



BOOK REVIEW:

David Myer Temin. *Remapping Sovereignty: Decolonization and Self-Determination in North American Indigenous Political Thought*. The University of Chicago Press, 2023. 264 pages. ISBN: 978-0-226-82728-5. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226827278.001.0001>.

To be reminded of how contested issues around political sovereignty are in our time, one need only glance at news headlines. Readers expect, in fact, a daily bombardment of updates on war, genocide, and famine on multiple continents, and news of the latest wave of refugee deportation in the US and Europe. At the level of cultural and educational sovereignty, we confront the increasing precarity of humanities curricula at universities, book bans, and cuts to ethnic studies programs in American schools. If history is written by the victors, those with money and power drown out the voices outside the mainstream, including those of Indigenous North Americans. David Myer Temin's *Remapping Sovereignty: Decolonization and Self-Determination in North American Indigenous Political Thought* demonstrates, to the contrary, how dynamic Indigenous voices have remained throughout the twentieth century and into the present. It is refreshing when a book such as Temin's is published by a major university press.

Equally welcome is Temin's sustained attention to the intellectual development of his selected thinkers and activists. As such, he avoids the social science case study method that often compartmentalizes Indigenous histories and cultures within the non-Indigenous researcher's analytical framework. The case study approach often supports the unspoken assumption that the research can at some level "help" marginalized

communities adapt to society's norms, which are seldom questioned. In fact, Temin states explicitly that he takes issue with the case study approach because, he explains, "I contend that the context of (settler-)colonial domination shapes the concept and materiality of sovereignty, in ways evaded in standard accounts of the concept in Western political thought" (6). Temin's interrogation of the terms and the conceptual logic of sovereignty is relevant not only for political scientists and Indigenous studies scholars; his argument is just as timely for Americanists concerned with the idea of American exceptionalism. In its expressions such as the American Jeremiad, the West, Manifest Destiny, the Frontier, and more recently, slogans like "Make America Great Again," American exceptionalism relies on assumptions about sovereignty defined as territorial domination. Temin problematizes this view.

For his approach to "mapping," Temin draws on Tonawanda Seneca literary theorist Mishuana Goeman's use of the term to discuss "Native women writers '(re)mapping' their nations, against the destructive incursions of ongoing colonization" (4). Similarly, for Temin as a political scientist, mapping provides an analytical framework for addressing the ways in which Indigenous North American thinkers contest both the terms of settler state sovereignty, and sovereignty's very conceptual logic (12).

What the book does not do is the cartographer's work of simplifying and flattening multidimensional spatial relationships. In fact, he does not include a single visual map in the entire book. Rather than simplifying relationships, the book moves in the opposite direction: it takes flat ideas about Indigenous North Americans as inherited from five hundred years of settler colonialism and complicates them. Rather than using the term "mapmaking," Temin draws on the anticolonial "earthmaking" to guide his close readings of texts by six US and Canadian Indigenous scholars, activists, and writers spanning time from the turn of the twentieth century to the turn of the millennium: Zitkala-Sa (Yankton Dakota), Ella Deloria (Yankton Dakota), Vine Deloria, Jr. (Yankton Dakota), George Manuel (Secwépemec of British Columbia), Howard Adams (Métis from Saskatchewan), and Lee Maracle (Sto:lo from British Columbia) (3). Not only are Temin's sources Indigenous, but many of the mentors and colleagues who provided feedback on earlier drafts of the book are also respected Indigenous scholars such as Glen Coulthard, Audra Simpson, and Kyle Whyte (192). His choices support the recognition of Indigenous earthmaking methodologies within mainstream academic spaces. As Sara Ahmed notes in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), citation is a form of power that reproduces, and can resist, hierarchies of knowledge production (Templin). For Temin, "making" the earth is an active assertion of power in "pursuit of reciprocal responsibilities of care that mutually sustain both human and other-than-human beings, contrasted to the colonial sovereignty of a self-possessed collective endlessly fabricating its surrounding environmental conditions through extractive domination from subordinated human and other-than-human others" (16).

The book's chapters develop both chronologically and dialogically in that three of the four chapters pair two thinkers writing at different

historical moments: chapter one places Vine Deloria in dialogue with Zitkala-Sa to show how both thinkers resisted the idea that full Native citizenship could necessarily be a positive goal for Indigenous Americans. Zitkala-Sa writes from the context of the Progressive Era before the adoption of the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act. Vine Deloria analyzes how the policy of Termination in the 1950s and 60s, adopted for the alleged sake of benefiting Native Americans as individual US citizens rather than as members of tribal communities, had the paradoxical effect of reinventing the erasure of Native cultures and perpetuating the theft of their lands.

Chapter two shifts the focus from resisting the terms of sovereignty toward exploration of an Indigenous conceptual logic for governance. With this goal in mind, Temin discusses how Vine Deloria and his aunt Ella Deloria develop Indigenous theory related to the practice of treaty making. For Native Americans, treaties represent a "scaling up" of the practice of kinship where being a good relative is central (64). For the US government, in contrast, Native peoples since the *Worcester v. Georgia* Supreme Court decision of 1832 have been regarded as dependent nations. Because at that time the government did not know what to do with Native nations within settler state law, the Court defined them as wards of the US state, not as separate nations worthy of dignity and respect on their own terms. The lack of fundamental respect underpins the long history of the making and breaking of treaties in the US.

Chapter three is the only chapter that concentrates on a single thinker, George Manuel. This choice seems appropriate because here Temin develops one of the book's core arguments that North American Indigenous political thought is pertinent for understanding global struggles for anti-colonial sovereignty. Manuel's "Fourth Worldism" connects issues for North American Indigenous societies with ongoing struggles for

self-determination against colonial and neocolonial domination in the global south.

Chapter four builds on Manuel's Fourth World Pan-Indigenous political thought through the Marxist analyses of Howard Adams in the 1960s, and the gendered Marxist insights of Lee Maracle starting in the 1970s. Adams exposes the ways in which the 1969 Canadian White Paper that reversed the Indian Act of 1876, in the name of multicultural inclusion of First Nations and Metis people in the wider Canadian society, effectively established new terms for systematically erasing Indigenous self-determination. Temin's close reading of Vine Deloria's analysis of the US Termination policy, paired with Adams's discussion of the Canadian White Paper, effectively shows how Canadian and US trajectories of erasure are more similar than different. Both American and Canadian political histories rely on a conceptual logic that places trust in the power of individual agency over collective accountability.

Appropriately, Temin gives the last words in Chapter four to Maracle. Her scholarship, creative writing, and activism examine the ways in which gender and violence against Indigenous North American women is not an adjunct, but rather a central feature of the continuing project of settler colonialism. Maracle's work is central to more recent scholarship by Mishuana Goeman, Sarah Deer, and Leanne Simpson, writers and scholars whose work has influenced Temin's.

Temin begins and ends the book with the 2016 No Dakota Access Pipeline (NODAPL) movement by the Dakota Water Protectors to "reveal and confront the constitutively earth-destroying, antirelational violence of colonial sovereignty" (183). This confrontation provides more than a background for the book's main arguments. Rather, in placing the reader with NODAPL in the twenty-first century, Temin strongly asserts the

need for more public attention to the voices of Indigenous scholars, writers, artists, and activists. The disheartening reality is that the neocolonial logic of the profit-driven market still shapes public discourse in both the US and Canada.

In American studies circles, Temin's interrogation of sovereignty challenges us to question the ideological underpinnings of American exceptionalism at a deeper level than some scholars and teachers in the field have done. For example, how would the critical thinking we encourage students to do change if an Indigenous worldview based on kinship were made central to introductory courses? What if required readings could include other-than-human "texts" such as mountains, rivers, canyons, and arroyos that have traditionally been represented as context for literary texts? What if essay assignments included tasks such as tracing the origin of a print book to a location in a forest on the land of a particular Indigenous nation? The long-standing American studies approach to using interdisciplinary methods and texts to respond to current planetary crises keeps us rethinking curricula. That is a good thing, despite, and perhaps especially given, the continued budget cuts to the humanities.

Remapping Sovereignty does have a few gaps worth mentioning. In his discussions of self-determination, Temin might have placed Indigenous resurgence not only in the framework of Fourth Worldism, but also in contrast to the discourse of reconciliation. Since the end of the twentieth century, Indigenous scholars agree that reconciliation and resurgence are the two important contemporary schools of Indigenous theory in Canada. Even though the official discourse on reconciliation did not start until the end of the twentieth century, and even though reconciliation does not address the issue of self-determination that Temin focuses on, referring to reconciliation, even in a footnote, could have

helped include a wider audience of readers. This is especially the case in the wake of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 report on the residential school system's legacy of harm to generations of First Nations and Metis children. As it is, the interested but uninformed reader of Temin's book could get the sense of entering the middle of a conversation among specialists in Indigenous studies.

Considered from my own perspective as a white person descended from European settlers in North America, I also would have liked to hear something about Temin's background. Because he does not mention it, the reader assumes he is a descendant of white European immigrants. Revealing more about his own stake in these issues would reinforce his commitment to Indigenous methodologies. Not doing so risks creating a façade of disembodied objectivity that Donna Haraway aptly calls the "god trick" in her often-cited 1988 article on "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective."

Temin's book is nevertheless worth taking time to read as closely as he reads the work of twentieth-century theorists and activists Zitkala-Sa, Ella Deloria, Vine Deloria, George Manuel, Howard Adams, and Lee Maracle. Through his meticulous attention to the intellectual development of these thinkers and activists, in dialogue with their communities and with settler colonial histories, Temin makes a timely contribution to twenty-first-century American studies scholarship.

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