Deanna Reder, *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition: Cree and Métis âcimisowina.* Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2022. 194 pages. ISBN 978-1-77112-554-3. $34.99 paperback.

My âcimisowin: I want to share a short summary of my life and how I found myself here today. My mother is Dënë Sųłınᶒ́ from Fort Smith, and my father is Irish from Ottawa. Growing up I experienced much intergenerational trauma, without realizing what it was until I was in my early twenties. When I was in kindergarten, I remember throwing out my lunch leftovers to avoid being scolded. When I was in the third grade, I developed full-bodied hives that I hid from my mother because I feared how she would react. I survived nearly killing myself with ecstasy pills in 2006. I also grew up with the assumption that university was not for people like me. But when I was seventeen, my oldest sister Melissa reminded me that I deserved to be in university, and that there were financial supports to be there. I started to have dreams for myself again. It took an ADHD diagnosis and some years to upgrade my high school courses before I was accepted into the University of Alberta. I decided to pursue my childhood dream to be an artist and writer and was enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts in Art and Design, with a minor in creative writing. However, I experienced some romantic issues that that led me to take on a full-time work during my studio courses semester, and I became so exhausted that I lost my art portfolio on the train to school. That year, I was nearly kicked out of university and had to switch my major. It was a devastating time for me, but I eventually decided on English literature since it seemed to be the best fit for helping me to become a better writer (and reader). Now, ten years later I published my first book, *ʔbédayine*; I am a doctoral candidate in English literature with a focus on Turtle Island critical and creative writing. (Kaitlyn Purcell)

I was first introduced to Deanna Reder's research on autobiography as theoretical practice during the writing of my master's thesis. My supervisor at the time, Christine Stewart, had directed me to read Reder's dissertation. The way that Reder prefaced the work with pieces of her life story, was something I felt alienated by during most of my experiences in university, aside from creative writing and community-based learning courses. In traditional literature classes we were expected to avoid the use of lived experiences. This never made sense to me.

In one graduate class on Canadian Literature, there was a peer that gave an enthusiastic presentation on border monuments and statues. However, I sensed that there was something they were not sharing. When it was time for questions, I asked if there was a story behind this keen interest of theirs. They shared a story of life growing up in border towns and seeing these monuments and public artworks. I wanted to ask again why they did not start the presentation with this story, but I believe I refrained. It was just the previous class when the instructor asked me if I would consider laughing like Eden Robinson instead of crying. I had given a presentation on Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*, which was scheduled during my moontime, and I became flooded with the grief of losing my sister Lorrie a few years prior.

I always felt so strange in university courses on English literatures. I chose this degree to support myself becoming a stronger writer, despite having ADHD and having no memory of most of the books taught during my primary education. I always got through those classes with my creative writing. I guess this gave me a bit of a different perspective in university. The thing that confused me the most was that scholars of literature were not supposed to talk about themselves in any form. We were only supposed to talk about the form of the text, the symbols and imagery. How are we supposed to study story if we removed our body, spirit, and heart, from this experience

of learning? I felt so lost and confused about my discomfort in literature classes until I discovered community service-learning courses and until I was introduced to the work of Indigenous scholars like Deanna Reder, Shawn Wilson, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

In the introduction of *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*, we are introduced into the landscape of Reder's psyche from the most prominent aspects of her upbringing. She survived the experience of seeing how her father, under the influence of alcohol, would spew racist remarks against her mother. And then there were the experiences of growing up with parents and relatives experiencing various emotional, spiritual, and/or physical disabilities or illnesses. After this succinct depiction of her adolescence, Reder ushers us away from this story becoming an illness narrative and brings us into the survivance narrative of her mother as an avid storyteller. Her relationship with her mother is something I can only dream of and have been in the process of learning how to mother myself so that I can stand confidently in academia.

In Chapter 1, Reder shares a story of a medicine giving dream, a story that denotes the ways Indigenous peoples interpret dreams and symbols through Indigenous knowledge systems, and that which cannot be defined through fixed definitions or interpretations.

In Chapter 2, Reder provides her reading and commentaries on Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, as well as the story of her role in helping to recover the lost piece of Campbell's âcimisowin. Within this chapter, there are references to Neal McLeod's writing on the Cree teaching of wâhkôhtowin. Initially, I found this citation to be shocking. In 2014, McLeod was charged with one incident of domestic violence. I only heard of this news from the Aunty Whisper Network, so I finally decided to investigate this story. From what I have gathered in McLeod's open letter, it appears that he received guidance and healing through ceremony in his community. Nonetheless, I wondered why Reder would refer to McLeod's writing on wâhkôhtowin rather than someone such as Dwayne Donald. This wonderment led me to believe that McLeod's scholarship here was intended to create an undercurrent on the spectrum of violence against women.

In Chapters 3 and 4, Reder's archivist work on Edward Ahenakew is astounding and inspiring. It reminds me why I am here, why I should be here, why I must be here in academia. Through this chapter, she brings us through her reading of the original manuscript of Edward Ahenakew's *Old Keyam*, in comparison with the 1973 published version. I was shocked—but not surprised—to see the ways an editor had completely altered Ahenakew's personal narrative and testimonies about public health issues for Indigenous peoples on reservations and residential schools. Through reading Reder's comparisons, I have gathered a stronger sense of direction for how I can begin to recover and read the stolen Indigenous stories from the archives and repositories.

In Chapter 5, we come back to the teaching of wâhkôhtowin, but through Papaschase scholar Dwayne Donald's perspective. This reference affirms that Reder was aware of the choice to include McLeod's scholarship despite his domestic violence charge. Through the experience of reading this text, while it did not explicitly explore this controversial topic, Reder is pointing to the various teachings of wâhkôhtowin as reminders "to walk cautiously" and the Cree teaching of kihcêyihtamowin: to have respect for the beliefs of others and "to tolerate conflicting ideas and perspectives" (76). Through reading this, I was finally able to piece together my thoughts and confront my conflicting feelings about writers like Neal McLeod, Wab Kinew, or Sherman Alexie. Maybe I would be better off to not speak on this topic, especially when this is not openly discussed in this book. But, now after contemplating the teachings shared through the work of Reder, I am prepared to explore and revisit the works of these authors.

Throughout these essays on Cree and Metis âcimisowina, are pieces of dream teachings and knowledge. We keep coming back to a story of a dream that Reder's kôhkom once had, proving her to be a great healer. Variations of this dream and this story surrounding the dream, are passed down to different relatives. Throughout each chapter, Reder comes back to this dream again and again in different ways. Reder's writing both embodies and articulates Cree and Métis âcimisowina as theoretical practice. The repetition of this dream story, the centering of nêhiyawêwin and teachings from various elders; this collection of scholarly essays reminds us that our research can be as spiritual as it is investigative.

The master's tools may not dismantle the master's house (Lorde), but may we at least use these tools to recover the archives and âcimisowina of those that have been haunted by the secrets and atrocities of colonial white supremacy. I dream that there may be different editions of this book so that it may be read more accessibly by all Indigenous peoples that yearn for the traditional teachings of our elders, as well as the empowerment brought by recovering the truth of our histories as great writers. But this is my wish for all our stories and artwork.

Mahsi cho to anyone reading this review, and to Deanna Reder for the gifts of these âcimisowina.

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