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Author(s): Mary L. Keller

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## Indigenous Studies and “the Sacred”

MARY L. KELLER

I don't want to call it a sacred site because your idea of something sacred and my idea of something sacred are a little bit different.

Grant Bulltail, 2003

This study of the sacred as a categorical tripping point at the intersection of Indigenous studies and the history of religions begins with the words of Grant Bulltail, an Apsáalooke (Crow) elder, recorded on video when he traveled from his home on the Crow Reservation in Montana to speak to schoolchildren in Cody, Wyoming, about an extraordinary landmark, Heart Mountain. In the quotation above, Mr. Bulltail was addressing the categorical problem that exists when he discusses the sacred with people from the dominant Anglo-Christian culture. He has to set the stage that there are two different worlds of meaning with regard to “the sacred” before he can discuss what Heart Mountain means to him. His words and that mountain are the ground upon which the following questions stand: Is *sacred* a category that merits continued development in the service of Indigenous studies? Is it best avoided as the appendix on a body of passé, Eurocentric, dualistic thought? Will Indigenous studies methodology be served best to move away from this category as quickly as possible, as it appears that even the UN is doing in its recent embrace of the phrase “intangible cultural heritage”? Or does the category *work*, formally and pragmatically, in situations of cross-cultural dialogue, serving the interest of Indigenous people in their struggles for justice in the face of global economic and ecologi-

cal forces that impact their homelands disproportionately? Indigenous studies and the history of religions rub shoulders on the methodological challenges raised by the sacred as a category in the twenty-first century, and this article examines the fertile ground of their respective concerns toward the goal of clarifying what is at stake in understanding this problem well for those who seek alliances in struggles over the meaning of mountains and other powerful places.

On the larger field of work in Indigenous studies and the history of religions it is fair to say that we have reached a fork in the road, with some people eschewing the *sacred* because of its freighted Eurocentrism, while, on the other hand, a significant bibliography of serious uses of the word *sacred* exists, from Vine Deloria Jr.'s "Sacred Places and Moral Responsibility" in *God Is Red* to Joe Edward Watkins's series Contemporary Native American Issues, in which he published *Sacred Sites and Repatriation*, Andrew Gulliford's *Sacred Objects, Sacred Places*, Deward Walker's work to articulate an anthropological sense of sacred geography, and Violet F. Cordova's discussion of the sacred in her Native American philosophy *How It Is*.<sup>1</sup> From Winona LaDuke's *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* to the documentary film activists of the Sacred Lands Film Project, to the new wave of ecologists working in coalition with Indigenous experts to develop what Fikret Berkes calls *Sacred Ecology*, the sacred is at play.<sup>2</sup> Yogi Berra would advise, when you come to a fork in the road, take it.

Faced with the fork in methodological theory, to *sacred* or not to *sacred*, this article brings Charles Long's work as a historian of religions to the table of Indigenous studies to think about the sacred, and particularly to think about Grant Bulltail's articulation of an American landscape where his Apsáalooke notion of the sacred is a little bit different from the notions of settlers.<sup>3</sup> That is, Long's emphasis on the heterogeneous nature of American religious history works as an excellent theoretical partner to Bulltail's articulation of difference itself as central to the problem of speaking about the sacred. However, in order to get to the categorical issue, I've got to walk through a big, American, historical mess that can be metaphorically equated to the distance between reservation and off-reservation realities. That mess explains why I view Heart Mountain daily from my home and office, while Grant Bulltail lives three hours away from the mountain on the Crow Reservation. He may have ancestors buried on that mountain, but I've got title to prop-

erty that allows me to live close to the mountain. This is the distance between reservation and off-reservation realities, and it illustrates how the sacred of settler culture, property title, works in very material ways.

The article moves in three parts, all of which are grounded on Long's suggestion that we live in a moment at which it is crucial to consider "the meaning of matter and the value of meaning" in his landmark essay "Indigenous People, Materialities, and Religion."<sup>4</sup> Part 1 studies the historiography and meaning of Mr. Bulltail's discussion of the significance of Heart Mountain. Part 2 raises the formal issues of substantialist and situational discourses on the sacred, drawing from Chidester and Linenthal's genealogy of sacred lands in America.<sup>5</sup> Part 3 draws from Nancy Shoemaker's analysis of categories in the service of Native American historiography, highlighting the story of the "bat"—the animal that confounds categories—as a model for thinking about the sacred in order to develop a practice-oriented, place-based, and situational appreciation of the sacred without a normative recommendation for its use or nonuse.<sup>6</sup>

The article concludes with Mr. Bulltail's homecoming warrior song, a song given to him by his father when his grandfather drove Grant back home to the reservation after Grant returned from his service in the Marines in Vietnam. Mr. Bulltail recalls that his grandfather sang the song "when he was feeling lonely" and that the song "accelerates your powers and helps to heal."<sup>7</sup> By concluding with his song, I return to the relationship between a theory of the sacred, on the one hand, and the possibility of coming home in the current configuration of reservation/off-reservation realities of the American West in the twenty-first century; the possibility is equally distant for both Mr. Bulltail and I, but the consequences are vastly different as I look at Heart Mountain from my window. If the sacred is approached as a bat, how might it confound the current gap between my home and Mr. Bulltail's homecoming song? What borderlands might we be approaching in terms of restoring an Indigenous presence, to petition the work of Peter Nabokov and Lawrence Loendorf?<sup>8</sup> What new world is yet to be consecrated in which mutual, reciprocal recognition, in Frantz Fanon's words, will be realized on the land upon which Mr. Bulltail and I both stand and stand apart?

I am not uninterested in the question of whether or not the *sacred* is a viable category. I seek a theoretical framework that is subtle enough to walk between the worlds of the dominant discourse and what Don-

ald Fixico describes as the embrace of the physical and the metaphysical that characterizes Native American epistemology. What is clear in contemporary legal battles over American Indian sacred lands and religious practices is that we need not only to be able to think about the sacred, but we also need intellectual work that provides teeth for the repatriation work that lies ahead.<sup>9</sup> The sacred could work as an instrument in the service of what Chela Sandoval has called “differential consciousness,” allowing the players to switch gears between worlds of competing discourses in the context of the global conquest of Indigenous lands and contemporary battles to regain sovereignty and religious freedom on Indigenous land.<sup>10</sup> If approached hermeneutically, aware of its categorical ambivalence, then allies in the cause of Indigenous struggles to “take place” can arm or disarm themselves of this bat.<sup>11</sup>

PART 1: THE SACRED IN PLAY IN THE WORDS OF  
GRANT BULLTAIL: A PRAGMATIC USE OF THE  
SACRED AS A CATEGORY OF DIFFERENCE

Grant Bulltail, Apsáalooke (Crow) elder pipe lighter, and Joe Medicine Crow, tribal historian, anthropologist, and author, worked with members of the Wyoming Heritage project in 2003, directed by Sharon Kahun, by instructing students on the meaning of Heart Mountain to the Apsáalooke (pronounced with an emphasis on the accented *a*, and the *k* sounds like a *g*). The students attended schools in the settler communities of Cody and Powell, Wyoming, in view of Heart Mountain. The students studied Heart Mountain and prepared questions for the elders regarding the significance of the mountain to their respective traditions as members of two distinct bands. These types of educational events are the contemporary frontiers of contact culture, and the risks and benefits of such events are played out on a field where the Indigenous partners have survived “radical inequality and intractable conflict,” thus creating a field of differences in which the Indigenous people face the widespread ignorance of settler mindscapes.<sup>12</sup> In this case, the word *sacred* came into play on that field. Let me explain the cultural geography of this contact event between Apsáalooke elders and settler schoolchildren.

In 1851 at the Fort Laramie Peace Council, the Apsáalooke were given 33 million acres, including the region in which my current home exists, Cody, Wyoming.<sup>13</sup> However, when gold was found in Montana and the

Black Hills and settlers continued to pour across the region, the government abrogated that treaty, reducing the reservation to approximately 2.2 million acres of land by 1904, all of which lies north of the Wyoming/Montana border. The Apsáalooke band that moved most frequently in the region of Cody were the Aamitaalasshé band (Home Away from the Center). Their territory was to the west of the Many Lodges band—hence their home was away from the center. The Many Lodges band occupied the “center” where the reservation now stands as the last, small vestige of the land base of their cultural inheritance. The Aamitaalasshé are more commonly known as the Eelalapíio (Kicked in the Bellies) because a colt kicked a member of this band when they first encountered horses.<sup>14</sup> The Aamitaalasshé were forcibly removed from their territories and placed back at the center, on the reservation, soon after 1868.

He Comes Up Red (1847–1947) was a member of the Aamitaalasshé, a man who was forced to leave the area near Heart Mountain and go to the reservation when he was about twenty-four years old, approximately 1872–73. Mr. Bulltail is his great-grandson and was raised by He Comes Up Red from 1940 to 1947. He Comes Up Red recognized in his great-grandson the ability to listen and remember valuable information, and Mr. Bulltail received many important stories and place-names for the region around Cody. Mr. Bulltail is tied to Heart Mountain in particular because he was given the Heart Mountain homecoming song by his family. Heart Mountain is a remarkable and distinct landmark that oriented seminomadic Indigenous travelers in this region for twelve thousand years, and it was very important to the Apsáalooke. We have evidence of their presence in the region from approximately 1450 CE as part of the early development of the Plains Indian cultures.<sup>15</sup>

The interview session with Mr. Bulltail and Mr. Medicine Crow was arranged by the Wyoming Heritage Project for three teachers in Cody and Powell schools. The elders traveled the three hours from the Crow Reservation near Pryor, Montana. Mr. Bulltail began the interview by relating the story of his great-grandfather's birth on the banks of a nearby river. Early in the discussion he told the children that when he sees Heart Mountain he feels happy because he knows that he is home. “When we see Heart Mountain we know exactly that we are in the heart of Crow Country. We feel safe and comfortable.” He then told them all of the Apsáalooke place-names for the major mountains and rivers in the region, presenting them with the Apsáalooke cultural landscape.

The Apsáalooke have their own name for Heart Mountain, Foretop's Father, because the mountain adopted an Apsáalooke warrior named Foretop and gave him great power, evidenced in his remarkable career as a chief. The Apsáalooke people used the shoulders of this mountain to navigate west toward Yellowstone, south to the rich hunting grounds of the Greybull River, and north along the Beartooth Mountains. Mr. Bulltail recounted that they also used its shoulders to repeatedly beat the Blackfeet in battles for territorial dominance. His great-granduncle was buried on the eastern shoulders of the mountain after a battle with the Blackfeet. The Apsáalooke knew the mountain intimately and used their advantage to secure their territory. He told the students that because the blood and bones of his ancestors are buried on the land it is sacred to the Apsáalooke.

The first time that I saw this video in the McCracken Library of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, my world was transformed. As a forty-four-year-old academic who had left Wyoming to study religion, I was ignorant of all that Mr. Bulltail recounted. I had known theoretically that settlers appropriate a sense of belonging by adopting Indigenous place-names about which they were generally ignorant. I knew that I was surrounded by and had traveled as a wilderness ranger through Shoshone Forest, the Absaroka Mountains, Wapiti Valley, and that I had little to no knowledge of the Apsáalooke or Shoshone origins of those names. I drove by Arrowhead subdivision, Wild Horse Lane, and the myriad novel street names we use for our subdivided rangelands.<sup>16</sup> I had no idea a living Apsáalooke person had traveled in Cody in the 1940s with his great-grandfather, learning about prereservation life on the banks of the river that runs through Cody. Nabokov and Loendorf note that we shouldn't be surprised that living American Indians have this knowledge. The fact that I was surprised to hear that Mr. Bulltail felt at home when he was in sight of Heart Mountain illustrates how fully my cultural upbringing had distanced the Indigenous people in time and space, providing me with the concealment of being a Wyoming native, as our settler bumper stickers proudly proclaim with the image of the bucking bronco that serves as our University of Wyoming mascot.<sup>17</sup>

In the exchange that followed, a student asked Mr. Bulltail how the Apsáalooke use Heart Mountain today. Mr. Bulltail began by articulating the difference between his idea of the sacred and hers before answering her question.<sup>18</sup>

NICKI: Well, Mr. Bulltail, how is Heart Mountain used by Crow People today?

GRANT BULLTAIL: Hmm, today, . . . I don't want to call it a sacred site because your idea of something sacred and my idea of something sacred are a little bit different. We feel that there are places that are located on the earth that have special power that when the Creator created the earth he went along and created things. And when you carry a cup of water, no matter how careful you are you're going to spill some. We feel that power has spilled in some of them and Heart Mountain is one of those places. And if you have the right state of mind and you want powers, you'll get powers. But if you don't, you don't think in that manner, then nothing will happen. So that's why it's a sacred place to us. And a lot of people fasted there. One of them is a man called Foretop who had his vision that he was going to live as long as Heart Mountain was intact. And then when it collapsed [a major landslide], he died. And this was a long time ago. I don't know when it happened, but it's part of our history. And it's not sacred in the sense that if you go there there's going to be weird sounds and ghosts are going to come out and thunder is going to strike—it's not going to happen. But it's still, we believe, that there's something special there. [Pause] Did you understand? [Nicki hesitates and then nods seriously, and the other participants can be heard laughing gently. As she walks past him we hear her say "Kinda."]<sup>19</sup>

In terms of methodology, I can hardly address the pregnant distances captured in this exchange about Heart Mountain, epitomized by Nicki's "kinda" as she walks closely past Mr. Bulltail to return to her seat. In the silence after Mr. Bulltail asked Nicki if she understood, the room waited, poised for her answer. Her serious nod to him produced the gentle laughter that bubbled among audience members. As she walked past him, her second response, "kinda," was barely heard. She was still thinking about his question, and she revised her answer in what I read as an honest appraisal of her limitations. Understanding the distance of "kinda understanding" in the exchange between Mr. Bulltail and Nicki is central to understanding the difference between his sacred and the sacred of settler culture.

When it came to discussing the power of the land with students from the dominant culture, Mr. Bulltail employed the sacred as a category

with which they would be familiar, but he began by attending to the *difference* between his culture's understanding of the sacred as meaning the greater power found in some places where the Creator imbued extra power, especially likely in places that are hard to scale, like Heart Mountain, which rises steeply from the basin around it. These are the distinctions I see Mr. Bulltail developing. First, *sacred* is different in settler culture from what it is in Apsáalooke culture. Second, for the Apsáalooke the word *sacred* refers to places with extra power. It is not a category regarding spooky beliefs; the sacred is not a structure of belief. Third, the land is a repository of the Creator's great power, and it extends itself, adopts humans, to give them power. Fourth, humans can enter into relationships with that power if they have the right discipline. Humans are therefore negotiating with the great powers of the land. If they sacrifice and show their respect properly, they can develop an exchange relationship with that power, receiving powers that will fortify them.

When Mr. Bulltail notes that his idea about the sacred and the schoolchildren's idea of the sacred are different, he highlights the problem that we are addressing when we ask whether the sacred is a viable category. As a pragmatic matter, those who come from Indigenous communities have to engage with the power of the dominant language terms such as the English word *sacred*, while those in the dominant communities rarely engage with the linguistically and culturally specific words and meanings of the Indigenous communities such as the Apsáalooke term *akbahii laashée*. Mr. Bulltail writes that *akbahii laashée* thoroughly overwhelmed the Crow people, producing a conviction that this force "does the overcoming" and that its "powers are limitless."<sup>20</sup> Because of men's hubris, the Creator only allows them access to this power in desolate places where the humans must sacrifice greatly and ask for the Creator's gift.<sup>21</sup> When Mr. Bulltail clarifies that his meaning of the sacred is not the same as the dominant white culture, he is also not claiming that his meaning of the sacred is the same for all Indigenous people. His evidence is taken from the historical and geographical specificity of Apsáalooke people and their experiences with Foretop's Father. His people have embodied memories and enduring stories of their existence on this land, including stories of the blood and bones that have been buried in the land, remembered through their oral histories. Mr. Bulltail describes the power of that blood and those bones in his relationship to the mountain. Is it strategically useful in the freighted terrain of inter-

cultural discourse to talk about a sacred when the culturally and geographically specific contours of that sacred are all unique? In this case, Mr. Bulltail chose to do so.

Reviewing the conversation in order to provide the reader with a broader picture of the exchange, Mr. Bulltail began with “When I see Heart Mountain, I know that I am in the center of my homeland,” and in response to Nicki’s question he described its sacrality. Recalling that he is talking to people who look at Heart Mountain every day while the Apsáalooke people now live too far away to even see it, there is a telling moment in which one student asked Mr. Bulltail if the Crow still visit the mountain. Mr. Bulltail said, “No. We don’t come here to practice anymore. But it is enough to be able to see it. As soon as we come over [the Big Horns], we see it, and that is enough.” The heavy feeling in the room as I experience it watching the video says that everyone in the room understood that it was not right that the Apsáalooke no longer have access to the mountain even though Mr. Bulltail said that it was enough to see it. That is, as a warrior he reclaimed his connection with the mountain through his eyesight. That is emblematic of the distance between reservation and off-reservation realities. His relationship to the mountain is intense and immediate, but it is experienced in the *connaissance*—the *cobirth*—that happens when his eyes see the mountain and bring him home, though he can’t access the mountain. The silence that lingers in the room when he has stated that “it is enough” tells me that the relationship he has established with the people in the room raised the fact of the injustice that Mr. Bulltail’s people no longer have access to the mountain. It is not enough. That is, he had successfully interrupted the settler mindscape just long enough for the students and their teachers to have a problem that remained unstated, but nevertheless I am imaginatively willing that this problem was hanging in the air as they participated. This is what I imagine was the unsaid in the silence. “You (Grant Bulltail) said that this is where you feel at home, but you can’t come home because we are the homeowners, we own that mountain. Prior to today we did not know that you were at home on that mountain, and we don’t know what to do to change the situation. But now we have this problem tugging at our conscience. Surely, there is nothing we can do. Surely, it should be otherwise.” While the educational event did not prompt an Occupy Apsáalooke Territory movement among the teachers and students, it cultivated the potential unsettling

of the settler cultural geography. What would it take to ask the question, How can we both be at home? Is there room for sacred land in a world of global capital?<sup>22</sup>

PART 2: SUBSTANCE, SITUATIONS, AND SOMETHING SPECIAL

David Chidester and Edward Linenthal provide a definitive genealogy and framework for the study of sacred space in America from a history of religions perspective in their edited collection *American Sacred Space* that elucidates important contours of Mr. Bulltail's discussion of the sacred. They identify three defining features in the production of sacred space, the first of which is that sacred space is ritual space, "a location for formalized, repeatable symbolic performances," such as the ascetic steps taken by Foretop and other Apsáalooke ancestors who sought out fortifying energy and clarity of vision on Heart Mountain.<sup>23</sup> When one studies the ritualizations by which people prepare themselves to participate in an exchange with the power of a sacred site, embodied practices situate memory and meaning in places, and these embodied performances work in concentric circles from cognitive to social dimensions of practice.<sup>24</sup> Issues of purity, defilement, and the hierarchical axes of gender and status are all negotiated in those embodied practices. Hence, ritual space and human bodies cocreate a deep cultural geography. The loss of such practices due to the removal of Indigenous people from those sacred places can be understood to have devastating consequences for the cultural work of becoming human and inhabiting a moral universe.

Second, sacred space "is significant space, a site, orientation, or set of relations subject to interpretation because it focuses crucial questions about what it means to be a human being in a meaningful world."<sup>25</sup> When Foretop was instructed by his wife to seek a vision on the mountain, it was in order for him to transform himself from being an orphan, and therefore dependent on others with little tribal prestige, toward becoming a chief with many horses and great prowess. Not only did the mountain adopt Foretop, but Grant's retelling of the mountain's significance, particularly his recall of the blood and bones that are buried in the mountain, consecrate his relationship to the mountain and orient him as a man who is intimately tied to the power of the land. He is a human who belongs in relationship with that mountain.

Their third feature is that sacred space is "inevitably contested space."

In the case of Heart Mountain we know that many tribes used the mountain to guide them from the north, east, and south. The Apsáalooke repeatedly battled with the Blackfeet for territorial control that the mountain conferred. Chidester and Linenthal suggest that, as a formal element in describing sacred space, this element “might provide a necessary corrective” to “analytical naivete, whether it takes the form of theological dogmatism or mystical intuitionism.”<sup>26</sup> There is no shortage to contested claims regarding Heart Mountain. As surely as the Blackfeet did not back away from the fight in response to a Apsáalooke claim that the mountain was sacred to the Apsáalooke, the settler community identifies the mountain as a central orienting force that tells them from a distance that they are home. In addition, the settler community has maps and title to the ownership of the land, documents that consecrate their relationship to the land as their property. As seen at the Heart Mountain, Wyoming, Foundation website, the iconic backdrop of the mountain serves as the silhouette of space that defined the liminal status of the ten thousand Japanese American internees as well.

This third feature of sacred space is particularly troublesome in its ramifications for Indigenous studies theorizations of sacred land due to the history of four hundred years of living in a contact zone in the American West and over one hundred years of removal from tribal territories to the reservations. Being confined to reservations after the 1880s prevented tribes from returning to key territory for seasonal, annual, and life-cycle ritualizations would have maintained their claims to belonging on the land. Drawing from geographer John Urry, Chidester and Linenthal note that the very fact that sacred lands are spatial is in and of itself part of the reason that sacrality is a contested arena—who and what occupy, use, and consecrate the space with blood and bodies and memories are matters of presence.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, they note, a space is “transformed into a surplus of signification.” One limited space becomes “a point of departure for an endless multiplication of meaning.” They surmise: “A sacred place is not defined by spatial limits; it is open to unlimited claims and counter-claims on its significance. As a result, conflict in the production of sacred space is not only over scarce resources but also over symbolic surpluses that are abundantly available for appropriation.”<sup>28</sup>

Aye—there’s the rub for a twenty-first-century reckoning with sacred lands in the American West. The spatiality has been asymmetri-

cally tilted against the presence of Native Americans on the land. As a child who grew up in Cody, I had no awareness that the Apsáalooke had deep cultural ties to my hometown nor that there was a historical link between Cody, Wyoming, and the Crow Reservation in Montana. The straight line that serves as a border between Wyoming and Montana has functioned admirably to sever the relationship in the settler imagination in Cody from our Apsáalooke neighbors. Meanwhile, the symbolic surpluses of the mountain coexist in the competing cultural geographies of Apsáalooke, settler, and internment camp communities according to the resources that each community has directed toward that commemoration.

Again turning to Chidester and Linenthal, I want to lay out the terrain they call substantialist and situationalist in order to note what is unique, the “something special” of Grant Bulltail’s position, which is, I would argue, a point of friction between religious studies and Indigenous studies. Chidester and Linenthal suggest a chronological development in religious studies theory regarding the sacred in which “two broad lines of definition have been advanced—the substantial and the situational.” From the perspective of a substantial definition, the sacred “has been identified as an uncanny, awesome, or powerful manifestation of reality, full of ultimate significance.”<sup>29</sup> When Grant Bulltail describes the Creator’s cup that spills extra power in some places, he is using a substantial definition of the sacred. When he invokes the power of his ancestors’ burial on the mountain as part of his sacred bond to the mountain, he is invoking a substantial sense of the sacred.

Substantialist claims have been roundly criticized as crypto-theology in recent debates regarding the discipline of religious studies. I do not see this tension abating between those who describe particular places that have special access to power, on the one hand, and those who dismiss substantialist claims, on the other. The “unsacred” state of matter (i.e., anti-crypto-theology), including mountains, is transparent to such critics. They are experts in demystification and are working diligently to demystify the use of the word *sacred* as a representation of special powers inherent in matter. I would argue that by doing so the critics of crypto-theology are enacting the modern and flattening the world rather than enacting a differential consciousness in which there is room for many worlds.<sup>30</sup> In contrast to Mr. Bulltail, who articulates a differ-

ence between the settler idea of the sacred and the Apsáalooke idea, the critics of crypto-theology would necessarily have to proclaim the lack of all substantialist descriptions of the sacred. If I understand the charges raised under the banner of demystifying crypto-theology, it would be impossible for Heart Mountain to be a site of substantial sacred power.

The substantialists include Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw, and Mircea Eliade. In contrast to the critics who call Otto, Leeuw, and Eliade crypto-theologians for their substantialist leanings, Chidester and Linenthal identify the subtleties with which these historians of religion also integrated geopolitical awareness of the rhetoric of the sacred. With regard to Leeuw, they argue that ultimately there are four elements of the situational nature of the sacred to be found in his work. First, he “recognized that every establishment of a sacred place was a conquest of space.” Second, the sacrality of place can be directly related to “a politics of property.” Third, a politics of exclusion “might be an integral part of the making of a sacred space.”<sup>31</sup> Finally, and this is extremely important for the discussion at hand,

Van der Leeuw ultimately positioned sacred space, and his analysis of sacred space, in the context of a politics of exile. Insistently he highlighted a modern loss of the sacred, or alienation from the sacred, or nostalgia for the sacred in his use and interpretation of basic data of religion. Repeatedly, Van der Leeuw noted that primitives had it; some peasant folk had retained it; but moderns had entirely lost it.<sup>32</sup>

Where Leeuw articulated four elements of the situational nature of the sacred, and where he positioned moderns in terms of a politics of exile, which sounds like an existential exile born on the mindscape of modernity, we see a difference in Grant Bulltail’s description of Heart Mountain. What Grant Bulltail does not do is concede that he has been alienated from the power of the mountain; instead, he describes how it is enough for him to see the mountain. His exile is spatial but not existential.

Returning to the second line of definition, the situational definition of the sacred holds that “nothing is inherently sacred. Not full of meaning, the sacred, from this perspective, is an empty signifier. As Claude Lévi-Strauss proposed, the sacred is ‘a value of indeterminate signification, in itself empty of meaning and therefore susceptible to the recep-

tion of any meaning whatsoever.”<sup>33</sup> This notion of the situational has been developed with a Saussurian theory that language is a network of forever negative differences and tends, I would argue, to emphasize the “forever negative difference” rather than the interplay of identity and difference that is found in some applications of poststructuralist theory. Mr. Bulltail employs the full import of the play of language, even the political economy of language, when he says that Nicki’s idea of the sacred and the Apsáalooke idea are a little bit different. They sit together, off the reservation, in the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, discussing a difference. Mr. Bulltail is not saying that the sacred is an empty signifier but rather that it is a marker of difference. While noting the difference, the diminutive “a little bit different” suggests that a translation might occur between their understandings. When he concludes his response by asking her if she has understood, and the gentle laughter of all the people in the room is heard as she seriously nods her head yes but then admits “kinda” as she walks past him—that is a space of two worlds in proximity being impacted by the social relationship they are developing, even if a nuanced translation is yet to be developed in the minds of the students that he is teaching.<sup>34</sup>

To return briefly here to what I see as the difference of the sacred as a category in Indigenous studies, Chidester and Linenthal identify two lines of definition, the substantial and the situational: “The divergence between a substantial and situational definition of the sacred is perhaps most evident in the analysis of sacred space. . . . Not merely an opposition between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives, this clash between substantial and situational approaches to definition and analysis represents a contrast between what might be called the poetics and the politics of sacred space.”<sup>35</sup>

What I want to suggest is particular to Indigenous studies is that the politics of space, such as living life removed from the land where his great-grandfather was born, is never divorced from the poetics of holding that the mountain itself adopted Foretop. Of course, the nomination of the mountain as Foretop’s father is itself an appropriating claim to special right to the mountain; it is a poetic and political nomination. The Apsáalooke who would identify themselves as descendants of Foretop through tribal affiliation are also adopted by Foretop’s father. But it is not an appropriating claim to the mountain as property in a commod-

ified sense. Hence, Mr. Bulltail's invocation of the sacred functions as a marker of difference, a critique of commodification, and a consecration of a precommodified reality that endures in the mountain. Mr. Bulltail is voicing an alternative theory of matter itself (whereas the reductionists in the world of forever negative differences are left with empty signifiers in the desacralized world of modernity with its commodified, demystified property).

The mountain has undergone such transformations since the days of Grant's ancestors that there are at least three Heart Mountains coexisting: Foretop's father exists in the oral culture of Apsáalooke tradition; the Heart Mountain of settler culture has become a patchwork of federal and private land; and finally, the Lone Heart Mountain of the Japanese internment camp of the 1940s became the "un-home" of ten thousand Japanese Americans, making it the site of the third largest city in Wyoming at the time. This genealogy produces a maze of territories that are guarded by nondescript fence lines, lines that produce the whiteness of the settler Heart Mountain. The fences indicate property lines, and the quilt of "owners" makes it very unclear that there is any public access. At the time of the interview, neither Mr. Bulltail nor Mr. Medicine Crow had knowledge of any public access to the mountain. As Mr. Medicine Crow stated in his discussion with the students during the same interview, "I don't know if any of them [Crow people] still come here or not. Sometimes you can't just go to these places anymore. They're owned by private people or whoever." Private people or whoever. That is a powerful critique of personhood as it is enacted in the settler mindscape.

Looking at Mr. Bulltail's deployment of the sacred, we see that he walks in two worlds. First, he acknowledges that the sacred is different for the students in the room than it is for him, thereby invoking his awareness that there is not one "sacred" to which all people have access or to which all people will ultimately arrive. By doing so he is, I would argue, raising a relief map in the room in which two Heart Mountains coexist. He uses the word *sacred* throughout the discussion with the students because they can recognize the word, but he describes the sacred as a substantial power inherent in the land itself that is different from the way they, children of settler cultures, perceive of something that is sacred. Fully aware of the differential play of language between cultures, he nevertheless also takes a stand on the ontological power of the mountain from the Apsáalooke perspective.

PART 3: INDIGENOUS THEORY AND THE SACRED

To strategically interpret Mr. Bulltail's use of the sacred, I turn to Nancy Shoemaker's important edited collection *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*. Her chapter "Categories" begins with a story from southeastern American Indians of a ballgame between birds and running animals. An eager bat shows up ready to play, but the teams don't know what to do with the bat, which confounds their categories. "The size of a mouse, with teeth, fur, wings, and four feet—what is it? Bird or animal? Whichever side takes the bat (there are different versions), that side wins." Shoemaker notes that the bat plays the role of protagonist but that "it is an exception and as such serves to clarify how much easier it is to divide the rest of the natural world into categories based on observable criteria of difference: wings or no wings, four legs or two, fur or feathers." Also, she writes: "No matter how the ballgame unfolds, whether the bat joins the animals or the birds, the bat's odd physical features bring victory to the side of which it is playing. Its ambiguous position between categories was a source of power."<sup>36</sup>

Adding a further element of depth to this story is the fact that there are African stories about the bat as a confounder of categories, which has led some scholars to argue that this story is evidence of African Indian cultural exchange, though none of the African stories contain a ballgame motif, whereas the ballgame was a central vehicle of southwestern Indian political organization. Shoemaker surmises that either the story is evidence of change and adaptation in the southeastern Indian stories or "maybe the bat is so anomalous in its appearance that Native American, African, European, and Asian taxonomic systems have all had to struggle to account for it." She concludes: "Either changes occurred in southeastern Indian oral traditions or there are common patterns to how people construct categories, or both."<sup>37</sup>

I want to engage in a two-step dance here with Shoemaker's point about categories and what the story of the bat might mean not only for Native American history but also for the intersection where religious studies and Indigenous studies meet at the problem of the sacred. First, I want to suggest that Mr. Bulltail's use of the sacred walks a different ground than either a simple substantialist invocation of the sacred or a situationalist deployment, and in that way the sacred works like a bat in his cross-cultural discussion. Hence, the first step of this dance with

Shoemaker's bat story is to adopt the metaphor and say that the sacred works like a bat when it is employed by Indigenous people to help them communicate and translate to the dominant discourse. Always understanding the politics of what has and what has not been seen to be *sacred* on the landscape of American and colonial culture, the Indigenous use of the term has to, by nature of the experience of conquest, infer the situational indexes of the sacred. However, with that political awareness burned into the history of Indigenous experiences in contact zones, complete with the robbing of grave sites, for example, Mr. Bulltail's act of naming Foretop's father as a sacred mountain enacts the consecration of an enduring and substantial sanctity. He never suggests that his or the student's *sacred* are empty signifiers. From a hermeneutical perspective, sacred is a Eurocentric term—it cannot be cleaned of the potential problems of that valence. At the same time, mammal with wings, it consecrates the meaning of the land in a precommodified economy of the surplus of the creator. As a formal issue, we can understand the confounding of dualistic distinctions to be a useful theoretical underpinning, representative of Indigenous studies theory.

The second step of this dance is to examine the use of the term *sacred* for comparative study of global Indigenous struggles. Where Shoemaker argued that the bat story was either an example of adaptation or an illustration of the nearly universal problem that the anomalies of the bat have raised for human communities, or both, I want to suggest that the sacred holds the same complex status for theory. Either Indigenous traditions have adapted to the hegemonic notion of the "sacred" by labeling some of their lands and practices as sacred, or there are common patterns to how people have dealt with the anomalous experience of extra power contained in some places and some practices, or both. That is, not only is the bat a confounder of categories, but the appearance of the bat in stories across cultures is itself confounding—either the original story has adapted to cross-cultural exchange and the hegemonic role of the sacred in Western discourses with their problematic ties to dualism, or many cultures have been intrigued by the power found in some places, and they bring to the table their respective terms that describe this common, human experience of some places and some things exerting special power, or both. The bat story tells us what is most true about categories used in the comparative study of religion, and the sacred is a particularly charged category that elucidates three things: (1) the need

to attend to culturally specific notions of the sacred with all the nuances of language and cultural sensitivity; (2) the potential power of bringing culturally specific notions to the table using the word *sacred* as a token of translation when battles for religious freedom are being fought; and (3) critical awareness that the full ambivalence of the sacred crosses the terrains of substantialist claims of ontological sacrality, on the one hand, and situational claims of the interpretive play of the category as a category of difference, on the other.

And here is where we get to the meaning of the matter in Charles Long's words. In careful studies of culturally specific Indigenous concepts of the sacred, it is seen to mean that a place or an object, in its materiality, is essentially powerful, and that power carries with it an ambivalent tenor, for it can be put to uses that help and harm. By maintaining a discursive space in Indigenous theory for the substantialist claims, one is actually discussing the meaning of matter in a precommodified worldview. Where modernity has been understood to be the transformation and desacralization of matter from a sacred gift to a man-ordered commodity, a consecration of multiple worlds occurs in theory when the story of the bat is invoked as the theoretical foundation of the sacred as a category of analysis. The impurity and desecration of suggesting that theory itself might be engaged in a consecration of meaning will clearly be galling to a strict reductionist. Crypto-theologian with bat seated at table of Indigenous studies with spork.

Using the sacred comparatively, one can approach the study of geographically and historically specific traditions identifying *that which the community values as most powerful* as its *sacred*, whether I am thinking about the sacred of global consumer culture or the sacred of the Apsáalooke. I argue that it is theoretically more interesting and strategically helpful to pursue Indigenous studies with a hermeneutical mode of understanding that the sacred is a bat: on the one hand, it is freighted with all the problems of being a European category, and, on the other hand, all Indigenous communities will have a way of describing that which holds extra power. Sacred can function as an umbrella under which the culturally specific concepts can be studied and invoked for the purposes of common battles, such as battles to protect powerful places commonly called sacred lands. Categorically, the sacred is both a problematic category with all the baggage of Eurocentrism and the hegemonic deployment of European-based languages, and, *because* of that, it wields some

efficacy as an umbrella term under which cultural specificity can be articulated *as long as* the meaning of matter itself is studied in each situation in order to flesh out significant distinctions. Always it carries the risk of hegemonically erasing difference, yet if applied as does Mr. Bulltail by noting differences between culturally specific uses of the term, then a field of engagement is literally invoked upon which the two understandings of the sacred can be contrasted, two meanings of matter can be viewed, without the intent of arriving at a totalizing or singular notion of the sacred. There is no über-bat to which all bats belong. In Nikki's words, she kinda understood.

It is in the interest of winning the game that one puts the bat in play. If one employs mastery in so doing, as exemplified in Mr. Bulltail's engagement with the students from the settler school systems, then the potential to transform reality arises. I am thinking here of Bruno Latour's insight that when enemies have come to work together for a common good, it is not because they have come to agree with each other. Rather, they come to see the world differently. As he wrote in his presentation for the Symposium on the Conciliation of World Views, "We perhaps never differ about opinions, but rather always about things—about what world we inhabit. And very probably it never happens that adversaries come to agree on opinions: they begin, rather, to occupy a different world."<sup>38</sup> In terms of Mr. Bulltail's work, by articulating how his idea of the sacred is different from Nikki's, the attendees are presented with a different picture altogether of what Heart Mountain is. She and the settler communities that have occupied what is clearly the cultural inheritance of the Indigenous people might come to occupy a different world with knowledge that settler property is also "home" in the deepest sense to Indigenous people who were removed from the area. Heart Mountain is also Foretop's father. Without a continued line of access to the mountain, however, its status as Foretop's father might become invisibly thin, to the mutual loss of all who have glimpsed its significance as Foretop's father. The Nature Conservancy has purchased much of the mountain and now maintains it as a public land trust. In June 2010 Grant Bulltail led a pipe ceremony on the Nature Conservancy land, reinitiating the relationship of the Apsáalooke to the mountain after their 130 years of forced absence. We are in the earliest stages of restoring a presence on the cultural landscape from which two separated communities might come to see the world differently and from that process work toward reciprocal recognition.

#### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE LARGER FIELD OF THEORY

There are many ongoing conversations regarding the sacred that merit note, but I am going to relegate that work to an endnote, knowing that Jacques Derrida's, Jonathon Z. Smith's, Mark C. Taylor's, and Victor Taylor's works do not suffer from inattention.<sup>39</sup> What Mr. Bulltail's comments evidence is the complexity that an Indigenous people bring to the table of a critical theory of the sacred in their struggles to reclaim the sanctity of their place on the earth through battles over sacred lands and for sovereignty. I see a potential fruitful line of inquiry being developed by contrasting Victor Taylor's discussion of graves with Native American struggles to create and enforce the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, for example, in order to ground the floating signifiers of the postmodern discourse in the meaning of matter.

Some activists and scholars have eschewed the term *sacred*, for example, the scholars included in the collection *The Political Economy of North American Indians*, ed. John H. Moore, in which neither *religion* nor *sacred* are employed by any of the authors.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, David Chidester has written a political economy of the sacred in Cape Town, South Africa, that I prefer for its ability to invoke non-Western, nonsettler modalities of perceiving the power of places, the meaning of matter, and the poetic and political organizations of space at the interface of race relations as those relationships transitioned in time.<sup>41</sup> He brings those culturally specific modalities of the Indigenous people of Africa to the analysis of the social space of Cape Town in a way that unsettles settler assumptions about what is going on in terms of property and social values. For example, Chidester tracks the devaluation of the central cathedrals and the graveyards of the city as they lose their place and value due to the high prices of real estate. One might say that Chidester tracks how the commodified landscape of Cape Town knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, an emerging sacred develops in the peripheries of Cape Town, the townships, where small, local social spaces such as garages have developed currency and value as sacred places. The Indigenous sense of home as sacred space and as a bulwark against external threats runs deep in the culture of the small churches found throughout the townships in buildings that the dominant European tradition would not have considered sacred, or at least certainly not on par with their cathedrals.

At the United Nations it appears that the phrase *intangible cultural heritage* is replacing the term *sacred*. The discourse of intangible cultural heritage studiously avoids the words *religion* and *sacred* and prefers instead the language of culture and tradition. Whether Indigenous activists choose to fight for intangible cultural heritage lands or sacred lands, I really do not care—use what works! However, I think the word *intangible* itself represents a variation on the sacred in style, not in terms of the formal issues. *Intangible* describes that which confounds dualistic thought by invoking something that is in = not + tangible = touchable as the very thing that must be preserved. The shift toward the discourse of intangible cultural heritage might be preferred in some arenas due to the facility with which interdisciplinary scholarship discusses culture and the discomfort that many scholars within and without religious studies describe in terms of the vagaries or implicit crypto-theology and essentialism of the sacred as a category. I would argue that the same formal concerns accompany the phrase *intangible cultural heritage* that accompanies use of the term *sacred*. The problem is the problem with being a bat. Let's say I wanted to protect a rock. I do not want it moved, nor do I want a replacement rock. I do not want money to compensate for my loss of the rock. How can this rock be this rock and only this rock, on the one hand, and an intangible, on the other hand? It is the tangibility of land from which its power is experienced.

As we see in the transcript below, Mr. Bulltail concludes the song that was given to him with another powerful, place-taking maneuver when he says, "I was going to sing that anyway. I always sing that song when I'm in this area."

[SHARON KAHIN]: Grant, I was wondering if we could end this, if that song about Heart Mountain, if you would mind singing that for us and then translate it?

[GRANT BULLTAIL]: This song in English is  
Look at Heart Mountain  
Heart Mountain is remarkable  
Rise up and look at Heart Mountain

And in the old days, in the war parties, when they came home, when they came home successful they would ride through the village and a war party leader would be behind everybody and he would sing his homecoming song. So this is one of the homecoming songs that was sung by one of my ancestors.

Awa-Xaám-daá-say iiga-ga-waa  
Awa-Xaám-daá-say xiia-sa-la-chik  
Awa-Xaám-daá-say chii-lok-iiga-ga-waá.<sup>43</sup>

I was going to sing that anyway. I always sing that song when I'm in this area. [He smiles and chuckles, and the students and their teachers laugh as well.]

Mr. Bulltail has told me that he thinks singing “accelerates” the power that a person invokes, and what I felt in watching the video was that everyone in that room understood that he was indeed a warrior who had come home, and they laughed at the joke he had pulled. It was as though the laughter indicated that in fact his singing ought to be able to bring the warrior home. The moment of laughter marked his full declaration of what he was up to and recognition on the part of the students and teachers that another America was coming to life in that very room. In chorus with the work of scholars like Mark Warhus who are raising Native American landscapes to the surface of American research and cultural consciousness, “another America” will illustrate the bat at play, raising not only a different perspective on Heart Mountain, for instance, but also a different meaning of matter, based out of a human exchange relationship with land wherein land is understood to be a given with a surplus of ambivalent power that was neither made by humans nor mastered by human constructs.<sup>44</sup> This Indigenous terrain of meaning is in contrast to the “private people or whoever” to which Mr. Medicine Crow referred, a phrase that conflates two of the key settler concepts of being an individual and owning private property. I predict, therefore, that in the twenty-first century we will see the sacred as a player on the field. Though we may witness a reorientation in international discourse away from the term *sacred* and toward the phrase *intangible cultural heritage*, this reorientation does not remove us from the formal problem raised by the bat.

To the extent that the sacred remains a player on the field, it will be effective in that it confounds the traditional pairings by which we animals distinguished differences among ourselves (birds vs. running animals) and by which we organize our social lives. For my purposes, then, the sacred is a bat, both a modern European category and a geographically and historically specific Indigenous category. It is both poetic and political, but always the key point of distinction will be to understand

the historically and culturally specific notion of matter that supports the concept of the sacred in the culture being studied. The sacred is as material as are the rocks and the land that constitute the power of Foretop's father, but the question still must be answered, What materiality are you invoking—can your rock adopt people? It is specific and local—Foretop's father cannot be picked up and moved to other places or purchased, nor is Mr. Bulltail exiled from it as long as he can see it. As Mr. Bulltail so artfully articulates, the sacred is a category of difference and therefore home to substantial powers.

#### NOTES

The epigraph quote is from Grant Bulltail MS 201, oral history collection, interview 54, 2003, McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Historical Center. I am indebted to the hard work and knowledge of Apsáalooke (Crow Indian) elders Grant Bulltail and Joe Medicine Crow, upon whose lifework as keepers and recorders of the Crow traditions this article is founded, and also those people who have supported and disseminated their teachings, including their extended families, and Sharon Kahin, Lawrence Loendorf, Tim McCleary, and Peter Nabokov. Also, Charles H. Long's "Indigenous People, Materialities, and Religion: Outline for a New Orientation to Religious Meaning," in *Religion and Global Culture: New Terrain in the Study of Religion and the Work of Charles H. Long*, ed. Jennifer I. M. Reid (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2003), 167–80, directs the focus of this examination of the sacred as a problem of the meaning of matter. An important article to read alongside of Long's work is Augustin Berque, "Indigenous beyond Exoticism," *Diogenes* 50, no. 4 (2003): 39–48 for its insistence that humans, *ecumene*, stand on the earth, each particular people in a dialogical relationship to the creation of the world, though the inheritors of the modern West imagine themselves to be the engineers of one world.

1. Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red*, 30th anniversary ed. (Golden CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003); Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Joe Watkins, Paul Rosier, and Walter Echo-Hawk, *Sacred Sites and Repatriation*, Contemporary Native American Issues (New York: Chelsea House Publications, 2005); Andrew Gulliford, *Sacred Objects, Sacred Places: Preserving Tribal Traditions* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000); Amber L. McDonald, "Secularizing the Sacrosanct: Defining 'Sacred' for Native American Sacred Sites Protection Legislation," *Hofstra Law Review* 33, no. 2 (2004): 751–83; James Riding In, Cal Seciwa, Suzan Shown Harjo, and Walter Echo-Hawk, "Protecting Native American Human Remains, Burial Grounds, and Sacred Places: Panel Discussion," *Wicazo Sa Review* 19, no. 2

(2004): 169–83; Lawrence E. Sullivan and Alison Edwards, eds., *Stewards of the Sacred* (Washington DC: American Association of Museums with the Center for Study of World Religions, Harvard University, 2004); Deward Walker, “Protection of American Indian Sacred Geography,” in *Handbook of American Indian Religious Freedom*, ed. Christopher Vecsey (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1991); “Sacred Geography in Northwestern North America,” <http://www.Indigenouspeople.net/sacred.htm>, 2004, accessed June 6, 2010; Kathleen Dean Moore, Kurt Peters, Ted Jojola, and Amber Lacy, eds., *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007); Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

2. Winona LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (Cambridge MA: South End Press, 2005); Berkes, *Sacred Ecology*; Fikret Berkes, Johan Colding, and Carl Folke, *Navigating Social-Ecological Systems: Building Resilience for Complexity and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

3. Charles Long, “Religion, Discourse, and Hermeneutics: New Approaches in the Study of Religion,” in *The Next Step in Studying Religion: A Graduate Student’s Guide*, ed. Mathieu E. Courville (New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2007), 183–98; Long, “A Postcolonial Meaning of Religion: Some Reflections from the Indigenous World,” in *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*, ed. Jacob Olupona (New York: Routledge, 2004), 89–98; and Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*, Philosophical and Cultural Studies in Religion (Boulder CO: Davies Group, 2004). See also Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, eds., *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008).

4. Long, “Indigenous People.”

5. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

6. Nancy Shoemaker, ed., *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

7. Personal conversation with Grant Bulltail, June 11, 2011.

8. Peter Nabokov and Lawrence Loendorf, *Restoring a Presence* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

9. Walter Echo-Hawk, *In the Courts of the Conquerors: The 10 Worst Indian Law Cases Ever Decided* (Golden CO: Fulcrum Press, 2010); Donald L. Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003); John R. Welch and T. J. Ferguson, “Putting Patria Back into Repatriation,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 7, no. 2 (2007): 171–98.

10. Chela Sandoval argues that there are five different modes in which criti-

cal, oppositional consciousness has been developed: the equal rights form, the revolutionary form, the supremacist form, the separatist form, and differential consciousness, the last of which recognizes the place and need for each of the four previous forms and allows one to shift gears between these modes, like the differential of an engine, in order to effectively navigate between minority and place-based identities, on the one hand, and the cyberworld of social justice struggles, on the other. She sees differential consciousness as a nomadic consciousness that transforms reality in its effective use of social justice networks that derive from the four previous modes of consciousness. See especially "U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I," in *Methodology of the Oppressed, Theory Out of Bounds*, vol. 18 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 41–66. Shifting from a theory of consciousness to political theory, see Manuhia Barcham, "(De)constructing the Politics of Indigeneity," in *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous People*, ed. Duncan Ivison, Paul Patton, and Will Sanders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 137–51.

11. Philip Arnold addresses the role of the sacred as a category in the context of his work with the Native traditions of the Americas. He argues for an approach to religion as a "cipher of meaning" whose nature is to generate "imaginative recreations of reality." For him, the sacred functions as a category that signifies a distance between oneself and something that is other. Hence the sacred as a category marks a difference. "The difference is essential for genuine learning to take place." See his "Sacred Landscapes and Global Religion: Reflections on the Significance of Indigenous Religions for University Culture," in Reid, *Religion and Global Culture*, 39–49, quote at 48. See David Carrasco's discussion of the difficulties encountered at the interface of religious studies and Latino/a studies, "*Cuando dios y usted quiere: Latino/a Studies between Religious Powers and Social Thought*," in *A Companion to Latino/a Studies*, ed. Juan Flores and Renato Rosaldo (Maldon MA: Wiley-Blackwell), 60–76.

12. As soon as one is speaking about the movement of tribes in Plains Indian culture, one is talking about interactions that were influenced by the larger event of North America as a *contact zone* in Mary Louise Pratt's use of that term as "a space of colonial encounters, the space which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish on-going relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" (*Imperial Eyes* [New York: Routledge, 1992], 6).

13. See the maps that illustrate the transition from 33 million acres in 1851 to 2.2 million in 1904 (Apsáalooke Writing Tribal Histories Project, Little Big Horn College, 2002–11, <http://lib.lbhc.edu/history/6.01.php>). For an overview of the process depicted in these maps, see Nabokov and Loendorf, *Restoring a Presence*, chap. 1. The removal of the Apsáalooke was accomplished using the nets of meaning sedimented into layers of maps; the creation of forts; surveys;

treaties; renegotiated treaties; broken treaties; the incorporation of European American settlements; the development of water law, land law, property law, and natural resource law; and the creation of national parks and other federal appropriations of territory that had previously been treated to Native American tribes as sovereign nations within the United States. See also Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987) for a discussion of the problems that property law evolved to solve in response to unwieldy natural resources.

14. See the introduction to the Apsáalooke Writing Tribal Histories Project, <http://lib.lbhc.edu/history/1.00.php>.

15. Conversation with Tim McCleary, May 17, 2010.

16. For an excellent discussion of the general ignorance of settler communities with regard to Native place-names, as well as the settler appropriation of place-names, which signifies their desire for indigeneity, see “Splitting the Earth,” in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, ed. Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

17. Long discusses distantiation and concealment in “Indigenous People,” 169, 171–73.

18. An important analysis of the relationship between landscape and language is found in Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

19. The text is my transcription of the video.

20. Bulltail conversation, June 11, 2010.

21. Indigenous studies has entered a new but fragile moment in scholarship that is bringing Native-language speakers and learners together with language recovery efforts to digitally record and document vital knowledge, especially that of elders, but these efforts urgently need funding and collegial support. Let me note that my position is not as a language expert, and I depend upon Grant Bulltail and Tim McCleary of Little Big Horn College to translate and identify Apsáalooke concepts, which puts me in the position of being an ally but not an expert in any way. As I understand the terrain laid out by Jace Weaver in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, allies are invited to the table of Indigenous studies, but expertise lies with those whose linguistic and cultural awareness is subtle and complex from years of participation within Indigenous communities.

22. Mary L. Keller, “Sacred Land and Global Capitalism,” *Tamara: Journal of Critical Organization Inquiry*, forthcoming.

23. *American Sacred Space*, 9.

24. Catherine Bell’s *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) is the standard in discussing ritualization.

25. David Chidester and Edward Linenthal, *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 12.
26. Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 15, 17.
27. John Urry, "Social Relations, Space and Time," in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, ed. Derek Gregory and John Urry (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 30. Further discussion of temporal dimensions of cultural landscapes in contact zones is found in Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
28. Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 18, 19.
29. Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 5.
30. Sandoval quotes Subcommander Marcos of the Zapatista Army of Liberation in the front pages of *Methodology of the Oppressed*: "We seek a world in which there is room for many worlds."
31. Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 8.
32. Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 9.
33. Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 6.
34. I read this exchange as an emblematic moment of what Chirevo Kwenda has described as a "spirituality of distance"—the space where difference coexists in the face of the hegemonic forces of globalization that would otherwise make of us all a common, consumer culture. See "Mthunzini (a Place in the Shade): Religion and the Heat of Globalization," in Reid, *Religion and Global Culture*, 67–82.
35. Chidester and Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, 6.
36. Shoemaker, *Clearing a Path*, 51, 52.
37. Shoemaker, *Clearing a Path*, 52.
38. Bruno Latour, "Whose Cosmos? Whose Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck," *Common Knowledge* 10, no. 3 (2004): 455.
39. Tyler Roberts provides a useful overview of the critique of the sacred in the past decade in "All Work and No Play: Chaos, Incongruity and *Différance* in the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77, no. 1 (March 2009): 81–104, and provides an interesting discussion of the tension in play in the work of Sam Gill and Huston Z. Smith. (Do scholars or religion play while religious people do not consciously play?) Roberts argues that Mark C. Taylor has definitively articulated the theological underpinning of theory, even critical theory, and the a/theological potential of theology and theory in dialogical relationships. Central to Taylor's argument is the contrast in his a/theological reading of Hegel's Absolute Knowing to a poststructuralist critique of Hegel as the ultimate voice of totalizing theory. That issue is not unrelated to the problem of using categories such as the sacred; does the strategic reading of the sacred as a "bat" (akin to Taylor's a/theological reading of Absolute Knowledge) work, or does one drop the sacred for terms less freighted with Christian,

Western theological, and ontotheological weight? Victor E. Taylor's *Para/Inquiry: Postmodern Religion and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000) discusses the absence of a singular sacred center as a dominant characteristic of the most radical elements of postmodernity. For a pithy discussion of the issue of sacrality, graves, and postmodern culture, see the March 29, 2010, interview found at [http://www.arthistory.upenn.edu/vlst/2010-studentsites/lew/Site/Victor\\_E.\\_Taylor.html](http://www.arthistory.upenn.edu/vlst/2010-studentsites/lew/Site/Victor_E._Taylor.html). Mark C. Taylor's move into the sciences of biological systems and information networks could be an interesting conversation partner for an Indigenous studies theory of the interface between Indigenous knowledge and the emerging field of panarchy studies. See Mark C. Taylor, "Refiguring Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77, no. 1 (2009): 105–19; and Lance H. Gunderson and C. S. Holling, *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural Systems* (Washington DC: Islands Press, 2002).

40. John H. Moore, ed., *The Political Economy of North American Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

41. David Chidester, "Mapping the Sacred in the Mother City: Religion and Urban Space in Cape Town, South Africa," unpublished manuscript. See also Jacob Olupona, "Globalization and African Immigrant Religious Communities," and David Chidester, "Cross-cultural Religious Business: Cocolonization, McDonaldization, Disneyization, Tupperization, and Other Local Dilemmas of Global Signification," both in Reid, *Religion and Global Culture*.

42. See Raj Patel, *The Value of Nothing: How to Reshape Market Society and Redefine Democracy* (New York: Picador, 2010), where Patel invokes Oscar Wilde's "we know the price of everything and the value of nothing" to consider the significance of our economic times.

43. Grant Bulltail provided this transcription in personal correspondence, June 11, 2010. For discussion of the American Indian strategic use of song and art in the presentation of American Indian history, see Craig Howe, "Keep Your Thoughts above the Trees: Ideas on Developing and Presenting Tribal Histories," in *Clearing a Path*, 161–79.

44. Mark Warhus, *Another America: Native American Maps and the History of Our Land* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).