Jas M. Morgan. *nîtisânak*. Metonymy Press, 2018. 200 pp. ISBN: 9780994047175.

https://metonymypress.com/shop/print-books/nitisanak/

The centering of Two-Spirit critiques and narratives is essential to decolonial and anticolonial work. One piece of importance in Two-Spirit critiques is Jas M. Morgan's *nîtisânak*. In their memoir, Morgan tells their childhood narrative and the development of their sense of identity. They address issues of gender, sexuality, whiteness, and adoption. Their narrative begins by talking about who their parents are and how they know the stories about them that they know, as they were adopted by a non-Indigenous family at a young age. Morgan continues their narrative by addressing the complex relationship they have to their tribal community, as well as the impact that settler colonialism has had on their relationship with their tribe and culture. Morgan discusses the ways that they have navigated white queer spaces, that often ask BIPOC folx to leave their racial identities at the door. Their memoir concludes with a message to the youth today and their imagining of a different future.

When writing from an Indigenous perspective, we are taught to think not only about our own identities and our survival but also the survival of future generations. Morgan writes directly towards Two-Spirit youth when they state unequivocally, "Dear 2s youth: I witness you. I witness you. I witness you. I witness you. One time for each direction" (159). At a time when Indigenous youth face high rates of suicide and death, the acknowledgement and witnessing of them and their identities is essential for Two-Spirit youth who do not see themselves represented in mainstream queer movements. Just as our work is not solely for us, but for future generations and their survival, our knowledges are not solely ours but community knowledges and stories. In this way, Morgan has "been a reluctant academic because [they] don't believe in individual claiming of knowledge" (171). While we, as Indigenous scholars, vocalize, write, and analyze our lives and our knowledges, these knowledges are not solely ours but are influenced by the community we are raised in, the people who raised us (and not solely those in our household), and our larger kinship networks. These understandings of knowledge and ownership do not translate into the world of academia, where individuality and self-promotion are essential to making progress in our perspective fields. This is demonstrated in Morgan's feelings towards academics and the critique of the individuality of the academic space.

While mainstream movements concerning queer genders and sexualities are focused around identity labels, Morgan argues that Indigenous gender can never be defined under a colonial lens: "when people ask me why my pronouns (correction, when yt people ask me why my pronouns) aren't the most important to me now, I can explain that my gender—something I associate very closely with my indigeneity, and lineages of diverse gender in my community—could never be affirmed through the use of colonial language, through one word" (39). Morgan furthers this conversation with their appreciation for the use of "they," although it is hard for Morgan to disconnect from the trauma associated with the sexualization of their feminized body at a young age. Their discussion around pronouns also challenges the notion that "trans bodies have always been here," an idea often presented by mainstream movements as an appropriation of the Two-Spirit identity. While Indigenous communities historically did not have binary understandings of gender, they did not necessarily have what we know as trans bodies today. Two-Spirit people thus are confronted with gatekeeping politics around queerness and Indigeneity. It is not uncommon for Two-Spirit and Queer Indigenous people to hear, "If you are Indigenous, why must you appeal to these white constructs of gender and sexuality?" from members of their Indigenous communities.

When violence occurs within the queer community, a common response is dismissal due to the fact that people have not healed from their own trauma and that reproducing violence is a coping method. However, trauma should not be used to justify the violence towards others, as many who have faced trauma do not repeat the violence onto others. Morgan argues that "I won't tell you it's okay when your girlfriend gets violent when she's drunk—mainly because I know that intimate partner violence somehow gets normalized within queer communities" (158). Society normalizes ideas of who can and cannot be violent, as well as who can and cannot be victims. In the eyes of mainstream (patriarchal, heteronormative) society, women are not violent, and men are not victims, which makes it difficult in queer relationships for intimate partner violence to be recognized. The queer community is also not absolved from its reproduction of patriarchal norms, particularly when it comes to toxic masculinities. In the section of their book titled "Skyler," Morgan says that they "have been subject to the pitfalls of fem binarization to trans masculinities, [their] whole queer life, and the cycles that can emerge from the reification of masculinities that are misogynist, and therefore toxic, even in queer communities. A toxic trans bro is still a toxic bro" (30). Trans men are still capable of recreating violence and positioning themselves in roles of authority over others.

Another topic of importance that Morgan asks us to think about is who receives love and who deserves love: "Is there really such thing as NDN love, as trauma bb love as love for the unloved?" (1). Inundated by the media we watch, particular bodies are deemed lovable, and others are deemed disposable or even "rapable" (Smith). Both queer and Indigenous communities have been marked as undesirable and unlovable. This categorization creates systems in which we see ourselves and even reproduce these ideals within our communities (i.e. transphobia and queerphobia in Indigenous communities and anti-Indigeneity in queer communities). Morgan adds that "If love seems unattainable, for us prairie NDNs, it's only because we've lost our sacred connection to the land, and to all creation" (1). For Indigenous people and communities, connections to land and revitalization of their land-based practices are imperative to their healing and survival.

Two-Spirit and Queer Indigenous people have complex relationships between love and violence. What does love mean when it is not modeled to you? How can you love yourself and allow others to love you when you have faced violence and trauma? Due to our understanding of trauma and how trauma is reproduced, it can be hard to create boundaries. Morgan argues, "the only people who get angry when you set boundaries are those who benefit from you having none to begin with" (159). When behaviors are excused by the violence and trauma someone faces, those who wish to create boundaries are ostracized by those who do not wish to confront the realities and change the learned behaviors that have become acceptable. Throughout their memoir, Morgan explores the complexity of boundaries and trauma through their experiences and stories. They navigate how their life is a set of complex relationships, and ultimately, they find that navigating a mainstream white queer community – one which does not center issues of Indigeneity – reproduces violence towards Two-Spirit and Queer Indigenous members.

Jas M. Morgan's *nîtisânak* presents their personal memoir in conjunction with critiques of the settler-state policies of elimination and violence. Morgan's writing style presents these topics in short, easily consumed, autobiographical pieces that are accessible to those within and outside of academia. Their language choice and references are particularly relatable to Millennial and Gen Z age groups, presented through short pieces that capture moments of their lives and particular issues. Their references to Myspace, Limewire, and dial tones are especially relatable to Millennials who grew up with the beginnings of home internet access, music downloads, and early social media. Their references to #whitefeminism, yt, and tl:dr, among other online slang, are relevant to the youth growing up in an age where social media is a part of daily life.

While their memoir is easily relatable and understandable to non-experts and a younger audience, Morgan's critiques of mainstream queer movements and settler colonialism nevertheless make their story of particular interest for scholars in these academic fields.

Oregon State University

Works Cited

Smith, Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, Duke University Press, 2015.