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A Tale of Reconciliation and Gendered Violence
Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*[1]

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Abstract

This article examines the novel *Monkey Beach* (2000) by Haisla and Heiltsuk author Eden Robinson, framing it as a Young Adult narrative and taking into consideration its representation of gender, race, and "reconciliation/resurgence" in Indigenous Canadian communities. The ways in which gender intersects with the re-appropriation of cultural traditions and with the idea of an Indigenous resurgence are examined. The analysis focuses on Robinson's portrayal of gendered violence towards Indigenous women and on the intergenerational trauma caused by the residential schools system. The female lead character, Lisamarie Hill, exemplifies the figure of the empowered Indigenous woman, who manages to reconnect with her cultural history and traditions through the acceptance of her preternatural powers.

Keywords: Critical Race Studies, Gender Studies, Indigenous Studies, Resurgence, Young Adult Literature

With the utmost development of consumer culture in the last two decades, there has been a gradual commodification of culture and literature, in particular of Young Adult productions. *The Twilight Saga* (2005-08) by Stephenie Meyer is among the "culprits" for this, as it has inspired an enormous literary phenomenon inside the Young Adults' universe that continues to this day (see Martens 2010, 243-60). Since the first book and subsequent movie came out between 2005 and 2008, there has been a steady increment in the publication of Young Adult novels (including all sub-genres, not just fantasy novels or dystopias) and their consequent adaptations into movies or TV series. In fact, *Twilight* paved the way for a specific kind of narrative, in which a female lead between the ages of sixteen and eighteen

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[1] TRIGGER WARNING (TW): This article deals with topics of gendered violence, sexual assault, addiction, suicide, and racism in Canada. There are quotes referenced from the primary source that may trigger or disturb readers.

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experiences growth, puberty and all sorts of adventures, with a special focus on her love life.

When considering Young Adult books series, Linda K. Christian-Smith notices how "teen romances are examples of 'packaged' books, where each aspect of the books' development has been carefully supervised by a cadre of public-relations firms and marketing experts" (1990, 14). Indeed, the majority of these female characters present a series of repetitive traits and patterns in their physical and psychological descriptions and in their social and romantic relationships. The stories and the protagonists may be placed in very different contexts, universes, and narratives, but overall, the same character variously disguised is offered up to the reader (Younger 2009). Most of these female protagonists are repetitively white, heterosexual, and cisgender and incorporate masked reiterations of female stereotypes and misogynistic schemes within their characterisations. While these Young Adult female leads apparently rebel against the system, they inevitably return to traditional social norms and conventional romantic relationships at the end of the story, thereby unconsciously conveying canonical and, from time to time, even misogynistic messages.

This of course does not mean that the totality of the Young Adult production communicates outdated and dogmatic messages. Yet, to find works that offer a more intersectional representation of the adolescent experience we must turn to works by authors who mostly belong to minorities. In this article, through the case study of *Monkey Beach* (2000) by Haisla and Heiltsusk author Eden Robinson, I aim to argue that Indigenous authors provide more intersectional representations of the adolescent experience without giving into stereotype, while they process intergenerational trauma and rewrite the way that adolescent female bodies of colour have been instrumentalised, marginalised and commodified in North American cultural productions.

1. Introducing Lisamarie Hill from a Young Adult perspective

Most criticism on Eden Robinson's first novel *Monkey Beach* until now has focused on trying to position it within a specific literary genre, the main options being the Gothic novel and Magical Realism. Although I believe the analyses of the novel by commentators like Jodey Castricano, Jennifer Andrews, Anja Mrak or Janie Beriault[2] – to name but a few – have problematised many interesting points regarding questions of colonial trauma and reconciliation (that I will also consider later), they have failed to fully scrutinise and dissect the depiction of Lisamarie Hill's personality, erratic behaviour, and life events in the light of a Young Adult narrative perspective.

The text itself was not published for a specific target audience, but there are certain literary features that allow me to reframe the narrative from a YA's[3] perspective: for instance, the main ones being her age of about nineteen years old, the novel's "coming of age" structure, and the first-person narration of the story by Lisa herself. Although this may seem like a common literary technique to an average reader, Elizabeth Schumann has argued that the first-person narrative can be identified as a typical YA trope (qtd. in Cadden 2000, 146), because of how frequently it is used and because it is able to create a closer bond through empathy and identification with a younger audience. However, in my consideration of Indigenous literature, I would also argue that this technique represents a recovery of power and a re-appropriation of one's own literary and cultural voice. Indigenous authors and characters are finally able to speak for themselves after having been physically and culturally ghettoised and subjugated for years on end.

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[2] See Andrews 2009, 205-27; Beriault 2016, 1-12; Castricano 2006, 801-13 and Mrak 2013, 1-15.

[3] From now on I will employ the acronym YA to reference Young Adult literature.

At the same time, the possibility of speaking with one's own voice is linked more generally to the figure of the adolescent, since this category did not officially exist until less than a century ago. In fact, teenage culture did not emerge until the 1950s, a reason why adolescents in particular would have such a strong desire to speak for themselves and finally be self-represented (Hilton and Nikolajeva 2016, 6-7). However, there is always a certain irony in this narration, since almost all of YA novels are written by adults and not teenagers, with few exceptions – for example *The Inheritance Cycle* (2003-11) by Christopher Paolini, who started writing the first book of the saga when he was fifteen.

To return to Robinson's novel, while the main action takes place over just a few days, Lisa's narration is constantly digressing and fragmented: most of the story is made of her recollection of pivotal moments of her growth, with a semi-chronological but nebulous structure that begins in her childhood and moves to her present day. Moreover, her fictional memoir is interspersed with gruesome elements, such as the brief descriptions of eerie situations Lisa has encountered or the disturbing sketches of the anatomy of a dissected heart (Robinson 2000, 191-92). Therefore, we are faced with an unconventionally constructed novel, posing itself in between a *Bildungsroman* – since it narrates Lisa's physical growth into adulthood – and an *Entwicklungsroman*, considering that one of the main themes that drives the plot is her psychological development and the acceptance of her gift of communication with the spirit world.[4]

The third and more complex element that frames *Monkey Beach* is Lisa's struggle with what in her life encapsulates power and authority, both exemplified in the novel in different ways. As Roberta Seelinger Trites argues throughout her book, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (2000), YA narratives are permeated with different kinds of power struggles of varying intensity, through which the protagonists challenge figures of authority. However, the main characters frequently, if not always, return to the original societal norms they have been fighting, as soon as they realise they are able to assert power over what surrounds them. Lisa struggles particularly with school and with those elements in her life that symbolise adult and colonial power. A very interesting episode highlighted by most criticism, for example in Castricano's article "Learning to Talk with Ghosts" (2006, 804-05), is when Lisa is taken to a psychiatrist by her parents because she is starting to realise she has the ability to connect with the spirit world, identified by her parents as the approaching manifestation of mental illness. The other "institution" that she clashes with, and that will be my main focus here, is gender, how it is defined and to what extent she fits the one that has been given to her.

Therefore, my analysis of Robinson's novel will have a strong intersectional approach, in Kimberlé Crenshaw's words as "a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects" (2017), and it will consider how all the elements just introduced are connected to one another and to concepts of race, class and postcolonial trauma.

2. Blowing up gender norms with Lisamarie Hill

One of Lisa's biggest endeavours is trying to conform to her peer culture, as indeed it is for all teenagers; she feels she does not belong with the other girls as they do not share the same interests – and they frequently shame her for this. In the following passage, Lisa is trying to communicate her dissatisfaction, but she does not receive any kind of consideration from the other girls:

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[4] There are "[…] various types of novels about the maturation process, including the *Entwicklungsroman*, which is a broad category of novels in which an adolescent character grows, and the *Bildungsroman*, which is a related type of novel in which the adolescent matures to adulthood. *Entwicklungsromane* can be thought of as novels of growth or development, whereas *Bildungsromane* are coming-of-age novels […]" [italics in the original] (Seelinger Trites 2000, 9).

> 'We talk about the same stuff every day. Aren't you bored of it?' I said.
> 'If you think we're so boring,' Erica said in an aggrieved tone, 'why don't you go sit somewhere else?'
> 'And miss your fascinating debate on hair spray?'
> The second it came out my mouth, I knew I'd have to start apologizing or I'd be socially dead. But I couldn't bring myself to care. (Robinson 2000, 169)

After this brief exchange Lisa becomes completely ostracised from her group of friends, and, shortly after, they start insulting her in front of everybody, saying "[s]he looks like a boy. […] She is a boy. […] She's an animal. […] Hey, Miss Piggy" (170), adopting abusive words that target her supposed lack of femininity – because she does not want to talk about hairspray. It is striking and disquieting to see how verbally aggressive a group of young girls can become, targeting their own peer and bringing her down with such gendered hostility because she diverges slightly from the group mentality. It shows how hard it is sometimes for teenagers to envision difference and debate inside a group; a communal mindset is built that cannot be violated by any of the group members or they would suffer the penalty of shaming and exclusion. This scene shows that some women internalise a gendered perspective that automatically blacklists any woman who does not correspond to the female stereotype created by society and enforced by male-driven cultures.

If we look at Lisa through her girlfriends' eyes she looks like a tomboy, a precise type of young girl who is considered to behave in a stereotypically masculine manner – emancipated and, allegedly, uninterested in things that define "ordinary" notions of femininity. However, I find this term unfitting for her as it encapsulates the very misogynistic concepts that feminism and gender studies are on a path to eradicate; in addition to that, it will be proved throughout this analysis that Lisa does not belong to any western mainstream and stereotypical category into which girls or women are constantly inscribed. Why does a girl's identity need to be defined once again in comparison to a boy? Lisa's lack of interest in what society has deemed to be feminine does not make her less of a woman than her cousin Erica or their other friends. Lisa is budding in a different way than her female peers and, whether or not she becomes interested in things that would stereotypically render her more feminine is insignificant; more importantly, she embodies the figure of a strong and resilient Indigenous woman, who is trying to reclaim her own voice and her connection with nature and the spirit world.

Lisa struggles deeply with her perception of herself; she is not like the other girls and, although she tries to fit in, she ends up being rejected by her group of girlfriends and becomes friends with a gang of boys who think she is tough, and at first do not really envision her as a girl – although all of them will do so later in the novel. With them she feels freer to be herself, although she is always aware in the back of her head that she is not a boy and that this for her poses a disadvantage. Lisa therefore finds herself in a sort of "gender limbo" not always being fully aware of whether she is a girl or a boy, mostly because the outside world seldom treats her with respect and is constantly telling her that she is something other than what she truly feels herself to be. Above all, she is desperate to conform to a gender binary that quite likely does not belong to her fluid – and possibly queer – personality.

Throughout the novel she is constantly proving her strength, courage, and resilience in situations of different kinds, but she is also reminded that she can be put into positions of imposed weakness because biologically she is female. While debating over the issue of gender, I want to discuss three episodes I believe are key to underlining what Indigenous women are subjected to on an everyday basis, chiefly because of harmful gendered patterns that still survive to this day, but also because of the way they have been radicalised in North America. The different degrees of violence they experience are caused by the social and individual impact that colonialism has had inside their communities, having created cycles of intergenerational trauma that intersect not only with gender and race, but also with class, sexual orientation, and spirituality.

The first episode occurs one day when Lisa is strolling around the mall and sees her cousin Erica – after they have already stopped being friends – and as soon as she notices her, her first instinct is to avoid her completely, because she is no longer on speaking terms with her. However, Lisa suddenly realises that her cousin is being followed by a car, inside which there is a group of white men, who our narrator describes as "[…] wearing black baseball caps and sunglasses. […] One of them had a black moustache, but it was obviously fake" (250). Seeing her cousin in danger, Lisa intervenes right away and has a heated discussion with the driver (TW):

> They pulled a U-turn and the driver called out that he'd teach her how to fuck a white man.
> 'Yeah?' I yelled out 'With what, you dickless wonder?' […]
> 'Hey, looky, looky, we got a little feisty squaw on our hands,' the driver said.
> 'Looky, looky' I said. 'The dickless wonder can speak. I thought guys like you just grunted.'
> 'You fucking watch your mouth, cunt.'
> 'Yeah, you're so brave with a girl, aren't you, asswipe? Can't stand up to someone your own size, can you? Cowards like you gotta pick on girls to feel like men.'
> 'Bitch,' he said. 'You're begging for it.' He opened his door and got out. (*Ibidem*)

Although the scene ends without any kind of violence towards either Lisa or Erica, thanks to the intervention of another "hulking white guy" (251), our protagonist runs a big risk, since the men seem ready to attack her and probably even sexually assault her. Through the brief conversation she has with the driver several elements emerge, the most significant being Lisa's extreme courage, despite her awareness that the men intend to hurt both her and her cousin. While Erica just looks down and tries to get away without a fuss, Lisa confronts the men and does not let them have the best of the discussion, she continues to insult and enrage them; she even manages to "contextualise" her insults, while they can only produce gender or ethnicity related slurs such as (TW) "cunt", "bitch" or "squaw". This time she demonstrates how tough she can truly be, now that she finds herself in a situation of extreme danger for a young woman. Nonetheless, Lisa comes out of this experience stronger and bolder, further proving her fulfilment of the ideal of the tough Native woman, the figure of the matriarch that has a paramount role in Indigenous communities and families frequently reiterated throughout the novel.

What I also find thought-provoking in this scene, apart from Lisa's anger and bravery, is her revelation of how afraid she is while the whole situation is unravelling. Most YA heroines never seem to be afraid of anything, or if they are their fears are easily conquered throughout the narrative.[5] This is one of the numerous elements that lacks credibility in the genre, since the fear of a physical attack or of sexual assault is one of the greatest terrors a woman can have and that many women experience for their entire lives. In mainstream YA productions, with white main characters in particular, there is not a very linear representation of rape culture and it is alarming that most heroines or innocent girls[6] end up being subjected to males who are more likely to resemble a stalker than a lover, or who have exerted some sort of physical or psychological power over them. The responses female characters have to this behaviour from the men they love or are attracted to are usually either unrealistic or give a distorted sense of moral reality – that is, men should not abuse women, in any way. The kind of trauma that happens to Lisa never abandons a person's psyche, haunting them for their entire life.

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[5] Two prominent examples of this kind of character are Katniss from *The Hunger Games Trilogy* (2008-10), or Tris from the *Divergent* trilogy (2011-13). Both Katniss and Tris are suddenly catapulted from a generally quiet and rural lifestyle to violent adventures, where the need to survive is paramount and they are forced to face all their darkest and deepest fears. However, their internal conflicts are never in fact explored by the authors, on the contrary, they are quickly resolved with effective narrative tricks: for instance, in one of the *Divergent* books Tris must take a test which will simulate her fears and force her to deal with her worst nightmares. One of these terrors is sexual assault, which she easily overcomes during a fight sequence. In this scene Tris physically battles against her fear embodied in a fictional violent and abusive version of her boyfriend Four. In this imaginary scenario created by the test, she promptly overpowers him and, as a consequence, the fear, therefore conquering without major difficulties

What the white men also represent in this scene is "the violent history of Native-white relations" (Sugars 2004, 82), that has an even stronger impact on women, victimising and blaming them for the violence or the rape telling them "[y]ou're begging for it" (Robinson 2000, 250). This passage portrays the twisted minds of men who believe women themselves want and actively choose to be mistreated, beaten, or undermined. Lisa does not understand why she is the one to be blamed for "some assholes acting like assholes" (255) and tries to grapple with the fact that there are different weights and measures for white and Indigenous people to this very day, when Canadian law and society claim that everyone is equal. Colonial violence is no doubt one of the crucial themes of this story and unfortunately one of its engines.

The last detail I wish to point out, before I move on to the next episode, is how at the end of the incident the men – who clearly intend to assault Lisa and her cousin – decide to back down out of a sort of twisted patriarchal respect. They only seem to respond to a person that visually represents and belongs to their main cultural group: a white man. As a matter of fact, the main (if not only) reason why they decide to leave and not harass the girls anymore is the *deus ex machina* intervention of the "hulking white guy" I had mentioned a few paragraphs above. This minor but pivotal element shows how convoluted and interconnected misogyny and racism are: the men's immediate reaction of backing down proves again how little respect they have for women, of colour especially, as they only abide to specific cultural rules and respond to a male code solely shared and understood by those who look and (may) behave like them. Indeed, the only respect they are capable of showing is for other men, either when they are "protecting" women or when they are asserting dominance over their female partners – treated almost as property.

The second episode of gendered violence that Lisa endures is even more hurtful and traumatising for her than the one just mentioned. During adolescence, she begins to be sexualised by her group of male friends, and by one of them in particular: Cheese. One day he suggests that they go out and be together in order to make Frank, one of their other friends, jealous as everybody apparently knows that Lisa has feelings for him (248-49). After this episode Lisa avoids Cheese and the rest of the group for some time, annoyed by his inferences that have sexualised her; this however until she decides to make up with them, and they all go to a party together. At the party, Cheese gives her a beer and she drinks it trying to be nice to him, in order to make peace again with the group of friends. However, a little later, while she is leaving the party on her own, she begins to feel a little dizzy and confused, until she loses consciousness. Later she does not remember distinctly what has happened to her, as she recollects (TW):

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something that had been presented as deeply rooted inside of her.

[6] In my Masters' thesis dissertation "North American Young Adult Narratives: cross reading the intersection between gender norms and Native reconciliation", I identified two main types of mainstream white YA female protagonist and classified these two varieties with the terms "the heroine" and "the innocent girl".

> The long blank spots start then. Chunks of memory are gone. […] The next piece I have, I'm lying on the ground and I can't see the sky because of the tree branches. I'm cold and someone is breathing over me. The last piece is pain between my legs, and a body on top of me, panting. We're moving together as if we were lovers, and the rocks and twigs are digging into my back. I open my mouth and a hand covers it. I can't see the face. It has the feeling of a dream, as if it didn't happen to me. I remember fighting sleep, thinking I had to stay awake, but I couldn't. (258)

After this episode she is obviously traumatised, silenced and numbed, not understanding why this has happened to her and why a person who she considered a friend would do such a thing. The reader infers that Cheese never really had any respect for her, either as a friend or as a woman: all he wanted was her body at all costs and was even prepared to drug her so that he could conquer what he thought was supposed to be his. Cheese has internalised a form of western misogyny and its colonial imperative of taking whatever one wants with no regard for the feelings and objections that the individual might have against it. Lisa is no longer a person to him: she has become an abstract space that he has to take for himself before anybody else does.

Sexual violence is unfortunately one of the main underlying textures that weave through this narrative: Lisa is not the only character who is raped, as we will indeed later find out – although it is only implied and never explicitly stated – that her other friend Pooch and his cousin Karaoke were sexually assaulted by their Uncle Josh. Pooch probably commits suicide because of this trauma, as Karaoke implies when she says "[w]e all know why he did it. […] Yes, let's not talk about it. Josh didn't –" (319) and Frank shuts her up. The act of silencing Karaoke's narrative is a crucial turning point, because it highlights the way that Indigenous victims, and women in particular, are constantly silenced and rendered subaltern – in Gramscian terms – by a dominant voice, whether it is a male one as in this case or a more general white paradigm. Agnes Kramer-Hamstra argues that

> [v]iolence is manifested through a discourse of mastery that seeks to silence all but its own voice. Mastery works through the legacy of racism, […] it becomes insidious through the secrecy that allows a sexual predator to continue to haunt Lisamarie's group of friends. (2009, 112)

The reason why Uncle Josh has become a predator is because he was preyed upon by a priest in residential school when he was a child and, on his return home, he brought his trauma back with him, repeating unto others what had been done to him. Lisa finds this out when she discovers a photograph and a card in his brother's bedroom on which

> Josh's head was pasted over a priest's head and Karaoke's was pasted over a little boy's. I turned it over: *Dear Joshua*, it read. *I remember every day we spent together. How are you? I miss you terribly. Please write. Your friend in Christ, Archibald.* […] The folded-up note card was a birth announcement. Inside, in neat, careful handwriting it said, 'Dear, dear Joshua. It was yours so I killed it'. [italics in the original] (Robinson 2000, 365)

The reader therefore discovers that Josh's actions set the framing narrative of the novel in motion, as it was to avenge Karaoke's rape that Lisa's brother Jimmy left on the boat "Queen of the North", to kill Josh at sea. Jimmy dies as well by falling off the boat, but not after having reenacted another instance of violence, rendered epistemic by colonial power, with the murder of Uncle Josh.

All the violence in this book is caused by different kinds of abuse cast upon Indigenous communities by the hand of colonialism; the reason why the younger generations are violent towards themselves – like Pooch – or towards others – like Cheese and Karaoke (frequently described as a violent woman (280-81)) – is because they have been subjected to the brutality of people like Uncle Josh who was in turn a victim himself. The abuse is not always physical, but can also be verbal or psychological as with Aunt Trudy and her daughter Tab, who she calls (TW) a "whore" and mistreats frequently. All these people, including Lisa, are nonetheless victims of a colonial violence and mentality that is passed on from one generation to the next, causing nothing but pain and intergenerational trauma. Jennifer Andrews comments on this by saying that

> Robinson's reading of this process of colonization highlights the systemic spread of evil behavior among both the oppressors and the oppressed. […] Colonization has led to the sexual abuse of children, both by the colonizer (Archibald) and eventually by the colonized (Josh), by virtue of power relations that relegate women (and particularly Native women) to a lesser status than men. (2009, 215-16)

What is even more disconcerting about these acts of violence is that none of them are reported to any authority, as they are all silenced by someone – like Frank with Karaoke – who refuses to acknowledge the situation and buries their head in the sand. For Indigenous communities such conditions are persistently "unspeakable", as they represent the difficulty of dealing with a painful past, exactly like in the narrative of *Monkey Beach*. Robinson interestingly uses the literary technique of never letting the characters finish their sentences when they are on the verge of talking about trauma: their speech is interrupted, broken down and silenced again by another character present – frequently a man – in order to show how even within Indigenous communities there are elements that continue to unconsciously perpetuate this violence by refusing to denounce what happens to them.

Indeed, Lisa as well does not report her attack and never tells anybody about it, without possibility of healing or recovery. In Canada only 6% of survivors of sexual assault report the incident to the police, which means that, on average, the majority of the attacks are never reported.[7] This happens because western mentality has created an environment in which the victim becomes the one to blame (Brownmiller 1993, 312-13) and when a woman belongs to a minority such as an Indigenous community, she is often not believed, especially if the perpetrator is white.[8] If it is instead Indigenous then the woman might be believed, but only in order to place the blame again on those people who are victims themselves; simplistic explanations of violence should be avoided in such cases, when Indigenous communities have been coerced into violence and mistreatment by colonialism for centuries. They are only now beginning to process this intergenerational trauma with little to no kind of support from governments and from society in general.

The most common practice through which Indigenous characters process trauma is drug and alcohol abuse, as Lisa will do in the last sections of the novel or as Aunt Trudy, Uncle Mick and Uncle Josh do because of their residential school trauma. It has unfortunately become a terrible phenomenon not just in Canada,[9] but also in the US (see Beauvais 1998, 253-59),

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[7] "A Comprehensive Portrait of Police-reported Crime in Canada, 2021". *Statistics Canada*, released August 2, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220802/dq220802a-eng.htm> (10/2022).

[8] There are several studies that analyse this issue from a statistical and empirical point of view, not only in relation to Indigenous women, but also to all women of colour. Some examples: Burton and Guidry 2021, 370-81; Lewis *et al.* 2019, 308-17 and Murphy-Oikonen *et al.* 2022, 237-58.

[9] "For those 12 and older, the rate of heavy drinking (five or more drinks on one occasion at least once a month in the 12 months preceding the survey) was 35% for off-reserve First Nations people, 30% for Métis, and 39% for Inuit, compared with 23% for non-Aboriginal people. An estimated 43% of off-reserve First Nations people, 38% of Métis, 40% of Inuit and 36% of non-Aboriginal people aged 12 to 24 reported heavy drinking" (Kelly-Scott and Smith 2015, 8)

Australia and New Zealand,[10] that many Indigenous communities turn to substance abuse in order to cope with unresolved traumas of imperialistic violence and land expropriation.

To return briefly to Cheese's suggestion about Lisa being interested in Frank, ambiguously, throughout the novel Lisa never expresses an interest in Frank to the reader, although there are many scenes between them in which Lisa's mixed feelings towards him could transpire, while it is quite clear that Frank likes her as he will later reveal. They never end up together, instead they chase each other for a long time without ever truly exploring their feelings. The reason why I mention this is because it is important to be aware that their relationship had an abusive nuance from the start. Frank was a very mean and violent child and had pranked and made fun of her ever since they were very young; in one episode they even end up punching each other in the face, hurting one another so much they have to go the Emergency Room (Robinson 2000, 64-66).

The possibility remains that Lisa has never had any sort of romantic feelings for Frank, although he does develop them. Yet what is more intriguing about her character is that she proves she does not need a romantic or sexual relationship to feel validated by men or society and never finds herself in a love triangle – as instead often happens with mainstream white YA protagonists.[11] She knows that there are more important things at stake in life than having a relationship at all costs and being "crazy about boys". The story places more value on reconciling oneself with one's own culture and family. There is no complicated or thwarted romance that overwhelms the protagonist, instead the focus is shifted to other themes, like the intersection between gender, race, and violence in a postcolonial Indigenous context, that should be of primary importance to any audience, issues that have a much greater need to be seen and heard than the banal, pre-packaged love triangle.

At the end of the novel Lisa does not end up with anybody because she does not need to, she has herself and that is enough and this is what, ideally, should be taught to young girls today: that women have value, that they are worth and do not need a man or a relationship to feel validated or to feel like they belong. YA mainstream female protagonists very rarely communicate this concept to their young and impressionable audiences; rather, they do the exact opposite by building characters who pretend not to care about their relationships although the story winds up revolving around that one element.

By arguing this, I do not mean to say that Lisa – or any other YA character – should forcibly avoid relationships to make a point, but that not having a sexual or romantic relationship does not make her less of a person, or of a woman; it just proves that she is at peace with herself, which is what in return will allow her to feel at ease with her community. What she wants to achieve more than anything is a harmonious relationship with her identity as an Indigenous woman who has a deeper connection with the natural and the spirit world. When that is achieved, everything else can be welcomed in a healthier way.

In relation to this, it is crucial to bring up the last episode worth mentioning regarding Lisa's growth and teenage years. A person's first sexual encounter as a teenager is often anticipated with excitement, however, even in our contemporary society still remain twisted ideas of how the dreaded and awaited "first time" should be; popular belief implies that it should take place with someone you are in a relationship with or have feelings for, and a certain degree of shame can still surround those people, and girls especially, who choose to have their first sexual intercourse with someone who is not "the one". Beth Younger comments on this matter by quoting Janice Radway, as according to her "depicting explicit sex in an adult romance narrative is an acceptable narrative feature as long as the characters are in love. The view of the dominant culture is that sex without love is unacceptable, especially for teen girls" (qtd. in Younger 2009, 88). When talking about promiscuity (having sexual intercourse without love or a long-term relationship/partner), Younger also highlights how "many YA novels promote the idea that sex for the sake of pleasure, not bolstered by a 'love' relationship, is explicitly wrong. This idea translates into punishment for those who might espouse or even practice sex without love" (Younger 2009, 88). There is clearly a misogynistic spark to this concept, since boys are allowed to have intimate relationships with whomever they wish indeed because they are boys, while girls risk being insulted and (TW) slut-shamed.

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[10] See Jens Korff, "Aboriginal alcohol consumption", *Creative Spirits*, <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/health/aboriginal-alcohol-consumption> (10/2022).

[11] Some examples are: Katniss with Peeta and Gale in *The Hunger Games*; Wanda with Ian and Jared in *The Host*; Clary with Jace and Simon in *The Mortal Instruments*; Elena with Stefan and Damon in *The Vampire Diaries*; Bella with Edward and Jacob in *Twilight*; Alina with Mal and the Darkling in *Shadow and Bone*; Luce with Cam and Daniel in *Fallen*, and many more.

Lisa's first time happens unexpectedly with Pooch and in her words she perfectly expresses the idea that, it does not matter if it is not the most perfect, the best experience, it just needs to be a first time:

> If I had known I was going to be having sex that night, I would have worn something special, instead of jeans and a white shirt, though I don't know why people make such a big deal about doing it. In all the movies I've ever seen, it is this huge, life-changing event. With me, I met Pooch at a party, we went up to a room, took off our clothes, kissed, got on with business and that was it. […] He wasn't in love with me and I wasn't in love with him, but it was nice to be held and to have someone there. (Robinson 2000, 287)

Although Lisa of course feels the need for some sort of affection, it is not her primary objective. It is striking the way in which her ideas about sex and the first time have been instilled in her brain by movie and TV culture, which quite frequently does not represent sex as it really is; it is rendered more fashionable and better than it might actually be in real life. In many cultural products, sex is represented in a more marketable way, but that depicts it unrealistically: perhaps the most absurd aspect of sex scenes that is too often included in portrayals of first times is the woman's or girl's ability to reach orgasm extremely easily, quickly, and usually through penetration alone. Women themselves and numerous studies[12] can confirm the opposite and while it may be true for some, it is certainly not the experience of the majority or totality of women, as cultural marketing would like them to believe.

Thankfully Lisa has already proved that she can distance herself from gender stereotypes or bias, although the reader perceives through her stream of thoughts that she is still insecure about many things and is always questioning whether her actions fit into the norm or not.

Robinson is capable of building a character like Lisa without portraying other versions of femininity as negative or shaming them; instead, she demonstrates that womanhood cannot be reduced to a single definition or to a fixed set of interests and characteristics, as women's identities are much more nuanced. There are many shades of what it means to be a woman in this novel that demonstrate the revolutionary and realistic nature of representations of Indigenous female figures. Readers can mirror themselves in these figures and see real women as different from YA stereotyped protagonists, not filtered by the definitions that society has given them. Lisa and all the other female characters in *Monkey Beach* are not granitic portrayals, but come with different characterisations that render them far more realistic than, for example, the other female personas usually found in white mainstream YA narratives, who mostly mirror men's desires regarding women's functionality.

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[12] An example is the 2017 study by Herbenick *et al.*

3. Refiguring Gothic genre in Haisla's cultural space

In the first part of this article, I mentioned that literary critics regularly frame *Monkey Beach* as a Gothic novel. The way in which criticism approaches this definition is extremely cautious and re-envisions the canonical definition of Gothic literature by adapting it to the symbolism of an Indigenous work that, however, does not belong to the western canon. I find it particularly fascinating how David Gaertner reconfigures the typically gothic idea of the "return of the repressed". He defines the return as a "resurgence" instead, through Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg critic Leanne Betasamosake Simpson words, as a "nourishment of [an] Indigenous past" (2015, 48), implying that it is not the "ghosts" of the colonial past that are coming back to haunt the settlers; instead, he argues that the repressed goes back to its own self and reunites and tries to reconcile itself with itself, therefore putting the settler at the margins of or outside the narrative.[13]

In *Monkey Beach* this whole process happens through Lisa's account of her reconnection with Haisla culture and traditions. With the guidance of her Uncle Mick and her Mama-oo, she works to understand and learn more about their beliefs and mythology and, as Castricano puts it, she "learns to talk with ghosts" (2006, 801), in order to embrace her bond with the spirit world. Her link to this "other world" had been severed or at least numbed by a western lifestyle, as her Mama-oo makes her notice "to really understand the old stories, […] you had to speak Haisla" (Robinson 2000, 211), showing how language is fundamental in understanding a culture. It is not accidental that at the end of the story, when Lisa has come to terms with her gift, she "[…] can understand the words although are in Haisla" (373) and she can interact with her ghosts, who are all the people she has lost.

Mama-oo even tells Lisa that her mother Gladys had exactly the same gift when she was a girl but was too scared of it and decided to ignore it. She has clearly internalised a western mentality in regard to the concepts of ghosts and of seeing "things that are not there", and indeed when Lisa tells her about the visions she replies saying "clearly a sign, Lisa, […] that you need Prozac" (3). When her daughter was younger, she and her husband even took her to a white psychiatrist, because they thought it was Lisa's way of dealing with stress and fear of death.

Nonetheless, Lisa's growth throughout the narrative sets her on a path of reconciliation with her culture, to all the things she and her ancestors have lost and are now trying to re-appropriate, such as their native language. Not only our protagonist, but all the other characters in the novel, as we have already seen, are trying to grapple with a complex history that has created a strong imbalance in the way Indigenous communities and in this case the Haisla relate to their origins and culture. Although the ending of the novel is open and leaves the reader wondering what will happen to the narrator, it gives a strong sense of hope and peace, showing how happy she is now that she is not afraid of her gift anymore. It is always her Mama-oo who says to her "you don't have to be scared of things you don't understand. They're just ghosts" (265), summing up in just two sentences that there is no active need to be afraid of the "Other", because it is no threat to you, because a ghost is impalpable and it cannot hurt you.

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[13] The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada has sparked discussions on what terms are more suitable to talk about the post-apocalyptic experience of Indigenous people in North America. Scholar Keavy Martin argues that "the concept of reconciliation relies upon a form of amnesia. […] [it] entails 'a fixation upon *resolution* that is not only premature but problematic in its correlation with *forgetting*' " [italics in the original] (qtd. in Hanson 2017, 74). Therefore, many Indigenous critics have begun to employ the more appropriate term "resurgence", which "unlike reconciliation, is a socio-cultural movement and theoretical framework that concentrates on regeneration within Indigenous communities. It validates Indigenous knowledges, cultures, histories, ingenuity, and continuity. Resurgence is an Indigenizing impulse; it acknowledges colonialism and domination through resistance but it does not focus solely on colonialism as the most important concern. Instead, […] [it] focuses on Indigenous communities as sites of power and regeneration. […] [it] does not focus primarily on relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people" (74-75).

All the pieces we have mentioned so far can indeed be considered typical elements of a Gothic story, but all of them are turned upside down by Robinson's narrative, who reverses what is considered a scary genre in western culture, by making a story that recounts the re-conquest of Indigenous values and traditions with some eerie features. Intergenerational trauma remains, pulsating and poisoning the community, but Robinson argues that in an era of "Truth and Reconciliation" (although, the novel was published before the Commission's work in Canada), it is pivotal to reclaim Indigenous roots that have been buried too deep by imperial power and have not been allowed to blossom properly until now. In fact, even though Lisa cannot be defined as the typical YA heroine, she still goes on a quest, one for identity, belonging and self-representation.

4. Death as a co-protagonist

As hinted in previous paragraphs, death is utterly immanent in this novel, leading me to define its role in the novel as a co-protagonist to Lisa. As the story progresses, many characters die, including some of the main ones – indeed the central action revolves around the disappearance of Lisa's brother Jimmy, who is revealed to have also died at the end. That this theme is going to pervade the whole story is visible from the very first page of the novel that reads "six crows sit in our greengage tree. Half-awake, I hear them speak to me in Haisla. *La'es*, they say, *La'es*, *la'es* […] – Go down to the bottom of the ocean" [italics in the original] (Robinson 2000, 1). The image of crows looming can already feel like a bad omen, and indirectly communicates to the reader that death will appear, sooner or later in the story.

However, the symbolism of crows in Indigenous cultures is much more layered than in Anglo-Saxon ones, which have frequently considered them a symbol of death. This western belief was influenced by the fact that crows are scavengers and used to feed on the decaying flesh of people after they had been executed. Therefore, they loomed around the areas where they knew they could find sustenance, like prisons, graveyards, gallows, battlefields (Cattabiani 2015, 291). Yet, in Indigenous cultures crows' imageries vary in meaning according to different tribes' traditions; in Haisla and particularly in this novel, they are employed as symbols of either luck or warning (of mis-happenings or death) for the characters. In several west coast First Nations communities – Haisla included – the crow, frequently referred to as the Raven, can embody both the trickster and the helper of the creator of the world. It can exemplify the unknown and can be seen as a "keeper of secrets", using its knowledge to play tricks on humans; at the same time the Raven can be an emblem of creation, transformation, and knowledge, acquiring a nuance of wisdom (Raven Reads 2018).

Thus, it is interesting to notice that on the cover of the Mariner Books' edition of *Monkey Beach* there is indeed a crow,[14] which is a recurring and controversial symbol throughout the novel. On the other hand, the new cover by Vintage Canada shows a beach,[15] which supposedly represents the Monkey Beach of the title, a fundamental place where a lot of the action takes place and, above all, where the vicissitudes conclude and Lisa reconciles herself to her gift and the ghosts of her past.

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[14] "Cover of the book *Monkey Beach*", Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monkey_Beach#/media/

The protagonist's life is accompanied by loss and death, especially when it involves her mentors Uncle Mick and Mama-oo. Alongside her, the reader explores her relationship with death, abandonment, and the disappearance of her family members and those she is really close to, while she delves more and more into her ability to predict these happenings.

Indeed, before something tragic takes place, Lisa is visited by the "little man", an entity that always takes on different forms and clothes every time it appears. Even here, as in her outside world, there is a struggle of power for Lisa – a battle with the essence and presence of the supernatural power within herself, yet the inability to understand and master it. The impotence Lisa first feels in front of death and its "potential", pushes her into going to Vancouver; she does not finish high school and resorts to drug and alcohol abuse to anaesthetise her uncontrollable gift and the guilt and pain of not being able to stop these terrible things from happening.

However, when she is in Vancouver she wakes up one day feeling hungover to a vision of her favourite cousin Tab and she realises her abilities go far beyond "seeing dead people", as she will soon find out that Tab is still very much alive. Not many pages later, after she has likely had a sighting of a *b'gwus*, called a sasquatch[16] or big-foot in English, she interestingly says "I felt deeply comforted knowing that magical things were still living in the world" (Robinson 2000, 315-16), showing how important the existence of this other spiritual dimension is for her. The myth of the *b'gwus* is utterly present in the novel: one of the sections is even titled "In Search of the Elusive Sasquatch", to symbolise all the other digressions on Haisla culture and mythology and how pervasive these funding traditions are for Lisa.

Kathryn James argues that there is a strong link in YA literature between gender, sexuality, and death. Death is a major theme in adolescent productions because of the formative impact it has on a teenager and the sense of drama and tragedy it creates; however, James notices that death throughout the centuries and more specifically in YAs has been associated with female characters. She quotes Elisabeth Bronfen: "Woman is a 'symptom' of death's presence, precisely because she is the site where the repressed anxiety about death re-emerges in a displaced, disfigured form" (qtd. in James 2009, 15). James then continues with Efrat Tseëlon's theory that Woman and Death share similar characteristics in the sense of being a psychological trigger of anxiety – although for different reasons. But most of all "in the patriarchal cultural imagination, both are mysterious, ambiguous, unrepresentable, silent, and a threat to stability; both are the eternal Other" (*ibidem*). When talking about Gothic literature the presence of death and horror is at times a critical element around which the narration revolves. In addition, many critics have also focused on the centrality of sexuality and gender in these kinds of narratives, where in YA or children's literature products there are especially representations of monstrous women or of hegemonic masculinity (117).

File:Monkey_Beach.jpg> (10/2022).

[15] "*Monkey Beach*", Penguin Random House Canada, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/156126/monkey-beach-by-eden-robinson/9780676973228> (10/2022).

[16] "The word Sasquatch is believed to be an Anglicization of the Salish word *Sasq'ets*, meaning 'wild man' or 'hairy man'. J.W. Burns coined the term in the 1930s. Burns was an Indian agent assigned to the Chehalis Band, now known as the Sts'ailes First Nation. The Sts'ailes people claim a close bond with Sas'qets, and believe it has the ability to move between the physical and spiritual realm. Sasquatch has also been commonly known as Bigfoot in the Pacific Northwest of the United States" [italics in the original] (Thomas 2020).

Yet Robinson is capable of overturning these theories, by making Lisa accept death as something that, no matter what, is part of life itself, and therefore not scary, just like the ghosts. This knowledge is passed on to her again by her Mama-oo, who tells her more than once that "[w]hen it's time to go, you go" (Robinson 2000, 371); this means that when the time has come there is no need to be afraid of the Other, represented by death in this case – it should simply be embraced in order not to be afraid anymore of something unknown to humans. Indeed, Lisa defeats death's psychological power over her and manages to survive after a near-death experience in the ocean.

While our protagonist outplays stereotypes of genre and gender, it is striking to see that in *Monkey Beach* the ones who have connections with the spirit world are not just Lisa or the other women, but also Frank and Uncle Mick, who recall episodes in which they had contact with something that had come from this other world. For Robinson, the link to the spirit world unites all Haisla people and therefore is not gendered; even though her story portrays a young woman as the bearer of the gift, this does not mean that a man could not also have it.

Conclusions

Through the case study of Robinson's *Monkey Beach*, I have discussed the complex and articulated dynamics of some aspects of North American society, Canadian more specifically, in relation to the condition and representation of adolescent Indigenous women. With an intersectional approach, I have investigated matters of violence and sexual assault, intergenerational trauma caused by the residential school system and how this influences people's substance abuse or lack of knowledge regarding their cultural heritage.

It is compelling to see how Robinson's main character manages to (re)affirm her Indigenous identity while still being subject to the cultural pull of the western, white dominant stream. Lisa, who is not only focused on sexual desire like the majority of white mainstream female leads depicted in YAs (some of them have been mentioned throughout this article), reveals how layered the identity of a teenager can be. One of my main concerns has been to highlight whether Lisa conforms or not to female gender stereotypes, and to the representation of young women and their personal development in North American YA literature. I have argued how diversely and more subversively Indigenous cultures represent femininity and female characters in works intended for teenage audiences. Indigenous characters like Lisa and her family members have proved to be less stereotypical and more realistic than white characters, chiefly because they are not depicted according to common gender biases. The female ones in particular are truly independent, self-made, and brave and do not need validation from their male counterparts; they mostly yearn to be members of a community, nourishing and cherishing their cultural heritage.

In her article "Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* and the Indigenous Reinvention of Young Adult Literature", Mandy Suhr-Sytsma analyses in detail Okanagan Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* (1985) as the first ever novel by a Native American or Indigenous Canadian author written directly for teenagers and therefore starting the trend of YA in Native North American literature as well (2016, 26-27). She then continues to list numerous other Indigenous authors who have followed along this path, among whom she also features Eden Robinson, trying to show that there is a growing interest in this newly acknowledged genre of literary production, even though the criticism on it continues to lack. Since the '90s, in between the US and Canada, there has been a steady – although still limited – growth in Indigenous publications that have continued on the path that Armstrong's novel set while also broadening the scope and kind of narratives employed, clearly targeting a YA audience: some examples from Canada are *The*

Marrow Thieves (2017) by Cherie Dimaline, *Fire Fight* (2015) by Jacqueline Guest, *Fire Song* (2018) by Adam Garnet Jones, or *Shadows Cast by Stars* (2013) by Catherine Knutsson, and from the US *Firekeeper's Daughter* (2021) by Angeline Boulley, *House of Purple Cedar* (2014) by Tim Tingle, *Rain is Not My Indian Name* (2001) by Cynthia Leitich Smith, *If I Ever Get Out of Here* (2013) by Eric Gansworth, or *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007) by Sherman Alexie.[17]

These publications, as well as Robinson's, are playing an important part in renovating the genre of YA literature and are connected to the resurgence in cultural representations of Indigenous peoples. Lynnette James uses the example of the new literary current of Indigenous futurist YAs to comment on the figure of the Indigenous heroine who brings about a new intersectional revaluation of the genre, with the combination of elements from dystopia, cyberpunk, postcolonial fiction, and Afrofuturism (2016, 151). Indigenous futurism has become a very specific type of YA production, which includes those themes that are usually lacking in mainstream white YAs. It is a

> deliberate, intentional, and purpose-driven position that addresses not only inclusion but intersectionality for its protagonists and themes. While not limited to portraying heroines, it explores the vital role of young women in coming worlds that, while difficult and dangerous, are neither random nor pointless. In doing so, these fictions question received ideas of agency, gender, and ethnicity, uses of violence and technology, and even the meaning of survival and triumph, while extending more nuanced concepts of tradition, community, scientific exploration, environmental and social consciousness, power and responsibility. (152)

These Indigenous authors manage to succeed where several white writers have failed: they provide a comprehensive representation of humanity, and especially of the condition of young women. When considering Indigenous YA production, it is interesting to point out that none of the books mentioned have been adapted into either TV series or movies, compared to plentiful white YA series that have been transposed into visual representations. Obvious reasons are linked to the low marketability or profitability of the Indigenous works that resist stereotypes and bring to the forefront realities of hardship, poverty, and violence that the average audience refuses to acknowledge and therefore will not buy or "consume". Even though *Monkey Beach* was adapted into a movie in 2020, it was hardly publicised in and outside of Canada and not given all the media attention that, for instance, a series like *The Hunger Games* obtained on its release. As a matter of fact, it is a virtually unknown and niche movie, quite hard to find, and remains one of the very few to be adapted into another medium.

Going back to my main argument, Indigenous futurism is not simply an ethical addition of underrepresented communities to the YA's scenario, but "an organic outgrowth of the oral storytelling traditions in which the authors have been steeped" (156), which explains why many YA tropes are also repeated, but in a different and more layered fashion. These authors are reclaiming their voices (one of the reasons why the novels are often narrated in first-person) and finding their place inside post-colonialism, defined as "a process by which decolonizing society negotiates its identity apart from that of its colonizer, and apart from its identity as a colonized place or people" (qtd. in James 2016, 158). These heroines have a more conscious attitude and awareness towards their societal and physical vulnerabilities, because, as part of a minority, they have already experienced an apocalypse with colonialism and their lives are to this day affected by the legacy of those events (James 2016, 159).

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[17] This list of texts is a sampling of Indigenous YA literature and does not provide a comprehensive overview of the genre.

Although we find the same themes of love, desirability and sexuality, the protagonists are less concerned with physical appearance and romantic drama than the white ones. Indeed, these characters are not just navigating their love lives, but also learning what it means to be daughters, sisters, friends, and community members, therefore making the readers engage with more nuanced concepts of love and emotional ties (167). Fundamentally, their boyfriends are not abusive and do not impose their control over them,

> they are vital, though, not because they are the most sought-after *as* boyfriends, but because they offer an additional person working toward the ultimate good of the heroine's community, someone else who shares her vision and can help support her purpose. (167-68)

These heroines value their role inside their community and are humble enough not to believe they can do anything on their own, but that real strength comes with the help of others – something that common YA heroines never realise, since they always act alone, causing more damage than anything else.

Although I have specifically referred to James' analysis of Indigenous futurism in these last paragraphs, the characteristics that have been highlighted pertain to all other representations of female leads in Indigenous YA literature, as has been shown with the example of Robinson's novel. Alongside the fact that they finally give space and a voice to those who have been cut off from the cultural spectrum, these stories offer a proper intersectional depiction of what it means to be a teenager in contemporary society.

Alongside this novelistic production however, there has also been a prolific production of comics and graphic novels by Indigenous Canadian authors that enrich the YA genre. Within this trend there are publications that vary in genre and thematic, with examples like Katherena Vermette's *A Girl Called Echo* (2017-21), a comic series with a clear didactic structure and purpose to unlearn colonial standards and re-learn Indigenous stories and histories; Tasha Spillett-Sumner's series *Surviving the City* (2018-) which narrates the experience of Indigenous youths of different descents as they navigate complex web of kinships in Canadian metropolitan areas; the anthology *This Place: 150 Years Retold* (2019) by various authors that has the aim to rewrite Canadian history from the point of view of the oppressed; *The Outside Circle* (2015) by Métis Senator Patti Laboucane-Benson, which narrates the story of two brothers who try to escape a suburban gang life they have been dragged into; or *If I Go Missing* (2019) by Brianna Jonnie which, with a combination of graphic fiction and non-fiction, comments on the current issue of extremely high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women in North America. In parallel with comics' art, there has also been a strong leaning towards the representation of traditional Indigenous storytelling (their myths and funding stories) on national television and more specifically towards the creation of an Indigenous feminine animation aesthetic. This aims to mend the mistake of having considered Native American mythologies as fairytales until now, when they are actually founding stories that show the distinctive indigeneity of different tribes and are made to pass on their traditional oral storytelling to younger generations (most of these productions are for children) so that they can re-appropriate their history and "folklore"[18] (Hearne 2017).

There is also the intention of identifying a specific current inside this production that has been designed by women who seek to create a feminine aesthetic and bring back to life through animation "the (hi)stories of tribal women that are discarded, materially and metaphorically, by the cinematic stereotypes that naturalise and elide violence against Indigenous women" (Romero 2017, 59). The reason why I briefly mention these two trends is that all the contemporary Indigenous cultural productions, as YAs, aim to reevaluate female narratives and to bring back to the forefront the traditional mythologies and oral storytelling that have always characterised their cultures.

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[18] I use this term here – between inverted commas as it is extremely connected to western culture – merely to point out the concept of bestowing ancestral cultural traditions.

Therefore, I consider Robinson's work fairly representative of the current trends in Indigenous cultural productions (not only in YAs) and open to enabling a dialogue with the reader; although Lisa's story is not conventionally adventurous and supposedly inspirational as those of other white YAs (for instance *The Hunger Games*, *The Twilight Saga*, *Divergent*, or *Shadow and Bone* to name some of the most famous titles that had been mentioned before), hers is more cathartic and thought-provoking. In narratives such as this there is a clear attempt to eliminate the shame that may come after a sexual assault or other forms of gendered violence, in order to help readers face the truth of the world rather than reiterating fairytales that romanticise misogynistic and abusive behaviours.

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