Journal of the Austrian Association for American Studies
vol. 7, no. 2, 2026, pp. 139–55
doi: 10.47060/jaaas.v7i2.215

Obstructing the Hungry Gaze: Poetics of Refusal in Indigenous Futurisms

Marie Krebs

ABSTRACT

Failure can be a productive experience, particularly in the process of reflecting on reading practices with regard to the (post)colonial gaze. In this article, I engage with literary and artistic manifestations of Tuck and Yang's "pedagogies of refusal" (812) in the works of Anishinaabe poet Liz Howard and A:shiwi/Zuni beadwork artists Farlan and Alesia Quetawki. I interact with the xwélmexw/Stó:lō sound studies scholar Dylan Robinson's concept of "hungry listening" (shxwelítemelh xwélalà:m) to contextualise reading as a colonial-extractive enactment. With this as a theoretical background, I approach Howard's poetry and the Quetawkis' artworks to hone a practice of "care-ful" (Whyte and Cuomo 235) dialogical reading that is attuned to acts of refusal (as opposed to construing them as "difficulty"). This is specifically situated as an examination of Eurocentric/settler reading practices and attempts to theorise why and how Indigenous literature and art might be thematised in the context of European humanities as a form of "aesthetic education" (see also Spivak 2). Ultimately, I attempt to deconstruct, at least partially, what Robinson calls the "Western demand for complete accessibility" (22) or the probing ethnographic eye within literary studies, and advocate for a reading of care, which can help to address some of the inadequacies of how Indigenous literatures and cultures are studied within European/settler spheres.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous literature, poetry, postcolonial studies, reading practices, Indigenous art, beadwork

Copyright: © 2026 Marie Krebs. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which allows for the unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and sources are credited.

Failure is very often a productive experience in academic contexts, as it prompts an examination of the mechanisms that caused it in the first place. In literary and cultural studies, reading, listening, and watching are the most important mechanisms, meaning that a failure to engage in them "successfully" may be caused by an underlying issue in their application or, even more fundamentally, in their position as the most important tools of creating and distributing knowledge. This article reflects on what a "failure to read" may indicate in the context of Indigenous literatures, primarily relating it to extractive epistemologies that, while certainly not uncritically continued, undoubtedly form the historical basis for academic inquiry in a "Western" humanities context. It further suggests a potential way to rethink mechanisms of reading through the lens of Indigenous studies to avoid replicating and reenacting harms inflicted by settler colonial epistemologies and histories, with Dylan Robinson, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and Eve Tuck as guides toward a reflection on failure as a thoroughly generative process.

A potential site of failure for the "Western" literary gaze, for instance, is situated within the works of Anishinaabe-Canadian author Liz Howard, whose poetry is characterised by high linguistic and structural complexity. Her work is generally placed in the art and literary movement of Indigenous Futurisms, which comprise a vast complex of texts, art works, and other cultural practices engaging with futurity and speculative storytelling from Indigenous perspectives (Fricke 108). Although the term itself has been criticised because it tends to subsume all Indigenous futurisms under one umbrella term – for this reason, Chelsea Vowel, for instance, prefers to speak of "Métis futurisms" (*Buffalo* 16) – in this essay, it is used as a provisional label for works that challenge settler colonial epistemologies and reassert Indigenous presence both in the past *and* the future (Dillon and Marques 1). The futurity of Liz Howard's work is articulated through, among other features, a self-situation somewhere between Indigenous histories and a movement from the terrestrial to the extraterrestrial, the planetary, the cosmological. Her poetry is also defined by opacity and complexity and thus potentially constitutes a site of failure of, or at the very least, resistance to a certain way of reading and a certain set of epistemological expectations – namely those of accessibility, legibility, and factual density.

These epistemological expectations, as argued below, are inflected by a colonial-extractive or "hungry" gaze, the terminology of which is based on Dylan Robinson's "hungry listening," which has become a vital theorisation not only for sound studies but also for the humanities at large. In his work, Robinson directly addresses and deconstructs the "Western demand for complete accessibility" (22) that ultimately reenacts colonial exploitation through patterns of epistemological violence. This article, therefore, critically examines the colonial "hungry" gaze, which is so often directed at Indigenous cultures and literatures when they are discussed in non-

Indigenous contexts. It also explores how texts might engage in a poetics of refusal, which I theorise with Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's "pedagogies of refusal" (811). It begins by taking stock of the "hungry" reading practice, a strategy based in the (literal) depletion and abuse of natural resources as well as the (figurative) extraction of meanings from cultural texts. However, the analysis does not end at this descriptive point but instead continues to articulate an attempt to read with care that dialogically approaches Indigenous cultural texts and reflects on its own positionality. This is performed in a fragmentary sample reading of Liz Howard's "Terra Nova, Terraformed" from her 2015 poetry collection *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* and a brief excursion into the field of visual arts with beadwork artists Farlan and Alesia Quetawki (A:shiwi/Zuni). These texts exemplify only two of the ways in which poetics of refusal might be enacted, and what follows is only one way in which they could be received.

Firstly, however, I pose two important caveats that frame my approach as well as its significance within the field of Indigenous studies. Firstly, it is important to note that the argument presented is situated in a very specific cultural context: I am arguing from the perspective of a white European scholar of Anglophone literary and cultural studies, who is reading Indigenous literatures from across the Atlantic Ocean, operating with considerable geographical distance from the actual lived experiences of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island. This means that this article's argumentation is defined by a purported distance. Yet my ideas are also fostered in a context of the "Indianthusiasm" of German-speaking countries: Hartmut Lutz et al. trace the roots of this "problematic German infatuation with the Indigenous peoples and cultures of North America" (3) to the eighteenth century and diagnose an ongoing objectification and fetishisation of Indigenous peoples in a German (popular) cultural context. A defining moment for German "Indianthusiasm," they explain, was the publication of Karl May's Winnetou novels in the nineteenth century, which remain at the forefront of cultural narrative-building about the Americas (15). This fascination is, to a degree, echoed in the context of the humanities, where important discussions of Indigenous literatures and cultures are occasionally supplanted by a sense of extractive voyeurism that focuses on narratives of cultural trauma and reduces them to the ethnographic data described by Tuck and Yang (813). At the same time, it would be grossly negligent to teach and study North American literatures and cultures without paying significant attention to the project of settler colonialism and extricating its present-day effects, which is why there must be a way to productively redress gazing and reading practices from the inside out.

Secondly, it should be reiterated this is not an invention or coinage of terminology. The verbiage of "hunger" and "extraction" in the context of the colonial gaze has been used before by many Indigenous thinkers (see, for instance, Kimmerer 306). I levy no

claim to newness but instead seek to let these thinkers guide a re-examination of European readings of Indigenous texts and cultures, geared toward reflection on the colonial implications of "Western" academia as well as an overall meditation on questions of access, difficulty, and refusal within cultural production.

The Hungry Reader

In his book *Hungry Listening*, xwélmexw/Stó:lō sound studies scholar Dylan Robinson uses the term "shxwelítemelh xwélalà:m," which roughly translates to "colonial" or "hungry" listening. This describes a mode of listening that enacts colonial violence through its methodology and articulation: In Robinson's inaugural example, the Canadian settler composer R. Murray Schafer listens to Inuit throat singing with a colonial ear, mistaking familiarity with quality (i.e., assuming that "Western" art music has merit because it is what he knows), and produces a viscerally negative, racist response calling the Inuit people an "astonishingly unmusical race" (qtd. in Robinson 1). In this case, the colonial or hungry listener equates a lack of familiarity and understanding with a lack of quality, an accusation of unrefined banality hardly concealing racist denigration. Robinson connects this to an overall "Western demand for complete accessibility" (22), which originates in the voyeuristic ethnographic exploration of Indigenous peoples that sought to know them by "[l]istening, watching, surveying, penetrating, extracting, studying" and ultimately "owning" their culture (Shorter and TallBear 5). In Robinson's work and subsequent explorations, the consumption of cultural texts and artifacts becomes a site of colonial reenactment and enforcement. Listening and watching are inflected by the project of settler colonialism in settlers and the colonised alike (Clark 5), rendering music – among other art and cultural artifacts – a resource to be extracted from Indigenous communities in a quest to *know* and *own*.

I suggest an analogous terminology of "hungry reading," not just in the context of literature but also referring to cultural texts at large. This process applies the same standards of legibility, accessibility, and purported palatability levelled at music and defined by Robinson (2) to other forms of texts as an enactment of epistemic violence. In hungry readings, judgements of quality are based on access and understanding, which generally saturate "Western" approaches to Indigenous cultural production. For instance, a review criticises the novel *Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich harshly because of its "failure to explain exactly what's going on" (Schaub par. 9). Of course, the tone of this review cannot be equated with the outright denigration of Murray Schafer's utterance, but it is nonetheless significant that non-intelligibility is faulted in a novel in such an explicit way.

It might be worth noting that, in the context of consuming culture, "hunger" is not an accidental choice of terminology or a word used for illustrative or metaphorical

purposes. In the nineteenth century, during the prime of colonisation, the xwélmexw/Sto:lo word for "settler," *xwelítem*, literally translates to "starving person," as white settlers "arrived in a bodily state of starvation" but also brought with them a desire beyond physical need, "a hunger for gold" (Robinson 2). Similarly, the Lakota term for "settler," *wašíču,* literally translates to "fat taker," referring to settlers who coveted the most "nutrient-rich, energy-dense part of the buffalo" (Hopkins par. 1), i.e., their fat. It furthermore echoes a figure from Cree and Ojibwe winter stories[1] that is driven by insatiable hunger and greed. Interestingly, out of all figures from Indigenous stories, whitestream[2] popular culture has most decisively latched on to this creature, an appropriated form of which is featured as the villain in, for example, the horror television series *Supernatural* (specifically season one, episode two) and the video game *Until Dawn* (2015). The hungry reader is defined somewhere between the helplessness of the settler on land they do not understand and the rapacious greed of the creature. They seek to own Indigenous culture by understanding it and devour and denigrate that which they do not understand.

The hungry reader, in this article, is a fictive entity codified through extractive tendencies within "Western" academia. In my argumentation, they are also defined by their considerable geographic distance to Turtle Island and its Indigenous Nations. The hungry reader is an expressly academic figure, i.e., an entity directly exerting epistemological dominance, whose reading practices simultaneously extract information from texts written by Indigenous authors *and* "stake claims" on the gleaned knowledges (see Tuck and Yang 814). While the aforementioned review of Erdrich's novel was published in a non-academic environment, where the demand for "ease of access" is most explicitly articulated (i.e., things are more easily termed "difficult"), academic discourse frequently expresses its hunger in more implicit ways.

Academic hunger for Indigenous trauma has been well-documented across a variety of disciplines. Tuck and Yang have shown just how much of social science is defined by an imperative of making marginalised communities legible by defining them primarily through their experiences of marginalisation (813). David Delgato Shorter and Kim TallBear have written extensively about the staggering epistemological violence thrust upon them in a natural science context, in which they offered criticism to the unquestioning repetition of colonial vocabulary in discourses around space exploration, and were met with vast indifference, if not outright disrespect (3). "Western" academia as a whole gives structural rewards to hungry engagements with the Other, be this in a natural/social sciences *or* in a humanities context in its

[1] The name of this creature usually appears as an anglicised version of the Cree word for "greedy person" ("Wihtikow").

[2] I use the term "whitestream" in a similar vein as Chelsea Vowel (16), who blends "mainstream" and "white" to indicate the tendency among science fiction literatures (among many other genres) to remain complicit in the reproduction of colonial fantasies. This blended word removes the idea of centrality from the term "mainstream" while acknowledging the racialisation inherent in practices of storytelling.

celebration of new claims, groundbreaking research, or innovative coinage. The goal is to perpetually chart new epistemological territory and make the unknown known.

In its most basic form, a hungry reading can manifest as a direct extension of extractive capitalism which commodifies literature and art to centre its status as a product to be consumed. Instead of literally extracting physical resources in the colonial-capitalist sense (Diamanti 55), a hungry reading mines cultural, philosophical, artistic, and scientific practices for the purpose of monetary gain (Clark 7). While this is not acknowledged as widely as, for instance, the settler-colonial buffalo genocide (Hubbard 29) or the environmentally disastrous economic extraction practices propagated by right-wing and colonial actors (Fabricant and Gustavson 1; Preston 354), it has an equally profound historical precedent in Indigenous contexts. The extraction of cultural objects from Indigenous communities has been practiced since the first points of contact, when items of ceremonial value were commodified and assimilated into capitalist value systems, either through trade or outright robbery (Nixon 336; Pineau 148). To this day, this extraction manifests in practices of cultural appropriation and the deployment of pilfered and distorted aesthetics in the whitestream. For example, narratives of decolonisation have slowly been fed into contemporary whitestream science fiction and appear as distinctively romanticised (Nilges 432–33). Thus, cultural and discursive extraction can be conceived of in a very literal, material sense.

However, on the level of epistemology, extraction occurs as an enactment of hungry reading in which texts are approached primarily with the goal of comprehension. Comprehension refers both to processes and practices of analysis and expectations levelled at texts, which are then either bestowed or refused abstract categories of artistic merit. In the case of the former, comprehension means that analyses – regardless of their medial context, i.e., whether the primary text is a film, poem, narrative, or visual artwork – are sometimes geared towards the project of filtering out theses and themes. These are used as a basis for making statements about an entire text, i.e., not accounting for text-internal slippages and gaps in cohesion, which is frequently criticised by scholars like Barbara Johnson (349). This is, of course, not applicable in every context and also falls short of, for instance, the claims staked by proponents of deconstructivism. Yet it could also be posited that there is an overall structural reward given for providing "clear" thesis statements and works that make a text legible as opposed to complicating it further. This is tied to, in large parts, the centring of "claiming" language in all research disciplines: "To claim something is to mark it as new, and as newly mine. . . . Researchers make claims for a living" (Tuck and Yang 814).

For the matter of expectations, this means that art and literature are often judged based on which information they can convey and how much of it they make experientially salient. In Indigenous literatures, this often refers to the fact that in order to be legible, Indigenous voices need to conform to a preconceived notion of intelligibi-

lity. According to Vizenor, Indigeneity, in the hungry eye, is often conceived of as primarily impacted by loss, pain, and the trauma of being colonised – a positing of the Indigenous subject as primarily defined by their victimry. Texts which do not "deliver" on this expectation of victimry may be perceived as inauthentic or naïve (97). Furthermore, there is considerable pressure placed on Indigenous authors and artists to limit their work to the topics they are granted expertise in – so usually only topics perceived as Indigenous. In other words, Indigenous cultural production is always seen as specific, never universal (Dillon 1). As Spivak explains, texts are expected to provide their readers with an "aesthetic education" and as such, their merit is predicated on their ability to allow readers to encounter a colonial Other and form empathy and understanding (9). However, this is largely formulated on a recognition of the Other as entirely different from the self, an a priori separation that in itself is an expression of Western epistemologies.

Thus, ultimately, the hungry reader enacts extraction through reading practices by centring legibility, accessibility, and purported palatability to reinscribe a version of Indigeneity defined by absence, trauma, and loss. Indigenous artists and writers, however, practice gestures of inoculation, as I argue below, by which the hungry gaze is complicated, if not obscured completely. In this, the text becomes a mirror, and the hungry one must recognise, and grapple with, their own ravenous reflection.

Reading Resistance

An author whose work can be read as an enactment of refusal is Liz Howard, a poet from Ontario of settler-Anishinaabe descent. Her first poetry collection, *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent*, was released in 2015 to great success, winning, for instance, the Griffin Poetry Prize. Her second collection, titled *Letters in a Bruised Cosmos*, followed in 2021 to similarly great success (Griffin Poetry Prize). Howard's poetry is highly complex and innovative, blending the language of cosmology and astronomy with the intergenerational trauma of Anishinaabeg communities dealing with the aftermath (and ongoing process) of settler colonialism – among many other themes. In a 2018 conversation between Howard and fellow poet Armand Garnett Ruffo (Anishinaabe-Ojibwe), Ruffo describes the book as an obfuscation of traumatic realities in a "labyrinthine language fixed in science" (Taylor 33). Anishinaabe through her father's heritage, Howard describes a troubled relationship both with her Indigeneity and her familial kinscapes, narrating her father's alcohol-induced early death, which is thematised extensively in her poem "Letter from Halifax" ("Liz Howard: Indigenous Reconnection" par. 10). She describes the process of writing *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent* as one infused with anxiety and traumatic legacies, going so far as to term it a "disaster of language" (qtd. in Taylor 37), albeit in a markedly tongue-in-

cheek way. A self-described "slippery, in-between, trickster spirit" (qtd. in 38), Howard inhabits an important place in contemporary poetry.

Importantly, her poetry is also notoriously difficult to read, a descriptor which echoes "Western" demands for accessibility of culture. The connotations of difficulty are primarily negative and inflected by colonial gazing practices. That is why I suggest to reframe "difficulty" through the language of refusal and resilience to resituate cultural practices as actively meaning-making as opposed to a passive inaccessibility, as the latter carries connotations of failure on the side of the text as opposed to failures on the side of the reader. Furthermore, Howard's refusals work on a spectrum model as opposed to a yes/no binary. As I argue below, a poetics of refusal does not mean that texts become inaccessible or illegible. It means that they refuse an epistemological framework of extractive reading and that, while the hungry gaze is being subverted, there is undoubted value in the project of trying to read. An alternative practice of reading, then, could be understood within the frameworks of an ethics of care described by Whyte and Cuomo (235): I utilise the term "care-ful" to allude to ecocritical theorisations centring community, responsibility, and mutual caretaking in contrast to the pragmatism of many "Western" philosophical traditions.

Many of Liz Howard's poems and, in this case, particularly "Terra Nova, Terraformed," purposefully elicit contributions from its readership to ensure that reading is a slow and mindful process which requires considerable research beforehand. Specific terms from geology ("shale," "pyroclastic dust," "terraformed"), chemistry ("peptides," "plasma"), and astronomy ("aurora borealis") are used frequently. References to the large and diverse Anishinaabeg territories ("creek," "river," "roe") evoke a sense of locatedness while being interspersed with the language of cosmology ("stars birthing themselves"), which places the poem somewhere between the terrestrial reserve and outer space. In a bid to appeal to integrated, non-Cartesian ontologies, the poem also conjoins differently textured vocabularies, specifically the organic and the inorganic ("injured transistors," "venous highway"). All of these are properties more or less frequently ascribed to movements of Indigenous Futurisms, a move away from a strict separation of mind and body and toward an emphasis on kinship and holistic world views (Dillon 10–11). The complexity of its referential fields, the density of its linguistic innovation, and the specific situatedness of the poem are not necessarily markers of difference between Howard's work and that of other contemporary poets writing particularly expressive poetry. However, the inclusion of such elements, which require a slower, more care-ful reading, certainly constitute part of Howard's poetry's refusal of extractive readings by encouraging readers to confront epistemological difference head-on.

The most prominent acts of refusal in "Terra Nova, Terraformed" could, moreover, be found in its serpentine evasion of stabilisation and stereotyping, both in terms of

form and content, ultimately utilising a sense of interrupted mobility to challenge settler colonial epistemologies and complicate attempts at extractive reading. In the context of Indigenous refusal, this means that "Terra Nova, Terraformed" does not adhere to the static stereotypes of Indigeneity. It does not portray a "drunken" or "vanishing Indian" (Vowel, "The Stereotype" par. 1; Mihesuah 24). It does not provide voyeuristic accounts of Indigenous pain (Tuck and Yang 813) as is so often required for Indigenous literatures to be deemed authentic. It does not allow an extractive reader to glean any facts or tribal secrets, which means that it does not satisfy the ethnographic gaze. Of course, this is not unusual for poetry, which very seldom conveys any specific factual information. However, the expectations of poetry labelled as "Indigenous" are expressly racialised. Indigenous literatures are so often expected to speak to an abstract sense of Indigeneity (Dillon 1) and by refusing to do so, "Terra Nova, Terraformed" already resists the hungry gaze.

This is, of course, not to suggest that the poem does not have a "message" in an abstract sense or that it does not speak to Indigeneity in some way. "Terra Nova, Terraformed" engages with the extremely real and visceral experiences and trauma of being colonised as well as the aftermath of the North American nation-building project, which has not become any less determined to conquer new territory since the sixteenth century. One need only look at US President Donald Trump's inaugural address, in which he promised that the US will "pursue [its] manifest destiny into the stars, launching American astronauts to plant the Stars and Stripes on the planet Mars" (Trump). Howard's poem alludes to the residential school system and the discovery of children's remains ("you pack bits of bone away within a system / of conservation the site was discovered"; see also Woolford 2), it mentions mental and physical illnesses disproportionately affecting North America's Indigenous population ("fetal alcohol syndrome," "overdose;" see also Vowel, "Stereotype" par. 24) and explicitly addresses the environmental degradation brought on by nation-building projects ("oil drums sunk / to the bottom of every lake"). However, the poem decisively does not project an individual standpoint; it does not distinguish a speaker as a particularly individualised figure. The lack of an individualised "I" obfuscates easy identification and thus does not provide a cohesive storyline of Indigeneity that can be assimilated into a self-affirming logic of victimry. Instead, the poem changes rapidly between the first-person singular personal pronoun and the first-person plural personal pronoun, although the latter appears slightly more often in different variations. The self is constantly in tension with the collective; the boundary between individual story and collective is suspended and never resolved.

This refusal of immobility is also enacted on the level of form, as the poem appears to be constantly caught between rapid bursts of movement and more or less static-ekphrastic elements. The poem, it appears, halts in unexpected places and flutters

away the moment it is close enough to grasp: Through frequent enjambments, "Terra Nova, Terraformed" articulates a sense of almost discordant interruption. For instance, noun phrases are often separated by verse breaks ("river / delta," "venous / highway", "five / minutes"), which introduce stops and gaps, moments to take unexpected breaths. At the same time, however, the poem very punctually deploys mobile verbs, indicating movement sporadically yet extremely poignantly: After a relatively stative first stanza, which paints a picture of a boreal region ("Spent shale, thigh haptic fisher, roe river"), the second stanza introduces a spurt of movement away from the forest and into the "Cartesian floral pattern / of heritage," which functions on the plane of kinship ties and epistemology. In the stanza following this, the poem leaves earth altogether for outer space, referring to "venous / highways for stars birthing themselves," which relocates the text's scale from a terrestrial to an interplanetary one. These forms of (im)mobility suggest not just that the poem is mobile in its meanings and its refusal to cater to the ethnographic eye, but also that it does not stay in one place for too long, that it cannot be pinned down to a specific situatedness. This refusal to be immobilised can be read as a formal reflection of an overall displacement of methods of comprehension: Understanding requires a certain degree of stasis, and Howard's poetry does not stay in one place for too long.

What "Terra Nova, Terraformed" does evoke very clearly, though, is a tangible sense of pain – not in the sense of a voyeuristic, detailed account of a personal testimony that provides a factual basis for understanding colonial violence but through a verbalisation of an I/we that blurs the boundaries between individual fate and collective trauma. "Terra Nova, Terraformed" transports a deep sense of mourning: It layers images of mental illness and substance abuse ("fetal alcohol syndrome") with those of environmental decay ("an overdose along the magnetized pole"), articulating the lasting effects of colonisation on Turtle Island. In the final stanzas, the poem begs for a moment of peace before an apocalyptic event: "let me sleep five more minutes just five / minutes before we default on / eternity." The poem thereby ends on a note of mourning that is not tied to any figures of a tragic "vanishing Indian" but instead evokes a sense of deep empathy. At first, it speaks to a sense of individualised longing that, presumably, most readers will be familiar with (begging for five more minutes of sleep) but then immediately breaks the illusion of the individualised self, scaling up to the collective once more ("*we* default on / eternity"; emphasis mine). Ultimately, this facilitates readings that do not extract anything – no facts, no voyeuristic pleasure – but requires a base level of empathy, to feel the poem's pain at an oncoming caesura (i.e., defaulting on eternity).

Ultimately, none of the characteristics I have described are unprecedented in poetic texts in isolation: Densely packed, ambiguous language as well as personifications of inanimate objects or a conjoining of disparate semantic fields have been

utilised at the very least since modernism, if not well before that in metaphysical poetry. Uneasy relationships between the self and the Other, shifting subjectivities and dynamic relations between stasis and mobility – all of these properties can likely be found in many other texts. Howard's poetry is, rather simply, extremely complex and dense, highly evocative and imaginative, but this alone does not generate acts of refusal. Instead, refusal is generated out of the very specific situatedness of the poem as Indigenous Futurist literature, a generic marker that emphasises its position outside the whitestream and explicitly rejects notions of simplified, stabilised, and stereotyped Indigeneity. Its refusal is a response to expectations of hungry reading, which fall short of a nuanced reading of Indigenous literatures because they approach them with an expectation of meanings, tribal secrets, stereotypes to be mined. "Terra Nova, Terraformed" obstructs the hungry gaze because it masters forms of refusal innovatively and requires a care-ful reading that ultimately feels what the poem feels.

Beadwork and Experientiality

The second analysis of this article moves off the page and toward the visual arts, exploring a very differently structured aesthetics of refusal of the hungry gaze. Specifically, I engage with beadwork, which is a deeply important cultural and material practice among many Indigenous communities. It has a long history in pre- and post-contact eras as a community-building artistic practice. Despite attempts to frame it as an art form on the decline by settler colonial anthropology, for example, in Ketchum's (89) work, it remains a vibrant practice of cultural production that, to a degree, serves to establish economic self-sufficiency in Indigenous communities: The A:shiwi/Zuni beadwork artists Farlan and Alesia Quetawki, who create a variety of artworks, sell their work in a self-described "Souvenir Shop" in Santa Fe, California, which offers a variety of Indigenous artworks, from jewellery to folk art and fetish carvings (Sun Country Santa Fe). This is, of course, not an unburdened discourse. Elyse Lamm Pineau states that to her, the bartering of Indigenous-crafted art "echoes every scene stretching back to First Contact in which a 'noble savage' and 'wealthy white' sat in a circle of trade goods and bartered the buying and selling of Ojibwe culture in the currency of the time" (148). There is more than a backpack full of cultural trauma associated with the practice of selling cultural artifacts to settlers, which is also echoed, to a degree, in the language associated with Indigenous arts. To this day, the language of romanticisation and fetishisation is levelled at beadwork, for instance, through statements which posit that "handmade indigenous arts and crafts offer a refreshing antidote to the grinding homogenization and standardization of capitalism" (Carruthers 359). This indicates the presence of a hungry gaze levelled at these art works, one that suggests a sense of nostalgic longing, an internalised "Indianthusiasm."

What is more, Alesia and Farlan Quetawki's beadwork has also been featured in a variety of museums, which further exposes them to a hungry ethnographic eye which views them as testaments to their Indigeneity. The beaded figurines they make depict whitestream pop cultural icons such as the *Star Wars* characters Princess Leia, Han Solo, R2-D2, and C-3PO (Weltmuseum Wien), superheroes such as Spider-Man (National Museum of the American Indian), and Anglo-Christian imagery such as Christmas trees and, particularly delightfully, Christmas cacti (Sun Country Santa Fe). These art works were respectively displayed in the ethnology museum of Vienna, Austria, in 2023 and 2024 in the exhibition "Science Fiction(s) – If There Were a Tomorrow," which explicitly focussed on Indigenous Futurisms among other forms, and in the National Museum of the American Indian as an item in their permanent catalogue. Again, the featuring of Indigenous beadwork in ethnographic museums significantly echoes historical practices of colonial pilfering and immobilising, through stripping items of their ceremonial value and displaying them in museums. This discourse of the museums' complicit role in an extractive economic and academic model has been amply thematised by Indigenous scholars (Nixon 334) and even in fictional works such as Devon A. Mihesuah's *The Hatak Witches* (2021). However, I argue that Farlan and Alesia Quetawki's works engage in a visual poetics of refusal to inoculate their art works against a hungry gaze.

Their works, very much in contrast to Howard's poetry, may not provoke outright accusations of difficulty or unintelligibility: The figurines depict well-known, easily recognisable characters from pop cultural franchises that have become global phenomena. However, in other contexts, they engage in similar tactics with regards to expectations of legibility, accessibility, and Indigeneity. For instance, they, like Howard's texts, do not allow any exposure of secrets to satisfy a hungry gaze that mines for meaning. They do not purport to portray images of ritualistic importance. They do not explain themselves as tokens of Indigenous identity and thus refute the expectation that Indigenous art works have to reveal a secret in order to be worth the hungry gaze's attention.

They do, however, reveal an experiential quality that facilitates an engagement with the *practice* of beadwork. One may ask, for instance, in seeing the miniature beads that are lined up so perfectly, whether the artists work in silence or whether they chat about their days while they work. A care-ful reading would allow viewers to think about the significance of beading in Farlan and Alesia Quetawki's days – do they bead to wind down, does either of them have carpal tunnel syndrome? There is an experiential quality to viewing these art works that, once again, discourages a quick and easy reading, as with Howard's poetry. They depict popular cultural icons which could be manufactured, quickly and cheaply, in overseas factories. However, their 'slow' materiality is one that allows a non-extractive reader to gain an under-

standing of the process of making something without unmasking an inherent truth of the process.

All these texts – "Terra Nova, Terraformed" as well as the beaded figurines – embody strategies of refusal, of resilience, and of obstruction in the face of a hungry gaze. Their particular methods and rituals of refusal may differ, but ultimately they are both not useful to an extractive project of mining information, Indigenous trauma, and immobilised stereotypes. An obstruction of hungry reading can thus be conceived of in a variety of ways which may foster a different mode of reading, a reading "otherwise" (see also Vowel, *Buffalo* 13). To a care-ful eye, they offer experiential knowledge, build empathy, and facilitate an understanding of difference and sameness not as mutually exclusive categories but as entangled entities.

Reading (with) Refusal

It should ultimately not be the duty only of the marginalised, the exposed, and the hyper-visible to practice refusal against exploitative practices. It is of equal importance that epistemologies of gratitude, care, dialogue, and respect are introduced into non-Indigenous spaces and that hearing refusal becomes just as important as enacting it. Instead of revisiting the bone-grinding vampirism of extractive colonialism by continuously reenacting it through acts of hungry reading or of positing a mythologised incommensurability, it may be worth looking to an in-between space that centres an empathetic understanding of Indigenous poetics (see also Vizenor 9), a way of hearing refusal and acknowledging failure while not abandoning the project of trying to read. As Robin Wall Kimmerer states, "[g]ratitude plants the seed for abundance" and presents an "antidote" to extractive hunger (376) – thus, greed can be mitigated at the source.

Essentially, the artworks and poetry discussed in this article engage in acts of refusal by way of unsettling expectations that are levelled at them by a colonial-extractive gaze. They do not expose a sense of familiar, immobilised, and stereotyped Indigeneity or satisfy the ethnographic eye through voyeuristic recapitulations of trauma. Instead, they reframe the epistemological expectations levelled at Indigenous literatures and cultures. They do not only recount or reflect but look onward as well as forward and enable non-Indigenous readers to confront their racialised expectations and epistemologies. This could be read as a key component of their futurity and part of what aligns them with Indigenous Futurisms. It could even be posited that poetics of refusal are in themselves a vital part of Indigenous Futurist movements in that they destabilise established ways of gazing at, speaking about, and reading art.

I do not want to suggest that these two texts, "Terra Nova, Terraformed" and Alesia and Farlan Quetawki's beadwork, should be singled out as engaging more or less actively in acts of refusal than others but rather aim to explicate that they are only

two fascinating texts among many. This essay has attempted to demonstrate how, on the one hand, difficulty and inaccessibility are sometimes used as ciphers for an epistemological hunger and should thus be reformulated as a more active stance of refusal and, on the other, how refusal can be enacted in a variety of ways and cannot be reduced to a simple act of "saying no" or "being difficult." This article is a passionate call to read refusal productively by acknowledging the limits of a "Western"/European/settler gaze without attempting to mine texts for immaterial commodities of meaning while not falling into the trap of mythologising Indigeneity and ending the journey of meaning-making at a point of final, irreversible incommensurability. A white European perspective on Indigenous literatures and arts will always necessarily be impacted by its colonial history and a voyeuristic gaze, and great care needs to be taken not to revisit extractive violence upon Indigenous texts by utilising them like an ethnographic report. At the same time, mythologising difference may ultimately promote a world view of incommensurability, a sense of "why try reading something different at all?" Neither of these extremes are particularly useful. Instead, I advocate for a sense of empathetic and care-ful reading, a recourse to an aesthetic education that – while no doubt deeply flawed and inflected by colonial and Enlightenment vocabulary, a fact which is critiqued in Spivak (9) – helps foster a sense of care and curiosity. The purpose of reading Indigenous literatures, studying Indigenous artworks, and encouraging students to do the same should never be to gesture at points of incommensurable Otherness. The goal, really, is to shape a future and practice in which, instead of reading *out of* a text, we approach it with care to read *with* it.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to Alexandra Ganser-Blumenau, whose class on Indigenous Futurisms sparked my interest in the topic. I would also like to thank Barbara Gföllner and Markus Schwarz for their input on this article, Cornelia Klecker and her team for their tireless editorial work, and the two reviewers for their detailed, supportive, and thoughtful feedback.

About the Author

Marie Krebs (*she/her*) is a doctoral candidate and university assistant at the Department of English and American Studies of the University of Vienna, Austria. Her research focuses on the politics and poetics of Anglophone genre film, television,

literature, and audiodrama, primarily within the realm of horror. In her PhD thesis, entitled *Timing Fear, Fearing Time*, she examines and theorizes the temporalized and temporalizing aesthetics of twenty-first-century horror across multiple media contexts. She also works as an administrative and research assistant for the ERC/FWF-funded project "Poetry Off the Page", which investigates the history of UK and Irish spoken word poetry and poetry performance from 1965 to the present day.

Peer Review

This article was reviewed by two external reviewers.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Works Cited

Carruthers, David V. "The Politics and Ecology of Indigenous Folk Art in Mexico." *Human Organization* vol. 60, no. 4, 2001, pp. 356–66, doi.org/10.17730/humo.60.4.9xmv7dd0brc6kf8e.

Clark, Emily Hansell. "Introduction: Audibilities of Colonialism and Extractivism." *World of Music*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2021, pp. 5–20. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27095336.

Diamanti, Jeff. "Extractivism." *Krisis,* vol. 38, no. 2, 2018, pp. 54–7.

Dillon, Grace. *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction.* U of Arizona P, 2012.

Dillon, Grace; Marques, Pedro Neves. "Taking the Fiction Out of Science Fiction: A Conversation about Indigenous Futurisms." *E-Flux Journal*, no. 120, 2021, www.e-flux.com/journal/120/417043/taking-the-fiction-out-of-science-fiction-a-conversation-about-indigenous-futurisms.

Fabricant, Nicole, and Bret Gustafson. "Moving Beyond the Extractivism Debate, Imagining New Social Economies." *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2015, pp. 40–5, doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2014.11721813.

Fricke, Suzanne Newman. "Introduction: Indigenous Futurisms in the Hyperpresent Now." *World Art*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2019, pp. 107–21, doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2019.1627674.

Griffin Poetry Prize. "Liz Howard." *The Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry. Griffinpoetryprize*, griffinpoetryprize.com/poet/liz-howard. Accessed 17 Feb. 2024.

Hopkins, Ruth H. “Indigenous People Are Paying the Price for Vaccine Thieves.” *Al Jazeera*, 30 Jan. 2021, www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/1/30/indigenous-people-are-paying-the-price-for-vaccine-thieves.

Howard, Liz. *Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent*. McClelland and Steward, 2015.

———. *Letters in A Bruised Cosmos.* McClelland and Steward, 2021.

Hubbard, Tasha. “Chapter 13. Buffalo Genocide in Nineteenth-Century North America: ‘Kill, Skin, and Sell.’” *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, edited by Alexander Laban Hinton et al, Duke UP, 2014, pp. 292–305, doi.org/10.1515/9780822376149-015.

Johnson, Barbara. “Teaching Deconstructively.” *The Barbara Johnson Reader: The Surprise of Otherness*, edited by Melissa Feuerstein et al., Duke UP, 2014, pp. 347–56.

Ketchum, William C. *Native American Art*. Mason Crest, 2018.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions, 2013.

“Liz Howard: Indigenous Reconnection and Resurgence in Poetry.” *Victoria University in the University of Toronto*, 13 Feb. 2023, vicu.utoronto.ca/news/liz-howard-indigenous-revitalization-and-resurgence-in-poetry/.

Lutz, Hartmut, et al., editors. *Indianthusiasm: Indigenous Responses*. Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2020.

Mihesuah, Devon A. *So You Want to Write about American Indians? A Guide for Writers, Students, and Scholars*. U of Nebraska P, 2005.

National Museum of the American Indian. “Figure by Alesia and Farlan Quetawki.” *Smithsonian Institute*, americanindian.si.edu/collections-search/objects/NMAI_416363. Accessed 22 Feb. 2024.

Nilges, Mathias. “The Temporal Imagination of Indigenous Futurisms.” *College Literature*, vol. 50, no. 2–3, 2023, pp. 432–56, doi.org/10.1353/lit.2023.a902225.

Nixon, Lindsay. “Visual Cultures of Indigenous Futurism.” *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness*, edited by Tiffany Lethabo King et al., Duke UP, 2020, pp. 332–42, doi.org/10.1515/9781478012023-019.

Pineau, Elyse Lamm. “Preservation, Provenance, Piracy: (Re)Framing Indigenous Art.” *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2021, pp. 146–48, doi.org/10.1177/1532708620978760.

Preston, Jen. “Racial Extractivism and White Settler Colonialism: An Examination of the Canadian Tar Sands Mega-Projects.” *Cultural Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2–3, 2017, pp. 353–75, doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2017.1303432.

Robinson, Dylan. *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. U of Minnesota P, 2020.

Schaub, Michael. "*Future Home of the Living God* Is a Rare Stumble from a Great Writer." *NPR*, 14 Nov. 2017, www.npr.org/2017/11/14/562557229/future-home-of-the-living-god-is-a-rare-stumble-from-a-great-writer.

Shorter, David Delgado; TallBear, Kim. "An Introduction to Settler Science and the Ethics of Contact." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1–8, doi.org/10.17953/aicrj.45.1.shorter_tallbear.

Spivak, Gayatri. *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Harvard UP, 2013.

Sun Country Santa Fe. "Alesia and Farlan Quetawki." *Sun Country Traders*, suncountrysantafe.com/product-category/beadwork/farlan-and-alesia-quetawki/. Accessed 22 Feb. 2024.

Taylor, Rob. *What the Poets Are Doing: Canadian Poets in Conversation*. Nightwood Editions, 2018.

Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Unbecoming Claims: Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2014, pp. 811–18.

Trump, Donald. J. "The Inaugural Address." 20 Jan. 2025. *Whitehouse.gov*, The White House, www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address/.

Vizenor, Gerald. *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*. U of Nebraska P, 2009.

Vowel, Chelsea. *Buffalo Is the New Buffalo.* Arsenal Pulp P, 2022.

———. "The Stereotype of the Drunken Indian." *Âpihtawikosisân*, 26 Oct. 2024. apihtawikosisan.com/2012/10/the-stereotype-of-the-drunken-indian/.

Weltmuseum Wien, "Farlan and Alesia Quetawki: Ten Beaded Star Wars Figurines." *Weltmuseum Wien*, sciencefictions.weltmuseumwien.at/en/mainstream/farlan. Accessed 22 Feb. 2024.

"Wihtikow." *Online Cree Dictionary,* University of Alberta, www.creedictionary.com. Accessed 17 Oct. 2025.

Whyte, Kyle, and Chris Cuomo. "Ethics of Caring Ion Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies." *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics*, edited by Stephen M Gardiner and Allen Thompson, Oxford UP, 2017, pp. 234–47.

Woolford, Andrew. *The Benevolent Experiment: Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide, and Redress in Canada and the United States.* U of Nebraska P, 2015.