

## **Heroes in Body Bags: Renegotiating Heroism in Rebecca Roanhorse's *Trail of Lightning***

**Lorena Bickert**

**ABSTRACT:** This paper discusses how Maggie Hoskie, the Indigenous “hero” of Rebecca Roanhorse’s *The Sixth World* series, renegotiates what it means to be a hero in the “post-Native Apocalypse” (Dillon 10). *Trail of Lightning*, as a work that explores Indigenous futurisms and ecofeminisms, demands a renegotiation of Western hero ideals, highlighting how Maggie’s most heroic qualities arise from her challenge of stereotypical Western heroism in the wake of ecological disaster.

**KEYWORDS:** Anthropocene, Ecofeminism, Heroism, Indigenous Futurisms, Ecological Other, Community

These Diné know the old stories [...], the ancient legends of monsters and the heroes who slew them [...]. And now they are looking to me to be their hero. But I’m no hero. I’m more of a last resort, a scorched-earth policy. I’m the person you hire when the heroes have already come home in body bags.

(Roanhorse 2)

### **Introduction: Heroism in the Age of the Anthropocene**

Literary tradition has long known the figure of the “hero.” In 1949, Joseph Campbell formulated a pattern of literary heroism known as “the monomyth,” a characteristic hero’s journey towards mythological status. The traditional hero’s quest is framed as “a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return” (Campbell 28), describing several “rites of passage” (6) the hero must pass in order to complete his journey. According to Campbell, diverse literary examples from around the world illustrate the universality of this pattern (28) and, along with it, the extraordinary character of “[t]he composite hero of the monomyth [who] is a personage of exceptional gifts” (29). This image of a god-like, heroic genius who transcends and, thereby, saves the mundane reality of human existence emerges as an integral part of Western heroism. Due to its pervasive presence in American literature, the traditional hero and his quest convey supposedly unalterable values that reinforce oppressive Western power structures (Hourihan 14-15). In fact, Campbell’s traditional hero’s journey systematically masks discriminations based on gender, race, age, or ability in favor of a stereotypical image of heteronormative masculinity. What is expected of a hero is to provide sanctuary in times of crisis or danger, and, ultimately, a solution to those troubles.

However, the ecological crisis poses a threat that transcends conventional crisis management. “Welcome to the Anthropocene” (16), writes Dale Jamieson and polemically gives his readers an introduction to their own looming demise. Indeed, we live in a world where human power seems at its high point (15), yet, its main driving forces leave the future hanging by a gossamer thread—in the face of climate change, rising extinction rates, and other ecological threats. Then, Jamieson continues, “[e]verything seems possible but nothing seems to matter” (15). However, the continuously harder-to-ignore truth remains: “[t]he old order is shaking. [...] [N]ew thinking i[s] needed” (16) in the context of this fundamental “remaking [of] the planet” (16). Especially now, it seems that humanity is quite literally in need of a hero, but what happens when the new heroes and their supposedly heroic behaviors or mindsets fail to meet the traditional or stereotypical perception of heroism? What happens when heroes are no longer heroic enough? I argue that new thinking is also needed when it comes to the ideal of Western heroism.

The title of this paper, in part a quote from Rebecca Roanhorse’s 2018 speculative fiction novel *Trail of Lightning*, seems to support the call for a renegotiation of traditional Western heroism opposite the ecological crisis. In the novel, the Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo/African American author sends her monster-slaying Navajo<sup>1</sup> protagonist Maggie Hoskie on a journey towards saving the so-called Sixth World, an apocalyptic environment where the boundaries between the human and the supernatural realms have broken down in the aftermath of an ecological disaster. However, the supposed “hero”<sup>2</sup> ardently rejects this denomination for herself, struggling to fulfill the stereotypical role of a hero that is expected of her after her teacher Neizghání, “the Monsterslayer of legend, an immortal who is the son of two Holy People” (Roanhorse 6),<sup>3</sup> has disappeared and abandoned her.

My reading of Roanhorse’s novel combines a conceptual focus on heroism with a theoretical framework of ecofeminism. “[B]uilding on feminist attention to the concept of the ‘other’” (Gaard and Murphy 5), ecofeminism “reject[s] the notion of absolute difference and the binary construct of inside and outside” (5). These binary oppositions perpetuated by dualistic Western thought include the dichotomies of reason/emotion, civilization/wilderness, reason/nature, order/chaos, mind/body or soul/body, male/female, human/non-human, and

---

<sup>1</sup> *Navajo* is a term that goes back to the Spanish colonization of the Diné people that, according to Jennifer Nez Denetdale (Navajo), began in the sixteenth century (*The Long Walk* 17-18). It is a translation from the Tewa word *Navaju*, meaning “large area of cultivated fields” (17). By contrast, “*Diné* means the People and is the word Navajos call themselves” (7; cf. Roanhorse 2).

<sup>2</sup> The characters I discuss in my analyses transcend the rigid individualism of stereotypical heroism. Thus, I use the ungendered term “hero” for heroic characters of all genders in emphasis of their diversity and ambivalence, by which they renegotiate the traditional Western heroic ideal.

<sup>3</sup> According to Navajo mythology, “Changing Woman, sometimes known as White Shell Woman, is the principal mythological deity in the Diné culture. She gave to the Diné the first clans and the guidelines of how the Diné should live their lives. She birthed the Twin Heroes who destroyed the monsters that were ravaging the people” (Tohe 104). The twins, “Naayéé’ Neezghání (Monster Slayer) and Tó Bájish Chíní (Born for Water)” (Begay 122), thus, figure prominently as the protagonists of various Diné hero stories.

master/slave (cf. Plumwood qtd. in Hourihan 17). Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy emphasize that “[t]he discipline of ecology challenges any such dichotomy” (5). An ecofeminist reading of *Trail of Lightning* not only subverts the definition of Western heroism by foregrounding the voices and perspectives of frequently othered Native American heroes. These Indigenous perspectives also reveal different strategies of survival, responsibility, or crisis management in the current moment of ecological crisis, previously marginalized from a Western point of view. Thus, the novel can be read as a work of what Anishinaabe author Grace Dillon, in *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (2012), has called “Indigenous futurisms” (3). Indigenous futuristic narratives, like *Trail of Lightning*, reimagine Western hero stories of conquest by emphasizing the complex apocalyptic experiences of Native American heroes.

In this paper, I discuss how Maggie renegotiates what it means to be a hero in an apocalyptic environment. I argue that Maggie’s most heroic qualities arise from those elements of her identity that Western heroism marginalizes and thus constitutes as “other.” As an Indigenous female hero with supernatural powers, Maggie challenges traditional notions of Western heroism—centered around colonialist processes of othering—on account of her alleged monstrosity, her race, and her gender. I want to show how Maggie must, first, learn to embrace her Indigenous identity as the “monstrous” ecological other in order to, secondly, claim her place in her own hero story by moving past those binaries that exclude her from being a hero in the androcentric Western hero myth, especially in times of the Anthropocene. *Trail of Lightning* exposes the blurriness of allegedly fixed boundaries and highlights the importance of “[I]ndigenous people’s knowledge of what it means to survive and flourish” (Powys Whyte 213) in an apocalyptic environment. In doing so, this Indigenous futuristic hero story actively participates in the ecofeminist “process of rewriting the old stories” (Gaard and Murphy 11-12) of heroism that are centered around the conquest of the other.

### **Renegotiating Heroism: Envisioning Ecocritical Indigenous Futurisms**

In the introduction to *Walking the Clouds*, Dillon states that, from an Indigenous point of view, “the Native Apocalypse, if contemplated seriously, has already taken place” (8). This statement draws attention to two central aspects. Firstly, Indigenous futuristic narratives contribute to a transformed understanding of what it means to be a hero in a “post-Native Apocalypse world” (10) by mobilizing Native American voices, traditions, and perspectives, typically pushed to the margins of, or completely excluded from, the traditional hero myth. Dillon situates the apocalyptic experience explicitly in Native American “storytelling that challenges readers to recognize their positions with regard to the diasporic condition of contemporary Native peoples” (6). Indigenous futuristic texts, like *Trail of Lightning*, contribute to the central goal of ecofeminist literary criticism to make visible “previously unnoticed elements of a literary text” as well as “connections and differences that affect our relationships with nature and with each other” (Gaard and Murphy 7). By linking alternate

pasts, presents, and futures together, Indigenous futurisms center on the Indigenous conception of the Apocalypse as a direct result of colonialist and imperialist agendas, thereby actively challenging conventions of Western science fiction stories that often focus on such colonialist tropes (Dillon 5).

Indigenous futurisms, secondly, point to the multi-faceted intersections between the hero story, hubristic visions of Western science, and the exploitative treatment of the natural environment, perpetuated in those hero tales. Dillon emphasizes the legitimacy of Indigenous science, frequently questioned in comparison with Western conceptions of the term, which also affects the definition of science fiction (7). Indigenous futuristic narratives imagine alternative ecological pasts, presents, and futures by focusing on “cosmovisions” (Adamson and Monani 3) of sustainability and mutual respect, underlining the centrality of Indigenous science and knowledge in the face of the ecological crisis (8-9). Laurie Anne Whitt et al. contend that Indigenous understandings of science<sup>4</sup> are based on “genealogies [that] map affiliations spatially as well, placing individuals and families in relation to one another, and locating them in – by connecting them to – the earth” (4). Indigenous science and knowledge systems, thus, establish connections between the land and the people in the past, present, and future, illustrating how the natural environment can neither be seen as outside of human experience, nor can the exploitation of the land be justified in terms of ownership and conquest (6-7), as it is often the case in Western hero stories. Indigenous conceptions of science, then, highlight the ecological implications of relegating the natural environment to a state of passive exploitability. In doing so, they not only challenge traditional narratives of heroism, but also engage with ecofeminist visions of equality and diversity that take different perspectives on human-nature relationships into account (cf. Gaard and Murphy 6).

Consequently, Native American worldviews call attention to a relationship of respect and responsibility (Whitt et al. 10-11; 13) among all beings, anchored in Native American oral traditions of storytelling and their literary incarnations in Roanhorse’s Indigenous futuristic narrative. *Trail of Lightning* is set in an apocalyptic future, a new “Sixth World,” which paints the desolate picture of the aftermath of an ecological disaster, the Big Water. Importantly, the narrative foregrounds Native American experiences in this post-Native Apocalypse by explicitly focusing on Diné stories and Diné heroes. For instance, Ma’ii, or Coyote, a trickster

---

<sup>4</sup> In their article, Whitt et al. illustrate understandings of Indigenous science with reference to multiple Indigenous peoples’ stories and traditions, drawing attention to the diversity of Indigenous perspectives. Accordingly, Whitt et al.’s article “offer[s] one possible way of understanding the foundation of [I]ndigenous responsibilities as guardians of the land and of future generations” (17). Likewise, this paper recognizes this diversity, highlighting the importance of Native American knowledge systems for a renegotiation of Western heroic narratives of conquest and environmental exploitation with a focus on Roanhorse’s Navajo heroes.

god,<sup>5</sup> directly links the Big Water to the Navajo cosmology of different worlds,<sup>6</sup> all of which ended in a great flood. According to Yolanda Begay, this worldview “has been influenced by the historical trauma that the Diné peoples have faced” (123). Ma’ii recounts the story of how, when the Big Water ended the Fifth World, “[i]t opened the passage for those like myself to return to the world” (Roanhorse 101), demonstrating the importance of storytelling as a strategy to remember and explain the Diné people’s apocalyptic reality. The story is not a Western interpretation of the disaster; to the contrary, it is an Indigenous literary space that presents the Navajos’ perspective as an equally legitimate narrative that exists alongside, and not in the shadows of, the white population’s explanations for the Big Water (69-70).

Moreover, the story of this Native eco-Apocalypse connects Diné storytelling to the colonialist exploitations of the ancestral lands. The Big Water is linked to colonial relationships and the capitalist interests of the dominant white population that systematically exploits Indigenous lands and peoples, demonstrating how these forms of oppression intersect and thus also responding to the ecofeminist criticism thereof (cf. Gaard and Murphy 3). Maggie describes the hurricanes (Roanhorse 23), floods, droughts, and earthquakes (70) that preceded the apocalyptic flood. Still, she emphasizes that, for the Navajo people, the real threats were not natural, but human-made, with “the oil companies ripping up sacred grounds for their pipelines, the natural gas companies buying up fee land for fracking when they could get it, literally shaking the bedrock with their greed” (23). Kyle Powys Whyte points out how “industrial settler campaigns<sup>7</sup> both dramatically changed ecosystems, such as through deforestation, overharvesting, and pollution, and obstructed [I]ndigenous peoples’ capacities to adapt to the changes, such as through removal and containment on reservations” (209; original emphasis) in the past. *Trail of Lightning* illustrates how campaigns similar to those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries continue to isolate Indigenous communities by systematically denying them their right to self-determination.

---

<sup>5</sup> Native American trickster figures are ambivalent characters appearing in the shape of different animals (Coyote, Raven, Spider etc.) in a variety of myths and stories. They unite opposites in their ambiguous personalities, “clever and foolish at the same time, [...] powerful as well as powerless” (Erdoes and Ortiz qtd. in Coulombe 30). According to Gerald Vizenor, a trickster stands for “the realities of human imperfections. [...] [He is] not an isolated and sentimental tragic hero in conflict with nature [...] but survives as a part of the natural world; he represents a spiritual balance [...]” (Vizenor qtd. in Coulombe 30-31). As incarnations of the Indigenous cosmovision of interconnectedness, tricksters themselves challenge the traditional Western heroic ideal.

<sup>6</sup> Diné creation stories are organized around a four worlds model, sometimes a five worlds model. After an initial state of harmony, “deceit or betrayal [...] leads to chaos and forces the Diné peoples to emerge into another world” (Begay 121). At the beginning of the Fourth World, Changing Woman gave birth to the twin heroes and created the first clans and rules for the social organization of the Diné people, including rituals, ceremonies, and the kinship principle of k’é (122). In the novel, the Big Water marks the end of the Fifth World and the beginning of the Sixth World, in which monsters, gods, and humans coexist again.

<sup>7</sup> Powys Whyte “use[s] the term *campaigns* because these waves of settlement are sustained, strategic, and militaristic” (208).

However, in line with Dillon's argument about Indigenous futurisms, the narrative highlights an alternative perspective on those histories. In the novel, the Diné people found a way to reclaim their agency by building a Wall, "made with rock from each sacred mountain" (Roanhorse 23) of the Diné people, around the ancestral lands. The so-called Energy Wars led the Navajo Tribal Council to choose isolation over displacement through this practice of walling off their people. The violent encounters that "invoked the specter of conquest, manifest destiny" (22), associated with Western hero tales, revealed to Maggie's community that "Navajo people weren't safe anymore" (22). According to Maggie, the Wall symbolized "our rebirth" (23), given that "the Diné had already suffered their apocalypse over a century before" (23). This account testifies to the systematic exclusion of Native American perspectives from Western narratives of conquest that are typically cast as heroic endeavors.

As Joni Adamson observes, "[n]otions of the 'post-Native Apocalypse' also grow out of cosmologies that hold that Mother Earth is an 'entity-in-assemblage' who will remember acts of mass violence" (218). For Maggie, the Native Apocalypse is inextricably linked to Indigenous experiences of displacement. On the one hand, the Wall offers a way to protect the connection between the Diné people and the land, sustained by the traditions of storytelling, but threatened by the exploitative agendas of the dominant white population. As a marker of Navajo identity and subject of new mythical stories, "the Wall took on a life of its own" (23), offering the Diné a way to rewrite those stories that marginalize them. On the other hand, as a memorial of failed communication and trust in the face of ecological threats, the Wall is also the physical representation of the boundaries created by colonialist narratives locking Native American perspectives away. In *Trail of Lightning*, the impossibility of dialogue between Natives and non-Natives brought about by the eco-disaster obstructs ways in which traditional ecological knowledge<sup>8</sup> can offer invaluable insights into and strategies for survival in times of environmental disaster.

An ecofeminist reading of this Indigenous hero story discloses how Roanhorse's novel negotiates clashing discourses of Western and Native American heroism by reimagining Western heroic stories and ideals (cf. Gaard and Murphy 11-12). The narrative moves beyond the limitations of Western dualisms—of self/other, male/female, or hero/monster—instead creating a productive counter-narrative of inclusivity and responsibility. By introducing Maggie as a self-reflective Diné protagonist who learns to embrace her Indigenous heritage and connection to her ancestral lands, *Trail of Lightning* presents an alternative outlook on heroism and its intersections with race, gender, human-nature relationships, and, by extension, the genre of science fiction. Embracing her otherness from the Western hero ideal is a key incentive for Maggie's heroic potential in the novel, by which she renegotiates heroism in the face of the post-Native Apocalypse.

---

<sup>8</sup> Dillon defines traditional ecological knowledge as "practices used by Indigenous peoples over thousands of years to reenergize the natural environment while improving the interconnected relationships between all persons (animal, human, spirit, and even machine)" (7).

## Renegotiating Heroism: Embracing Otherness

In 1997, Margery Hourihan poignantly summarized what she calls the “invariable pattern” (9) of the traditional hero’s journey, as prominently described by Joseph Campbell almost fifty years earlier. A white, young male hero, who may be the leader of a group of adventurers, “leaves the civilized order of home to venture into the wilderness in pursuit of his goal [...] The hero encounters a series of difficulties and is threatened by dangerous opponents” (9), but ultimately, his bravery and strength, and sometimes the guidance of a mentor, help him overcome all obstacles and achieve his goal, which may be a treasure or the rescue of the damsel in distress. He returns home and accepts the reward for mastering this difficult journey, for instance, the hand of a beautiful woman (9-10). Hourihan emphasizes the remarkably narrow and limited scope of this ideal that “inscribes the set of related concepts, the fundamental dualisms, which have shaped Western thought and values. [...] The hero always embodies the superior terms of those dualisms as he adventures forth on his quest and encounters evil monsters, dragons, witches and their like” (2). The Western hero is the agent of oppression and exploitation since it is this very act of conquering that is coded as heroic, as masculine, as white. As a cultural ideal grounded in such colonialist endeavors, “[t]he hero story celebrates the conquest of nature, as well as of ‘savages’” (6). Thus, Western heroism as a cultural product sustains and justifies not just the idea of nature as a conquerable space, but also of similar processes of othering on account of gender or race.

As mentioned above, ecofeminism explores these intersecting forms of oppression. Carolyn Merchant points to “the historical interconnections between women and nature that developed as the modern scientific and economic world took form in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – a transformation that shaped and pervades today’s mainstream values and perceptions” (xx). At the same time, ecofeminist concerns are “also based on the recognition that these two forms of domination are bound up with class exploitation, racism, colonialism, and neocolonialism” (Gaard and Murphy 3). As an Indigenous futuristic narrative, Rebecca Roanhorse’s hero story celebrates a different brand of heroism that is specifically “other” from the oppressive Western ideal by reimagining heroism through a focus on a female Native American protagonist. Nevertheless, the ideal of Western heroism still informs this text. In *Trail of Lightning*, Maggie takes on the hero’s role of the Monsterslayer, a figure that features in both Diné and Western hero myths—Neizghání’s name even translates to “Monster Slayer” (Begay 122)—and, as such, already points to the convergence of these hero ideals. Yet, the traditional Western heroic ideal systematically marginalizes her as an Indigenous woman with supernatural powers in more than one way. She is “other” because of her clan powers, but also because of her race and her gender.

Firstly, Maggie’s otherness as a hero stems from her allegedly monstrous clan powers. Paraphrasing Dillon, Adamson points out that in Indigenous futuristic texts, “characters who resist injustices are often imbued with traits of ancient supernatural beings [...]” (217). In *Trail of Lightning*, Maggie’s supernatural clan powers were brought on by a traumatic encounter

with the monstrous underbelly of the Sixth World Apocalypse that led her to become Neizghání's apprentice (Roanhorse 106-11). She struggles with her apocalyptic reality because, at first, she rejects the identification with her Indigenous heritage, fearing the monstrous side these powers expose. Before he abandoned her, Neizghání told Maggie that her clan powers mean that "[she is] touched by death now and that it's changed [her]" (110). His perception of her powers as the physical manifestation of an infection with evil (14-15) conditions her fear of "becoming just another monster" (14) by using them, and, simultaneously, reinforces her rejection of the role of the hero she is supposed to fulfill. Ecofeminism challenges the idea of an absolute dichotomy between self/other, like the sharp distinction between hero and monster (cf. Gaard and Murphy 5). As an Indigenous futuristic work, Roanhorse's novel reimagines the other as a positive element of human identity, participating in the ecofeminist reconsideration of otherness by focusing on an Indigenous female hero.

When asked to disclose her clans to a Diné family she is supposed to save from a potential monster threat, Maggie hesitates. She claims that "I've never been much for tradition, and it's better all around if we just stay strangers" (Roanhorse 3). Maggie's comment stands in opposition to "Diné identity [that], in true form, is centered on the principle of k'é, a system of clans that establishes kinship [...] [and] reinforces community [...]" (Begay 122). When she finally does disclose her clans, her powers are met with instant suspicion, like she expected, because they do not fit with the Diné family's initial hope for Maggie to be like the mythical hero Neizghání (Roanhorse 6). The Diné clan system is bilateral with the first two clans, originating from the mother and father respectively (Begay 122). Translated into English, Maggie's maternal clan means "Walks-Around" (Roanhorse 58), endowing her with immense speed in dangerous situations. Her paternal clan translates to "Living Arrow" (58), which, as she morbidly remarks, "means I'm really good at killing people" (59). Maggie sees her clan powers as a threat, not as a form of empowerment that enables her to act heroically. As a "human, a five-fingered girl" (6), Maggie shuns the comparison with her mentor Neizghání, the "hero of legend, [...] the son of Changing Woman and the Sun" (113). She feels her otherness from this hero sharply, because, in her view, her own monstrosity is the cause for Neizghání's departure (59). Instead of relishing her clan powers, Maggie chooses to deliberately comply with her status as "some kind of freak" (46), or, put differently, as "the other." Here, the novel shows how such binaries, while called into question from an ecofeminist perspective, continue to inform Maggie's self-perception, i.e., how she has internalized her stance as the colonized other.

In this regard, it becomes apparent how *Trail of Lightning*, secondly, subverts Western discourses of domination that reveal how traditional Western heroism is also racially coded. Roanhorse's novel shows "other" Native American heroes fighting monsters in an apocalyptic environment. By contrast, Campbell's references to "primitive peoples" (72) at various points throughout his explanations (84; 116-19) illustrate how the monomyth is centered around a white, Western, young, non-disabled male hero. Sarah Jaquette Ray states that ecological



others' "bodies [...] bear the costs of environmental exploitation" (19), which makes them appear as "threats to nature" (19). Ray highlights the link between the marginalization of the ecological other and traditional heroism when she notes that "[u]nlike ecological subjects, whose aim it is to save the world from ecological crisis, ecological others are often those from whose poor decisions and reckless activities the world ostensibly needs to be saved" (5). Despite Campbell's use of examples from non-Western cultures and traditions, those ecological others are marginalized in comparison to the heroic ideal. Further, the monomyth casts the natural environment as a "demon wilderness" (Campbell 68), a realm of monsters and darkness. Early incarnations of the Western hero capitalized on the defeat of savagery and the ultimate victory of civilization. In this vein, ecofeminist scholar Maria Mies argues that "[w]omen, nature, and foreign peoples and countries are the *colonies of White Man*. Without their colonization [...] (exploitation), the famous Western civilization would not exist, nor its paradigm of progress and, above all, not its *natural science and technology* either" (43-44; original emphasis). The Western hero story sustains these binaries, especially since "[t]he effect of [such] dualistic thinking is to naturalize domination [...]" (Hourihan 17) on various levels.

In *Trail of Lightning*, Kai encourages Maggie to embrace her Indigenous heritage, to see her clan powers as a blessing and "as potential for growth" (Roanhorse 57). He tells Maggie about his grandfather, who taught him that clan powers are "gifts from the Diyin Dine'é [the Holy People]. [...] That they manifest in times of great need, but not to everyone, and not everyone is blessed equally" (57). In doing so, he emphasizes not only the value of storytelling but also the importance of Indigenous science, based on community and interconnectedness between the land and the people. Maggie, on the other hand, casts this traditional knowledge aside as "noble savage shit" (57), alluding to how Western environmentalism systematically marginalizes or erases Indigenous experiences, while paradoxically perpetuating an image of "noble" Native Americans as "closer to nature" (Ray 24). At first, Maggie's compliance with these colonialist discourses of otherness prevents her from realizing her heroic potential that lies in the connection to her Indigenous heritage. Consequently, Maggie is quick to isolate herself from her community and its traditions for fear of hurting others.

Indigenous understandings of the interconnectedness between human, non-human, and more-than-human beings subvert this Western ideology of colonial violence. Centered on responsibility and "respect for the land [that] involves acknowledgment of reciprocity and active observance of certain ritual activities" (Whitt et al. 14), Native American discourses of community include the land as a participating actor in this network instead of a passive backdrop to the hero's quest. In an ecofeminist sense, *Trail of Lightning* promotes the "recognition of the 'other' as not only different but also of equal ontological status" (Gaard and Murphy 6) to the Western male hero. The novel celebrates "diversity as a necessary dimension of individual species and ecosystemic survival" based on "the recognition and positive identification of otherness" (6). Native American stories of communal and inclusive

heroism,<sup>9</sup> like those of Rebecca Roanhorse’s “other” heroes, emerge as insightful and productive counter-narratives to the stereotypical hero tale.

Thirdly, Roanhorse’s novel reverses traditional notions of gender connected to the Western hero story. In Campbell’s monomyth, women appear in the role of supporting characters in the courageous hero’s tale, as “the guide[s] to the sublime acme of sensuous adventure” (97). His example of woman as a nature goddess who, compared to the male hero, “can never be greater than himself, though she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending” (97), exposes the paradoxical nature of a woman’s role in the Western hero story, oscillating between sublimity and submission. Campbell’s descriptions reveal how women’s bodies have historically been connected to the natural realm, as frequently criticized by ecofeminist scholars (cf. Merchant xix- xxi). Women are cast as “female devils” (Campbell 104), whose luring sexuality threatens to make the hero stray from his destined path. From this perspective, a woman’s bodily connection to the creation of life even turns her into “the queen of sin” (102), as the hero has to move past “this limitation of the body which is inert and filthy by nature” (103).

Contrarily, in Roanhorse’s novel, it is Maggie’s companion Kai who is reminiscent of Campbell’s nature goddess, implying a gender-role reversal that speaks to the novel’s ecofeminist efforts. For one, Kai’s body is sexualized in *Trail of Lightning*. Maggie immediately notices his “[m]ovie-star boy-band handsome” (Roanhorse 39) face, his “[p]erfect hair, [...] fashion model clothes [and] [f]lawless brown skin” (39). Kai’s luring attraction is one of his clan powers, “Talks-in-Blanket” (273), through which he can easily manipulate others for his own benefit. This gift, thus, turns him into a male counterpart to Campbell’s “queen of sin” (102); he even offers Maggie a “sensuous adventure” (97) when they first meet (Roanhorse 118). Campbell associates such bodily powers with sin and evil, similarly to Neizghání in the narrative (Roanhorse 14-15). Kai, however, relishes his powers and often proves how his rootedness in his Indigenous heritage boosts his confidence. As a young medicine man, he also has healing clan powers that not only include healing humans, but also condition his ability to

---

<sup>9</sup> In the second novel of Roanhorse’s *The Sixth World* series, *Storm of Locusts* (2019), Maggie mobilizes a diverse heroic community to prevent another ecological disaster. This heroic community grows into a group that consists of other Diné with clan powers, human fighters, and Native gods, but also includes nature itself as a participating actor in ecological battles. As another Indigenous futuristic hero story, the narrative demonstrates the importance of a communal approach to ecological issues, highlighting both the dangers of isolation and ecological othering, and the empowerment that arises from embracing loyalty and community as catalysts for heroic action. Other Native American novels also feature heroic communities. One particularly interesting example is Diane Glancy’s (Cherokee) historical novel *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears* (1996) that tells the traumatizing tale of the Cherokees’ Trail of Tears from the perspective of various narrators. The novel foregrounds the apocalyptic experience of displacement and highlights community as a key strategy of survival—not just of a people, but also of its stories and traditions. *Pushing the Bear* reimagines the hero story from a historical perspective. In doing so, it captures the central idea of Native Slipstream, a subgenre of Indigenous futurisms, whose goal it is “to recover the Native space of the past, to bring it to the attention of contemporary readers, and to build better futures” (Dillon 4). The many voices in Glancy’s novel are a testimony of a community that tells its own Indigenous hero story, refusing to be silenced by colonialist aggressions.

potentially “heal the land [...] [by] [c]ontrolling the forces of nature” (36-37) through so-called “Weather Ways” (36). Campbell’s monomyth relegates “[t]he shaman” (82) or “the medicine man” (Róheim qtd. in Campbell 84) of “every primitive tribe” (84) to the role of the hero’s spiritual helper, but in this Indigenous hero story, Kai’s healing clan powers are “cool superpowers” (Roanhorse 59), according to Maggie.

In contrast to Kai, Rebecca Roanhorse’s female hero is a fierce Monsterslayer, fulfilling the role of the stereotypical male hero. However, Maggie rejects the violence that her clan powers supposedly represent. Unaware of Kai’s second clan, she believes that Kai’s clan powers are more benign than her own, convinced that benevolent healing powers like his “don’t make people distrust you, don’t get you treated like you’re diseased or a step away from being one of the monsters yourself” (Roanhorse 59). Maggie’s contradictory assessment of Kai’s and her own clan powers emphasizes that Western binary gender roles still influence the way the characters in the novel act and interact. Kai’s pride in his Indigenous powers mirrors the confidence of a Western male hero. He is aware of how he can use the connection to nature and his people that his clan powers endow him with (186), while Maggie’s self-doubts still prevent her from seeing her potential for heroic actions as an Indigenous female hero.

Here, *Trail of Lightning* shows the lasting impact of colonialist discourses on Native American self-perception, which an ecofeminist perspective on Western heroism helps to expose. An ecofeminist reading of Roanhorse’s novel discloses how such colonialist power structures violently perpetuate a hierarchy that systematically strips gendered, racialized, or ecological others of their right to self-determination, and, by extension, their active place in the Western hero story. The binary gender system is another colonial imposition on Indigenous communities (Smith 124; 126). As such, it contributed to the creation of “new colonies” (Shiva 5), namely “the interior spaces of the bodies of women, plants, and animals” (5; cf. Mies 43-44). Jennifer Nez Denetdale (Navajo) points out that, prior to colonization, “Navajo society was organized around matrilineal clans in which women were, and still are, central to social, economic, political, and spiritual organization of the people and their nation” (“Return” 84). Colonialist agendas “profoundly transformed Indigenous societies in ways that have undermined women’s places in their societies, devalued their authority, and rendered almost invisible gender roles beyond the heterosexual” (73), simultaneously erasing conceptions of multiple genders within the Diné community (90).<sup>10</sup> Maggie’s self-perception and confidence are significantly affected by this disempowerment. At the same time, both Maggie’s and Kai’s

---

<sup>10</sup> Jennifer Denetdale speaks of *nádleehí* as a third gender, “who technically is a person with both female and male sexual organs, [and who] was not sexual but a spiritual person who brought about reconciliation between the two sexes” (“Return” 90), i.e. male and female. However, as Denetdale also notes, accounts vary about the characteristics of *nádleehí* (98). Wesley Thomas (Navajo) refers to five genders that, apart from those associated with the male and female sexes, include “a *nádleeh* [who] mixes various aspects of the behaviors, activities, and occupations of both females and males” (158), as well as masculine females and feminine males, who have ceremonial duties and/or perform activities associated with the opposite sex (160-61).

subversion of the “ideal” is an indicator of how this Indigenous futuristic narrative challenges Western stories of heroism and the gender roles attached to them.

One way in which *Trail of Lightning* reimagines gender in its Indigenous futuristic hero story is by presenting the Diné community not as *divided* into male and female characters, but as *connected* by “k’é” (Begay 122), i.e., clan kinship. From a Western point of view, Maggie and Kai present as opposite genders of the binary. Nevertheless, when entering a Diné club in search of the monsters’ origin, Kai’s Indigenous medicine helps them look beyond the illusion of conformity to a gendered Western humanity. Instead of seeing “[n]ormal” (Roanhorse 208) human bodies, the medicine reveals “the children of Dinétah, stripped of all illusions” (210). Initially, Maggie identifies those beings with rabbit ears, feathers, or antlers as “monsters” (208), once more fearing the disclosure of her own monstrosity by the medicine as well (211). However, neither appearance nor sexuality defines the Diné. In the club, contrary to the gender norms of Western “heterosexual patriarchies” (Denetdale, “Return” 72), both Maggie and Kai wear makeup and jewelry (Roanhorse 199–200), and Maggie finds out about Kai’s flirtations with one of their male friends (215). Indeed, in this Indigenous space, nobody is judged based on binaries. According to Maggie, this embrace of gender fluidity and Diné identity even makes Kai look “preternatural” (212). Here, the Indigenous futuristic narrative reimagines heroism from a Native American perspective, highlighting how being Diné imbues this Indigenous character with the glory of the Western stereotypical hero. Simultaneously, in line with the ecofeminist challenge of binary oppositions, the narrative continues to forego the dualistic thought attached to this traditional hero figure; instead, the subversion of such colonialist tropes is further underlined by Kai’s pride in his Indigenous heritage.

Roanhorse’s Indigenous futuristic hero story reveals the necessity for a renegotiation of the Western heroic ideal. In the novel, Western and Native American understandings of heroism overlap, clash, and stand in intertextual dialogue with each other. *Trail of Lightning* actively contributes to a reconsideration of Western heroism by portraying Native American ideas of fluidity, community, and respect for all beings not as deviances from a heroic ideal that excludes all forms of otherness, but as catalysts for these Indigenous heroes’ empowerment. Maggie’s stance as an “other” Indigenous hero in the post-Native Apocalypse enables her to move past the limitations imposed by those Western dualisms, and to, ultimately, claim her place in her own Indigenous futuristic hero story.

### **Renegotiating Heroism: Transcending Binaries**

The last section of this paper focuses specifically on the figure of the hero. *Trail of Lightning* illustrates that the ideal of Western heroism inscribed in Campbell’s monomyth and perpetuated over centuries is not a suitable and infallible guideline to define what it means to be a hero in times of ecological crisis. This Indigenous futuristic narrative poses a challenge to traditional Western notions of individualistic heroism centered around the binaries that dictate who qualifies as the hero of a story. Engaging with the ecofeminist vision of equality

and diversity (cf. Gaard and Murphy 6), Rebecca Roanhorse's Indigenous hero story is not based on otherness, and, thus, exposes the image of heroic flawlessness as a part of the constructed Western hero tale, i.e., as a myth. In contrast to Campbell's heroic genius, Roanhorse's Indigenous heroes are complex and ambivalent characters, whose actions and interactions reveal the difficulties posed by the negotiation of conflicting heroic ideals in the post-Native Apocalypse. Indigenous futuristic texts, like *Trail of Lightning*, narrate what Dillon refers to as "the process of 'returning to ourselves,' which involves discovering how personally one is affected by colonization, discarding the emotional and physical baggage carried from its impact, and recovering ancestral traditions to adapt in our post-Native Apocalypse world" (10). As an Indigenous female hero, Maggie experiences how these colonialist discourses of othering not only intersect on multiple levels (cf. Gaard and Murphy 3), but how they, in consequence, systematically deny her a place as a heroic character in a stereotypical Western hero tale. The narrative portrays Maggie's struggle of, in Dillon's words, returning to herself by claiming the role of the hero for herself—and, thus, rewriting a story that stigmatizes her as "other"—as both a psychological and a physical battle.

Firstly, *Trail of Lightning* reimagines the Western hero ideal of flawlessness by presenting an Indigenous female hero whose self-doubts are an integral part of her path to discovering her heroic potential. The novel repeatedly demonstrates how Maggie cannot shake the binaries that lie at the bottom of her self-identification as a monster. When her self-loathing leads her to agree to a death match in a fighting pit in exchange for information about where the monsters came from, she argues with Kai about her recklessness. Maggie insists that "[k]illing is my clan power the same way healing is yours. [...] It's who I am" (Roanhorse 232). She is convinced that "I'm no hero, Kai" (232). At this point, Kai poignantly explains that stereotypical Western patterns and definitions of heroism cannot hold true in times of Apocalypse and ecological disaster. He points out that "[b]eing a hero's not about being perfect. It's about doing the right thing, doing your best to get the people you care about home safely. You were willing to sacrifice yourself to do that. [...] Whatever happened to you may have been evil, but you aren't evil" (232-33). Kai's definition of heroism takes Indigenous understandings of community and interconnectedness into account, while Maggie's perception of heroism is still restricted to the idea of "good guys" (232; 250) versus "bad guys" (250). This crucial internal battle emphasizes the process central to both ecofeminism and Indigenous futurisms, namely of overcoming Western dualistic thought, and, in doing so, reimagining the Native American heroes' Indigenous heritage as a form of empowerment. Here, Roanhorse's Indigenous hero story once more points to the lasting effects of colonialist discourses on Maggie discussed earlier in this paper. The imposed Western gender binary that, simultaneously, conditions an acute awareness of racial otherness pushes Maggie, a female Indigenous character, to the margins of the Western hero myth. In order to move past this binary thinking and to return to herself, Maggie must overcome both the monsters on the outside and the ones she still carries within her.

The novel, secondly, refrains from portraying the arrogance of supposedly perfect and powerful heroes who do not emerge from the paternalistic pattern of traditional Western heroism as an asset. Rather, it shows how hubristic thinking reinforces the breaches that exist amongst a community profoundly impacted by colonialist power structures and othering dualisms. As Ma'ii puts it, "sometimes the ones we call our heroes are the greatest monsters of all" (Roanhorse 97). The ambivalence of these Western binaries of heroism becomes most apparent in Maggie's complicated relationship with Neizghání. Interestingly enough, the "real hero" in the novel is also Native American. As such, he is a personified challenge to the ideal of Western heroism that entirely excludes Indigenous characters from being heroes. Yet, Neizghání also exemplifies the pride and empowerment that stem from his status as a *male* Indigenous hero. From an ecofeminist standpoint, this attitude underlines Maggie's struggle as a female hero to overcome the persistence of gender as an excluding factor in the definition of Western heroism. In fact, Neizghání adheres to a heroic ideal that falls in line with Campbell's all-powerful individualistic hero. As a legendary and mythical creature who "isn't human" (30), but "utterly otherworldly" (237), Neizghání stands in stark contrast to Maggie.

Ma'ii is the first one to point out that Neizghání "is a deeply selfish creature" (Roanhorse 115), alluding to the hero's arrogance and hubris. When Maggie encounters her former mentor as her adversary in the fighting pit, she describes how the muscular and handsome warrior is "every inch the hero of legend, stepped out of the stories and into the pit to fight me" (238). Her mesmerized description evokes images of the non-disabled male body that is also connected to discourses of environmental othering (Ray 14-16). Here, it is interesting to observe how *Trail of Lightning* submerges dominant discourses of white masculinity by presenting an equally non-disabled Native American male hero. However, this perfect hero, who looks down at Maggie with "something like pity on his face" (Roanhorse 239), yet leaves her completely engulfed by his presence, comes across as self-absorbed and condescending, sneering at Maggie's decision to fight him. By contrast, Maggie is empowered by his underestimating her strength. Instead of surrendering, Maggie disputes the gendered image of the male Western hero, realizing that "I'm not a desperate little girl anymore" (241), and that, paradoxically, Neizghání has "made sure of that" (241) by leaving her to fend for herself.

The encounter echoes notions of heteronormativity that are also connected to Western heroism and challenged by ecofeminism, especially when Neizghání, the traditional hero, brings up his blossoming romance with Maggie prior to his departure. When he tells her that he wants to rekindle their relationship, "[h]is face is virtuous, but his voice mocks me" (Roanhorse 241). He even suggests Maggie should thank him for leaving her behind (242). Neizghání knowingly plays with Maggie's new-found self-determination on a psychological and physical level, not hesitant to affirm his superior strength while also complimenting her fierceness and beauty before kissing her while branding her as his possession with his lightning sword (244). Maggie's defeat in this battle shows how the traditional Western hero "story glorifies violence" (Hourihan 3), thereby "defining the essential qualities of true manhood as prowess, courage, aggression, determination, [and] dominance. Sexual dominance is

conflated with physical and political dominance, and women in hero stories appear only in relation to the hero” (3). The novel depicts this sexist power relation through Maggie’s literal branding as a female inferior, illustrating how women are also defined in terms of “good and bad femininity” (3). Overcoming this demeaning dualistic perception of gender is not only a central goal of ecofeminism, but also constitutes a fundamental step for Maggie to return to herself by embracing her Indigenous heritage and, ultimately, her stance as a female Native American hero. In this battle of heroes, Neizghání puts Maggie in her place in the hero story, namely in a marginalized, subordinate position (3; 6). However, Maggie is not disempowered by her defeat. She survives the battle, saved by Kai’s healing clan powers.

Here, the complex interconnections between colonialist discourses of othering and Indigenous rewritings thereof in the form of Roanhorse’s Indigenous futuristic hero story become apparent once more. Kai, as well as Ma’ii, are two additional examples of the ambivalence of heroism in *Trail of Lightning*, pointing to the various ways in which the narrative engages with the ecofeminist project of disputing Western dualisms and reimagining otherness as a positive element of human identity (cf. Gaard and Murphy 6). On the one hand, both characters advocate the importance and legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge systems and experiences of interconnection, community, and survival in an apocalyptic environment. Their stance as Native American heroes, rooted in Navajo traditions of storytelling and Indigenous understandings of science, thus, contributes significantly to the renegotiation of Western science and human-nature relationships based on exploitation and progress. Thereby, they also help Maggie embrace her otherness from a Western heroic ideal as a catalyst for heroic action, revealing how these boundaries have never been fixed or unsurmountable.

On the other hand, Kai and Ma’ii both exhibit the selfishness and greed for power associated with said ideal, demonstrating how Western discourses of dominance still inform the narrative. Kai himself points to this complexity when he emphasizes that “[c]lan powers [...] can be used for good or evil” (Roanhorse 234). Maggie’s other supposed mentor Ma’ii turns out to be the one who manipulated her into becoming a “weapon finer than any other” (266) in his own quest for revenge against Neizghání, against whom he holds an ancient grudge (113). Kai, in fear of the mythological hero, healed Maggie for the same reason (275). In fact, Kai’s act of saving Maggie caters to the patriarchal ideal of the male hero as savior of the female other (cf. Hourihan 9-10). Kai claims that “I couldn’t lose you” (Roanhorse 275), but also admits that he himself has used his clan powers for evil. When confronted by Maggie, he confesses to manipulating her with his “silver tongue” (273) before they became allies, and, hence, to taking possession of her in a similar way to Neizghání in the battle.

These examples highlight the ambivalence of Roanhorse’s male Native American heroes. Simultaneously, from an ecofeminist perspective, they illustrate the struggle of the female Indigenous hero Maggie against the various ways in which she is confined by the boundaries imposed by the traditional Western hero story, once again emphasizing the intersections between different forms of oppression (cf. Gaard and Murphy 3). The novel discloses the

arrogance and hubris that lie at the bottom of Western heroic narratives, while, at the same time, pointing to the socio-ecological ramifications of such attitudes in general. Both the ecological disaster of the Big Water and Ma'ii's threatening monsters were a direct result of such greed and selfishness. The narrative echoes ecofeminist criticism against the creation of such new bodily colonies (cf. Shiva 5; Mies 43-44) and challenges these power structures by putting emphasis on Maggie's strength as an "other" hero to overcome these obstacles.

In order to conclude the final conflict of the novel between Kai and Neizghání, now rivals in their possessive affection for the new hero Maggie, the latter must abandon the role of the inferior female "other" that the Western hero story prescribes for her. She realizes that "I need a plan. A better plan. Not Ma'ii's, not Neizghání's, not even Kai's... And the thought is there. Awful. Monstrous. But perfect" (Roanhorse 276). Maggie finally admits that "[y]ou were right about me, Kai [...] About me being more than a killer" (277). Now trusting her judgment and embracing her Indigenous heroic identity, she first outsmarts Neizghání by shooting Kai before the vengeful hero of legend can kill him and then binds the arrogant god with mythical rings in order to restrain him. Maggie refuses to "tuck myself safely under Neizghání's wing again and remain his favored pupil" (280), proving that she does not need the stereotypical hero's protection anymore. Importantly, Maggie does not take revenge on Kai, either. Her Indigenous heroics transcend a stereotypical Western definition of an individualistic, power-greedy hero. She has learned to trust in the supernatural powers that will enable Kai to resurrect himself, just like her own powers catalyze her heroic agency. After her final victory, Maggie looks beyond Western definitions of heroism that curtail her own heroic potential. Instead, she has returned to herself by embracing her Indigenous heritage (cf. Dillon 10), and, finally, claims her place in her own hero story as the empowered "monstrous other" hero in the post-Native Apocalypse.

### **Conclusion: Eco-Heroism in the Anthropocene**

In this paper, I have shown that *Trail of Lightning* serves as an example of an Indigenous futuristic hero story that actively challenges, but also engages in intertextual dialogue with, traditional notions of the hero-as-conqueror of otherness. Not only does Rebecca Roanhorse's novel foreground Native American experiences of the "post-Native Apocalypse" (Dillon 10) and Indigenous perspectives on heroism, but it also highlights the relevance of Indigenous science and knowledge systems that provide invaluable insights commonly sidelined by Western science. By portraying otherness as a catalyst for heroic action, *Trail of Lightning* reimagines Indigenous heroism as a way of rethinking multilayered and interconnected discourses—in terms of gender, race, or human-nature relationships. In line with ecofeminism's challenge of binary oppositions (cf. Gaard and Murphy 5), the novel reimagines Western stories of heroism that marginalize, stigmatize, or completely exclude "other" heroes from the Western hero narrative. In Roanhorse's novel, ecological others' bodies seize to be exploitable colonies (cf. Shiva 5; Mies 43-44) equated with the allegedly passive environment



as a conquerable space. Instead, they advocate humility, interconnection, and responsibility for the land as heroic values (cf. Adamson and Monani 8-9). By transcending Western dualisms and a hubristic image of an individualistic heroic genius, Rebecca Roanhorse's Indigenous futuristic hero story creates alternative scripts for ecological survival that further underline the importance of this new "eco-heroic" vision. According to Gaard and Murphy, ecofeminism is grounded in "both resistance and vision" (2). Maggie's Indigenous futuristic hero story illustrates her *resistance* to othering Western hero myths, instead celebrating Indigenous heroic *visions* of fluidity, community, resilience, and survival in an apocalyptic environment. What Roanhorse's novel impressively demonstrates is that, in the age of the Anthropocene, the old order of Western heroism is, indeed, shaking, both on and beyond the pages of hero narratives.

## Works Cited

- Adamson, Joni. "Connected Things with Names like Mother Corn: Native North American Speculative Fiction and Film." *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, Routledge, 2017, pp. 216-26.
- Adamson, Joni, and Salma Monani. "Introduction: Cosmovisions, Ecocriticism, and Indigenous Studies." *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies: Conversations from Earth to Cosmos*, edited by Salma Monani and Joni Adamson, Routledge, 2017, pp. 1-19.
- Begay, Yolanda. "Historic and Demographic Changes That Impact the Future of the Diné and the Development of Community-Based Policy." *Diné Perspectives: Revitalizing and Reclaiming Navajo Thought*, edited by Lloyd L. Lee, U of Arizona P, 2014, pp. 105-28. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ub-bamberg/detail.action?docID=3411886>. Accessed 22 Oct. 2019.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 3rd ed., New World Library, 2008 [1949].
- Coulombe, Joseph L. *Reading Native American Literature*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ub-bamberg/detail.action?docID=668420>. Accessed 12 May 2020.
- Denetdale, Jennifer Nez. "Return to the 'Uprising at Beautiful Mountain in 1913'." *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*, edited by Joanne Barker, Duke UP, 2017, pp. 69-98. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ub-bamberg/detail.action?docID=4832129>. Accessed 28 Jun. 2020.
- . *The Long Walk: The Forced Navajo Exile*. Chelsea House, 2008.
- Dillon, Grace. "Imagining Indigenous Futurisms." *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*, edited by Grace Dillon, U of Arizona P, 2012, pp. 1-12.
- Gaard Greta, and Patrick D. Murphy. "Introduction." *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*, edited by Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy, U of Illinois P, 1998, pp. 1-14.
- Glancy, Diane. *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears*. Mariner, 1998 [1996].
- Hourihan, Margery. *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*. Routledge, 1997.

- Jamieson, Dale. "The Anthropocene: Love It or Leave It." *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, Routledge, 2017, pp. 13-20.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. HarperOne, 1989 [1980].
- Mies, Maria. "Feminist Research: Science, Violence, and Responsibility." *Ecofeminism*, edited by Shiva, Vandana and Maria Mies, Zed Books, 2014, pp. 36-54. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ub-bamberg/detail.action?docID=1644031>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2018.
- Powys Whyte, Kyle. "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene." *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, edited by Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, Routledge, 2017, pp. 206-15.
- Ray, Sarah Jaquette. *The Ecological Other: Environmental Exclusion in American Culture*. U of Arizona P, 2013. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ub-bamberg/detail.action?docID=3411813>. Accessed 29 Oct. 2019.
- Roanhorse, Rebecca. *Storm of Locusts*. Saga, 2019.
- . *Trail of Lightning*. Saga, 2018.
- Shiva, Vandana. *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*. North Atlantic, 2016 [1999].
- Smith, Andrea. "Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2005, pp. 116-132. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20459010>. Accessed 19 Apr. 2020.
- Thomas, Wesley. "Navajo Cultural Constructions of Gender and Sexuality." *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, edited by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang, U of Illinois P, 1997, pp. 156-173.
- Tohe, Laura. "There Is No Word for Feminism in My Language." *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, U of Minnesota P, 2000, pp. 103-110. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1409467>, Accessed 22 Oct. 2019.
- Whitt, Laurie Anne et al. "Indigenous Perspectives." *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, edited by Dale Jamieson, Blackwell, 2001, pp. 3-20. *Wiley Online Library*, doi: 10.1002/9780470751664. Accessed 12 May 2020.