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“Served up like a club sandwich to the dreamless":

Reciprocal Relationality and the Ethics of Consumption in *The Marrow Thieves*

In Cherie Dimaline’s dystopian novel *The Marrow Thieves*, the non-Indigenous inhabitants of a world ravaged by extractivism have lost the ability to dream. Only Indigenous peoples retain the ability to dream and this power is being systematically extracted from their bone marrow by agents of the settler-colonial government who then sell the marrow to the highest bidder – “being served up like a club sandwich to the dreamless” (145) as Miigwans bitterly phrases it. This process is notably a slow one. In Wab’s coming to Story, she mentions the “death camps” where “we were being murdered real slow” (81) and it is this horrifying fact of slow violence that RiRi, having eavesdropped on the story, fixates upon: “why do they murder us real slow?” she asks “on the verge of hysterics” (86). One answer, the underlying cause to this slow violence, is to be found in neoliberalism and laissez-faire capitalism, those ideological structures which actively destroy relationality and inflict harm on Indigenous bodies. When Miigwans confronts a worker from one of the new Residential Schools, the man explains “They work them . . . I mean . . . you . . . until there’s enough demand built up then they hook you up,

and game over, man. It's done" (143). In this world, dreams are a commodity, and suffering is extenuated for the accumulation of capital.

I use the phrase "slow violence" quite purposefully here, knowing that I will evoke Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, a work which touches on how climate change and environmental pollution are a form of slow violence exacerbated by capitalism. I'm interested in exploring the ways in which capitalism, the climate crisis, food systems, and theoretical understandings of relationality are all intertwined. As Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. The Climate* has made abundantly clear to a wide audience, laissez-faire capitalism is literally fueling the climate crisis through the funding of extractive industries. Indigenous peoples, like those currently fighting to stop the expansion of the Alberta tar sands, are at the frontlines of this crisis. In this paper, I argue that *The Marrow Thieves* offers a critique of extractivism, free market capitalism, and the hierarchical and individualistic thinking that make these things possible. I trace this line of reasoning through the novel's engagement with food and metaphors of consumption. However, the novel does much more than critique the status quo – it also maps out a solution. Ultimately, I read Dimaline's novel as demonstrating how Indigenous understandings of reciprocal relationality, as manifest in ethical food systems, are a vital alternative to the rampant consumption that can and will kill this planet if we do not learn to reign in our autocannibalism.

Throughout this paper, I frequently appeal to the work of Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg). As *The Marrow Thieves* is set on traditional Anishinaabe territory and the characters use Anishinaabemowin, the Anishinaabe language, I find that Simpsons' articulations of Nishnaabeg epistemology seem to resonate with the narrative. In theorizing with Anishinaabe

concepts, especially as a settler who exists outside the culture, my intention is never to be prescriptive or limiting; rather, I want to demonstrate how I have placed myself and these ideas in conversation in a way that has been generative for me, and in a way that has further reinforced my core belief in Indigenous food sovereignty as a key to healing our planet.

As Pauline Wakeham noted during our ongoing discussion of the novel, it is telling that the book opens with the pop of a Doritos bag.[1] The anticipation of eating the junk food makes Frenchie's mouth water, and a "rotten hole in one of [his] molars yelled its displeasure" (1). Decaying teeth and rotten mouths, abject symbols of consumption gone awry, appear elsewhere in the novel, notably in association with the cityscape where Frenchie spent most of his youth, "surrounded by urban decay and concrete waste where the skyline looked like a ruined mouth of rotted teeth" (59). Imagery of decaying mouths is also associated with the climate change-induced earthquakes that "peel[ed] the edging off the continents back like diseased gums" (25). Putting these metaphors together we are given a picture of a wiindigo world, in which the rampant consumption of industrialized societies have cannibalized the earth and the earth in return becomes sick and cannibalizes humans back. The figure of the wiindigo haunts the narrative and Frenchie's mind after he hears the twins Tree and Zheegwon tell the "story of the cannibal people":

> "They're the wiindigo people, those who need to eat but can only eat human flesh."
> "They lost their way but don't want to get back on the path. All they want is meat."
> "And they don't care if it's their own children, they'll eat them just the same." (115)

[1] My insights in this paper are indebted to the generative discussions I have had with Dr. Wakeham, as well as to my fellow students in Dr. Wakeham's class "Indigenous Literatures: Cultures of Storytelling, Cultures of Reading" taught in the summer of 2018. In particular, I must acknowledge the work of Jordan Pynn who presented an argument in line with my own: that *The Marrow Thieves* presents a return to Indigenous belief systems as an alternative to the ravages of neoliberal exploitation.

What I believe Dimaline's narrative gestures towards is how our everyday practices of acquiring and eating food deeply inform our relationship with others. The point of consumption is a critical moment for determining our ethical relation to the various persons of creation.

Doritos may seem innocuous relative to a wiindigo, but in truth they are an ideal representative of how toxic imbalances manifest themselves in our food systems. Mass-produced and largely comprised of corn, Doritos reflect a capitalist form of industrialized agriculture that has wreaked havoc on the environment. Klein notes that industrialized agriculture is an unsustainable "energy-intensive, higher-emissions model" and that this is why our "global food system now accounts for between 19 and 29 percent of world greenhouse gas emissions" (78). Hubert Alain makes similar observations about the immense environmental harm of industrialized agriculture in his article "CONTROL: the extractive ecology of corn monoculture." Focussing on corn, a plant indigenous to North America, Alain notes that "it is telling that a native inheritance like corn has become central to the development of the current extractive economy. Corn industrialization is rooted in a colonial continuum that subjugates the crop to Western economic worldviews" (237). In a sense, settler society has appropriated and consumed the diversity of Indigenous corn life and from this diversity produced a monoculture that is now, in turn, running roughshod over the earth and contributing to our general autocannibalism. With this in mind, I read the Doritos metonymically in relation to the destructive production and consumption methods of industrialized agriculture. The sympathetic pain triggered in Frenchie's tooth at the sight of the junk food signifies a wide range of consumptive habits gone awry. Notably, when Frenchie joins Miigwans' party and begins

hunting and living off the land rather than off convenience stores, we hear no more about his rotten molar (Wakeham).

We can thus read the novel as reflecting the links between the settler-colonial ideology of extraction and our massively inequitable global food system. This is also apparent when we look at how the novel represents the grocery store as a site of alienation and, for Indigenous peoples, explicit danger. When Frenchie explains to RiRi how the world became "sick" and people lost the ability to dream, he interestingly situates the dreamless in the aisles of a grocery store:

> "They stopped being able to dream. At first they just talked about it all casual-like. 'Oh, funniest thing, I haven't dreamed in months.' 'Isn't that odd, I haven't dreamed either.'"
>
> Here I pitched my voice high and wiggled my shoulder to imitate a mincing kind of movement, like how I imagined white ladies did as they pushed metal carts down long straight aisles to gather food from boxes lined up on shelves, all of it already dead. (29)

Frenchie's story associates the sickness of dreamlessness with modern industrialized food systems as represented by the sterile aisles of the grocery store. In Wab's coming-to story, the food bank, the lower-class replica of the grocery store becomes a site of explicit danger: "we stopped going to the food banks: the volunteers called in Indian sightings and next thing you knew, a wave of white vans screeched up and off you went, kicking and screaming, watching yourself in the mirrored reflection of their sunglasses, throwing boxes of macaroni and cheese and screaming to some god or devil or anything in between" (81) The foodways of settler society are sites of surveillance, methods for monitoring and controlling Indigenous bodies. And, like the vacuum-sealed bag of Doritos and the "food from boxes . . . all of it already dead" in Frenchie's story, the boxed macaroni and cheese are symptomatic of corrupt, lifeless foodways wherein people are alienated from the plants and animals that provide them with sustenance.

The novel is also quite explicit with its metaphors of consumption in terms of the descriptions of the "harvesting" of Indigenous peoples' bone marrow. Frenchie feels a desire to protect RiRi from the knowledge of this harvesting "so that she could form into a real human before she understood that some saw her as little more than a crop" (26). Similarly, when Miigwans describes the original residential schools, he mentions the "monsters who stayed there, ingesting our children like sweet berries, one after the other, for over a hundred years" (106). Here, Indigenous children, like the young boy whom Wab sees thrown "in the back of a van like a bag of rice" (81), are reduced to consumable goods to be swallowed by the gaping maw of settler-colonial extractivism.

Marrow itself, of course, is also a food stuff. Miigwans explains that their ancestors hid their dreams "in the honeycombs of slushy marrow buried in our bones" (90). This is a particularly compelling metaphor, with the image of ancestors accumulating dreams like a hive of bees accumulating honey suggesting that dreams are the distillation of generations of community and love and labour. Both dreams and marrow, in this sense, are pure, sweet relationality.

Before I further discuss these more positive articulations of food and consumption, I would like to address an episode in the novel that I believe reflects the effects of unchecked, selfish consumption and the breaking of treaties. The aforementioned wiindigo story is told after the party has spotted Travis and Lincoln in the woods but before the two groups unite, and as it lingers in Frenchie's mind it also, for the reader, tinges Travis and Lincoln with the threat of cannibalism. This is reinforced when we look at Frenchie's description of the clearing wherein the two parties meet and camp together overnight:

> "I slipped from the first row of trees, in the same spot we had entered from, then I walked left, keeping an eye on the clearing. It turned out that the fire and the men's tents and chairs were in a small circular patch at the end of a long, narrow clearing so that the whole spot was kind of in the shape of a spoon. At the top of the handle, the space dropped off with one of those craggy cliffs of a shale rock. I crept to the edge as close as I could manage and peered over. It was about a six-storey drop. With the pointed edges and rough landing, there was no surviving that fall." (123)

This is the landscape of RiRi's death, the place where a drug-addled Lincoln, after swallowing pills all evening, chokes the young girl and then carries himself and her over the craggy cliffs and towards that unsurvivable fall.

The fact that "the whole spot was kind of in the shape of a spoon" conjures associations with food and consumption, but also calls to my mind the Dish with One Spoon Treaty. This was a pre-colonial treaty between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee which laid out protocols for both sovereign nations to share territory ("Gdoo-naaganinaa" 37). Both nations were supposed to take care of the dish, that is, they were to follow codes of environmental ethics which ensured the wellbeing of all the plant and animal nations in the territory. Although the dish is the focus for the Anishinaabe, Simpson notes that "in the Haudenosaunee version there is one spoon not only to reinforce the idea of sharing and responsibility, but also to promote peace. There are no knives allowed around the dish so that no one gets hurt" (37). Reading the landscape of RiRi's death in this context illuminates the ways in which Travis and Lincoln violate Indigenous ethics of relationality. Rather than taking only what they need and giving back what they should, the two have a suspicious "abundance of food" and are "lazy and messy" and leave behind obvious litter (117-118). Frenchie finds "half a piece of bread" that "wasn't even mouldy yet" (112), a red flag which echoes Miigwans and Isaac's experience with the traitorous guests who sell them out to the Recruiters: "I should have guessed from the way he

wasn't meticulous about packing up and almost left behind a precious tin of canned meat, like it was nothing. Like he could grab more at any time" (103). Travis and Lincoln are also flush with food because they too are working for the new residential schools: "They were traitors. Indians turning in Indians for reward" (132). As Miigwans states at an earlier point in the narrative, "not every Indian is an Indian" (55). In her book *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back*, Leanne Simpson writes about the term *Zhaaganashiiyaadizi* which "encompasses the process and description of living as a colonized or assimilated person" and which "occurs when a person tries to live his or her life as a non-Native at the expense of being Nishnaabeg" (52). I see in Travis and Lincoln something of *Zhaaganashiiyaadizi*. In being seduced by excess and the promise of capital, they have abandoned reciprocal relationality and moved towards Eurowestern ideals of individuality and hierarchical thinking. They are no longer eating from the dish with one spoon. They have become extractivists.

To illustrate my meaning further, it would be helpful to look at a few comments by Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate) in conversation with host Rick Harper and Taté Walker (Lakota) on a recent *Media Indigena* podcast about Indigenous food politics. In discussing an incident in which animal rights activists targeted Kookum Kitchen, an Indigenous restaurant in Toronto, for serving seal meat, Kim TallBear talks of how "food has been used as a weapon against Indigenous peoples" (17:50). She goes on to explain the Eurowestern or settler assumption about a "hierarchy of life" in which humans, particularly white males (because this hierarchical thinking is also the cause of racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and inequality among humans), see themselves as somehow above and outside of the rest of nature and culture. This is also a point that Naomi Klein makes when she discusses sociologists'

differentiation between "hierarchical and individualistic" worldviews compared to "egalitarian and communitarian" worldviews, wherein the former category comprises persons more willing to deny or downplay the risks of climate change (37). And I believe this idea of relationality over individuality is also at the heart of Miigwans' chastisement of Frenchie when the boy unilaterally decides to sacrifice himself and save Miigwans from potential electrocution:

> "No one is more important than anyone else, French."
> It was Miig, still standing a few steps back. "No one should be sacrificed for anyone else."
> I tried to laugh it off, shrugging and starting a stream of 'no big deal' sentiments, but he refused to allow it.
> "I'm not joking, boy." He held my gaze until the smile disappeared from my face and my cheeks began to burn. (58)

Although such individual self-sacrifice might be laudable in a Eurowestern worldview, Miigwans, I believe, sees it as evidence of the sort of individualistic and hierarchical thinking which easily engenders the exploitation of other persons, whether plant, animal, or human. As Leanne Simpson says in interview with Naomi Klein, "The act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning" (*As We Have Always Done* 75). Fortunately, there are solutions: "The alternative to extractivism is deep reciprocity" (75).

I use "reciprocal relationality" in the title of this paper as a shorthand for a particular way of being in and viewing the world, one that contrasts with an extractivist and anthropocentric worldview. It would be helpful to unpack further what I mean by this. As evidenced from the above quotations, in her work Leanne Simpson frequently discusses a Nishnaabeg worldview as grounded in relation and reciprocity. For me, these ideas find particular resonance in Simpson's articulation of the Anishinaabemowin word *aki*, which may be translated into English as 'land'

but more accurately means "all aspects of creation: landforms, elements, plants, animals, spirits, sounds, thoughts, feelings, and energies and all of the emergent systems ecologies, and networks that connect these elements" (*As We Have Always Done* 160). In this understanding of creation, no one element is extricable from the others and all persons are tasked with living in relation to one another in ways that are *consensual* (a concept Simpson stresses) and non-hierarchical.

Although I am choosing here to centre Simpson's Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg articulation of reciprocal relationality, this is a worldview shared by many Indigenous peoples. Simpson herself dialogues with Yellowknife Dene scholar Glen Coulthard's notion of "grounded normativity." According to Coulthard,

> The theory and practice of Indigenous anticolonialism, including Indigenous anticapitalism, is best understood as a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around *the question of land* – a struggle not only *for* land in a material sense, but also deeply *informed* by what the land *as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations* can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another in the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms . . . I call this place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought and practice grounded normativity, by which I mean the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time.

Here Coulthard quite explicitly links Indigenous anticapitalism to grounded normativity, highlighting "*reciprocal relations*" as an alternative to capitalism and colonialism's domination and exploitation of the natural world. In his book *Eating the Landscape*, Enrique Salmón (Tarahumara) articulates this relationality in terms of a kincentric food system, writing that when his family introduced him to their local plants, "they also introduced my kinship to the plants and to the land from where they and we had emerged. They were introducing me to my relatives. Through this way of knowing, especially with regard to kinship, I realized a comfort and a sense

of security that I was bound to everything around me in a reciprocal relationship" (2). Again and again, concepts of relation and reciprocity are foregrounded.

It is not, as Simpson points out, that Indigenous peoples lacked the intellect or ingenuity to develop extractive industries -- it is that they had the spiritual good sense *not to*: "We certainly had the technology and the wisdom to develop this kind of economy [capitalism], or rather we had the ethics and knowledge within grounded normativity to *not develop* this system, because to do so would have violated our fundamental values and ethics regarding how we relate to each other and the natural world. We chose not to, repeatedly, over our history" (78). In many ways, Indigenous peoples have always known what philosophical movements like Deep Ecology have only recently come to realize: that humans exist in a web with the rest of creation and that we must cultivate this sense of an "ecological self" if we are to avoid destroying the environment. However, while Western academics are struggling to theorize what the ecological self might look like and how one might exist in good relation -- Indigenous peoples already and have always known these things. They have protocols for this. They have ceremony.

In the aforementioned podcast, Kim TallBear states that "Indigenous peoples have much more complicated ethical systems for dealing with their relations with non-human animals and that includes how we eat them and how we kill them" (29:40). An example of such a complicated ethical system is seen in Leanne Simpson's articulations of Nishnaabeg treaty-making with the plant and animal nations ("Gdoo-naaganinaa" 33). In her discussion of Nishnaabeg anticapitalism, Simpson identifies "excess" as a "mistake", citing a story on overhunting: "When the Nishnaabeg killed an excess of deer, the deer left the territory, to the point where today we have an abundance of deer in my territory but very few Deer clan people,

and this reminds us of that imbalance" (*As We Have Always Done* 77). As I understand it, balance is achieved through living in good relation to all other persons, that is, through finding one's place in a fluid network or web of reciprocal give and take. Simpson describes this balancing in terms of Bimaadiziwin, or "living the good life", which is "a way of ensuring human beings live in balance with the natural world, their family, their clan, and their nation and it is carried out through the Seven Grandfather teachings, embedded in the social and political structures of the Nishnaabeg" ("Gdoo-naaganinaa" 32). The ceremony of gifting tobacco is one example of an embodied practice the intention of which is to maintain balance in relationship. Simpson discusses Nishnaabeg scholar John Borrows' retelling of the aforementioned Deer clan story, and the Deer nation's instructions to the Nishnaabeg are worth quoting here:

> Honour and respect our lives and our beings, in life and in death. Cease doing what offends our spirits. Do not waste our flesh. Preserve fields and forests for our homes. To show your commitment to these things and as a remembrance of the anguish you have brought upon us, always leave tobacco leaf from where you take us. Gifts are important to build our relationship. (34)

The tobacco is a gift which nurtures the relationship between the human and animal nations in this story, but it is not the only responsibility the humans hold towards the deer -- the humans must also ensure the deer's home is preserved, they must move through the world mindful of all the points of connection between themselves, the deer, and the rest of *aki*. Clearcutting the forest to make room for fields of monoculture corn, for example, would be an extreme violation of all these relations.

To return to the issue of food systems, I see consonances between these protocols for reciprocal relationality and current discourse on agroecological practices. According to Klein, agroecology is "Based on the principle that farming should maximize species diversity and

enhance natural systems of soil protection and pest control" and, because it is profoundly place-based, it "looks different wherever its holistic techniques are practiced" (134). To put it another way, agroecology acknowledges existing networks of relationality and seeks to cultivate food systems that nurture these relationships. However, there are gaps separating Indigenous knowledges from agroecology, as Figueroa-Helland et al note in their article "Decolonizing Food Systems: Food Sovereignty, Indigenous Revitalization, and Agroecology as Counter-Hegemonic Movements," agroecology is a term born from Western ecological science and though it has drawn on Indigenous knowledges, which themselves are often agroecological in effect, it also "sideline[s] deeper indigenous cosmologies and communalities" (181). Another problem that I see with agroecology is that it privileges agricultural practices while glossing over other potential foodways, like the hunting and gathering practices of the Anishinaabe. As scholars like Patrick Wolfe have noted, forced agriculturalization and the accompanying assimilation into heteropatriarchal notions of private property was deeply harmful to many Indigenous nations; it was, in a sense, an attempt to sever them from their relations. While agroecology might have more relevance for Indigenous peoples in South America who have long-standing agricultural traditions (and these are indeed the peoples most often focussed on by scholars interested in food sovereignty, like Figueroa-Helland et al.), it admittedly has limited applicability for other nations.

There are a few instances in *The Marrow Thieves* where agricultural practices are imbued with an Indigenous sensibility, notably when Rose plants corn with her uncles and the growing of sweetgrass at Frenchie's father's camp. These are moments where relationships are strengthened and care is enacted through Indigenous food and medicine. An interesting fact

about sweetgrass is that it thrives and proliferates best where it is respectfully and lovingly harvested by humans (Kimmerer); it therefore holds within itself that lesson of reciprocal relationality.

However, many of the Indigenous characters in the novel do not settle in one place but rather live nomadically to avoid the Recruiters. Staying in one place long enough to plant, tend to, and harvest a crop is not an option, and so they are compelled to have different food systems. Although these foodways are different, they are no less guided by principles of relation and reciprocity. Frenchie's party is structured into two self-explanatory groups: "Homesteaders" and "Hunters." Initially Frenchie denigrates the Homesteaders, seemingly more interested in the active bravado of the Hunters over what he perceives as the passivity and boredom of base camp. This changes when he learns that Minerva is teaching "the language" to Rose and the other Homesteaders. His innate love of "the language", the words of which he compellingly wishes to "shove . . . into my pockets like sweets to suck on later" (121), means that he develops a new respect for Minerva and her knowledge. In this way, the novel undermines possible hierarchies of gendered labour surrounding food acquisition and preparation. Moreover, male and female characters take shifts in both groups, with Wab notably hunting and then also skinning her kill back at camp. Rather than cultivating a sense of toxic masculine superiority, Frenchie comes to see how no one role is more important than the others and that all roles must exist in non-hierarchical relation.

For me, the novel's most potent scene of relational reciprocity occurs early on, when Frenchie encounters a moose while out hunting. As Wahsayzee Deleary has explained to me, moose meat is one of the four sacred foods if the Anishinaabe and plays a vital role in many

ceremonies. Unsurprisingly, the moose has a powerful impact on Frenchie and the scene is worth quoting at length here:

> I swallowed hard, aiming, fingers exact and stiff. He was so frigging big. It was like he was a hundred years old, like he had watched all of this happen. Imagine being here through it all -- the wars, the sickness, the earthquakes, the schools -- only to come to this?
>
> He exhaled, long and loud like the wind. This was food for a week. Hide and sinew to stitch together for tarps, blankets, ponchos. This was bone for pegs and chisels. This was me, the conquering hero, marching into camp with more meat than all of us could carry, taking the others back to field dress this gift. This was Rose looking at me with those big eyes so dark they shone burgundy in the firelight. This was my chance.
>
> But could we travel with this meat before it rotted? No. And could we smoke it and dry it? No, Miig wouldn't set up camp for that long, especially not with a steady thread of smoke reaching above the trees, blasting a signal to anyone who might be out there. So we'd be leaving half, at least half, behind to rot.
>
> The moose watched all this play out on my face, a dirty boy tangled in the roots of an upended tree, hiding from the world, hiding from memories of a family and days without pursuit. And he stayed perfectly still. His eyes were huge, dark globes that reflected back their surroundings. I was sure I could see myself in there, in the trees, a long-haired warrior taking aim.
>
> I lowered the rifle.

Recognizing himself and the rest of *aki* reflected in the eyes of the moose, and having considered both the potential benefits and repercussions of killing the moose, Frenchie decides not to take the shot. For me, this careful deliberation calls to mind another Anishinaabeg concept: *Naakgonige*. According to Simpson, *Naakgonige* is a practice of careful deliberation and decision-making that takes cultural tradition into consideration: "Naakgonige encourages one to deliberate and consider the impacts of decisions on all aspects of life and our relationships – the land, the clans, children, and the future" (57). Frenchie's initial thoughts are ones of individual success, of being "the conquering hero," but as his thoughts expand outward to consider the wider effects of the moose's death -- the waste of meat, the danger of being detected by

Recruiters -- he realizes that these other repercussions outweigh his personal glory. When Frenchie first spots the moose he aims between the eyes before lowering his sight to the chest because that is what Miig taught him and "I listen to my Elders" (49). In many ways, the ancient moose is also an Elder to whom Frenchie listens. Through gazing at the moose and carefully deliberating on his relationship to this animal, and to the rest of *aki*, Frenchie experiences a valuable teaching. Reciprocal relationality is not always easy and sometimes it requires the relinquishing of individual power.

In their article "Beyond culinary colonialism: indigenous food sovereignty, liberal multiculturalism, and the control of gastronomic capital" authors Sam Grey and Lenore Newman argue that a key element to Indigenous food sovereignty must be Indigenous peoples' right to *withhold* gastronomic capital from the market. Under the guise of multicultural inclusion, Indigenous cuisine has become "commodified and alienated" as "foodstuffs are displaced from their ecological niches and deprived of their original stewards in the name of amping-up production." The rampant export of quinoa for North American consumption is an example of this. With reference to case studies from both Peru and Canada, Grey and Newmann's central thesis is that "the mindful withholding of food from the market system has . . . been a key scaffold of Indigenous food sovereignty."

Accepting "no" as an answer seems to be an impossibility for those inculcated with the interrelated ideologies of individualism, neoliberalism, capitalism, colonialism, and extractivism. During one of Miigwans' tellings of Story, he mentions how, when the dreamlessness began, non-Indigenous peoples

> turned to Indigenous people the way the New Agers had, all reverence and curiosity, looking for ways we could help guide them. They asked to come to ceremony. They humbled themselves when we refused. And then they changed on us, like the New Agers, looking for ways they could take what we had and administer it themselves. How could they best appropriate the uncanny ability we kept to dream? How could they make ceremony better, more efficient, more economical? (Dimaline 88)

The irony is that ceremony cannot be economized, cannot be commoditized. In trying to control and dominate Indigenous knowledges, settlers create a lifeless product where once there was a ceremony of relations. Again and again, the principles of reciprocal relationality are violated.

What *The Marrow Thieves* suggests is that, in response to the slow (now seemingly rapidly accelerating) violence of climate change, we need to cultivate slow, reflective, thoughtful relationships. Perhaps most importantly, it is time for settlers and those in positions of structural power to accept the "no" of Indigenous peoples. We have to understand what *consensual* really entails. We have to stop taking without ever giving back. We have to learn to live in reciprocal relationality.

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