dillon, 2012; Teuton, 2018), illustrating how present and past shape future visions of indigenous nations (Kulago, 2019). Vowel (2022) emphasizes Indigenous scholarship as a refusal of annihilation, creates room for Indigenous patterns of living, thinking, and practicing to continue in the future, while Paradies (2020) warns of modernity's destructive trajectory due to problems like poverty, environmental damage, and the presence of toxic substances in daily life, which causes mass consumption. These issues, along with settler thinking, endanger indigenous futures. Against the backdrop of inclusion debates such as the "no" vote on the Indigenous voice (Fredericks & Bradfield, 2021; Raciti, 2022) highlights that Indigenous voices were never absent, only silenced and marginalized. Thus, Indigenous futurity in education calls for both indigenous sovereignty and authentic inclusion. (Shay et al., 2024)

Lee and McCarty (2017) highlight that education for Native American students is innovative in that it encompasses not only concerns of language, "race"/ethnicity, social class, and other dimensions of social hierarchy. It majorly focuses on tribal sovereignty: the right of indigenous people to have self-government, to make their own decisions, to make educational policies, and the right to express their local language and culture in specific ways following their own traditions and norms (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006, p. 9). Tribal sovereignty always existed; it can be traced back before the U.S. Constitution, and it is also legitimized in the Constitution, treaties, and laws (Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001, p. 65). Despite sharing common

educational issues with other marginalized communities, Native Americans have faced distinct problems, influenced by idiosyncrasies of their relationship with the federal government and their standing as sovereign nations (Lee & McCarty, 2017).

Eubanks (2018) reviews *The Book of Phoenix* (2015) by Nnedi Okorafor, who is a Nigerian American author, and contributed to the flourishing of the genre of speculative fiction. The book garnered the attention of scholars and the public. Eubanks explores how Nnedi blends various genres like science fiction, fantasy, postcolonial literature, magical realism, Afrofuturism, feminism, and folklore. She is a seminal part of emerging writers who employ speculative fiction to fight against racial elements traced in both genres and the real world by envisioning futures and other worlds (Okorafor, 2015). Eubanks explains that Postcolonial literature is created by people belonging to countries once colonised by European empires, so it deals with themes of identity crisis, cultural mixing, and Western influences post-independence. The term "post" is ambiguous and misleading because many countries still experience neo-colonialism, where local, cultural, and economic power replaces military forces (Hall, 1996). Western science fiction supports ideas of control over planets or artificial humans since its history is tied to colonialism, but writers have the power to redefine these ideas through a postcolonial perspective. The use of science fiction was often criticized, while Nalo Hopkinson asserted that a similar genre can be best utilized by flipping it to represent experiences of colonized people, to resist the Western narratives through anger and humour (McGrath, 2011).

Ashcroft (2001) labelled this as "transformative resistance," where indigenous groups employ tools of colonizers, genres like science fiction or technology, to express their native narratives. Okorafor resists racial ideologies and meta slavery narratives through science fiction and indigenous futurisms (Eubanks, 2018). This research aligns with these pre-existing scholarly works as it focuses on exploring decolonial aspects, indigenous narratives, and the importance of Indigenous self-education against settler annihilation through Power's novel, *A Council of Dolls*. She presents the journey of native Americans and their generational struggle against the hegemonic ideologies and colonial oppression of white Americans, who continue to exploit the indigenous communities due to intergenerational trauma.

Research Methodology

This research employs qualitative approaches, textual and thematic analysis, complemented by a close reading method, implementing particular theoretical aspects of Indigenous Futurisms, particularly academic propositions of Grace L. Dillon, to examine the reclamation of indigenous narrative and cultural sovereignty in *A Council of Dolls*. Textual analysis approach is used to analyze how text, storyline, language, characters, themes, and underlying meanings are constructed within particular social, political, cultural, and historical contexts in the novel. The research

paper utilizes convenience sampling to select particular characters of novels to extract relevant instances of reclaiming indigenous identity through their indigenous technology and resisting the imposed evangelism of white Americans.

Data Collection

The primary source of the study, *A Council of Dolls*, is Power's intricate composition, which offers great illustrations for insightful exploration of the journey of reasserting indigenous narrative through three major characters, Sissy, Lilian, Blanche, and their dolls, Ethel and Mae. The secondary sources of this research include pre-existing academic articles, journals, literary works, and archival materials in the relevant research paradigm. The theoretical aspects of Indigenous Futurisms, Dillon's theoretical works, mainly her anthology Walking the Clouds, aid the interpretation of the indigenous narrative and its reclamation in the novel.

Discussion and Analysis

The present study analyzes the journey of reweaving the indigenous narrative of Native Americans by challenging the dominant Western ideologies and resisting colonial repression exerted by white Westerners on the indigenous communities throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The research explores the role of Indian boarding schools, the machinery of the calculated exercise of missionary evangelism. The previously existing indigenous literature focused on the traumatic experiences of marginalized groups, while the research, employing the innovative and contemporary literary analytical and theoretical perspective of Indigenous Futurisms, focuses on the courageous contemporary strategic resistance of indigenous people, who reassert the significance of indigenous technology, which constitutes the seminal aspects of indigenous culture and ancestral knowledge. The research scrutinizes the cyclical journey in which indigenous communities reclaim their past, the importance of their sociocultural aspects in their conscious living in the present, and purposeful presence in a progressive future.

Sissy's Encounter with Missionary Indoctrination: A Generational Impact

The research analyzes the malicious function of Indian Boarding schools that thrived after the arrival of native Americans in mainstream American cities due to the Urban Relocation Act, which, like the American dream, lured native Americans through its simulated glory. As Sissy mentions, "I've learned a lot from her angry shouts about the mayor, the president, and our whole stinking government—how Indians are lured to big cities to turn us into white people and make sure we lose what's left of our land" (Power, 2023, p. 19).

Power employed Indian Boarding Schools as representatives of Western oppressive systems aimed to erase the indigenous culture and identity, by separating children from families and shaping them through their violent policies and taming them according to Christianity and Western ideals. The research explores the operation of hegemonic ideologies through schools by analysing three female protagonists of the novel, Sissy, Lilian and Cora. The novel begins with the tragic narrative of intergenerational trauma experienced by Sissy in the 1960s, living in Chicago, a mainstream American city that still practices racial prejudice, as Sissy narrates her mother, Lillian's comment about Chicago, “If this city had a proper name, it would be 'Prejudiced, Illinois” (Power, 2023, p. 6). Lillian is a native American woman going through psychological turmoil caused by colonial oppression she faced at an Indian boarding school. She is psychologically afflicted with the ongoing trauma of colonial appropriation, which she fears her daughter might also face. This turns her into a mother having a distant relationship with her daughter, Sissy, due to her fury and embedded aggression. Sissy explains the parents' fear for their children as she narrates her father, Cornelius's, apprehensions;

Dad says I’m the reason she should stay at home; I should have the guidance and safety they never had, taken away to Indian boarding schools when they were so young. There's a word he uses that I don't understand because I miss too much of what he says around it: "indoctrination." He wants Mama to keep me away from those kinds of doctors or teachers who will do worse than take my land: they'll steal my spirit. (Power, 2023, pp. 15-16).

Lillian and the Trauma of Christian Re-Education: Evangelism in the Name of Discipline

Lillian’s traumatic hysteria makes her crazy to such an extent that she kills her own daughter, as Ethel, Sissy's doll, narrates, "She says it looks like the Devil never left Mama when the nun let her out of the closet. She says Mama's going to hurt us, the Devil's going to hurt us (Power, 2023, p. 57).

The schools were run by Christian fathers and nuns, in cultural or religious appropriation of native Americans, especially people belonging to the indigenous tribes of Dakhóta and Lakhota, because, according to them, as Lillian narrates, "we're not supposed to have bodies all riddled with sin but turn ourselves into holy spirits that rise above life and blood and childbirth" (Power, 2023, p. 99). They intimidated children to such an extent that their traumas prevailed, as Sissy narrates the stories her mother told her about boarding schools: "There was a nun who was mean to her because she didn't like that Mama was smart and that she'd taught herself to read before she ever went to school. The nun locked her up in a dark closet when she knew all the answers, because she was supposed to be dumb. She told her the Devil was in there with her, and Mama sassed back that she didn't care. (Power, 2023, p. 10). Lillian inculcates the trauma of Indian boarding schools in her daughter through stories, as Sissy states,

Mama still hates Sister Frances the most, even though she's supposedly been dead a long time. That nun would sniff at Mama right after she stepped out of the shower and tell her, "You stink. Wash yourself again." She tripped Mama once when she was going down the stairs, then looked away like it was just Mama being clumsy. Mama chipped her tooth, and she said she looked like a wolf on that side of her mouth until someone filed it down for her (Power, 2023, p. 16).

Colonial Education Versus Indigenous Epistemologies: A Conflict in Lillian's Formation

The novel then leads to its second part, which is about Lillian's childhood and her parents, Iná, her mother, and Jack, his father's narrative. Power then delves into narrating the tragic experiences of Lillian and her sister, Blanche, at Bismarck, Indian boarding school, and their third sister, Alvina, and the boys at the Flandreau Indian School in South Dakota. This portrays the broken families and intergenerational trauma caused by Indian boarding schools. Lillian's narrative exposes more gruesome realities. It reveals that indigenous languages were banned in Indian boarding schools, as a strategy to uproot indigenous languages and identity, as Lillian narrates, "Our languages are strictly forbidden in this place (Power, 2023, p. 78). Nuns and fathers treated native children inhumanely by imposing brutal punishments like starvation and imprisonment, as Lillian warns Lakhota boys and Blanche by saying, "try not to get locked in the punishment box, 'cause that's where the demon lives" (Power, 2023, p. 79). Cornelius also warns children not to act against the rules, as he found a child dead who was buried in a secret closet, and he only found haunting words written, "HELP HOME HELP HOME HELP HOME" (Power, 2023, p. 80). The Indian boarding schools imposed religious sexual repression on indigenous youth by integrating their Euro-Centric, gender-based moral policing through physical punishment as Sister Frances warns girls of male "things", which she labels as filthy and evil, and anyone found accused of it, "she points to the wall where a heavy strap hangs on a nail—an angry being, greedy for bare flesh" (Power, 2023, p. 81). Lillian had striking reading abilities and potential to learn different languages, which intrigued Sister Frances, as the boarding schools want children only to learn filtered knowledge provided to them through calculations. She is imprisoned in a dark room.

Reclaiming Language, Land, and Memory: Lillian and Blanche's Path to Epistemic Sovereignty

The boarding schools had the agenda to eradicate indigenous cultures and identities through evangelism, by scheduling chapel services at schools and compelling indigenous children to listen actively to sermons full of hatred against their indigenous ancestors, as Father Mahoney, during his chapel service, gives a sermon against Sitting Bull, a highly venerated spiritual indigenous ancestor. He tries to hypnotize indigenous children by polluting their brains, he says

Think of yourself as turning your back on the past. Envision yourself turning your back on dangerous miscreants like Sitting Bull and the lost souls who trusted him. Turn your back even on family members should they continue on a wayward road. Do not romanticize what is rightfully gone, rightfully dead. Face forward and head into the light that is Jesus Christ, Our Holy Redeemer. You will never be sorry! (Power, 2023, p. 105).

These fiery sermons enraged indigenous children, like Blanche who resist against them, as Blanche sings Lakhota songs in response, and her voice is temporarily silenced by nuns through soap soup which kills her, as Lillian states, “Sister Frances is trying to thrust soap in Blanche’s mouth, her homemade industrial soap that can burn for days” (Power, 2023, p. 107).

The Dolls as Carriers of Indigenous Technology and Spiritual Insight

The research explores the reclamation of indigenous epistemic sovereignty in response to the malicious efforts of evil Western doctrines to erase indigenous epistemologies. The research analyzes through close reading and textual analysis of novels that the focus of indigenous contemporary literary works is not mainly on representing their traumatic pasts, but to envision a progressive future by boldly representing the evident presence of their culture and indigenous existence. Power's work mystically aligns with Dillon's ideas of Indigenous Futurisms. Power employed all the strategies proposed by Dillon to resist the dominant narratives through speculative fiction. The research analyzes that Power intricately and innovatively employed "dolls" and her female protagonists as futuristic gadgets that overpower the monotonous Western ideals by operating in the genre of science fiction and technology through indigenous perspectives. The study explores how Power utilizes the cyclical, non-linear dimensions of temporality and spatiality by presenting the storyline of the novel in opposition to the fixed temporal and spatial colonial notions. As Lillian states, "Iná is a 'wašíču pretender," and points as proof to the gold timepiece that's pinned to her graduation dress, since according to Jack, only white people are arrogant enough to think they can capture Time" (Power, 2023, p. 74). Power presented a story in the order of the present 1960s, then delving into the past 1910, but envisioning a progressive future in both eras. The research scrutinizes that Power asserts indigenous narrative through a novel approach towards technology by not just limiting it to artificial gadgets but also to living beings, traditions, ancestral knowledge, spiritual affiliations, and mystical bonds. The research focuses on various indigenous aspects that help in resisting fixed ideologies.

Spiritual Resistance Through Storytelling: The Dolls’ Narratives as Epistemic Acts

The first element that aligns with the aspects of Indigenous Futurisms is the utilisation of dolls like Ethel and Mae to act as futuristic gadgets that protect the indigenous people from colonial oppression. In the first part, Ethel acts as a protective

shield that guards Sissy from her mother's ferocious attitude towards her, embedded in her psychological turmoil of traumatic experiences of racial discrimination faced in Indian boarding schools. Ethel warns Sissy about all the threats, like she says, "Racism follows wherever you go...Into your future. Into your soul" (Power 2023, p. 49). Ethel warns Sissy about her mother's rage and tries to protect her, as she knows that her trauma might harm Sissy, even though Sissy's mother feels Ethel's cold behaviour towards her, as she says, "I swear that doll stares at me sometimes" (Power, 2023, p. 42). The dolls act as symbols of progressive future in form mystical unifying forces that unite generations as Sissy's mother, Lillian herself had a doll named Mae, who acted as her guide and guard during her hard time at boarding school, especially when she was imprisoned in dark punishment room for touching a forbidden book but her doll Mae despite being buried with Ada, and ailing girl to whom Lillian gifted her doll as gift, but Mae comes back to protect her during dark times as Lillian claims, “Mae’s company warms this cold season that drags on without sunshine” (Power, 2023, p. 102).

Matrilineal Wisdom and Resistance: Cora, Lillian, and Sissy’s Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing

The second element of indigenous technology is the significance of familial connections and lineage, which holds primary importance for indigenous culture. Lillian states, while commenting about Lakota boys in her school, that, "Like us, they've been taught it's important we map our family connections since these branches say more about where we come from than the names of towns" (Power, 2023, p. 82). Ancestral knowledge, major element of Indigenous Futurisms, plays important role in resistance and futuristic claims, as ancestral knowledge narrates the true history and sociocultural reality of indigenous culture, like Sissy's mother informs her, "I want you to be strong, to be able to defend yourself. Our people have been pushed around for generations by dangerous bullies in greater numbers than us, who have more weapons" (Power, 2023, p. 42). Indigenous children draw inspiration from their elders as Lakhota boys, Cornelius and Luther, proudly narrate the story of Uncle Melvin, who stole the Holy tabernacle to verify the priest's powers and then set it free. This strengthened indigenous children like Lillian and Blanche to unite with Lakota boys to steal Sister Frances' Holy tabernacle. The children brag, "We'll be legend," Blanche declares, and I swear there's a fire burning behind her eyes; I see flames shoot past the irises. The boys are nodding. "I like it," says Luther. "We'll do it," Cornelius promises, his face serious like he's taken an oath (Power, 2023, p. 81).

Lillian's father, Jack, also inspires Lillian and Blanche when he proudly writes back the response to Sister Frances' letter, in which she informs parents that their daughters are incorrigible.

He writes that he is “delighted” we are of “independent minds, unassailed, unconverted, and not unduly influenced by the likes of such a limited mind as yours,

totally lacking in imagination." He says we are members of a sovereign nation far older than hers, and who is she to decide our worth? (Power, 2023, p. 86).

The research traces the significant aspect of Indigenous Futurisms, oral storytelling, power of oratory in indigenous culture, that move from one generation to another, as Sissy mentions that her mother narrates her the stories of her experiences at boarding school, "She tells stories about what she was like at my age, when she was seven years old. How she went to Indian boarding school with her sisters, but they were older, so they slept on a different floor" (Power, 2023, p. 10).

The research examines the importance of parental education as Jack tells Sissy and Blanche about cunning Western ideologies that aim to erase our culture. He states, "We're used to being made to feel dirty, backward, feeble-minded, lax in our conduct, nasty in our manners—just one tiny hair from being a beast in the zoo. Jack calls this 'propaganda," and one of his favorite sayings when sober is: "Don't believe the propaganda" (Power, 2023, p. 104).

Restoration of Indigenous Languages: Lillian and Blanche's Fiery Resistance

The research underpins the significance of spiritual connection to indigenous languages, which is the greatest weapon of decolonial resistance. In the novel, Jack educates his children about the atrocities he faced in boarding school for speaking the forbidden indigenous language. He reflects upon the power of indigenous language, he says, "Your spirit isn't big enough to walk in our words. They hold mysteries you can only understand with the heart.' I thought all their talk was as flat as a pancake, and you could understand anything they said, even with a thin mind" (Power, 2023, p. 67). The research analyzes that not just language, even the naming of native children, also holds mystical power and meanings deeply rooted in indigenous culture, as Sissy's grandmother, Cora, tells her.

We give our name to only one person, and sometimes we keep it for ourselves. But the first time I saw you, the name just came out of my mouth, so it was yours. Wanáȟča Waště Wiŋ. 'Woman Whose Good Works Bring Flowers.' It's a beautiful name, but it can be heavy on one's back. I hope I didn't give you too great a burden (Power, 2023, p. 29).

The research analyzes that all these elements of indigenous technology inculcated in the blood and flesh of indigenous children through their ancestral knowledge and stories help them in resisting dominant narratives and reclaiming the significance of indigenous culture and identity in the past and present, which ultimately leads them to a progressive future. The research traces elements of bold resistance by Lillian against Christianity, which was the most powerful weapon of imposition of Western ideologies employed by nuns and fathers to enforce the observance of the dominant religion. Sissy narrates how they left Church few months back when Lillian had a

fiery debate with Father whom she confessed that despite attending chapel service for months in Chicago, she still exercises her indigenous rituals like flesh sacrifice and sun dance because such sacred rituals heal their souls, as Sissy narrates "when Mama shared in confession that she never felt the presence of anything sacred except at the Sun Dance we go to in North Dakota at summer solstice" (Power, 2023, p. 7). can be best explained through the example of Blanche's resistance, who acts, "like a girl martyr who can't feel the first lick of an executioner's flames because she's wild with spirit" (Power, 2023, p.106), against the evil sermons of Father Mahoney, who tries to integrate hatred and cultural erasure, but Blanche resists and reasserts the existence of her indigenous culture, language, and ancestral knowledge through her indigenous song that defeats the colonial repression, as Lillian narrates.

How many minutes pass before Blanche adds words to her song? Lakȟóta words we learned from Grandpa Little Soldier, that tell the story of Lalá and his courageous heart. How many minutes before her song gets louder, the scrub brush pounding the floor in accompaniment? I finally unlock myself and force my legs to stand. “Blanche, stop!” ...When Blanche sings louder, Sister Anne tries to stuff a dish towel in her mouth, but Blanche is too quick. She's on her feet, dashing past. She can sing and race around the room at the same time. She leaps onto a chair and from the chair onto the massive table. She kicks the potatoes I was peeling onto the floor. She breaks so many rules at once, beginning with the use of our language, I’m ready to faint. This feels a bit like the end of the world. Some part of me says that’s crazy. Why should a girl singing in a kitchen be the end of the world? (Power, 2023, p. 106).

The research explores how Native Americans reassert their identity through permeating their presence of the past in the present and progressive future through indigenous technology, which constitutes culture, language, ancestral knowledge, and spiritual beliefs.

Imperative of Indigenous Pedagogy and Sovereignty

The research aims to highlight the significance of Indigenous futurisms and its role in emerging indigenous scholarship by replacing assimilationist models like Indian boarding schools with inclusive, sovereignty-affirming, indigenous educational systems and approaches that value Indigenous knowledge and cultural continuity. It envisions futures where success is measured by indigenous parameters like community well-being, healing, holistic learning, and language revitalization rather than colonial attainment metrics. By exploring truthful depictions of Indian boarding schools through the traumatic experiences of characters over generations, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse of Indigenous pedagogy and sovereignty. It underscores the significance and

necessity of autonomous indigenous schools that address historical trauma through cultural revitalisation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research successfully analyzes the journey of indigenous natives, especially Sissy, Lillian and Blanche, how they firmly resist dominant Western narratives and colonial history, through their indigenous technology, culture, and language, ancestral knowledge, spiritual relationships, and innovative notions of temporality and spatiality. The research explores the reclamation of indigenous identity and cultural sovereignty by analysing how characters fearlessly exercised their native culture, sacred indigenous rituals like sun dance and flesh sacrifice, indigenous songs, spiritual healing through ancestral knowledge, use of the indigenous Lakhota and Dakhóta language, which showcases the empowering agency of indigenous narrative and its absolute presence in the past, present, and future.

The study also validates the success of the theoretical approach employed to conduct this insightful exploration, verifying that Dillon's radical ideas proposed through Indigenous Futurisms best examine the journey of reweaving epistemic sovereignty of indigenous culture by utilising the genre of science fiction and indigenous technology, which challenges the fixed hegemonic ideologies and dominating perspectives through firm resistance against cultural imposition and erasure of indigenous narrative. The research invigorates the literary paradigm of indigenous studies by deeply exploring the great representation of American natives, their colonial history, and the journey of reclaiming indigenous narrative in *A Council of Dolls*. Based on the key findings of this study, this theoretical framework can be employed by the scholarly audience in future research to explore other indigenous groups that are misrepresented through fabricated narratives in the mainstream media. The intended audience, mainly indigenous communities, can utilise technology and literature to reclaim their cultural sovereignty and envision a progressive future.

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