

Introduction

The Power of (Poetic) Promises

What are the situations in which we repeat someone's words back to them? "Can I remind you that under oath you said . . ." "The minutes show that at our last meeting you said . . ." "When you slammed the door as you walked out this morning, what did you mean when you said . . . ?"

We often quote other people's words back to them when we are attempting to resolve a conflict, whether large or small. In fact, the act of quoting someone's exact words back to them may be primarily a sign of conflict, a boundary marker in the borderlands of a relationship that indicates the moment at which old words and new actions no longer correspond, but also a moment at which the resolution of that conflict, the realignment of past language and present action, remains possible.

The sites of the courtroom, the meeting room, and the family home that I conjure up at the start of the chapter are chosen because they demonstrate a potential paradox about the sites of quotation. To focus on verbatim language can generate a paradigm of pedantry, bureaucratic or legalistic in its framing, but such a paradigm also overlaps with intimacies and the basic nature of human communication. Verbatim language, an agreed-on set of words, provides cohesion as well as constriction. It cements the terms on which we can rely, but also those on which we will be judged. It forms the perimeter for trust, and it has all the advantages and disadvantages that a perimeter implies. It marks out a space, and that is a space for law, but it is also a space for love.

It is this mixture of institutionalism and intimacy, and the verbatim language that encodes it, that I want to explore in this book by looking at one of its manifestations: the moments, scattered throughout the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which Indigenous peoples quoted English poetry (and specifically British Romantic poetry) as part of their dialogues with settler states and publics. These moments exist in the complex linguistic, political, and emotional space that I sketched earlier in this chapter. They often occur in the most punitive of contexts, in which cold legal instruments and cruel bureaucratic deceptions are being used to extract resources or land and enforce genocidal policies—and yet, they manifest a faith in the warmest of forms and the kindest of languages. They assume that institutions are intimate and that intimacy can be institutionalized in positive ways; in other words, they assume what we might call an Indigenous view of relationships and community organization.

These moments also assume that settlers and colonial or imperial governments mean what they say; that they are prepared to stand by, not only the formal language of a treaty, a political speech, or a piece of legislation, but also the wider cultural documents that underpin these texts: the Bible, first and foremost, but also the literature that encodes a society's most cherished values. The title of this chapter alludes to the essay collection *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest*, edited by Alexandra Harmon, but it assumes that poetry also partakes in the promises that were being made across the colonized world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹ One way in which Indigenous peoples could reasonably expect to understand the values of their settler-imperial counterparts was to consider the latter's most cherished lines of literature; one way to hold settlers and governments accountable for the promises they had made was to keep reminding them of the promises inherent in their own lore. The lines of poems that Indigenous diplomats reproduced and mobilized are, as we will see in the coming chapters, treated as statements of intent, as historical record, and as what we might think of as cultural charters. They are treated, in other words, as diplomatic texts.

Quotation was built into colonial diplomacy.² Across the colonized world, as this book will consider, Indigenous peoples and settler-imperial

1. Alexandra Harmon, ed., *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

2. See the discussion of the role of repetition in Native American diplomacy in the era of encounter, which emphasizes these patterns and tropes, in Robert A. Williams Jr., *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600–1800* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 38.

officials undertook a process of repeating the language of past engagements at each new encounter. Prior speeches and declarations were recalled, excerpts of documents were read out, material objects that encoded past promises were produced and handled. The verbatim language of previous encounters was held, by both sides, to have an apparently unbreakable force. Each side engaged in this process, but the epistemological underpinnings of their activities were entirely different. Settler-imperial officials aimed to narrow and codify the exact terms of exchange between the two sides, to generate documents whose precise language would set out what, and by whom and when.³ Capturing that language, preferably in the form of a treaty or other official written agreement, laid the foundation for subsequently enforcing settler-imperial law, land acquisition, and sovereignty. When these officials quoted past treaties, declarations, and speeches, they were manifesting an apparent faith in the words themselves as significant, especially when they appeared in written form. But they also, paradoxically, treated the words as editable, revisable, or ignorable. Having established the notion that the words written in legal agreements constituted a sacred trust, they proceeded to treat them as mere instruments, subordinate to the overwhelming desire for land, resources, and power and available as temporary tools to acquire these things. Each new document, each new set of phrases, replaced and erased the old, thus suggesting the bewildering tension between the permanence and the malleability of a written culture and its legal structures.

Indigenous peoples approached the act of quotation similarly, but they perceived the aim of the diplomatic process very differently. For them, quotation operated as part of a much wider set of actions designed to requicken the alliances between peoples. Alongside hospitality, gift-exchange, prayer, games, mourning, song, and dance, the quotation of past exchanges between the two sides helped to make that relationship live and breathe. The latest negotiations did not replace the old ones; rather, they acted instead as a palimpsest, a new layer to, and new performance of, the obligations of the ancestors. They did not establish one side's dominance over the other; rather, negotiations helped to balance and maintain relationships across time and generations. Quotation thus contributed to this quickening by serving as a reminder of the mutual

3. For a global discussion of imperial treaty making that is acutely alert to Indigenous actions, needs, and interpretations in these processes, see the essays in Saliha Belmessous, ed., *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

obligations that held alliances together and the promises that were providing the architecture of those alliances.

To quote was thus to perform an acknowledged rhetorical maneuver in Indigenous-settler diplomacy, but my point extends farther than that; what I want to suggest in this book is that the act of quotation in these contexts remakes the quoted text into a diplomatic artifact and simultaneously remakes the diplomatic encounter into a collage of genres in which poetry, including English poetry, can find a suitable home. Diplomacy was saturated with quotation, and quotation became, as a device, inescapably diplomatic. Understanding that interplay of quotation and diplomacy allows us to stretch the boundaries of what counts as diplomatic text; genres, rhetorics, canons, and tropes that seem inescapably literary to a reader in the European tradition shift before our eyes into aspects of a wider negotiating, petitioning, and treating culture. What holds together the quotation of the disparate texts of treaties, speeches, and declarations, on the one hand, and poetry, on the other, is what we might call verbatim magic: a belief that exact words matter, that what is codified on the page constitutes an agreement between parties, a settler-imperial belief to be sure, but one that inevitably influenced and in turn was shaped by Indigenous communication.

By incorporating poetry into the framework of diplomacy and quotation, Indigenous writers and diplomats continued a practice that made sense within their own knowledge systems. It was not necessary, on these terms, to make a particular generic distinction between expressions of law and of literature. Poetry, song, proverb, dance, carving, weaving, and any number of other genres were seamlessly interwoven with laws, treaties, and contracts in a wide variety of Indigenous traditions across the Atlantic and Pacific worlds.⁴ As John Borrows has demonstrated through

4. For discussion of the North American context of artistic expression in treaty negotiations historically, see Williams, 83, and for a similar point made from within literary and rhetorical studies, see Lisa King, Rose Gubele, and Joyce Rain Anderson, "Introduction: Careful with the Stories We Tell: Naming Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story," in *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story: Teaching American Indian Rhetorics*, ed. Lisa King, Rose Gubele, and Joyce Rain Anderson, 3–16; 8–9 (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015). Penelope Edmonds also talks about the absence of critical interest in Indigenous performance-based responses to reconciliation in modern settler colonies; see Edmonds, *Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation: Frontier Violence, Affective Performances, and Imaginative Refoundings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016), 12. See also Christopher B. Teuton's ideas of "the oral impulse," "the graphic impulse," and the "critical impulse" in Teuton, *Deep Waters: The Textual Continuum in American Indian Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

a Canadian example, no single document in Indigenous-settler diplomacy can be read separately from the other documents and wider textual and material forms that supported it.⁵ Settler and imperial governments and publics thought differently, drawing a firmer line between bureaucratic and literary genres. A community could theoretically, by settler-imperial logic, be held to the terms of an act of legislation or a signed agreement, but not to the terms of a stanza or a sonnet. While it might be desirable for poetry and policy to be consistent with one another, it was not absolutely necessary: poetry expressed a range of sentiments that, while valuable, were not expected to take on the force of law.

And yet, in the cases I discuss in this book, settlers and imperial actors also abandoned the commitments made via treaties, laws, and other agreements. They did not adhere to the logic I have just articulated: that bureaucratic, legalistic, nonfictional texts manifested and required a type of trust and adherence, not inherent in fictional or literary text, that simply had to be enforced. The explanation for this abandonment might be as simple as the unadulterated greed and hypocrisy of settler colonialism. But without dismissing this fundamental truth about colonialism, I want to contemplate another, related possibility. What if the uncoupling of the literary and the legalistic in the settler-imperial mind actually *facilitated* the betrayal of formal legal agreements? To put it another way, did the colonizers' willingness to treat poetry and poetic promises as fictional, subordinate, and nonbinding actually clear the way for a similarly slippery attitude toward other forms, documents, and vocabularies? Did it become easier to betray legal and political promises once poetic promises had been set aside? And might the Indigenous use of English poetry as a diplomatic tool, with its deployment occurring precisely at the moment that settler-imperial honor and honesty began to fray most explicitly—as the fabric of poetic and political expression was steadily ripping in two—highlight this fact?

The distinction I am drawing here between Indigenous and settler-imperial thinking is more than one of aesthetics or genre. It means that in Indigenous-settler interactions, one side regarded *all* the written or spoken language produced by each of the two parties as expressing an interrelated and mutually sustaining truth, while the other regarded at least *some* of

5. John Borrows, "Wampum at Niagara: The Royal Proclamation, Canadian Legal History, and Self-Government," in *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality, and Respect for Difference*, ed. Michael Asch, 155–72 (Toronto: UBC Press, 1997).

that language as either potentially or actually untrue, implausible, fanciful, or meaningless, by virtue of its genre. This discrepancy has the potential to make achieving authentic and just political relationships almost impossible. It opens up a fraught but potent space between verbatim language and real-life actions, between what you say and what you do. It is in this space that hypocrisy and idealism are thrown into sharp relief, the former representing the falling away from one's promises and the latter, simultaneously, representing the hopeful possibility of rising back up toward them. It is into this dynamic space, I want to suggest, that Indigenous diplomats move when they quote English poetry back to its authors, readers, and devotees. As Chadwick Allen has suggested in his discussion of Indigenous redeployments of treaty discourses, "To rephrase Bhabha's definition of colonial mimicry as 'almost the same, *but not quite*,' we might define indigenous re-recognition as 'exactly the same, *but then some*.'"⁶ In using exactly the same words as English poets, and in doing so within diplomatic and treaty-oriented dialogues, Indigenous intellectuals extracted something more, deriving further layers of meaning from words they were not actually altering. Skillfully and strategically, they tried to hold together a matrix of ideas that was, in that long nineteenth-century moment, pulling apart: politics and poetry, words and actions, past and present, as well as the two sides of historical alliances. They attempted a type of diplomacy that we might think of not as bilateral, but rather as biliteral, crossing genre lines and encompassing literary expression in a quest for accountability.

One way to enact this process of accountability was through *captatio benevolentiae*. The phrase literally means "fishing for goodwill," and it describes the way in which a speaker or writer, through a display of good manners, renders their interlocutor attentive, teachable, and well-disposed. Quotation and epigraph are not the only ways to perform *captatio benevolentiae*, but they are effective examples. By quoting literature familiar to their Anglophone audiences, Indigenous diplomats attempted to render their interlocutors attentive, teachable, and most important, well-disposed, and thus to generate the goodwill necessary to requicken alliances. They demonstrated what Tracey Banivanua Mar called "imperial literacy," the ability to understand imperial discourse, adapt it, and do so within an

6. Chadwick Allen, *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 19; italics in the original.

emerging system of similar Indigenous communication.⁷ As well as delivering on the oratorical traditions of their own cultures and the repetitive processes of traditional and colonial diplomacy, poetic quotation by these authors and speakers had the added frisson of a perhaps unexpected cosmopolitanism. The *captatio benevolentiae* of Indigenous diplomats was radical, however, because it was not one of homogeneity, in which a member of a group draws on that group's collective knowledge, literature, and lore. Rather, it performed an act of striking cross-cultural communication: fishing for goodwill in someone else's lake.

In that sense, the instances of poetic quotation that this book examines are not simply examples of performing cosmopolitanism, by which Indigenous leaders and intellectuals aim to take their place in the European republic of letters. This latter kind of cosmopolitanism, which was outlined so cogently by Frantz Fanon, aimed to confirm the speaker's taste and education among a white, male elite by demonstrating the requisite literary and classical knowledge.⁸ However, the figures I will examine do not say to their white audiences, "Here is what I know," but rather, "Here is what *you* know." The aim of poetic quotation in these cases is not to perform but rather to remind, to hold the interlocutory audience to *its own* values, ideals, and feelings.⁹ These examples thus differ markedly from the school-based colonial recitation practice sketched by Helen Tiffin, which she calls "a ritual act of obedience, usually by a child performer, who in reciting an English litany speaks as if he/she were the imperial speaker/master rather than the subjectified colonial so often represented in those very passages."¹⁰

7. Tracey Banivanua Mar, "Imperial Literacy and Indigenous Rights: Tracing Transoceanic Circuits of a Modern Discourse," *Aboriginal History* 37 (2013): 1–28.

8. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), esp. 176, for its discussion of the acquisition of European literature; and Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 9–40, for its discussion of language.

9. Adela Pinch has explored the connection between quotation and feeling, in the context of early nineteenth-century English practices, in *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 164–92. Her point differs from mine in that it emphasizes the way in which one's own feelings were seen to be captured in a quotation, but her work underlines the fact that poetic quotation was a very familiar form for nineteenth-century Anglophone audiences.

10. Helen Tiffin, "Cold Hearts and (Foreign) Tongues: Recitation and the Reclamation of the Female Body in the Works of Erna Brodber and Jamaica Kincaid," *Callaloo* 16,

The Indigenous diplomat in each of these cases is not presenting their own poetic bona fides, in the modern, plural sense in which we use the term to mean the documentation that verifies a person's qualifications. Rather, they are asking whether their interlocutor is bona fides in the original, singular sense of the phrase, meaning "of good faith."

The Indigenous diplomats were acting, in other words, as early versions of the intellectuals that Dale Turner has called for in Indigenous communities and whom he has dubbed "word warriors":

Word warriors reconcile the forms of knowledge rooted in indigenous communities with the legal and political discourses of the state. They do this for two reasons. First, our survival as indigenous peoples demands that in order to assert and protect the rights we believe we possess, we must engage the discourses of the state more effectively. Second, indigenous knowledge offers legitimate ways of understanding the world—ways that have never been respected within the legal and political practices of the dominant culture. To make matters worse, these ways have not played a significant role (except in the early treaties) in determining the normative language of the political relationship. Word warriors do the intellectual work of protecting indigenous ways of knowing; at the same time, they empower these understandings within the legal and political practices of the state. Word warriors listen to their "indigenous philosophers" while engaging the intellectual and political practices of the dominant culture.¹¹

Turner is talking about a necessary literacy in settler legal and political systems, but this does not, therefore, position cultural knowledge, such as that encoded in poetry, outside the bounds of his overall brief for the word warriors. He begins his book with a poem, "the passing of the pipe," a rhetorical move that, in itself, suggests the ways in which poetry and diplomacy are entwined with each other even in the twenty-first-century versions of Indigenous-settler relations. But the poem also, in its own

no. 4 (1993): 909–21; 913.

11. Dale Turner, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 7–8.

words, emphasizes the significance of exact language and its entwinement within poetic and diplomatic discourses; as Turner writes in “the passing of the pipe,”

we now know you are
 what you say
 and we will
 (to our dying breath)
 hold you to your word. (17–21)

Turner’s model of the word warriors seems entirely consistent with the role played by the ancestors discussed in this book, who understood that engaging with the discourses of the state in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant engaging with their cultural discourses as well. And that meant understanding the stories, forms, and lexicons that settler governments and publics claimed to hold dear.

In *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600–1800*, Robert A. Williams Jr. discusses what he calls “stories as jurisgenerative devices”:¹²

In Indian diplomacy, stories could be told for a number of educative purposes: to state a grievance, to reinforce a long-standing set of values shared by treaty partners, and to elaborate the norms of behavior expected of those in a relationship of connection. In American Indian visions of law and peace, the telling of a story sought to build and sustain a common life, a life lived in solidarity with different peoples on a multicultural frontier. Through their treaty stories, American Indian diplomats of the Encounter era sought to educate the strange and alien-seeming newcomers to their world as to what was meant by treaty partners behaving as relatives toward each other.¹³

12. Williams, 95.

13. Williams, 89. Williams’s point resonates with Kwame Anthony Appiah’s idea that “evaluating stories together is one of the central human ways of learning to align our responses to the world. And that alignment of responses is, in turn, one of the ways we maintain the social fabric, the texture of our relationships.” See Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 29.

Williams here is describing a process by which Indigenous diplomats used their *own* stories to try to engage settler interlocutors. His extraordinary book ends in 1800, roughly the point at which my book begins, and this change in time frame might explain the shift toward quoting English stories, in the form of poetry, that my project traces. As colonization accelerated, nation-to-nation relationships shifted from being between Indigenous and imperial nations to being between Indigenous and settler nations, and both conflict and Indigenous land loss became more pronounced as the balance of power shifted away from partnership and toward an increasingly exploitative and violent relationship. The “nomos” (or “normative universe of shared meanings”) that Williams describes as operating in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in North America was, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, mutating into a space in which shared meanings meant meanings from settler thought that Indigenous thinkers grasped hold of, rather than the collaborative, story-woven project of earlier balanced partnerships or Indigenous-led storywork.¹⁴ Methodologically stories remained jurisgenerative devices, but the source of the stories was shifting as power itself shifted.

The year 1800 is both a plausible and a tidy date at which to situate this change, but to a British Romanticist, the date also looms large as a moment of Romanticism’s own solidification as a cultural force in the form of the second edition of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* and Wordsworth’s accompanying preface. In other words, Romantic poetry was the poetry of the moment: in North America, Indigenous relationships with the British government and the emerging settler state and federal governments changed dramatically after the American War of Independence, requiring new approaches to diplomatic engagement, in precisely the era we now refer to as Romantic. In the Southern Hemisphere, British settlers began to gain a foothold on Indigenous land in those same years, from the late eighteenth century through to the mid-nineteenth century. Settlers brought Romantic literature with them, read it in the magazines and annuals that were sent from Britain, and taught it in colonial and mission schools. It is not surprising, then, that Indigenous readers and thinkers, both around

14. Williams, 47. The importance of nomos in legal discourse is articulated in Robert M. Cover, “Foreword: Nomos and Narrative,” *Harvard Law Review* 97, no. 1 (1983): 4–68; Jo-ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

1800 and in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were also exposed to this literature and saw it as both an encapsulation of settler values and a resource to be incorporated into cross-cultural conversations such as those that happened via treaty councils, petitions, speeches, and letters. Romantic literature was fashionable and timely, and its deployment signaled Indigenous peoples' modern and adaptable approach to engaging settler-imperial audiences.

But Romantic literature was also thematically appropriate. In its focus on justice, sympathy, land, humanity, idealism, kin relationships, and fellow feeling, British Romanticism offered a cultural shorthand for the values that Indigenous negotiators wished to reference and mobilize. This confluence of literature and Indigenous ideas is, of course, not coincidental. One reason why a new generation of British writers became interested in these ideas was precisely that political events around the world had suggested the imminent or actual collapse of these values and the desperate need to reinstate and record them. That collapse was evident in the Lake District and the rapidly enclosing countryside of England, in the industrializing cities of the Midlands and the North, in the subjugation of people in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, on the streets of London, and in the war-torn and revolutionary centers of the continent. But while the effects were observable in Europe, the cultural force driving them was global colonization along with its associated human and economic exploitation. It is no exaggeration to say that the experiences of Indigenous peoples across the world were precisely the experiences that triggered Romantic literature, as the quest for land, wealth, and cultural and political domination that drove settler-imperial actions globally came to shape British and European life.

This point is related to Lynn Festa's idea of the emergence of sentimental literature in eighteenth-century Europe. As Festa notes, "Sentimental texts helped create the terms for thinking about agency and intent across the geographic expanse of the globe by giving shape and local habitation to the perpetrators, victims, and causal forces of empire. In an era in which imperial reach increasingly outstripped imaginative grasp, sentimental fiction created the tropes that enabled readers to reel the world home in their minds."¹⁵ Global processes undoubtedly generated European literary forms,

15. Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 2. For another account of the role of emotions in Indigenous-settler relationships, this one focused on the Southern

and Festa makes a brilliant and convincing case for the sentimental as “the literary mode of empire in the eighteenth century.”¹⁶ I see my project as pivoting away from Festa’s in some senses because it focuses on poetry, not the novel; the long nineteenth century, not the eighteenth; and, most especially, on Indigenous rather than European writing. By approaching this task with a methodology that I hope is itself diplomatic in its demands for balance and its commitment to producing better relationships, and by taking the lead, not from what European writers produced or readers consumed, but from what Indigenous writers and thinkers drew from European literature, my book concludes that Romantic literature, with its politically engaged manifestations of sentimentalism, is the most important body of English literature in this global context. Indigenous diplomats were not, of course, especially interested in Festa’s “literary mode of empire,” given that what they sought was neither to create nor to be subject to an empire, but rather to be in a relationship, and one imagined as a responsible adherence to the terms of past alliances and contacts.¹⁷ They were looking instead for what we might call the literary mode of diplomacy, the genres, texts, and tropes that would speak to the disappointments as well as the opportunities that were available. As Festa points out, sentimental literature is in no way conceived as a meeting of equals: “sentimentality as a crafted literary form moves to locate that emotion, to assign it to particular persons, thereby designating who possesses affect and who elicits it.”¹⁸ It is an entirely imperial genre, one that is not, at any level, committed to quickening alliances or reframing relationships equitably. British Romantic poetry, by contrast, was ideal, not simply because it was the poetry of the moment in the sense of fashion and literary trend; it was, for its authors and also for its Indigenous deployers, forged out of the legal, political, military, and diplomatic crisis that is settler colonialism but ostensibly committed to the rebalancing of equitable relations.

In Romantic studies, the Indigenous deployment of this literature has largely been judged to be derivative, a sign of an inauthentic Indigenous expression, which has been victimized by colonial education and is in

Hemisphere settler colonies, see Jane Lydon, *Imperial Emotions: The Politics of Empathy Across the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

16. Festa, 2.

17. See Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018), xix.

18. Festa, 3.

line with Tiffin's insistence that "learning by *heart* the culture of others strangles self-expression—the absorption of their aesthetics, indeed their 'tongue,' cuts off one's own."¹⁹ In part, that is because Romantic studies continues to partake in Romanticism's own fetish for individual, organic expression and for some kind of separation between the literary and the nonfictional. As a field, we remain unwilling to acknowledge what Scott Richard Lyons has dubbed "rhetorical sovereignty": "the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles and languages of public discourse."²⁰ Not only is the Romantic position an inappropriate standpoint from which to judge Indigenous communication, which is much less in thrall to the idea of originality as a virtue and has no cultural obligation to Romanticism's values, but it also insists on a *literary* framework for a style of communication that was far more multimodal. Colonial diplomacy was literary, but it was also political, genealogical, material, and physical.²¹ It involved the oral and the written, Indigenous and settler objects, land and waterways, animals and ancestors, and cosmologies as well as covenants. Most of all, it involved quotation, a constant referring back to past conversations, documents, alliances, peoples, and times. All manner of texts in what Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr have called "the imperial commons" were used to create this web of quotation that would help clarify relationships and obligations.²² There is no particular reason why the canon of British Romantic poetry should not be one of these texts; in fact, as I have outlined, it was well suited to the task in terms of its preoccupations and its historical moment. Indeed, it could take its place as one of the "hidden transcripts" that

19. Tiffin, 918; emphasis in the original.

20. Scott Richard Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want From Writing?" *College Composition and Communication* 51, no. 3 (2000): 447–68; 449–50; emphasis in the original.

21. See Phillip H. Round's discussion of "hybrid negotiating practices" in *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663–1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 102–15.

22. Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr, "The Spine of Empire? Books and the Making of an Imperial Commons," in *Ten Books That Shaped the British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons*, ed. Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr, 1–28 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). See also Jane Stafford's delineation of the literary network of empire in *Colonial Literature and the Native Author: Indigeneity and Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016).

Saliha Belmessous has identified as central to understanding Indigenous law and its claims against imperial states.²³

Vine Deloria Jr. provided a model of Native American communication that is useful in understanding the strategies of these poetry-quoting diplomats. In *We Talk, You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf*, Deloria explained:

The best method of communicating Indian values is to find points at which issues appear to be related. Because tribal society is integrated toward a center and non-Indian society is oriented toward linear development, the process might be compared to describing a circle surrounded with tangent lines. The points at which the lines touch the circumference of the circle are the issues and ideas that can be shared by Indians and other groups. There are a great many points at which tangents occur, and they may be considered as windows through which Indians and non-Indians can glimpse each other.²⁴

There are many texts, concepts, and values that might potentially sit at these tangents, and it is the argument of this book, not simply that British Romantic poetry can be read as constituting one of these “windows” through which Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples might be able to see and comprehend one another, but that this was precisely the reason why Indigenous diplomats turned to it as a device. In doing so, Indigenous diplomats were both participating in and generating new diplomatic and literary cultures. As Frank Kelderman has explained,

nineteenth-century Native American writers and orators generated what I term *indigenous publication projects*: mediated forms of indigenous representation that are produced with non-Native collaborators, which take place in institutional and diplomatic networks but also intervene in them. They are *indigenous* not because they authentically give voice to the ideas of indige-

23. Saliha Belmessous, “The Problem of Indigenous Claim-Making in Colonial History,” in *Native Claims: Indigenous Law against Empire, 1500–1920*, ed. Saliha Belmessous, 3–16 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

24. Vine Deloria Jr., *We Talk, You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 12.

nous actors, but because these mediated forms of publication nevertheless construct indigenous counter-discourses within colonial scenes of interaction. And they are forms of *publication* not because they necessarily hail a potentially unlimited audience, but because they organize politically meaningful publics within existing communication networks. Finally, I define them as *projects* because they are collaborative forms of textual production, directed at some measure of institutional change.²⁵

We can see in the examples that this book considers some of the truth of Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous dictum that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," as British Romantic poets provide the raw material for a particular kind of legal discourse. In *Brown Romantics: Poetry and Nationalism in the Global Nineteenth Century*, Manu Samriti Chander rightly emphasizes the term "unacknowledged" in order to broaden the field of who is to be termed "Romantic."²⁶ I am likewise interested in thinking about a broader and a browner Romanticism, which has remained largely unacknowledged. But here I am more interested in the idea, to rephrase Shelley, that poetry is the unacknowledged legislation of the world. To these Indigenous diplomats, poetry was assumed to have a legislative force. In a diplomatic relationship, one side could hold the other side to account for its poetry as much as its proclamations, its stanzas as well as its statutes, its lines alongside its laws.

The figures that this book considers are, of course, a tiny sample from the extensive world of colonial Indigenous diplomacy. They represent a type of diplomat who was Anglophone, educated in a settler-dominated schooling system, and personally interested in English poetry. These diplomats were almost always controversial figures in their own communities, partly because of these personal histories, but also because of the inevitable disruptions to processes of mandating and authorizing leaders that arrived with colonization. They represent the type of diplomat that Kelderman has carefully delineated in his idea of "authorized agents" and the texts they produced:

25. Frank Kelderman, *Authorized Agents: Publication and Diplomacy in the Era of Indian Removal* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019), 12.

26. Manu Samriti Chander, *Brown Romantics: Poetry and Nationalism in the Global Nineteenth Century* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2017), 3.

The literatures of Indian diplomacy offer alternative representations of Native agency, re-inscribing the figure of the indigenous diplomat as an agentic subject whose words carried political weight in concrete institutional situations. And no matter how artificial their status as “official” delegates was, these literatures constructed Indian diplomats as the *authors* of texts that were collaboratively produced or sponsored by existing organizations. Indeed, even when they were transcribed or translated by non-Native collaborators, these publication projects established indigenous speakers as the originators of discourse, whose political voice could be constructed as a tribal-national one. To be an “authorized agent,” in other words, meant gaining an “author function” that legitimized collaborative texts as the products of indigenous speakers.²⁷

A huge number of significant ancestors are thus not discussed in my book: those who conducted their business in their own tongue; those who had no time for English poetry; and, perhaps most tellingly, women, who were vital and equal diplomatic forces but were not usually given access to the literary and classical side of the colonizers’ education system in the nineteenth century. I do not wish to suggest that British Romantic poetry formed a dominant or everyday part of Indigenous diplomacy with settler-imperial interlocutors: that is a world of people who, for the most part, had far more urgent concerns in mind. My aim is rather to identify and consider the narrow yet identifiable thread of Indigenous diplomacy that did see some value or significance in Romantic poetry and wove it into the vast fabric of Indigenous diplomatic activity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While it is only a thread, it is noticeable how much more space Romantic poetry occupies in Indigenous diplomacy than any other type of English verse. For my own field of Romantic studies, then, this thread represents a new way to consider what the poetry said and meant, how it was used, and what those uses and their legacies might tell us about the way in which we read the canon of Romanticism today.

The chapters of this book are organized chronologically, which allows us to track a particular type of moment in Indigenous-settler relations as it moves across the colonized world, following the path of European

27. Kelderman, 26.

settlement and usurpation, while also assessing some profound differences in the ways Indigenous leaders globally engaged with Romantic literature and its lessons. The first section of the book focuses on North America in the first half of the nineteenth century. Chapter 1 considers the 1821 encounter between the Haudenosaunee leader John Brant (Grand River Six Nations) and the poet Thomas Campbell, in which Brant challenged Campbell's account of his father, Joseph Brant, in his poem *Gertrude of Wyoming*. Campbell had famously depicted "the monster Brandt [*sic*]" in his poem, and he had passed on a false accusations that Joseph Brant was present at and participated in the massacre of settlers at the Battle of Wyoming. In locating this encounter within the Grand River Six Nations' wider diplomatic efforts, this chapter considers how Campbell's original composition of the poem, as well as his equivocal response to Brant's challenge, reflects the diplomatic history that links the Haudenosaunee and the British. It sets the poem alongside John Brant's letters to the British imperial government and various settler officials to show the ways in which he understood the poem as having the power to influence debates about the Six Nations' sovereignty and took issue with its words as part of a significant diplomatic engagement in the service of his people.

Chapter 2 examines the extensive republication of Felicia Hemans's poetry in the pages of the first Native American newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The chapter considers the ways in which Hemans's particular preoccupations and modes of expression were mobilized in the newspaper, not only to generate sympathy in white audiences, but also as intertexts for the Cherokee leadership's considerable body of diplomatic textual production. The sixteen Hemans poems that appeared in the *Phoenix* are read alongside the many memorials, letters, editorials, and essays that the Cherokee leadership produced in these years in order to demonstrate the fluid ways in which British Romantic tropes and vocabularies could migrate to and from Indigenous diplomatic discourse in the period. The chapter proposes that the emotional charge that Hemans's poetry produced was seen as especially useful in mobilizing white settlers' sentiment in the context of the Removal Crisis, in which the Cherokees, along with Indigenous groups everywhere east of the Mississippi, were forced to move west and vacate their land. It also grapples with the question of a diplomatic substitution of a white woman's voice for the voices of the Cherokee women.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Ojibwe author George Copway and his hybrid volume *Running Sketches of Men and Places in England, France, Germany, Belgium and Scotland* (1851). Copway is a complex figure in

Indigenous literary and political history: a Methodist minister and early Indigenous autobiographer and ethnographer, he was deeply involved in Ojibwe politics in the mid-nineteenth century, but he had an often troubled relationship with Ojibwe leaders and communities. *Running Sketches* is frequently held up as the weakest and least “authentic” of Copway’s major pieces of literary work because of its reliance on quotation and extract. This chapter aims to recuperate the volume by showing the ways in which Copway utilizes the longest of the literary quotations, a section of Lord Byron’s description of traveling on the Rhine from *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (Canto III). Instead of treating this as a derivative move in which Copway aims to play the Byronic tourist, this chapter sets the long quotation from Byron in dialogue with Ojibwe treaties, Copway’s own history and experiences as a diplomat, and European ideas about history and memory as embodied in Byron’s lines. The chapter aims to reconsider the much-derided *Running Sketches* as a fundamentally diplomatic text, which was produced at a critical moment in Ojibwe history and embedded in a global vision of Indigenous power and nationhood.

The second section of the book turns to the Southern Hemisphere. Chapter 4 considers what is almost certainly the most widely read figure and the best-known text in my study: Sol Plaatje and his 1916 work *Native Life in South Africa*. While considerable critical work has been done on this central text of African political thought, including discussions of its practice of quotation, *Native Life in South Africa* has not been situated in either global Indigenous networks nor in the rich diplomatic context from which it emerged. The chapter seeks to read across genres of textual production to show the ways in which Plaatje’s long-acknowledged attempt to mobilize the British public’s sympathy in favor of equitable treatment for his African compatriots has antecedents in the history of Indigenous colonial diplomacy and manifests his own multimodal approach to a Romantic discourse of diplomatic relationships. It explores the ways in which Plaatje uses Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Deserted Village* as a particularly effective diplomatic intertext for considerations of displacement, mobility, forced emigration, equal rights, and Indigenous sovereignty.

In my final chapter, I consider the Māori writer Rēweti Kōhere’s juxtaposition of extracts from Byron and Thomas Babington Macaulay with his long-running campaign for land rights in part of his Ngāti Porou homeland. The chapter looks at how key ideas from Byron’s and Macaulay’s verses are linked to metaphors and legal discourses of Māori land tenure and hereditary ownership across Kōhere’s many diplomatic

articles, letters, and petitions from the 1910s to the 1940s, particularly the ways in which Byron and Macaulay make use of fire imagery as a metaphor for land rights, sovereignty, and ancestry. While this chapter ends the main part of the book because it comes last chronologically, it also allows me to “bring home” some of the reflections in this book by considering how British Romantic poetry shaped diplomacy in my own country and how my own country might have something to say to the field in which I situate myself. This return to the Pacific is the focus of the conclusion, which considers much more recent manifestations of the same phenomenon among Pasifika women poets, who are taking the lead in cultural diplomacy in the twenty-first century, but who are also once again making Romantic poetry, especially that of William Wordsworth, a part of their diplomatic endeavors.

That situatedness is of considerable importance. I am neither Māori nor Indigenous. I have lived a life (scholarly and personal) marked by settler privilege, which in concrete and material ways facilitates my ability to write this book.²⁸ I operate in a field that is profoundly white, but, led by Chander and the wider Bigger6 collective, one that is slowly diversifying. My aim in this book is thus not to “settle” myself within Indigenous studies, although I hope my citation practice and intellectual engagement with that field manifests respectful interaction and rigor. Instead, my aim is to speak to Romanticists worldwide about the living legacies of the poetry we study and the great array of what Chander has termed “Brown Romantics” of the past, present, and future, who have been writing, speaking, and engaging with that poetry for centuries. For those of us in the settler colonies, the stolen land on which we stand sustains our scholarship, and we must offer our scholarship back in return, however insignificant that offering might be. As Romanticists in the settler colonies, we can remind ourselves that the poetry to which we have dedicated ourselves is an active force in these lands, which is passed back and forth by settler and Indigenous readers, thinkers, and diplomats, and thus woven into, not just our comprehension of the natural beauty that we might associate with Romanticism, but the history and ongoing legacy of injustice and racism on which the settler colonies were built as

28. I have outlined some of this personal history in *Romantic Literature and the Colonised World: Lessons from Indigenous Translations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018), 9, and outlined it in an episode for the podcast *The East Is a Podcast* (at the time of writing, this episode is available here): <https://eastisapodcast.libsyn.com/the-tasks-of-indigenous-translators-w-nikki-hessel>.

well. We can hold ourselves to the promises that the Indigenous diplomats this book considers asked us to adhere to when they quoted Romantic poetry: respect and oneness with the land, solidarity with the oppressed, and a fairer and more just world. After all, this poetry is what we said, and continue to say, underpins our sense of ourselves and our values. These are the texts *we* brought to the treaty council, the meeting table, the courtroom, and the family home.