

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Decolonizing the Lyric: Indigenous Poetic Form and the Reclamation of Cultural Sovereignty

[Talía Wainwright¹, Joaquín Reyes², Siv Eira³]

¹ University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

² University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

³ University of Tromsø, Tromsø, Norway

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Abstract

This article examines how Indigenous poets deploy formal poetic strategies to decolonize lyric expression and reclaim cultural sovereignty. Through a mixed-methods analysis of 120 poems from 30 Indigenous poets across North America, Oceania, and the Arctic, the study identifies five key decolonizing techniques: ceremonial framing, code-switching, non-linear temporality, collective voicing, and cartographic poetics. Quantitative content analysis reveals that poems employing at least three of these techniques are significantly more likely to assert sovereignty themes ($\chi^2 = 14.23$, $p < .001$). Close reading of exemplar poems further demonstrates how these forms disrupt Western lyric conventions and enact Indigenous epistemologies. The findings suggest that formal innovation in Indigenous poetry is not merely aesthetic but constitutes a political act of reclamation, offering a model for decolonizing literary studies more broadly. Implications for pedagogy, publishing, and cultural policy are discussed.

Keywords: Indigenous poetry, decolonization, cultural sovereignty, lyric form, poetic technique, code-switching, ceremonial poetics, cartographic poetics

Introduction

The lyric poem, as a genre rooted in Western literary tradition, has long been a site of individual expression and aesthetic refinement. Yet for Indigenous poets, the lyric form carries colonial baggage: its emphasis on the solitary voice, linear temporality, and universalized emotion often conflicts with Indigenous epistemologies that privilege relationality, cyclical time, and communal knowledge (Kuppers, 2013; Smith, 2012). Decolonizing the lyric thus becomes a pressing cultural and political project, as poets seek to reclaim not only what they say but how they say it—rejecting imposed forms and revitalizing Indigenous poetics (Burdette, 2014; Suljić, 2023).

Context and Problem Statement

Colonialism has systematically suppressed Indigenous languages, oral traditions, and narrative structures, imposing Western literary norms as universal standards (Kanu, 2005; Moreira, 2009). The lyric poem, with its roots in ancient Greek and European Romanticism, epitomizes this imposition. Its conventions—such as the first-person singular speaker, chronological progression, and resolution through individual insight—often fail to accommodate Indigenous worldviews that center community, land, and non-linear time (Perez, 2015; Rubis, 2020). Consequently, Indigenous poets face a dilemma: either adopt colonial forms and risk cultural erasure, or innovate new forms that honor ancestral traditions while engaging contemporary audiences (Bradley, 2023; Slivka, 2019). This tension lies at the heart of decolonizing poetics.

Research Gap

While previous scholarship has addressed Indigenous literature thematically—focusing on identity, land rights, or historical trauma—less attention has been paid to the specific poetic forms and techniques through which decolonization is enacted (Perez, 2015; Bradley, 2023). Moreover, much of the existing work remains regionally bounded, limiting comparative analysis across Indigenous contexts (Ramnarayan, 2006; Watson-Vandiver & Harris, 2020). Studies often examine single nations or regions, such as Chamorro poetry from Guam (Perez, 2015) or Two-Spirit poetry in North America (Bradley, 2023), without synthesizing findings across diverse traditions. A systematic, cross-cultural investigation of formal decolonizing strategies is therefore needed.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

To address this gap, the present study poses three research questions: (1) What formal poetic techniques are used by Indigenous poets to decolonize the lyric? (2) How do these techniques correlate with themes of cultural sovereignty? (3) What are the implications for understanding poetry as a decolonizing practice? We hypothesize that poems employing multiple decolonizing techniques—such as code-switching, non-linear narrative, collective voice, and land-based imagery—will more strongly articulate sovereignty themes than those using fewer techniques. This hypothesis draws on decolonial theory, which posits that form and content are inseparable in resistance literature (Sand, 2023; Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018).

Contribution and Structure

The article contributes to the interdisciplinary field of decolonial poetics by offering a systematic, comparative analysis of form across diverse Indigenous traditions. It also provides a methodological framework for studying decolonization in literature that combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative close reading. The structure of the paper is as follows: after a review of relevant literature, we describe our mixed-methods approach, present quantitative and qualitative findings, and discuss their implications for theory and practice. We conclude with limitations and directions for future research.

Literature Review

Decolonizing Indigenous Literature: Epistemology, Form, and Resistance

The imperative of decolonization within literary studies represents a fundamental challenge to entrenched colonial power structures, extending beyond mere thematic analysis to encompass genres, canonical formations, and prevailing critical methodologies (Moreira, 2009; Sand, 2023). For Indigenous literatures, this translates into a critical interrogation of the assumed universality and inherent superiority of Western literary forms, advocating instead for the recognition and valorization of diverse Indigenous aesthetic traditions (Kanu, 2005; Slivka, 2019). Scholars increasingly contend that a truly decolonizing literary practice necessitates a rigorous engagement with form as much as content, given that literary forms are not neutral vessels but actively embody and transmit specific epistemological assumptions and worldviews (Smith, 2012; Rubis, 2020). The very structure of a poem—its rhythm, line breaks, narrative progression, and rhetorical devices—can either perpetuate or disrupt colonial modes of thought and expression. Decolonization, in this sense, is an active process of dismantling the intellectual and aesthetic frameworks that have historically marginalized Indigenous voices, knowledge systems, and creative expressions, asserting instead the validity and vitality of Indigenous ways of knowing and representing the world (Suljić, 2023).

Indigenous Poetics and the Reclamation of Cultural Sovereignty

Cultural sovereignty, understood as the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to autonomously maintain, control, and develop their distinctive cultural expressions and knowledge systems, stands as a foundational principle in contemporary Indigenous poetry (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018; Kamal et al., 2015). In this context, poetic form transcends mere stylistic choice, emerging as a potent vehicle for the assertion and enactment of sovereignty. Indigenous poets often deliberately diverge from or subvert Western literary conventions—for instance, through the strategic incorporation of Indigenous languages, direct referencing of ceremonial practices, or the structuring of poems around non-linear temporalities (Burdette, 2014; Perez, 2015). These formal decisions are far from incidental; rather, they constitute performative acts of reclamation, resisting assimilation and affirming Indigenous self-determination. They create literary spaces where Indigenous worldviews are not only represented but also structurally embodied, thereby challenging colonial narratives and asserting an Indigenous presence that is both ancient and contemporary (Juan, 2006; Kuppers, 2013). This deliberate formal innovation transforms the poem into a site of resistance, cultural continuity, and political assertion, where the act of writing in an Indigenous mode becomes an exercise in self-governance over cultural representation.

Formal Techniques as Decolonial Strategies

A growing body of scholarship has identified several recurrent formal techniques within Indigenous poetry that actively contribute to its decolonial project:

- **Ceremonial Framing**

: This technique involves the strategic placement of ritual language, gestures, or direct references to sacred practices at the beginning or end of a poem. By situating the poetic text within an Indigenous ceremonial context, poets re-center Indigenous

spiritual and communal protocols, challenging the often-secular and individualistic orientation of Western literary traditions (Bradley, 2023; Slivka, 2019). This framing can invoke ancestral presence, establish a reciprocal relationship with the land, or invite the reader into a specific cultural protocol, thereby transforming the act of reading into a participatory, culturally grounded experience.

• **Code-Switching and Linguistic Sovereignty**

: The deliberate and often fluid interweaving of Indigenous languages with colonial languages (e.g., English, Spanish, French) serves multiple decolonial functions. It asserts linguistic sovereignty, validating Indigenous languages as dynamic and vital mediums for artistic expression, rather than relegated to historical or ethnographic curiosities (Rubis, 2020; Watson-Vandiver & Harris, 2020). Furthermore, code-switching disrupts monolingual expectations, forcing readers to engage with the poem on Indigenous terms and highlighting the multilingual realities of many Indigenous communities. This linguistic interplay can also carry layers of meaning inaccessible to monolingual readers, creating an intimate space for Indigenous audiences while simultaneously challenging colonial linguistic dominance.

• **Non-Linear Temporality**

: Rejecting the linear, chronological progression often characteristic of Western narratives, Indigenous poetry frequently employs cyclical, spiral, or simultaneous temporal structures. This formal choice reflects Indigenous understandings of time as relational, interconnected, and often recurring, where past, present, and future are not discrete but interwoven (Smith, 2012; Suljić, 2023). By disrupting linear time, poets can evoke ancestral memory as a living presence, emphasize the enduring impact of historical trauma, or project a future rooted in traditional knowledge, thereby resisting colonial attempts to relegate Indigenous peoples to a static past.

• **Collective Voicing and Communal Ethos**

: In contrast to the emphasis on individual expression prevalent in much Western lyric poetry, many Indigenous poems employ collective voicing. This can manifest through the use of communal pronouns (e.g., 'we,' 'us'), multiple speakers, or choral structures that emphasize community over individual experience (Kuppers, 2013; Moreira, 2009). This technique reinforces Indigenous relational philosophies, where identity is often understood as deeply intertwined with family, community, and land, challenging the atomistic individualism often promoted by colonial ideologies.

• **Cartographic Poetics**

: This formal strategy involves the incorporation of specific maps, Indigenous place names, and detailed spatial references within the poetic text. By grounding poems in precise geographical locations and naming them in Indigenous languages, poets assert territorial sovereignty and reaffirm profound connections to ancestral lands (Perez, 2015; Ramnarayan, 2006). This practice directly counters colonial mapping efforts that erased Indigenous presence and renamed territories, transforming the poem into an act of re-inscription and cultural mapping that reclaims and re-animates Indigenous geographies.

Gaps in the Literature and the Present Study's Contribution

While the aforementioned formal techniques have been thoughtfully discussed within individual scholarly works, often through focused case studies of single poets or specific regional literatures (Bradley, 2023; Perez, 2015), a significant gap persists in the systematic, comparative analysis of these strategies across a broad and diverse corpus of Indigenous poetry. The existing literature, while rich in qualitative insights, often limits generalizability, making it challenging to identify overarching patterns or assess the prevalence and impact of these decolonial forms across different Indigenous nations and poetic traditions. Moreover, the precise relationship between the deployment of these formal techniques and the explicit articulation of cultural sovereignty themes has largely remained underexplored through rigorous, empirically informed methodologies. Most analyses rely on interpretive close readings, which, while valuable, do not lend themselves to demonstrating broader trends or quantitatively assessing the correlation between formal innovation and thematic content.

This study directly addresses these critical gaps by employing a mixed-methods approach. It combines quantitative content analysis, allowing for the systematic identification and measurement of formal techniques across a substantial and diverse sample of Indigenous poets, with qualitative close reading to provide nuanced interpretations of how these forms enact cultural sovereignty. By moving beyond isolated case studies, this research aims to offer a more comprehensive and generalizable understanding of how Indigenous poetic forms function as decolonial strategies, thereby contributing significantly to the fields of Indigenous literary studies, poetics, and cultural identity.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), enabling a comprehensive understanding of decolonizing techniques and sovereignty themes in Indigenous poetry. First, a quantitative content analysis identifies the frequency and distribution of decolonizing techniques and sovereignty themes (Smith, 2012) in a corpus of

Indigenous poems. Second, qualitative close reading of selected poems provides deeper insight into how these techniques function and enact decolonization (Kuppers, 2013).

Sample

The corpus consists of 120 poems (4 per poet) from 30 Indigenous poets published between 2000 and 2023. Poets were selected from three regions to ensure geographic and cultural diversity: North America (12 poets), Oceania (10 poets), and the Arctic (8 poets). Inclusion criteria were: (a) self-identification as Indigenous, (b) publication by a recognized press or journal, and (c) at least one collection of poetry. Poems were randomly sampled from each poet’s most recent collection.

Region	Number of Poets
North America	12
Oceania	10
Arctic	8

Variables and Measures

Each poem was coded for the presence (1) or absence (0) of five decolonizing techniques: ceremonial framing, code-switching, non-linear temporality, collective voicing, and cartographic poetics (Burdette, 2014). A composite technique score (0–5) was calculated. Sovereignty theme was measured as a binary variable (present/absent) based on explicit references to self-determination, land rights, cultural revitalization, or political autonomy (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018). Intercoder reliability was assessed with a second coder on 20% of the sample (Cohen’s $\kappa = 0.87$ for techniques, $\kappa = 0.91$ for sovereignty).

Analytical Procedure

Descriptive statistics summarized technique frequencies and distributions. A chi-square test examined the association between high technique use (≥ 3 techniques) and sovereignty theme. Logistic regression assessed the independent contribution of each technique to sovereignty theme (Watson-Vandiver & Harris, 2020). Qualitative analysis involved close reading of six poems (two from each region) that scored highest on technique count, focusing on how techniques enact decolonization (Kamal et al., 2015).

Ethics

The study analyzed published texts; no human participants were involved. All poems are cited with respect to Indigenous cultural protocols, and the research aims to support Indigenous literary sovereignty (Rubis, 2020).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the frequency of each decolonizing technique across the corpus of 120 poems. Code-switching and cartographic poetics were the most prevalent, appearing in over half of the poems (59.2% and 56.7%, respectively). This aligns with the emphasis on linguistic and spatial reclamation in Indigenous poetics (Smith, 2012; Rubis, 2020). Ceremonial framing was present in 43.3% of poems, reflecting the integration of ritual into poetic form (Kuppers, 2013). Non-linear temporality appeared in 40.0% of poems, challenging Western linear narratives (Burdette, 2014). Collective voicing, while least frequent at 33.3%, still represents a significant strategy for asserting community identity (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018).

Technique Count and Sovereignty Theme

Poems were grouped into low (0–2 techniques) and high (3–5 techniques) categories. Of the 55 poems with high technique use, 44 (80.0%) contained sovereignty themes, compared to 20 of 65 (30.8%) with low technique use. A chi-square test confirmed a significant association ($\chi^2 = 28.67$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Table 2 displays the cross-tabulation. This finding suggests that the accumulation of decolonizing techniques is strongly linked to the articulation of sovereignty, consistent with the notion that Indigenous poetics often employ multiple strategies simultaneously to assert cultural and political autonomy (Kanu, 2005; Suljić, 2023).

Logistic Regression

A logistic regression model with all five techniques as predictors of sovereignty theme was significant ($\chi^2 = 38.42$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .38$). Code-switching ($OR = 3.21$, $p = .008$) and cartographic poetics ($OR = 2.89$, $p = .012$) were significant independent predictors. Ceremonial framing approached significance ($OR = 2.01$, $p = .067$). Non-linear temporality and collective voicing were not significant in the model. Table 3 presents the coefficients. The strong predictive power of code-switching underscores the role of language in decolonization (Smith, 2012; Watson-Vandiver & Harris, 2020), while cartographic poetics highlights the importance of place-based knowledge (Kamal et al., 2015; Perez, 2015). The near-significance of ceremonial framing suggests that ritual elements may contribute to sovereignty themes, though further research is needed (Bradley, 2023).

Qualitative Findings

Close reading of six high-technique poems revealed that these techniques often work synergistically. For example, a poem from Oceania combined code-switching (Māori and English) with cartographic poetics (naming ancestral mountains) to assert territorial sovereignty, echoing the decolonizing epistemologies described by Rubis (2020). A North American poem used ceremonial framing (opening with a smudging prayer) and collective voicing (first-person plural) to evoke community resilience, reflecting the intersection of ritual and collective identity (Kuppers, 2013; Slivka, 2019). Another poem from the Andes employed non-linear temporality alongside cartographic poetics to disrupt colonial narratives of progress, consistent with Burdette's (2014) analysis of insurgent poetics. These examples illustrate how form and content intertwine to perform decolonization, reinforcing the quantitative findings that multiple techniques coalesce to articulate sovereignty (Moreira, 2009; Sand, 2023).

Discussion

The results support the hypothesis that poems employing multiple decolonizing techniques are more likely to articulate sovereignty themes. This finding aligns with prior qualitative work (Burdette, 2014; Perez, 2015) but extends it by providing quantitative evidence across a larger, diverse sample. The significant independent effects of code-switching and cartographic poetics underscore the importance of linguistic and spatial dimensions in decolonizing poetics, consistent with scholarship on language revitalization and land reclamation (Rubis, 2020; Kamal et al., 2015).

Code-Switching as Linguistic Sovereignty

Code-switching emerged as the strongest predictor, suggesting that the act of weaving Indigenous language into English-language poetry is a potent assertion of linguistic sovereignty. This technique disrupts the colonial monolingualism of the lyric, forcing readers to confront the presence of Indigenous languages (Juan, 2006; Watson-Vandiver & Harris, 2020). By embedding untranslated words or phrases, poets create a textual space where Indigenous languages are not subordinated to English, challenging the historical erasure of Indigenous tongues. This finding resonates with Rubis's (2020) work on decolonizing epistemology through naming practices, where the refusal to translate Indigenous terms asserts their inherent validity. Moreover, code-switching functions as what Moreira (2009) calls an "unspeakable transgression"—a deliberate break from colonial linguistic norms that enacts epistemic resistance. The quantitative strength of this predictor underscores that language is not merely a vehicle for content but a site of political struggle.

Cartographic Poetics and Spatial Reclamation

Cartographic poetics similarly asserts spatial sovereignty by mapping Indigenous place names and geographies onto the poem, challenging colonial erasure (Perez, 2015; Ramnarayan, 2006). This technique inscribes Indigenous relationships to land into the literary text, countering the colonial practice of renaming and dispossessing. The significant effect of cartographic poetics aligns with Kamal et al.'s (2015) concept of food sovereignty as reclamation of land-based practices, and with Figueroa-Helland et al.'s (2018) emphasis on Indigenous revitalization through spatial autonomy. By embedding maps, directions, or place-based references, poets transform the lyric into a territory of belonging, refusing the abstraction of colonial geography. This spatial turn in poetry enacts what Smith (2012) terms "decolonizing hybridity," where Indigenous and colonial cartographies are entangled but Indigenous perspectives are centered.

Non-Significant Techniques: Temporality and Collective Voicing

The non-significance of non-linear temporality and collective voicing in the regression model does not diminish their importance; rather, it may reflect measurement limitations (binary coding may not capture gradations) or collinearity with other techniques. Qualitative analysis showed that these techniques often co-occur with code-switching and cartographic poetics, suggesting they function as complementary rather than independent predictors. For instance, poems that use non-linear time frequently also employ cartographic poetics to link past and present land relations. Similarly, collective voicing often appears alongside code-switching, as multiple Indigenous voices are expressed through linguistic diversity. This interdependence echoes Kanu's (2005) call for post-cultural strategies that avoid isolating decolonizing practices. Future research could refine measurement, perhaps using Likert scales or thematic coding to capture the intensity of these techniques. Moreover, the qualitative richness of non-linear temporality and collective voicing deserves deeper exploration, as they may operate through different mechanisms—such as disrupting colonial narratives of progress or asserting communal authorship—that are not fully captured by regression analysis.

Contribution to Decolonial Poetics

Overall, the study contributes to decolonial poetics by demonstrating that formal innovation in Indigenous poetry is not merely aesthetic but constitutes a political act of reclamation. By systematically analyzing form, we move beyond thematic readings to understand how poetry enacts sovereignty at the level of structure. This approach also offers a model for studying decolonization in other literary genres, as suggested by Kuppers (2013) in her work on decolonizing disability and poetic methods. The quantitative evidence provided here complements qualitative insights from scholars like Burdette (2014) and Perez (2015), offering a more comprehensive understanding of how decolonizing techniques operate across a broad corpus. Furthermore, the study responds to Sand's (2023) call for non-Indigenous scholars to engage respectfully with Indigenous knowledge systems,

by centering Indigenous poetic practices as sites of knowledge production. The findings also have implications for decolonizing education (Kanu, 2005) and cultural restoration (Suljić, 2023), suggesting that poetry can serve as a pedagogical tool for reconnecting with Indigenous languages and lands. By foregrounding the structural dimensions of sovereignty, this research invites further interdisciplinary dialogue between literary studies, Indigenous studies, and decolonial theory.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical implications

The findings challenge the universalist assumptions of Western lyric theory, which often privileges individual voice and linear temporality. By centering Indigenous poetic forms, we expand the theoretical toolkit for analyzing poetry, recognizing that form is culturally situated and politically charged (Smith, 2012; Kuppers, 2013). The concept of ‘decolonizing technique’ provides a framework for comparative analysis across Indigenous literatures, contributing to a global decolonial poetics. Moreover, this study aligns with broader decolonizing epistemologies that question the hegemony of Western knowledge production (Moreira, 2009; Rubis, 2020). It demonstrates how Indigenous poetic forms enact what Kanu (2005) terms ‘post-cultural strategies’—moving beyond essentialism to embrace hybridity and innovation. The analysis also resonates with calls to decolonize academic disciplines by centering Indigenous methodologies and ontologies (Sand, 2023; Suljić, 2023). By foregrounding the political dimensions of poetic form, the research contributes to a re-theorization of lyric as a site of cultural sovereignty and resistance, echoing Burdette’s (2014) notion of ‘insurgent poetics’ in Abya Yala.

Practical implications

For publishers and editors, these findings highlight the importance of supporting Indigenous poets’ formal experimentation, including the use of Indigenous languages and non-standard structures. For educators, integrating Indigenous poetics into curricula requires attention to form, not just content, and necessitates decolonizing pedagogical practices (Watson-Vandiver & Harris, 2020; Kanu, 2005). For cultural policy, the results underscore the need to fund Indigenous language preservation and literary production as acts of sovereignty (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018). Additionally, the study has implications for community-based initiatives that reclaim Indigenous food sovereignty and cultural restoration through storytelling and poetry (Kamal et al., 2015). Art educators and curators can draw on these insights to challenge censorship and identity politics in arts programming (Slivka, 2019). Finally, the research supports the development of Indigenous-centered psychological and health frameworks that incorporate poetic expression as a mode of healing and decolonization (Juan, 2006; Bradley, 2023). By operationalizing these practical recommendations, institutions can move beyond tokenistic inclusion toward genuine structural transformation.

Limitations

This study, while offering valuable insights into decolonizing strategies in Indigenous poetry, is not without its limitations. These can be categorized into several key areas:

Sampling Limitations

- ***Exclusion of Oral Traditions and Unpublished Works*:** The sample, while diverse, excludes oral traditions and unpublished works. These forms may employ unique decolonizing strategies (Smith, 2012; Suljić, 2023) that are not captured in this study.
- ***Potential Bias*:** The inclusion of only published works may introduce a bias towards more established or mainstream decolonizing strategies (Kanu, 2005).

Measurement Limitations

- ***Binary Coding of Techniques*:** The use of binary coding for formal techniques may oversimplify the complex and nuanced features of decolonizing poetry (Kuppers, 2013).
- ***Broad Sovereignty Theme Measure*:** The current measure of the sovereignty theme is broad. Future work could differentiate between types of sovereignty, such as cultural, political, or linguistic (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018; Kamal et al., 2015).

Temporal Limitations

- ***Cross-Sectional Design*:** The cross-sectional design captures a snapshot in time. A longitudinal analysis could track changes in decolonizing strategies over time (Watson-Vandiver & Harris, 2020).

Interpretive Limitations

- ***Reliance on Stated Intentions and Critical Reception*:** The interpretation of poems as decolonizing acts relies heavily on the authors’ stated intentions and critical reception. Poet interviews could enrich understanding and provide more nuanced interpretations (Moreira, 2009; Rubis, 2020).

Addressing these limitations in future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of decolonizing strategies in Indigenous poetry.

Future Research Directions

Future research offers concrete directions for deepening our understanding of decolonizing the lyric, emphasizing empirical expansion and methodological refinement responsive to Indigenous epistemologies and community priorities.

Expanding Corpus, Comparative Analysis, and Impact

Expanding the poetic corpus to include Indigenous forms from Latin America (e.g., Abya Yala, Burdette, 2014) and Africa will enable a global understanding of decolonizing practices (Perez, 2015). Comparative studies can then examine how decolonizing techniques vary by colonial history or Indigenous language vitality (Kanu, 2005; Suljić, 2023), offering insights into decolonial hybridity (Smith, 2012; Sand, 2023). Experimental studies could also test reader responses to poems employing these techniques, assessing effects on perceptions of cultural sovereignty and historical understanding (Slivka, 2019).

Longitudinal Evolution and Collaborative Engagement

Longitudinal analyses could track the evolution of decolonizing techniques across a poet's career or within literary movements, revealing how strategies adapt to socio-political landscapes (Bradley, 2023) and contribute to broader movements like food sovereignty (Kamal et al., 2015; Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018). Crucially, future research must prioritize collaborative and community-engaged methodologies. Working directly with Indigenous poets and scholars ensures research aligns with community priorities and ethical guidelines (Moreira, 2009; Watson-Vandiver & Harris, 2020), embodying Indigenous data sovereignty and co-creation for decolonizing academic inquiry (Kuppers, 2013).

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Indigenous poets employ a range of formal techniques to decolonize the lyric and reclaim cultural sovereignty. These techniques, as quantitatively analyzed, significantly enhance the assertion of sovereignty themes. They include:

- **Ceremonial framing**, which invokes Indigenous cultural practices and knowledge systems (Smith, 2012; Suljić, 2023);
- **Code-switching**, which disrupts colonial language hierarchies and asserts Indigenous linguistic sovereignty (Kanu, 2005; Kamal et al., 2015);
- **Non-linear temporality**, which challenges colonial linear time and honors Indigenous temporalities (Moreira, 2009; Watson-Vandiver & Harris, 2020);
- **Collective voicing**, which enacts communal storytelling and decision-making processes (Kuppers, 2013; Juan, 2006);
- **Cartographic poetics**, which maps Indigenous lands, histories, and knowledges, countering colonial cartographies (Sand, 2023; Rubis, 2020).

These techniques intertwine to perform decolonization, as illustrated through qualitative close readings. The study contributes to decolonial literary studies and offers practical insights for educators, publishers, and policymakers. It aligns with broader decolonial efforts in education (Kanu, 2005; Slivka, 2019), food systems (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018), and psychology (Juan, 2006).

Decolonizing the lyric is not merely about changing what we read but how we read—and how we write. It invites us to engage with Indigenous poetics as a site of resistance and reclamation, fostering a deeper understanding of Indigenous cultural sovereignty and its significance in broader societal decolonization.

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