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"WHEN A LIPAN WOMAN REFUSES EXTINCTION": MARGO TAMEZ'S DISSIDENCE AGAINST SETTLER-COLONIAL VIOLENCE AT THE U.S. | MEXICO BORDER

INTRODUCTION

One of the most globally recognized modern fortifications, the wall erected along the U.S.-Mexico border represents a visible shift in the way the United States affirms and protects its sovereignty, namely by technologically and militarily advanced surveillance, coupled with a complex system of normative measures exercised at the border. The gradual militarization of the region, unquestionably more aggressive after the 9/11 terrorist attack, is deeply rooted in the perception that a massive fortification is a necessary and efficient element of the national security apparatus. However, the existence and functionality of such a highly militarized structure are questioned by those who see the process of bordering as a manifestation of state impunity and a blatant human rights violation. It reduces the entire border discourse to a state-sanctioned narrative about "us versus the enemy." Once legitimized, such a narrative demands that the United States be ready to defend itself against potential danger and, consequently, to fortify its borders.

While the current public debates on national security address mainly the issues of a grave immigration crisis and an ongoing war on terrorism, hardly any attention is given to the situation of the Indigenous communities inhabiting the U.S.-Mexico border region, among them the Yaqui, Tohono O'odham, Kickapoo, Apache, and Kumeyaay tribes. Their struggles to protect their rights for cultural integrity and sovereignty over their tribal lands

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are ignored and dismissed amid the federal government's efforts to further militarize the border region. Thus, to the communities bifurcated by the border wall, the continuously (re)built structure is "a carceral architecture of containment"—a brutal assault on their traditional homelands and tribal sovereignty.[1]

One of the vivid examples of Indigenous peoples' open resistance to the border wall and state impunity is a series of lawsuits brought against the government by members of a federally non-recognized Lipan Apache Band of Texas. Their original territory, Kónitsąąíígokíyaa (the Big Water Country), embraces over 6.5 million acres in the Texas-Mexico region, currently separated by the international border.[2] The lawsuits were filed by Eloisa García Tamez and her daughter, Margo Tamez. Their land in El Calaboz Ranchería, together with other parcels along the border, was to be seized by the U.S. Homeland Security Department to build the wall. Between the years 2007 and 2013, the women led a legal battle, using national and international platforms to defend their family's Crown title to the land. Having lost the cases, they witnessed a substantial portion of their land being eventually seized by the U.S. government. Despite the wall's construction, the mother and the daughter, together with other members of their community, continue their fight for self-determination and cultural recognition of their people. Joining forces with their transborder allies, they have continuously worked to restore and implement Lipan Apache/Ndé Dene rules of governance based on women's traditional knowledge and experience, and the practices that center on protecting land and community.[3]

[1] Margo Tamez, "The Texas-Mexico Border Wall and Ndé Memory Confronting Genocide and State Criminality, beyond the Guise of 'Impunity'," in *Beyond Walls and Cages: Prisons, Borders, and Global Crisis*, ed. Jenna M. Loyd, Matt Michelson, and Andrew Burridge (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 70.

[2] According to Tamez, the territory includes the lands that are presently in South Texas, Southwest Texas, and the regions of Nuevo León, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and eastern Chihuahua in Mexico. See Margo Tamez, "Dáanzho h'hi 'dał'k'ida', 'áá'áná', 'doo maanaashni': Welcoming 'long ago', 'way back' and 'remember'—as an Ndé Decolonization and Land Recovery Process," *InTensions Journal* 6 (2012): 23.

[3] While preparing the lawsuits, the two women co-founded the Lipan Apache Women Defense (LAW-Defense)—an organization that has provided space and tools for Indigenous women and their families thanks to which they have "organized, documented, and deployed legal, discursive, cultural and media-based challenges to the Texas-Mexico border wall." Margo Tamez, "'Our Way of Life Is Our Resistance': Indigenous Women and Anti-Imperialist Challenges to Militarization of the U.S.-Mexico Border," *Works & Days* 29, nos. 57–58 (2011): 284. For more information, see the organization's official website: https://lipancommunityde fense.wordpress.com/about.

A poet, herstorian, human rights activist, and Indigenous feminist critic, Margo Tamez has been at the forefront of Lipan Apache struggles, using her multifaceted work as a platform to critically engage with the issues, such as settler-colonial genocidal practices, historical erasures, and neocolonial state violence that Indigenous peoples, especially the communities bifurcated by geopolitical borders, have been subjected to. Her most recent work, both artistic and scholarly, is a continuation of her ongoing confrontation with state-sanctioned impunity, manifested by the erection of the border wall, aggressive militarization of the Texas-Mexico region, and "a carceral logic of containment, detention, prisons, and deportation"[4] created in the name of state's sovereignty and national security.

The state's forceful repression and dismissal of Ndé Dene peoples' voices made Tamez acutely aware of the necessary changes she had to make in her work, turning from "poetry-of-witness and embodiment to Indigenous poetic and cognitive method as a critique of genocidal processes."[5] Doing so, Tamez worked on a new language and perspective that would allow her to define and engage critically with Ndé Dene peoples' walled-in existence as well as with Ndé Dene women's strategies of resistance against state-sanctioned violence at the border. Published in 2021, a poetry collection titled *Father| Genocide* represents Tamez's dissident voice against border politics in the Big Water Country and its catastrophic consequences in the lives of Ndé Dene peoples and their neighboring communities. Composed two decades after her father died in 1996, the book focuses on Luis Carrasco Tamez Jr.'s life, locating the story in a broader context of settler-colonial genocidal practices that have fragmented and traumatized generations of Ndé Dene peoples and violently exploited their traditional lands in the Texas-Mexico border region. In the book, the border wall imagery remains central and is used by the poet to demonstrate that the modern-day structure is not only a material barrier but a manifestation of the ongoing physical, ideological, cultural, and psychosocial oppression of Ndé Dene peoples. For Tamez, the colossal border fortification is yet another form of "the carceral which predated the wall, and the many systems of discipline and punitive violence

[4] Felicity Amaya Schaeffer, *Unsettled Borders*: *The Militarized Science of Surveillance on Sacred Indigenous Land* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 3.

[5] Margo Tamez, "Indigenous Women's Rivered Refusals in El Calaboz," *Diálogo* 19, no. 1 (2016): 8.

which are at the root of settler colonialism in Texas, the U.S. and north-eastern Mexico."[6]

To *truth* about and reclaim the story of Ndé Dene peoples' fragmented life in the shadow of the wall, Tamez uses a linguistic and pictographic *land*-guage that constitutes part of her poetic form. It is described by Tamez as "Indigenous fusionism-Indigenous futurism, a union of pastpresent, body-knowing, intertext, bent tradition, *land*guage, and familial blood-knowing."[7] Challenging the official settler-colonial mytho-history, that has erased Indigenous presence in the Texas-Mexico region, Tamez juxtaposes it with a story of Ndé survivance that draws on family memories, photographs, and documents collected by the community members, as well as on historical, legal, artistic, and theoretical works that have shaped the poet's critical perspective on Indigenous peoples' experiences of exile and walled-in (non)existence. Reclaiming Ndé story and identity, Tamez takes up the role and responsibility of Nde´ isdza´ ne´ (the People-Women)—traditional law-keepers who have governed, protected, and chronicled the life of Ndé Dene communities for generations.[8] *Father | Genocide* is, therefore, Tamez's artistic tool of dissidence used to restore, protect, and nurture the body, mind, and spirit of Ndé Dene peoples, celebrated in the process of truthing about their resilient existence in the shadow of the wall.

NECROPOWER AND THE RESHAPING OF THE BIG WATER COUNTRY

Developing a critical Ndé perspective on the border wall, Tamez argues that it has reinforced the colonially-rooted order defined by a Cameroonian historian and philosopher, Achille Mbembe, as "necropower." Mbembe sees the birth of necropower in the spatialization of colonial occupation. For the

[6] Margo Tamez, "Nde' Subject Position, with and alongside Community, in a Militarized Walled Zone," Margo Tamez' UBC Blog, May 13, 2014, https://blogs.ubc.ca/mtamez/2014/05/13/hello-world.

[7] Margo Tamez, "About *Father | Genocide*," accessed May 17, 2024, https://www.margotamez.com/father-genocide.

[8] As Tamez explains, "The Ndé and other societies aboriginal to the area are generally matrilineal, matrifocal, and matrilocal; they engender families, clans, and tribal relations based on kinship, service, leadership, trade, spiritual strength, healing powers, and shared power rooted not only in blood ties but also in social and political alliances." Margo Tamez, "Restoring Lipan Apache Women's Laws, Lands, and Strength in El Calaboz Ranchería at the Texas-Mexico Border," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35, no. 3 (2010): 561.

critic, it begins with the compartmentalization of the occupied space: "It involves the setting of boundaries and internal frontiers epitomized by barracks and police stations."[9] The power and control over the occupied space is then "regulated by the language of pure force, immediate presence, and frequent and direct action; and it is premised on the principle of reciprocal exclusivity."[10] Since the established settler-colonial state manifests its sovereignty through necropower, it dictates whose life to save and who is to die. Consequently, necropower produces what Mbembe defines as "death worlds"—forms of social life "in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead."[11] Thus, the state's domination over human lives is the basic attribute of sovereignty, as "[t]o exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power."[12]

As Mbembe argues further, exercising such power inevitably leads to the creation of states of exception in which the use of violence is officially legitimized by the regime and performed via legal tools to secure its borders from the internal or external enemy. Focusing on modern settler-colonial architecture design, Léopold Lambert points to a problem that stems from the emergence of the state of exception. As he explains, two types of architecture dominate such a state. While the first one, e.g. a prison camp, "expresses the purposes of violence over the bodies such a state represents," the second type, e.g. a border wall structure, "includes the entire built environment in a potential establishment of a precautionary emergency state that transforms domesticity into detention and control."[13] However, the critic emphasizes that although the state of exception is intended to represent a temporal change, it hardly ever disappears entirely. Very often, "the current society reflects the ensemble of exceptional measures that have been taken during the past."[14]

Implementing the theory of necropower in her work, Tamez argues that the settler-colonial domination in the Texas-Mexico region should be perceived as a necropolitical order established and exercised to secure the domination and prosperity of the "civilized" world, represented by the successive regimes (Spain, Mexico, Texas, and the U.S.). Seen through the Ndé

[9] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 79.
[10] Mbembe, 79.
[11] Mbembe, 92.
[12] Mbembe, 12.
[13] Léopold Lambert, *Weaponized Architecture. The Impossibility of Innocence* (New York–Barcelona: dpr-barcelona, 2012), 22.
[14] Lambert, 22.

lens, it is a continuous occupation and operational control of Ndé lands and bodies achieved by genocidal warfare, slavery, racial discrimination, forced ethnicization,[15] and the use of institutions and technologies of control, subjugation, and incarceration. Focusing on the history of violence against Ndé Dene peoples, Tamez argues that it has centered on "marginalizing survivors and witnesses *spatially and politically, to the extreme, remote fringes*; diminishing existence to deprived conditions; and harvesting and exploiting survivors, forcing them into an unintelligible identity."[16]

The poet emphasizes that by blatantly refusing to acknowledge Ndé Dene peoples' rights to their customary land, self-recognition, and self-governance, the U.S. government frames them, together with other communities, as a mass of undistinguishable "border peoples."[17] Systemically deprived of the rights to their lands and self-determination, Ndé Dene peoples are forced to live in a state of exception, controlled and subjugated by the political power, so as not to disturb the state's ongoing fight with illegal migration and terrorism. Consequently, writes Tamez, due to the state's officially-sanctioned border politics, Ndé Dene peoples "are designated as legally violable and a sacrifice, homo sacer, 'others' with no legal juridical personality in the space of abjection it creates to spatialize impunity."[18]

[15] Pointing to the settler colonizers' use of racially-based logic against Ndé Dene peoples, Tamez states: "Being *both* indigenous *and* associated with Mexico over their long colonial histories as colonized peoples since the sixteenth century, Lipan Apaches have been shackled with dual racisms. By virtue of being indigenous and intrinsically bound up in relations with Mexico and Spain—empires that the United States both races and classes in its past and present construction of the villainous, dark-skinned, non-English-speaking individual/nation as both 'foreign' and 'enemy' – Lipan Apaches experience *multiple* oppressions." Tamez, "Space, Position," 118.

[16] Margo Tamez, "SOVERYEMPTY narrative DeneNdé poetics |||| in |||| walled |||| home |||| lands |||," in *Indigenous Women and Violence: Feminist Activist Research in Heightened States of Injustice*, ed. Lynn Stephen and Shanon Speed (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2021), 213; emphasis in the original.

[17] As Tamez explains, "between 2009 and 2012, I experienced significant resistance from high-level state and Indigenous rights experts and organizations on the issue of calling attention to genocide and nonrecognition. They suggested I should 'mellow' the message, homogenize the Ndé standpoint and collapse it into 'border peoples,' collapse Ndé colonial history into 'border histories,' and reduce Lipan Apache to a generic/universal U.S.-Mexican history. These assimilative forms of settler cognitive fragility confirmed that the Ndé standpoint on Aboriginal title, Crown title, and treaties, seemingly unintelligible to Indigenous rights experts, was unspeakable knowledge. The attempt to censor Ndé interventions at UN Indigenous forums indicated that minimization, denialism, dehumanization, and obstruction extend into the highest stages of international law." Tamez, "SOVERYEMPTY," 223–24.

[18] Kēhaulani J. Kauani, "Margo Tamez on Indigenous Resistance to the U.S.-Mexico Border Wall," in *Speaking of Indigenous Politics: Conversations with Activists, Scholars, and Tribal Leaders*, ed. J. Kēhaulani Kauani (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 307.

Refusing to be objectified and non-recognized by state power, Tamez turns her artistic, scholarly, and activist work into a dissident truthing—a political act of resistance against the forces that have systemically silenced Ndé voices and being. For the poet, truthing becomes

> an act of speaking, telling, writing what is directly observed, [it] strives to make meaning where there is little reliability upon official and sanctioned facts and definitions of the subject; where difficult knowing and shaping language to knowledge of those deemed subversive is contextualized as not important, not to be bothered about, not normal, to be contained and muffled.[19]

As will be demonstrated in the following analysis, born out of the militarized space of the border region, *Father | Genocide* is Tamez's dissident truthing about Ndé Dene peoples' resistance to necropower that has denied their existence, sovereignty, and belonging in the Big Water Country.

DEFINING NDÉ WALLED-IN REALITY

A photograph that opens *Father | Genocide* pictures the 18-foot-tall border wall constructed across Ndé customary lands in El Calaboz Ranchería, cutting Indigenous peoples off from the individually and collectively held customary lands and sacred ceremonial sites along the Rio Grande River. The black-and-white image invites the reader to look through the thick steel bars and assume the position of the incarcerated, unable to decipher the blurred and fragmented reality behind the wall. The photo, in other words, allows the reader to experience Tamez's "penitentiary soul strip" and understand that, in El Calaboz, her "sight line is an earthline / walled in, exiled inside carceral."[20] The visual representation of the carceral directly connects with the first poem in the collection, dedicated to Tamez's father. In the five stanzas, shaped like rifles, Tamez enumerates forms of violence that her father and many other Ndé Dene peoples have been exposed to, namely the loss of land, culture, people, memory, and identity. With the images of necropolitical control, subjugation, and destruction, Tamez begins a complex narrative about the cycles of violence against Ndé land, body, mind, and spirit, that have reduced Ndé Dene peoples' lives to "lacunaed unrecognized

[19] Tamez, "SOVERYEMPTY," 224.
[20] Margo Tamez, *Father | Genocide* (New York: Turtle Point Press, 2021), 147.

exist stance."[21] Having been exposed to such violence for a long time, Tamez writes,

> we are conditioned
> to practice disciplined
> submission to penitentiary soul strip.
>
> Fragments of our being
> being macerated
>
> into slivers flacks scales chips bits patches blisters pocks.[22]

Manifesting the fragmented Ndé beingness, many of Tamez's poems seem to have a "fractured" structure with words "trapped" in between typographically represented bollard posts. This "fractured" poetics expresses the trauma inflicted upon generations of Ndé Dene peoples. It speaks of the body of the land, taken away from the people and exploited in the name of capitalism, represented by the cattle industry and lucrative extractive businesses. It also expresses the "fractal memories"[23] of the survivors of transgenerational settler colonialism. The empty spaces between words may refer to the silence caused by genocidal erasures and the continuous settler-colonial brutality that has torn the fabric of the Ndé community. Consequently, their voices and memories are lost as a result of the unresolved multigenerational trauma. Ultimately, the "fractured" poems represent what Tamez identifies as "repressed memory, knowledge and anxiety about our subjugated and invisible class (non)identity and (non)recognized political personhood."[24]

To demonstrate how challenging it is to truth about Ndé Dene peoples' walled-in existence and their demands for social justice, Tamez uses in the book the iconographic symbols of bollard posts that "incarcerate" letters, words, and sentences, often formed as border lines, deeming Ndé voices as "not important, not to be bothered about, not normal, [thus deserving] to be contained and muffled."[25] This violent "incarceration," implies Tamez, is to confirm and normalize the legitimacy and control of the European-American

[21] Tamez, 147.
[22] Tamez, 35.
[23] Tamez, 27.
[24] Tamez, "Ndé Alliterations," October 2019, accessed June 15, 2024, https://siwarmayu.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ENG_Margo-Tamez-1.pdf, 4–5.
[25] Tamez, "SOVERYEMPTY," 224.

conception of the white man's "|||| IN |||| DI |||| AN ||||."[26] Therefore, as Tamez reiterates in the entire collection, installed in the unceded lands, "the wall is not the wall"[27] but part of a physical, mental, cultural, and ideological "American gulag"—the "American Fatherlands" built on the premise that "'there aint' no Indians in Texas.'"[28]

To understand the contemporary Ndé experience, Tamez roots it in settler-colonial land theft and warfare that changed Ndé homeland into "blood land/ (a) limping home (a homeland paved over, suffocating)."[29] To point out the brutality used against Indigenous peoples by the Spanish colonial necropower, Tamez deliberately uses in the collection the English translation of the name of her hometown El Calaboz—the Dungeon. Doing so, she directly refers to the history of the violent subjugation of Ndé Dene peoples during Spain's imperial rule. As the poet explains, the literal meaning of El Calaboz in Spanish is an "'earthen dug-out prison'" and it is connected with "the psychological warfare that the Spanish used against our ancestors to contain them in little prison holes within the ground when they resisted oppression and stood firm on dissidence against all power used to destroy a people."[30]

Furthermore, as created in the book, the wall embodies the history of violent settler colonialism represented not only by those who partook in the destruction of the Ndé world via warfare but also by legal, political, and scientific narratives that legitimized and justified European-American domination over the "savage Indian." In the poem "Indian war herstory," Tamez elaborates on this idea, creating a border wall line out of the names of men officially considered as contributors to the progressive development of the

[26] Tamez, *Father Genocide*, 34.

[27] Tamez, 21.

[28] Tamez, 62. It is not without reason that Tamez describes Texas as part of a gulag. An acronym for Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei (Central Administration Camps), the gulag was a system of labor camps established across the Soviet Union in 1919. With time, the network of camps began to be identified as the system of slave labor in the forms of labor and transit camps, and punitive and political field camps for men, women, and children. The gulag incarcerated and controlled the "unwanted elements" seen as a "social menace" and "enemies" of the people. The incarcerated were exploited to fulfill the regime's goal, namely, to foster the process of industrializing the USSR. For more information on the topic, see Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003). Exploring the history of the Texas-Mexico region, Tamez pictures the emergence and establishment of a system that has controlled Ndé lands and people via organized systemic exploitation and erasure of Ndé Dene peoples from the region's cultural landscape and history, reducing Indigenous bodies "to being nothing more than menial things: batteries./Things sourced and purposed./ Fabricated / and tasked." Tamez, *Father | Genocide*, 121.

[29] Tamez, *Father | Genocide*, 83.

[30] Tamez, "Space, Position," 120.

white-settler Texas-Mexico region. In Tamez's version of history, the military heroes, political leaders, and scientists, such
as

J. Bourke M. Gamio T. Kate
A. F. Bendelier J J. Moody J. Walter Fewkes,

are "the constabulary" of the patriarchal settler-colonial regimes responsible for "cleav[ing] & obscur[ing] Ndé place via shoving Indians inside Texas history,"[31] utilizing the white man's fantasy of the "primitive other" as the enemy of the civilized world. With this poem, Tamez refers to the creation of the ideological border, a tool of colonial necropower that separated the civilized Europeans from "El Apache"—the enemy of the Spanish Crown. Treated by the Spaniards as a threat to the rising colonial empire, Ndé Dene peoples, Tamez states, were officially described as "the organizer[s] of an alliance of 'enemies'"[32] formed to fight against the newcomers encroaching upon their customary lands. In the poem "Low-intensity conflict ICC Docket 22," the poet refers to the official colonial narrative of the "enemy Apache" used to justify genocide in the name of necropolitical system:

"Don't ever forget this is crucial fact. The Spanish military
and, later, the US department of war adopted and then re-invented the term 'Apache.' It's a weapon."

They needed to mass produce an idea to win the Indian War
for industry and banks. After all do you know of any

Indigenous peoples who would refer to themselves as 'enemy'
as their everyday identity?[33]

As Tamez demonstrates further in the book, the ideology of the "Indian enemy" was normalized not only by the politics of war. Ndé Dene peoples were systematically "imprisoned" in the image of the "savage Indian" propagated

[31] Tamez, *Father* | *Genocide*, 62.

[32] Margo Tamez, "Nádasi'né' nde' isdzáné begoz'aahi' shimaa shini' gokal Gowa goshjaa ha'áná'idiłí texas- nakaiyé godesdzog" [Returning Lipan Apache Women's Laws, Lands, and Strength in El Calaboz Ranchería, Texas-Mexico Border] (PhD diss., Washington State University, 2010), 71, Academia.edu.

[33] Tamez, *Father* | *Genocide*, 63.

in the historical settler stories about Western expansion that were later part of educational narratives about the history of the region. In the collection, Tamez draws on a text by a German immigrant, Maria von Blücher, titled *Maria von Blücher's Corpus Christi: Letters from the South Texas Frontier, 1849-1879.* Using excerpts from the book, the poet creates a narrative that reveals how von Blücher's white female's vision of the frontier life justified and obscured the "obsessive focus on the 'advancing' order of a Eurocentric economy catering to a German sensibility … amidst en masse killing occurring against 'Red Indians," 'Mexicans,' and 'Blacks.'"[34] An example of settler-colonial history in the making, von Blücher's narrative, Tamez points out, is a weapon of destruction that ignored Indigenous peoples' humanity and discriminated against people of color in the name of progress and civilization. The consequences are devastating for the surviving generations of Ndé Dene peoples who, over the years, have been made foreigners in their own lands. As Tamez writes in a poem-message to her father:

> Dad when you grew up in Premont & Kinsville
> settlers no longer called themselves settlers. They called themselves *Natives.*
> They called themselves *heroes.* They called themselves *pioneering.*
> They invented everything. They patented history. Synonymous
> with taking. Leaving us the shatter zones. Shredded.[35]

The centuries-long practice of violence against Ndé cultural and political sovereignty continues in modern times via the systemically usurped control represented by such public figures as Michael Chertoff, the second United States Secretary of Homeland Security who served under President George W. Bush. In the poem titled "Chertoff," Tamez truths about the attorney's responsibility for a criminal act of architecting "the 2006 Secure Fence Act, and the Section 102 'mega waver,'"[36] which was justified by what the poet sees as a "discursive legal fiction of 'terrorism.'"[37] Demonstrating the connection between the border wall and the previous cycles of destruction in the Big Water Country, Tamez emphasizes that the colossal structure proves the fact that "America desensitizes to violence."[38] In Tamez's eyes, the wall has not only re-traumatized the successive generations of Ndé Dene peoples but dehumanized those who, in the name of state security and sovereignty, have

[34] Tamez, 98.
[35] Tamez, 67.
[36] Tamez, 102.
[37] Tamez, "Dáanzho ha'shi," 1.
[38] Tamez, *Father | Genocide*, 102.

sacrificed the humanity of the Indigenous communities remaining in the shadow of the wall. As the poet concludes, "Most Americans deny the Indigenous-American genocide. / This denial is not illegal in the United States, nor anywhere else on our planet."[39]

For Tamez, denying Ndé genocide, their beingness as well as belonging in the Big Water Country, equals affirming the necropolitical power of the "American gulag," whose walls "crush, warp, excavate, and dehumanize human spirit and mental state; they assault a (w)holistic sense of beingness."[40] Referring to her own family experience, Tamez observes that living inside the gulag, Ndé Dene peoples become "traumacaged"[41] and, thus, begin to embody penitentiary reality. In the shadow of the wall, admits Tamez,

> a mind gets rough a
> hardened gut.
> Gut rust. Steel dust fracked in skin.
> Gets in. Gut memory. Gut knot.[42]

Yet, much as the border wall is a reminder of centuries-long violence and abuse of human rights in the Big Water Country, it also becomes a site of Tamez's open dissent against the system that legitimizes the border structure and forces Ndé Dene peoples to accept the "unrecognized muzzled/co-existence."[43]

"COUNTING THE STEEL POSTS FROM INSIDE THE GULAG"[44]

Defining and confronting the necropolitical forces, Tamez turns the border wall into a site of honoring her community and those whose work has contributed to the survival of the Ndé world. As described in the book, her routine of walking along the wall becomes an opportunity to "speak a name out loud counting each post."[45] In the poem "While counting steel posts, homeland is fracked, I embody penitentiary philosophies," the poet pays tribute to family and community members, as well as to activists, artists, and critics whose works truth about the experience of exile, incarceration, set-

[39] Tamez, 102.
[40] Tamez, "SOVERYEMPTY," 213.
[41] Tamez, *Father | Genocide*, 29.
[42] Tamez, 19.
[43] Tamez, 34.
[44] Tamez, 17.
[45] Tamez, 22.

tler-colonial violence, and the abuse of human rights. Among the honored ones are internationally and locally recognized figures, such as Nawal El Saadawi, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Nazim Hikmet, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Augustina Zuazua, Flavia Carrasco, Juanita Castro, Teresa Leal, and Eloisa García Tamez. Tamez's tribute represents Ndé herstory in the making that challenges the state-supported patriarchal historical narratives embodied by the previously analyzed list made out of the names of male figures. The reimagined wall is also a site where poetry, art, and activism are honored and celebrated as counterforces to patriarchal necropolitics supported by state power.

Tamez's rebellious presence at the border and truthing against state impunity that operates on fear and control is also a form of honoring the work of her mother as a leading figure in the anti-border movement, and a matriarch who has guided and encouraged her daughter in the struggle for Ndé survivance. *Father | Genocide* is therefore a tribute to and a continuation of Eloisa García Tamez's defiance. The poems of confrontation with Border Patrol officers directly refer to the mother's experiences which she describes in the collection of poetry titled *Naked Wanting*. In the poem "My Mother Returns to Calaboz," Tamez pictures her mother's open resistance to the border wall politics and its destructive influence on the river-hugging communities. Stopped by the INS officers while jogging along the wall, the mother is suspected to be "an illegal, / trespassing from Mexico."[46] As Joni Adamson aptly observes, documenting the mother's response, which she utters in Spanish, "*I am an indigenous woman*, / *born in El Calaboz, you understand?*,"[47] Tamez demonstrates "how the militarization of the region creates a disorienting space where so-called 'natives' clash with 'illegal aliens.' Her mother's proud statement challenges the categorization of the Lipan as 'aliens,' while the Border Patrol agents take the position of 'natives.'"[48]

Continuing her mother's struggle, Tamez documents in the book a moment when a security agent stops her at the airport while traveling to Canada, where she currently lives with her family in the unceded territory of the Syilx people.[49] When asked by the officer what she researches, Tamez

[46] Margo Tamez, *Naked Wanting* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 200), 61.

[47] Tamez, *Naked Wanting*, 361.

[48] Joni Adamson, "'¡Todos Somos Indios!' Revolutionary Imagination, Alternative Modernity, and Transnational Organizing in the Work of Silko, Tamez, and Anzaldúa," *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012): 11–12. Accessed September 24, 2023, http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2mj3c2p3.

[49] The territory spans the U.S.-Canada border region in Washington state and British Columbia.

responds: "*Poetry of dissidence; Indigenous peoples divided by nation-states and borders; militarization; Indigenous rights; Indigenous women's historical perspectives.*"[50] As she confesses in the poem,

> I lied when I told the Queen's officer
> I'm not carrying seeds, contraband
> and have no large currency/ nor undeclared weapons.
>
> I am a seed, my research is deemed a threat to the US state, my knowledge is currency, and I am considered a weaponized threat of knowing, challenging normative Texas history and memory.[51]

Knowing the power of her words/work, rooted in the struggles of the women who have inspired and empowered her, Tamez, like her mother, follows the footsteps of Nde´ isdza´ ne´ (the People-Women), defending their people's rights in the face of the destructive forces of such settler-colonial states as the U.S. and Canada. Like her female predecessors, Tamez also continues the tradition of passing down knowledge and the stories of the origins and continuance of the Ndé world. In *Father | Genocide*, the knowledge is about the necessity of cherishing memory, truthing, and exercising active dissent in the face of necropolitical force that aims at destroying Ndé Dene peoples.

The rebellion against borders and human rights violation is also represented in the book by an arrow—a symbol of "Ndé belonging and Native sovereignty"[52] in the Big Water Country. According to tribal teachings, which Tamez includes in the collection, the horse spirit gave the arrow to Ndé women to restore them as law-keepers, protectors, and guides to their people. Reappearing several times in the collection, the arrow becomes part of Tamez's *land*guage of resistance and protection, destabilizing the border ideology and its coercive narratives of violent separation and erasure. With the arrow, Tamez mends the torn fabric of the Ndé Dene community, focusing on the example of her father's life story. Marked by the loss of the mother, Flavia de la Fuente Muñiz Carrasco (Jumano-Lipan Apache), and the absent father, Luis Carrasco Tamez, Jr.'s story is part of a narrative of the intergenerational suffering of the "broken people" who are not only denied the recognition of their pain but of their full-fledged humanity. As Tamez writes to her father in a poem "Dad, you are on my genocide map,"

[50] Tamez, *Father | Genocide*, 126.
[51] Tamez, 126.
[52] Tamez, 149.

> I know you had no real access to address the
> cognitive neurological, emotional, mental,
> and psychical challenges you experienced
> your entire life. I recognize the dehumanization
> you experienced in the many institutions and
> systems you navigated, and which ultimately failed you.[53]

Thus, filled with arrows, *Father | Genocide* becomes Tamez's gift that is meant to heal "each tree/branch in our community-wide forest."[54] Reclaiming a Ndé sense of belonging to a place and a people is exemplified in a section of the book devoted to Flavia de la Fuente Muñiz Carrasco. Deciphering her life story, pregnancy struggle, and death due to untreated cervical cancer, Tamez helps her father understand the circumstances he was exposed to as a child, which was partially the reason for his suffering through life. The poems thus serve as a narrative that reconnects the bond between the mother and the son and help Tamez understand, confront, and accept her family's painful and fragmented history.

Moreover, by deciphering Flavia's story, Tamez reclaims the grandmother's place and voice in the history of the Big Water Country. In the poem "Oral herstory," Tamez reaffirms Flavia's place among the Jumano-Lipan Apache people by opening the narrative with an arrow that is followed by the names of the woman's mother, Victoriana de la Fuente Muñiz, and grandmother, San Juanita de la Fuente. In doing so, Tamez also points to the role of women in the survival and continuance of their communities. Rooting Flavia in a place and community is further represented by the information about the 'k' dialect used by the communities inhabiting the region. Flavia's life is ultimately reconnected with the lives of her ancestors—the "long walking people."[55] Their origins, emergence, and migration are expressed through oral "water stories" and "painted belonging stories"[56] that for generations have been understood by the Lipan and Jumano Apache peoples as foundations of their sense of cultural identity and belonging with the Big Water Country. Included in the poem, the photograph of the young Flavia connects her, and her offspring, with the ancient people, represented in a "painted belonging story," a photo of rock art that portrays the migration of the "long walking people."

[53] Tamez, 66.
[54] Tamez, 66.
[55] Tamez, 51.
[56] Tamez, 51.

Much as it is important for Tamez to reconnect the story of her father with his mother's narrative, the poet also reclaims the bond with her father via poetic memory- and dream-based conversations she holds with him after his death, when he begins his final journey to "live with the End of the World People."[57] In doing so, Tamez challenges yet another border: the Western conception of time as a linear progression from past, through present, to future. Such a perspective, argues Deborah Madsen, falsifies history "by separating events in a linear chronology."[58] Tamez's narrative aligns with the Indigenous philosophy of time bending, according to which the natural rhythm of all creation is circular. Thus, time is naturally experienced in the same way, that is as rhythmic and cyclical. Since "tribal memory rejects linearity and is able to sustain the past as a living event in the present moment,"[59] Tamez's poems-messages to her father, born out of family stories, memories, visions, and dreams, fuse the lives of Ndé Dene ancestors with the modern Ndé community. The poetic form of time bending, employed to tell the story of Luis Carrasco Tamez, Jr., defies the enforced (non)existence of the white man's "vanished Indian," "absenced, vacated, suppressed and silenced…, buried in the rubble of Texas' genocide history."[60] Finally, for Tamez, the practice of time bending becomes a weapon to investigate and evidence "long-term disaster cycles" that Ndé Dene peoples have experienced in their homelands.[61] It is also used to celebrate a continuous rebirth of Ndé resistance.

"WALLED IN BY HISTORY, WE STAY ALIVE, WE REMAIN, NONETHELESS"[62]

Understanding the gravity of the damage caused by the transgenerational walled-in experience allows Tamez to define and critically engage in the

[57] Tamez, 117.

[58] Deborah Madsen L., *Understanding Gerald Vizenor* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 54. As Mark Rifkin explains, in traditional Indigenous thought, "there is no singular unfolding of time, but, instead, varied temporal formations that have their own rhythms—patterns of consistency and transformation that emerge immanently out of the multifaceted and shifting sets of relationships that constitute those formations and out of the interactions among those formations." Mark Rifkin, Beyond *Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determinization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 2.

[59] Madsen, Understanding *Gerald Vizenor*, 53.

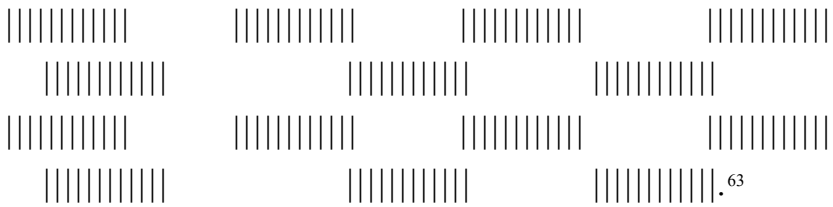
[60] Tamez, "*Father*|*Genocid*e."

[61] Tamez, "SOVERYEMPTY," 225.

[62] Tamez, *Father* |*Genocide*, 147.

struggle against neocolonial state impunity and to identify the border wall as yet another tool of violence against Indigenous peoples. Therefore, as Tamez presents in a fragment of the poem titled "Push," every post of the border wall, installed in the unceded lands of the Big Water Country, stands for centuries-long necropower:

broken words broken family Each one a broken promise
broken history broken land broken clan broken memory
broken spirit broken heart.



The last photograph included in the collection is an interesting representation of Ndé herstory told as a "painted story" titled "WALLED IN." Like ledger art, created by Indigenous warriors captured during Indian wars, Tamez's visual story becomes an artistic tool for documenting and thus truthing about "Ndé history welded in American genocide."[64] The photo represents a series of images superimposed on the photograph of the border wall erected in the Big Water Country. The images, collected by Tamez during her work on the book, represent a "struggle between official and unofficial narratives,"[65] that is the official, state-sponsored history of the Texas-Mexico region juxtaposed with Ndé personal and collective narratives of cultural continuance and belonging with the Big Water Country.

The act of truthing via the last visual story is accompanied by a poem representing Tamez's final statement of her dissident reclaiming of Ndé Dene peoples' land, culture, and identity. Celebrating *Father | Genocide* as "Indigenous herstory rising,"[66] the poet asserts in the last lines of the book:

[63] Tamez, 21
[64] Tamez, 20.
[65] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Elsewhere, within Here: Immigration, Refugeesim, and the Boundary Event* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 45.
[66] Tamez, *Father |Genocide*, 147.

I'm
blueorangepurpleyellowredbrownblackgreenochre
knowing differently, we remained we stay alive
none the less.[67]

The act of colorful linguistic fusionism, which essentially "gives birth" to ochre, is Tamez's creative expression of her "exist stance." The oldest known earth-based pigment, ochre was used in prehistoric times to create rock and cave art paintings, pottery, and medicines. In other words, it was used to express, record, and nurture human existence. The "I am ochre" stance is thus Tamez's manifesto of her rootedness in the Big Water Country and of reclaiming and celebrating her position among Nde´ isdza´ ne´ (the People-Women), who protect and chronicle the life of Ndé Dene peoples. The ochre imagery refers to yet another sign of Ndé existence. The natural iron-rich oxide, ochre creates rust which leads to the corrosion of the border wall installed in the Big Water Country. Thus, just like Gloria Anzaldúa defied the border cartography and envisioned the spirit goddess, Yemaya, "blow[ing] the wire fence down,"[68] Tamez's ochre imagery envisions the falling of the border wall and the continuance of the Ndé world guided and protected by Nde´ isdza´ ne.´ Counting the steel posts of a "violent, fractious, gutting, dismembering, and wickedly silent" wall, Tamez enacts her dissident project, knowing that "[w]hat can be built can be deconstructed and removed. Water and wind already are doing their part."[69] Empowered by Ndé Dene peoples' defiant struggles for sovereignty and recognition in the shadow of the wall, Tamez, a Lipan Apache woman, refuses extinction.

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[67] Tamez, 147.

[68] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 25.

[69] Tamez, "Ndé Subject Position."

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"WHEN A LIPAN WOMAN REFUSES EXTINCTION": MARGO TAMEZ'S DISSIDENCE AGAINST SETTLER-COLONIAL VIOLENCE AT THE U.S. | MEXICO BORDER

Summary

The article analyzes the collection of poetry, *Father | Genocide*, by Lipan Apache poet, hersorian, and activist Margo Tamez. The work represents Tamez's critique of border politics in the Texas-Mexico border region rooted in settler-colonial genocidal practices that have fragmented and traumatized generations of the Lipan Apaches and violently exploited their traditional lands. The border wall imagery remains central in the book and is used by the poet to demonstrate that the colossal structure is not only a material barrier but a manifestation of the ongoing physical, ideological, cultural, and psychosocial oppression. *Truthing* about the Lipan Apache peoples' resilient existence in the shadow of the wall, Tamez creates a poetic story in which she restores, nurtures, and celebrates her people's body, mind, and spirit. In so doing, she continues the role of Nde´ isdza´ ne´ (the People-Women)—traditional law-keepers who have governed, protected, and chronicled the life of Lipan Apache communities for generations.

Keywords: Margo Tamez; Lipan Apache, Ndé Dene; settler colonialism; border wall; necropolitics; poetic truthing; Indigenous resistance

„KIEDY KOBIETA Z PLEMIENIA APACZÓW LIPAN SPRZECIWIA SIĘ ZAGŁADZIE": TWÓRCZOŚĆ MARGO TAMEZ JAKO KRYTYKA PRZEMOCY OSADNICZO-KOLONIALNEJ NA GRANICY AMERYKAŃSKO-MEKSYKAŃSKIEJ

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje zbiór poezji pt. *Father|Genocide* autorstwa poetki, historyczki i aktywistki Margo Tamez (Apacze Lipan). Praca reprezentuje krytykę Tamez wobec polityki prowadzonej w regionie pogranicza teksańsko-meksykańskiego. Zdaniem poetki jest ona zakorzeniona w ludobójczych praktykach osadniczo-kolonialnych, które od lat niszczą zarówno pokolenia Apaczów Lipan, jak i ziemie zamieszkiwane przez to plemię. Obraz muru wyłaniający się z poetyckiej narracji Tamez ukazuje konstrukcję nie tylko jako fizyczną barierę, ale także przejaw opresji ideologicznej, kulturowej i psychospołecznej, której ofiarami są rdzenni mieszkańcy pogranicza. Dając świadectwo prawdziwego życia Apaczów Lipan w cieniu kolosalnego muru, Tamez tworzy poetycką opowieść, w której przywraca, pielęgnuje i celebruje ciało, umysł i ducha swojego ludu. W ten sposób kontynuuje tradycję i rolę Nde´ isdza´ ne´ – kobiet, które strzegą plemiennego prawa oraz dokumentują i chronią życie swojego plemienia.

Słowa kluczowe: Margo Tamez, Apacze Lipan, Ndé Dene; kolonializm osadniczy; mur graniczny; nekropolityka; poetyckie świadczenie prawdy; plemienne strategie oporu