

# Two Spirits, Nádleeh, and LGBTQ2 Navajo Gaze

Gabriel S. Estrada

*Two-Spirit people balance society, the world, and the cosmos.*

—Carrie House

*There he was, my baby . . . shi'yazhii. . . . It's hard to lose someone you love so much.*

—Pauline Mitchell, *Two Spirits*

Decades after Laura Mulvey originated a psychoanalytic feminist discussion of “the male gaze” in her 1975 essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” American Indian film studies continues the proliferation of analytic gazes that build upon and contest Mulvey’s thesis: “the pleasure found in one person gazing at another can be used for power.”<sup>1</sup> Although Mulvey originally focused upon the phallogocentric power of the male gaze over fetishized women in film, subsequent American Indian film analyses complicate her heterosexist and Eurocentric perspectives by elaborating upon critical race, national, gender, and queer implications of the film camera’s gaze.<sup>2</sup> For example, in critiquing Apache-themed, hypermasculine Western film, Edison Cassadore provides a critical “Western Apache” “two-spirit” resistance to imperial whiteness in film, what Albert Boime calls the “magisterial gaze.”<sup>3</sup> M. Elise Marrubio interrogates the masculinist imperial gaze that rendered American Indian women’s bodies as fetishized objects of violence throughout most twentieth-century

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film.<sup>4</sup> Channette Romero notes how contemporary Hopi filmmaker Victor Masayesva encourages “viewers to acknowledge and resist the historic imperialism and voyeurism of the camera’s gaze” in order “to adopt a Hopi consciousness that values the connection among images, stories, and silences.”<sup>5</sup> In reading queer Native American images, Lisa Tatonetti criticizes film in which the “boundaries of nation in indigenous contexts are constructed and maintained by the heteronormative gaze” that restricts lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2) representations.<sup>6</sup> My own work differentiates the mere intersection of Native and queer representations from a two-spirit gaze by noting a two-spirit gaze’s greater focus on traditionalist, nationalist, and activist representations of community-identified two-spirit images.<sup>7</sup> Given a critical mass in two-spirit Navajo film and the strength of Navajo cultural, feminist, and gender activism, this article foregrounds Navajo LGBTQ2 gazes on two-spirit Navajo images.<sup>8</sup>

The Web site [www.NativeOUT.com](http://www.NativeOUT.com) is an online archive of two-spirit multimedia and a resource guide integral to this analysis because it exemplifies a two-spirit gaze. Louva Hartwell, Diné director of NativeOUT, introduces NativeOUT’s mission “to empower Indigenous LGBTQ/two-spirit [LGBTQ2] people across North America to work toward social change in their communities” and “to educate the world about the history and issues of Indigenous LGBTQ/two-spirit people.”<sup>9</sup> In keeping with an empowerment and educational mission, NativeOUT documents eight Native LGBT hate-crime murders, including the case of Fred Martinez, and provides a link to the trailer for the movie regarding Fred’s short life, *Two Spirits* (2010), directed by Euro-American Lydia Nibley.<sup>10</sup> Nibley documents Martinez’s murder and affirms his/her Navajo sense of being a two-spirit “effeminate male,” or *nádleeh*. In an interview about Nibley’s film, Navajos Elton Naswood and Michelle Enfield offer an approving *nádleeh* gaze on the film; they also call for greater Navajo, transgender, and activist representations in *Two Spirits*. Other films speak to these concerns. In contrast to *Two Spirits*, Hartwell’s 2007 *Miss Indian Transgender Arizona Crowned* short overtly affirms a Native transgender identity as envisioned by Navajo transgender woman Trudie Jackson. Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie’s (Navajo/Muskogee/Seminole) art-installation film *An Aboriginal View with Aboriginal Dreams* (2002) takes an internationally informed gaze that visually interrogates Navajo gender, sexuality, and sovereignty in a context of contemporary US/Navajo nationalism, the Iraq War, and gender suppressions. Finally, Carrie House’s (Navajo/Oneida) *I Am* (1999) short also centers upon the two-spirit activism that *Two Spirits* mutes. Through a comparative analysis of the Native LGBTQ2 representations in *Two Spirits*, *2007 Miss Indian Transgender Arizona Crowned*, *An Aboriginal View with Aboriginal Dreams*, and *I Am*, this article foregrounds Navajo LGBTQ2 gazes

that are culturally grounded, activist, and critical of US, Navajo, and Native American national heterosexisms.

### *TWO SPIRITS, NÁDLEE H GAZE, AND ACTIVISM*

As a queer feminist of Chiricahua Apache, Rarámuri, Caxcan Nahua, and Chicana matrilineages who participates in two-spirit social networks, I begin with my own overview of *Two Spirit's* central message before moving on to *nádleeh* gazes on the film. Although the documentary problematically braids in queer, white activist narratives with an array of two-spirit voices, Martínez's mother, Pauline Mitchell, provides the heart-wrenching Navajo core of the film. A single, working-class mother, Mitchell emotionally narrates the 2001 loss of her sixteen-year-old child in Cortez, Colorado, located off the Navajo and Southern Ute reservations. Mitchell recounts her loving support for her son's adolescent transition to a Diné identity that she defines as "half woman half man . . . *nádleeh*." At times this included self-presentation as feminine, wearing makeup, a bra, and women's-style clothes. She tearfully recounts the horrific experience of surviving her son, only grudgingly letting go of her attachment to him when her son's spirit began to manifest itself physically around her as a sign of unrest. Through a Native American Church peyote ceremony briefly reenacted in the film, Mitchell is able to release her son's spirit, represented by a bald eagle that lands on a rock in front of her after the ceremony. The upward tilt of the camera angle that films the eagle's final descent against a windy blue sky alludes to a heavenly power that has transformed Fred's spirit into eagle form. This upward camera angle contrasts with a cut to a completely level camera angle that films a close-up of Mitchell on an earthly plane of pain. Although the close-up implies intimacy, the level angle emphasizes a conversational moment amongst peers, allowing the audience to empathize with her more easily. The absence of reaction shots to the director, Nibley, masks the whiteness that is inherent in the film and renders whiteness more invisible and, at times, more insidious. A collection of tiny child faces from multiple family pictures gaze out from behind Mitchell as Nibley films her seated in her trailer wearing a blue t-shirt, rimless glasses, and makeup. Mitchell tearfully interprets the sign, finally concluding, "It's Fred." A return shot to the landed eagle begins a montage in which the eagle image is briefly replaced by a photograph of Fred with upraised hands and face. The camera angle is also at an upward tilt. The sun that hits his face almost obscures his features, as though to represent his eminent ascension to heaven like an eagle, the hope being that his battered face would be healed by a heavenly touch in spirit. This sun blends with the sun that beams strongly through pine

trees and cottonwoods as the image montage ends with the first shot of L. Frank Manriquez in a cowboy hat and shirt seated in the grass. This return to Manriquez emphasizes the continued struggle for two-spirit people to heal themselves and their indigenous communities. Speaking as a Tongva native of Los Angeles, s/he affirms that s/he regained a neutral gender through speaking with “ravens.” “I talked to that land and it talked to me,” Manriquez recalls, reclaiming a constellation of two-spirit gender beliefs.<sup>11</sup>

In the film’s concluding close-up, Mitchell recounts the joy and pain of seeing Fred again in dreams. “There he was, my baby . . . *shí’yazhii*. . . . It’s hard to lose someone you love so much,” she cries. Within matrilineal Navajo society, her undying devotion for her son powerfully reflects a Navajo acceptance of *nádleeh* and makes clear the injustice of his murder. This final interview close-up reveals Mitchell’s shifting gaze, which registers her memory and draws the viewer into her sorrow and her determined will to struggle on behalf of Fred and his *nádleeh* identity. *Two Spirits* debuted on PBS’s Independent Lens during June 2011. Based upon the emotional Los Angeles screening audience reactions, I project that many within the mass home audiences were also moved to tears by the intimate power of her close-up testimonials and her tearful gaze.

In order to give a Navajo LGBTQ2 gaze, I include film reviews from two *nadleéhs* invested in two-spirit culture and healing. Naswood is of the Near to the Water People clan, born for the Edge Water People clan. His maternal grandfather’s clan is of the Mexican people, his paternal grandfather’s clan is of the Tangle people, and this is how he is Navajo, Diné. As program coordinator of the Red Circle Project (RCP) at AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) and recipient of the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center’s Red Ribbon Award, Naswood has key accolades for *Two Spirits*.<sup>12</sup> In a personal interview with me, he shares, “I enjoyed the reedited version [of *Two Spirits*] because it told a complete story. It had a correlation with Native thought processes and adequately dramatized the story of Fred Martinez. It had a strong impact, the mother’s perspective. I felt she was close.” Considering the potential impact of the film on the Navajo Nation, Naswood states that it will “add to the dialogue and understanding of our traditional way and culture and empower the youth as well.”<sup>13</sup> A Navajo transgender woman’s gaze on *Two Spirits* comes from Enfield. She is of the Tachii’nii clan born for the Tsi’naajinii clan; her maternal clan is To’ahani and her paternal clan is Todich’iinii. Enfield provides commentary on the film based upon her experiences and expertise as the HIV training specialist who runs an RCP/APLA Native Transgender support circle. This second *nádleeh* gaze confirms that the film can positively impact *nádleeh* representation on and off the Navajo Nation. In a personal interview, she concurs, “Her mother, I’m sure, was very happy to tell her story.

Navajos are very oral in their traditions. People will talk about this film for a long time. I have a friend who told me the mother gave speeches throughout the US. The mother touched my heart. It was so nice to hear from the first perspective how much a mother could love a child no matter what he or she is." Enfield is especially awed by the manner in which Mitchell overcame "the stage of oppression" in order to speak out for her murdered child.<sup>14</sup> Naswood and Enfield concur that the film *Two Spirits* will have positive impact on *nádleeh* and two-spirit communities both on and off the reservation.

*Two Spirits* acknowledges a *nádleeh* gaze through narration and interviews by Wesley Thomas, a foremost scholar on his own *nádleeh* gender and Diné language. Narrating the film's first five minutes, Thomas states, "this is the true story of a Navajo boy who was also a girl," honoring Martinez's dual male and female natures. As Thomas's voice explains the place of balanced femininity and masculinity within Martinez, the *nádleeh*, and the Navajo sacred landscape, he cinematically reclaims the Navajo Nation as inclusive of multiple genders and resists decades of heterosexist cinematic appropriation of Navajo lands in Westerns and other documentaries.<sup>15</sup> Thomas narrates Navajo gendered creation and the correlating balanced nature of masculine peaks and feminine rolling valleys as the camera takes soaring bird's-eye views of the Navajo Nation's iconic mesas bathed in red and yellow sunlight. By affirming the slippery slope of masculine and feminine inherent within land and all creation, Thomas's narrative rejects the hierarchical, dualistic Western hegemonies that pit men against women and people against nature. Carolyn Epple might comment that Thomas's narration, coupled with the visuals, is an example of the central Navajo philosophy of *sa'q̄h naaghát bik'eh hózhó*, which she translates as referring to an ever-dynamic cycle of feminine and masculine forces inherent within all creation.<sup>16</sup> Rather than focusing upon Mulvey's feminist "male gaze," which polarizes human males and females in a phallogocentric system, *Two Spirits* invites a gender-balanced understanding of the nature of Navajo cosmology in which *nádleeh* exist as a natural reflection of the cycle of male and female inherent in all aspects of the universe.

Thomas presents *nádleeh* as an honored role within his Navajo culture.<sup>17</sup> Seated on a wooden bench in a hogan with a dirt floor in front of a Two Grey Hills Navajo rug, Thomas calmly but authoritatively explains the *nádleeh* tradition as historical photographs of *nádleehs* appear labeled on the screen: "They were herbalists. They were negotiators. They were healers. They were matchmakers. They counseled couples. And when children were orphaned, the *nádleeh* would become the caretakers of the children." Through shared family photographs, oral tradition, and reenacted video of childhood scenes, Thomas also recounts his own story: "with my grandmother's insistence, I began occupying those spaces where only women are generally given privilege

to." He recalls his grandmother's affirmations, "That's who you are. That's what you were born into. Nobody has the power to derail you from that, not even yourself, because that's a power that's given to you by the Holy People." Providing a larger Navajo gender context, Thomas affirms the Diné language words for four genders. The first gender is "*asdzáán*, feminine woman" because woman is the matrilineal and matrilocal center of Navajo culture. The second is "*hastíin*, masculine man." A person of the third gender, "*nádleehí*, feminine man," is "born as a male person but functions in the role of girl in the early childhood and functions more in the role a woman in adulthood." The fourth gender, "*dilbaa*, masculine woman," makes the complementary switch to male gender roles in a female body.<sup>18</sup> Thomas provides these four gender categories but inhabits his *nádleeh* identity based upon his own Navajo voice, body, land, and oral traditions.

Thomas resists the homophobic Christianization that erased the knowledge of traditional *nádleeh* roles for many Navajos in the film. Although Mitchell's participation in a Native American Church ceremony allowed her to lay her son's lingering spirit to rest, she was unable to recall any support for the *nádleeh* role from her family or church while her son was alive. The family silence that surrounds Mitchell's role as a defender of the *nádleeh* role is a subtle reminder of how gender roles have changed among the Navajo. In the film, gay Navajo, Juantio Becenti, a resident of Cortez, Colorado, explains that "you don't find as many purely traditional people anymore as much as you find members of the Native American Church." Seated at his piano, he emphasizes that the traditional Navajo religion of his maternal grandparents stressed what is not beneficial but has "no . . . one God saying that in particular is bad." Within Becenti's knowledge of Navajo traditions, there is no broad condemnation of gender variations or of sexuality as being sinful. Becenti contrasts his maternal grandparents' acceptance of *nádleeh* with his parent's Christian rejection of it. In the film, he continues on as a gay Navajo composer, recalling that his parents once made him burn his own music composition scores as punishment for being effeminate. A series of childhood and adolescent photos of Becenti accompany his musings about his own gender and sexuality oppression as a youth.

Although *Two Spirits* avoids severe anti-*nádleeh* speech, it does exist in Navajo culture, and its existence helps contextualize the importance of the movie. For example, in one off-camera newspaper interview, former Navajo council member and adviser to the tribal council's Human Services Committee, Albert Deschine, freely voices a Christianized sexual condemnation of *nádleeh* by saying of Thomas, "that homo archaeologist? I hate that fucking fag." Deschine also denied Thomas's account of the reliance of First Man and other men upon the *nádleeh* for domestic needs during their original separation from



First Woman and the other women in Navajo oral tradition. Deschine charges, “They [*nádleeh*] were nothing more than a degenerate gene. Every society has one. There is no way that a Navajo man would have sex with a *nádleeh*. We’re not that idiotic. We’re not a backward community.”<sup>19</sup> Although the majority of Navajos may not believe as Deschine does, the fact that he felt free to make these homophobic and transphobic statements that attack *nádleehs* is a concern that the film broadly addresses. Although Deschine argues for traditional Navajo values, the oral traditions from which he draws clearly contrast to those that are well documented in *Two Spirits* and other sources.

Contrary to Deschine’s denials, Naswood affirms that the *nádleeh* play an important role in accompanying the men when an original division of sexes occurs—*nádleeh* help conduct the negotiations to end that division of sexes. In an interview in the short documentary *As They Are: Two Spirit People in the Modern World* (2009), Naswood faces the camera as he recalls the traditional teaching he learned:

I had heard a story from my mother’s eldest sister, who played the role of grandmother, if you will. And she had told me a story that I remember, that I recall, that long ago when the Navajo world [began], within the Navajo people, there was a separation of the sexes, and that there was an argument between man and woman. And then, at that time, the men went to one side of the river and the women went to the other side of a river. And, it was the *nádleeh*, it was the more effeminate less masculine men, that brought the sexes together, and that because of the *nádleeh*, our people survived. If it wasn’t for the *nádhleehs*, we wouldn’t be the people we are today.<sup>20</sup>

Naswood’s story of the emergence of the *nádleeh* is but one of many versions that circulate among the Navajo. In other versions, they are also credited with the invention of pottery and the grinding stone so integral to Navajo culture.<sup>21</sup> In the film, Naswood explains that he grew up performing both male and female roles in ceremony, sometimes cooking food with the women and at other times doing a male role of chopping and hauling wood. As a reflection of that traditional origin belief, Naswood affirms the *nádleeh* role: “people see it as that special gift we seem to have and it is really well accepted.”<sup>22</sup>

Concerned with community needs, Naswood also reports a gaze on the relative lack of contemporary two-spirit political and organizational activism within *Two Spirits*. In Nibley’s film, a Euro-American lesbian New Yorker from the Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), Kathy Renna, steps in to ensure that the courts follow up on Martinez’s murder as a hate crime. She collaborates with a Euro-American queer male friend of Martinez’s family, John Peters-Campbell. That queer Euro-Americans step in to aid the Martinez case is commendable, but one would expect that the Native activist

side of the collaboration would also find emphasis in the film. It doesn't. Naswood notes, "The *Two Spirit* film leaves off many organizations nationally. We see a lot of two-spirit groups: Northeast Two Spirit Society [New York, NY], Denver Divas [Denver, CO], Two Spirit Society [Tulsa, OK], Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits [San Francisco, CA]. . . . As Native two-spirit people . . . we are growing nationally, whether it's being visible or advocating for recognition. The film doesn't go into that. A contemporary voice is needed."<sup>23</sup> A false racialized dichotomy develops in *Two Spirits*—Native Americans are emotional and spiritual while Euro-Americans are factual and political. Although Thomas speaks strongly of Navajo genders and spirituality, he never comments directly on Martínez's death, choosing to support the concept of *nádleeh* more broadly. As interviewed, the two-spirit gathering activists, such as Manriquez (Tongva/Acjachemem) and Richard LaFortune (Yupik), neither express outrage nor sadness at his murder, nor do they show any direct organization against these kinds of hate crimes. The only direct two-spirit response to Martínez's murder comes from composer Becenti, who shares an opera he is composing in honor of Martínez's victorious resolve to "just be well" after attempting suicide stemming from the gender and sexual harassment that he endured in high school. Although *Two Spirits* shows that cross-cultural, queer support networks can and should develop between Native American and Euro-American LGBTQ2 communities, queer Euro-American and Native LGBTQ2 groups often struggle to find that common ground. *Two Spirits* erases these cultural conflicts that Scott Lauria Morgensen and others document.<sup>24</sup> Because two-spirit peoples have often had to organize apart from white LGBTQ2 racist, cultural, or Eurocentric practices, one might expect that *Two Spirits* would show more commentary and concern from two-spirit organizations and Native American nations in regard to Martínez's life and murder.

Naswood comments that the film could have focused more on Navajo and American Indian nations' responses to LGBTQ2 issues, noting that the film inspires him to do more in the field of Native LGBTQ2 hate crimes on and off Native American reservations: "I do a lot of work on victimization that includes how to train tribal law enforcement. How do you begin to develop trainings to get sensitivity for both LBGT issues and Native issues? I am developing curriculum needed to do training with tribal victims regarding gender power, gender victims, gender perpetrators, services, appropriate issues, domestic violence issues. The services on reservations are general. They are often not accessed or people do not know how to be sensitive to those needs."<sup>25</sup> Naswood prefers to utilize a curriculum that is specifically geared toward particular two-spirit and gender needs on and off reservation spaces rather than to rely upon national US organizations such as GLAAD to lead this



effort in a less culturally appropriate way. The strength of his *nádleeh* gaze shows how the movie can inspire a two-spirit nationalist and urban response, even when that response is not so visible in the film.

As a transgender Navajo woman activist, Enfield is quick to identify with the capable Navajo woman figure of Mitchell, noting of Navajo women, “we are strong.”<sup>26</sup> Although the film tends to focus on queer, white activism and mostly keeps Mitchell as the emotional core, Mitchell absolutely took an activist role off camera. She advocated against the K–12 educational nonacceptance of gender nonconformity and *nádleehs* that she and her son encountered, called for greater LGBTQ2 hate-crime persecutions, and relentlessly pursued the case that sent her son’s murderer to prison. Even though Martínez’s status as a Navajo and as a perceived transgender person may have limited the outcry against his/her murder in comparison to the sympathy that gay, white youth Matthew Shepard received worldwide, Mitchell’s activism with Parents, Friends, and Families of Lesbian and Gays and GLAAD helped to gain the passage of the 2009 Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.<sup>27</sup> This measure expands the US federal hate-crime law to cover crimes motivated by the actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, or disability of the victim. Like Judy Shepard, Matthew’s mother, Mitchell found herself motivated by love for her murdered child to act politically. Seeking a third term as Navajo Nation president, Joe Shirley Jr. paid a public visit to Mitchell in support of her activist work. Although Mitchell’s activism attracted the attention of the US and Navajo leadership, the film rhetorically limits her image to that of an emotional, spiritual mother, only showing her resistance to the K–12 gendered dress codes that her son violated. A Native feminist hand in editing the film could have emphasized greater linkages between Mitchell’s matrilineal Navajo clan system, motherhood, and political activism at the personal, community, and national levels.

Two-spirit and *nádleeh* gazes on *Two Spirits* provoked heated discussion about white, gay appropriation of Native gender systems and religions. Ultimately, two-spirit and *nádleeh* activism helped to shift the reediting of *Two Spirits* to reflect “visual sovereignty” better in order to “operat[e] in the service of the home communities” and nations, as Michelle Raheja would interject.<sup>28</sup> After viewing an earlier version of the film, the Two-Spirit Society of Seattle wrote an April 29, 2010 letter of protest to Nibley stating, “We believe the depiction of the Radical Faeries within *Two Spirits* appears as a co-optation of what their organization perceives as Native culture.”<sup>29</sup> As a nature-based recreation of Euro-American queer culture, white Radical Faeries such as Harry Hay and Mark Thompson have long debated the extent to which their countercultural faeries have co-opted Native American culture.<sup>30</sup> In response to the Two-Spirit Society of Seattle and to other two-spirit criticisms, Nibley

edited several minutes of Radical Faerie voices and histories out of her film in June 2010.<sup>31</sup> The images of nudist Radical Faeries and narratives that connect them with the *nádleeh* tradition are still available in the outtakes of the film on the DVD version but did not air nationally on PBS. In the edited version, Radical Faerie author Thompson only briefly attempts to collapse two-spirit and Radical Faerie peoples by saying “we make a stronger, healthier, more vibrant culture.” Clearly, the two-spirit protests to Thompson’s presence in the film contests his presumption that Radical Faerie activities truly support two-spirit culture and make it “more vibrant,” as they appropriate “tribalism” and “shamanism” from what they imagine to be two-spirit practices.<sup>32</sup> Joseph Gilley documents the multiple problems with non-Native appropriations of two-spirit traditions.<sup>33</sup>

### NAVAJO TRANSGENDER WOMEN AND *NÁDLEE*H

Although both Naswood and Enfield identify as *nádleeh*, they choose a different gender identity in English that influences their gaze and politics. Naswood identifies as a gay male, and Enfield states that she is a transgender woman. Their division in identities is a recent cultural evolution because Navajos did not make this exact kind of differentiation among *nádleeh* prior to contemporary times. Although Epple shares a lone 1934 report that Navajo biological hermaphrodites wore women’s dress while nonhermaphrodite *nádleeh* married to males wore men’s dress, she states that “traditionally, *nadleehí* have practiced certain behaviors—such as attire, occupation, and, on occasion, sexual partner preference. . . . Thus, a male *nadleehí* may (to varying degrees) wear women’s clothing; participate in activities associated with women, such as cooking and washing; and have sexual relations with other men.”<sup>34</sup> Epple clarifies that Navajo categories and culture are very dynamic and lead to ever-changing situational reactions that include gender within a Navajo worldview. Naswood presents questions regarding contemporary *nádleeh* identity in *Two Spirits*, noting that “there was a confusion of Fred’s identity. Did *nádleeh* mean transgender? Did it mean gay? . . . Wesley Thomas’s presence in the film was really good on third and fourth gender.”<sup>35</sup> Enfield quickly notes the lack of media visibility for Native and Navajo transgenders and the importance *Two Spirits* has in beginning to fill the void of positive representations: “I am happy that the documentary was made to increase the visibility of Native transgenders. It is unfortunate that her death was the impetus to get out in the media, but it shows that Native transgenders can be seen and heard. It was a disappointment to see that she was not referred to as a transgender woman. It creates confusion. In my mind there is no confusion.”<sup>36</sup>

Naswood and Enfield question the lack of transgender pronouns and representations in *Two Spirits*. Although Travis Goldtooth seems to present as a Navajo transgender woman, by wearing a skirt, makeup, and turquoise jewelry in *Two Spirits*, s/he does not self-identify by gender or gender pronoun but as “a proud Native American” who may positively influence others with his/her presentation as s/he is. However, the absence of a clear transgender identity in Goldtooth’s case may reflect a certain kind of Navajo cultural observance that is not rooted in transphobia. Based upon one gay Navajo’s testimony, Margaret Ann Waller and Roland McAllen-Walker conclude that Navajos reject a Eurocentric “stage theory” that privileges individual autonomy in which “coming out” is the final stage of “self-assertion.” They propose that Navajos may not come out so as to maintain “the integrity of . . . Navajo identity [that] requires respect, deference, and the ability to engage in subtle social interplay rather than obvious self-expression.”<sup>37</sup> The way that *Two Spirits* was edited may have captured this aspect of cultural deference in Goldtooth, who is visually striking in his/her presentation in bright women’s clothing. Even so, this deference does not characterize many Navajo transgenders like Enfield who are organizing and identifying as transgender in order to combat misrepresentations of their identity.

Given that Martinez took the time to present as a woman and was likely killed because of this presentation as a transgender woman, it would make sense to have a Navajo transgender woman’s perspective on the realities of violence and political mobilization as an empowering voice. Although *Two Spirits* incorporates *nádleeh*- and gay-identified voices, the film refrains from offering a transgender-identified perspective. Statistics and an abbreviated film history help to contextualize Martinez’s suicide attempt, educational harassment, and murder. The 2011 *Injustice at Every Turn* study offers the first national, comprehensive, multicultural, and multivariant examination of transgender violence. Not surprisingly, it finds that Native American transgenders and gender nonconformists face high rates of discrimination and violence. For example, American Indian transgender and gender-nonconforming K–12 students face the following high rates of harassment and assault: harassed, 72 percent; physically assaulted, 38 percent; and sexually assaulted, 24 percent.<sup>38</sup> Of those who were harassed or bullied in school, 41 percent reported attempting suicide, just as Martinez did after he was bullied in school. Leslie Fienberg notes the irony that popular films such as *Psycho* (1960), *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), and *Dressed to Kill* (1980) portray transgenders as murderous sociopaths when it is transgenders who face violent hate crimes in a gender-conforming society.<sup>39</sup> The films *Boys Don’t Cry* (1999), *Photos of Angie* (2011), and *Two Spirits* (2010) begin to rectify this as they recount the murders of transgenders Brandon Teena (female to male), Angie Zapata

(male to female), and Martinez (*nádleeh*), respectively. At the same time, these films about murdered transgenders do not offer complete resistance to the official US censorship (1934–70s) that virtually guaranteed that LGBTQ2 characters would die during the final scenes of the film.<sup>40</sup> To present a living Navajo transgender-identified narrative would have boosted the films' activist intentions.

One aspect of a *nádleeh* gaze is that it is able to draw upon resistive narratives and experiences and fill in the representational blanks that films often leave in their wake. Enfield makes positive statements about the successes that Native transgender role models can provide to younger transgenders. She mentions Navajo transgender activist Jackson as such a role model that Enfield missed earlier in her life:

Trudie Jackson is a wonderful woman. She represents what Native Transgender women are hoping to achieve. If I had met me when I was younger, a lot of my negative experiences wouldn't have happened. One Navajo Transgender friend is going back to school to become a doctor. Another Navajo Transgender I know is a business owner. Lo and behold here we are. We are Navajos. We're Native Americans. We're transgenders. We are resilient. We are productive. We are resourceful. That is a wonderful thing. It's our negative experiences that have given us a thicker skin no matter how bad or good it is. It is not always going to be negative. It's not always going to be a gloomy vision. . . . I have clients who are doing wonderfully, going to school, getting their own apartments, being productive citizens of society. It gives them hope and keeps us alive.<sup>41</sup>

An image edited out of *Two Spirits* momentarily shows Enfield and another transgender Navajo woman posing on the Diné College campus where they and three other transgender Navajos were earning a higher education during the 1980s.<sup>42</sup> In the photo, the modelesque Enfield broadly smiles over her bared shoulder. She sports black shoulder-length hair, black stockings, light shorts, and black shoes and blouse. Her taller friend with blond Madonna-like hair also smiles and bares her shoulders, revealing black bra straps that match her black shoes, pants, and blouse. The photo depicts playful and positive transgender Navajo women attaining a higher education. Such images can inspire a new generation of educated, professional Navajo transgenders to combat the false stereotype that transgender Native women cannot meet educational and gendered standards and must necessarily resort to unemployment or sex work.

Although Martinez did not claim a fixed transgender identity at his age, he may have chosen to identify fully as a she in time. Figure 1 is one of many personal photos in which Martinez presents as feminine. Many of the photos in the film show Martinez erotically licking the lipstick on his lips or even

grabbing “her” own breasts. This photo shows Martinez grasping an eyeliner pencil, finding the light in the photo, and exploring making the face into a feminine image that could be shown to the world, despite the rejections and violence it would encounter. In a separate newspaper interview, Mitchell was quoted as saying “To some people Fred said he



FIGURE 1. Fred/E. C. finds the light for the camera. Courtesy of Lydia Nibley.

was ‘transgender,’ to others ‘gay,’ to some ‘nadleeh,’ a Native American word for people who live in the worlds of both female and male,” leaving one to wonder why the fluidity of Martinez’s transgender self-identity figures so obliquely in the film.<sup>43</sup> It is brought up only once during the *Two Spirits* film, in GLAAD representative Renna’s interview. Renna notes the trend of gender fluidity, which she idealizes within a white, liberal, lesbian sense of individuality:

One of the hallmarks that we’re seeing with queer youth today is that they are much more fluid in their gender and their identities. . . . There was a fascinating tug of war in the GLBT community: He was gay! No he was transgender! I basically . . . learned . . . he was Fred. Sometimes he was Fredrica and sometimes he was F. C. and sometimes he was Beyoncé. Didn’t want a label. Wanted to wake up in the morning and say “who am I going to be today?” How many people have the wherewithal and the self-esteem and the pride to do that?

For film critic Sharon Cowan, this act of “rejecting the inevitable fundamental importance of gender categories” is a more radical representation than to conform to male or female categories through the transsexual transformation of the gendered body into a legally defined binary of male or female identity.<sup>44</sup> However, these popular conceptions of being between identities may not fit *nadleeh* because many *nadleeh* identify by specific LGBTQ2 identifiers as well.

Renna’s gender-queer sense that Martinez was constantly shifting his/her individual identity may not explain who Martinez was as a *nadleeh*. Although the eight-minute short *Thorn Grass* (2002), a poetic and personal film by the white transgender man D. R. Hammer, also emphasizes the elusive nature of Martinez’s gender identity, which the media often identified as transgender, larger two-spirit communities emphasize the need for communal recognition and support.<sup>45</sup> Working from the ideas of Beth Brant, Chris Mayer elaborates upon the importance of “presenting” oneself rather than coming out, an idea that differs from a more individualist and white liberal sense of LGBTQ2 identity. She quotes Brant, writing that “presenting oneself denotes an intracultural act with a ceremonial aspect that of necessity includes ‘a full knowledge of

who [one] is and what [one] is to [one's] community."<sup>46</sup> Although ceremonial knowledge is flexible, it may not simply reflect the individual identities and desires that Renna and Hammer idealize. In *Two Spirits*, Martinez does sit down with his mother and family to explain that "this is how I am," as Mitchell recalls. Martinez also hears input from the family and ultimately gains the support, purse, makeup, *nádleeh* identity, and prayers of his Navajo matriarch in what was clearly more than an individual decision to identify as *nádleeh*. Mitchell presents her son as *nádleeh* in her own Diné language and only prays for him in Diné at his grave.

Although a non-Navajo viewer cannot understand the depth of experience, time, and place behind that identity and prayers, Maureen Schwarz provides a cursory understanding of how Navajo prayers relate to the very origins of the people. In *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman* (1997), Schwarz notes that the central Navajo belief in *sa'q̄h naaghái bik'eh hózhq̄*, a philosophy that could translate as "the essence of long life, peace and harmony," is actually made of *sa'q̄h naaghái* (male) and *bik'eh hózhq̄* (female) beings who are inherent in all creation. She notes that contemporary Navajo philosophers feel that *sa'q̄h naaghái* is the "protective element" and *bik'eh hózhq̄* is the "blessing element," while informant Harry Walters cautions that the understanding only comes through full participation in Navajo ceremonies, language, and culture.<sup>47</sup> The result is "twelve levels" of knowledge that defy easy translation into static or fluid LGBTQ2 identities. It is possible that Martinez did not simply identify by gender/sexual category because he had reached a terminal stage of personal empowerment, but also because he was reflecting the larger process of the *sa'q̄h naaghái bik'eh hózhq̄* cycle, which is constantly changing between dynamic male and female forces, as Epplé's Navajo queen, gay, and *nádleeh* Navajo teachers suggest.<sup>48</sup> In this light, it is perhaps more than chance that one translation of *nádleehé* is "one who changes repeatedly."<sup>49</sup>

Although it lasts only two minutes, Hartwell's 2007 *Miss Indian Transgender Arizona Crowned* opens up representations of Native transgender women that *Two Spirits* only suggests.<sup>50</sup> Wearing her Tohono O'odham regalia, a white dress and blouse with black-water motifs at the bust, Angel Manuel accepts the sash, crown, Pendleton blanket, flowers, applause, photos, and honors for a second consecutive year as Miss Indian Transgender Arizona. Manuel promises that "I'm going to do this to the best of my ability." Jackson (Navajo) is the transgender woman who created the pageant in order to increase positive visibility and to counterbalance the many dangers that being a transgender Native women can entail. She spent part of her younger years in Phoenix as a sex worker, braving work conditions that led to the multiple deaths and injuries of other Native transgenders. After she was stabbed in the streets and sent to jail for drug possession, Jackson sobered up and worked for Native



American health and transgender organizations. Jackson's transgender activism resists the Navajo transphobia exemplified by Deschine who blamed the transgender Navajos for spreading AIDS on the reservation and counseled that *nádleehs* should simply try to remain at home and help their families out rather than have a public or political presence.<sup>51</sup> From a transgender Navajo woman's activist perspective, Jackson found that the video empowers her Native transgender community given the difficulties of sex work, AIDS, and transphobia. The 2010–11 reigning Miss Indian Transgender Arizona is Kristel Lee; she also portrays the pageant as representing a positive face of Native transgenders. A dental hygienist, Lee shares that she educates children about dental health and educates the general public about Native transgender issues. On her Myspace page she says,

My name is Kristel Lee, I'm born for the Naakai dine'e The Mexican clan and the Kinyaa'aanii/Kiyaa'aanii The Towering House Clan (Original Clan), My maternal clan is Tachii'nii Red Running Into the Water people clan and my paternal clan is T'laashchi'I The Red Bottom People clan. . . . The general perception lies within people like myself explaining that we are true, kind and proud people, a proud Dine being. I truly embrace my identity and hope one day everyone will began to understand that we are a human society with the same needs, feelings, and hopes and prayers for all.<sup>52</sup>

Like Enfield, Lee identifies by the matrilineal Navajo clan system in proper Navajo protocol, an act that speaks to her pride and tradition as a Navajo transgender woman.

## NAVAJO LESBIANS, NAVAJO FEMINISTS, AND TRANSNATIONAL LGBTQ2 IMAGES

Although Jackson's and Lee's intentions are to empower Native transgender women through the Miss Indian Transgender pageant, a Native feminist reading might question why women or transgender women are idealized in pageants rather than in more politically and socially empowered positions of political authority. Jennifer Denetdale criticizes her own Navajo Nation for promoting Navajo women to become Indian princesses rather than chairpersons. Although representation as an Indian princess is an evolution in Native transgender women's popular representation relative to being seen as a sex worker or conveyor of HIV, Denetdale might envision loftier goals that are not dependent upon constrictive notions of beauty and femininity. Tracing the Miss Navajo pageants back to the modernizing and quasi-assimilationist agendas of the 1950s, Denetdale writes, "Although Miss Navajo Nation embodies Navajo cultural values associated with ideal womanhood, we

must also acknowledge that beauty pageants are rooted in white middle-class values that present femininity as values of chastity, morality, and virtue."<sup>53</sup> Although the Miss Indian Transgender Arizona contest is really not restrictive in terms of chastity and middle-class values, Denetdale's desire to view politically active images of Navajo women could prod one to question why political activism is not expressed more in the 2007 *Miss Indian Transgender Arizona Crowned* short.

Hartwell's brief documentary of Navajo Nation President Shirley opens up dialogue regarding the Diné Marriage Act. Although Shirley vetoed the act that banned gay marriage, the Navajo Council overrode his veto with sixty-two in favor, fourteen opposed, and twelve abstaining on June 3, 2005. In Hartwell's video, Shirley gives an acceptance speech for the LGBT Barry Goldwater Award given by Equality Arizona and presented by the openly gay Navajo Arizona Representative, Jack Jackson Jr. President Shirley affirms his elders' teaching of a universal sharing of humanity, rights, and respect: "the real monsters in the world that we need to be making war against, standing together as family, as brothers and sisters, as relatives, are the famine, the thirst, the greed, the jealousy, the ignorance, the apathy, and all manner of diseases out there. These are monsters that have no creed or color."<sup>54</sup> Although Shirley does preside over the honoring of Navajo veterans involved with the Enemy Way in recent wars in the Middle East, it is important to note that his definition of *war* derives from a traditional sense of the internal and external imbalances; wars are not to be waged against gendered categories of people for merely being who they are.<sup>55</sup>

Hartwell also posted an irate message from Navajo lesbian Tomasina Grey on the NativeOUT Web site regarding the Diné Marriage Act, a message originally printed in the *Navajo Times*. "Why on earth would we want to help rebuild and maintain our tribal communities when the Navajo Nation fails to acknowledge my rights as a human being and [disallows] us to live the life given to me by the Creator, regardless of my sexual preferences?" she asks, noting that more two-spirit Navajos would remain on the reservation if the nation would support them through allowing two-spirit marriages. Appealing to a return to traditional Diné values that embrace gender fluidity, she concludes, "We have become entrenched into bilagaanaa [white]-way of life and thought. Give us domestic partner benefits. Help us to restore our connection to the land, to our people and our spirituality by acknowledging our choice to love freely."<sup>56</sup> Her letter and President Shirley's veto help fulfill Chris Finley's project of exposing the "heteropatriarchy and heterosexism" in the formation of the Native American nation as "logics of colonialism."<sup>57</sup>

Denetdale also analyzes the impact of the Iraq War upon the Navajo Nation's banning of gay marriages. She is highly critical of a post-9/11 Iraq

War “conflation of American and Navajo nationalism,” which she sees as “complemented by the similar conflation of Western gender ideology and notions of traditional Navajo values.” She connects the Navajo support of the Iraq War and the passing of the Diné Marriage Act with assimilation into US heteropatriarchal politics.<sup>58</sup> She concludes, “Asking how we came to equate Navajo concerns and priorities with U.S. foreign policy objectives and oppressive gender-sex systems represents an important first step toward recovering traditional principles of governance that were in place prior to 1863 when the Diné were in charge of their own destiny.”<sup>59</sup> For a matrilineal and matrilineal nation, that destiny would traditionally include Navajo women’s political and economic power over their clans and lands within smaller communities and the larger nation. Although Denetdale admits that this power may have been in the form of counsel given to the mostly Navajo male leaders of the “*Naataanii*,” she points toward the first Navajo woman chief justice and the first Navajo woman chief of police as indicators of a growing willingness of Navajo women to run for the presidency of their nation.<sup>60</sup> Lynda Lovejoy’s bid for presidency in 2010 overcame some of the resistance against the idea of a woman in leadership of the Navajo Nation, helping to overturn the ancient oral tradition that First Woman’s original leadership created a division of sexes and foretold an essential weakness in women’s leadership thereafter.

Denetdale’s insights inform queer and feminist readings of Tsinhnahjinnie’s post-9/11 video, *An Aboriginal World View and Aboriginal Dreams*. As a Navajo/Seminole/Muskogee lesbian multimedia artist, Tsinhnahjinnie creates a stark critique of Navajo and US patriotism and heteropatriarchy. This installation video features an image of performance artist Leilani Chan completely clothed from head to foot in a *niqab* or *burqa* made of several US flags. The standing Chan reaches out to the camera with hands bound by the US flags, the scenery alternating between the ocean and the Navajo Reservation. A powwow drum and singers play in the background as the land and water images shift across the color spectrum in brilliant tones.<sup>61</sup> The binding of a woman’s hands with an American flag could represent the US suppression of peoples in the Middle East and in the Navajo Nation.<sup>62</sup> Tsinhnahjinnie affirms that the masculinist US “occupying power” of Middle Eastern land is parallel to “the whole history of native lands in the US and it goes back to the phrase ‘America is stolen land.’”<sup>63</sup> Mishuana Goeman notes the Navajo context in which “Western masculine progress, rooted in the patriarchy of military and legal conquest, defined state practices; its counterpart of feminine progress, derived from Christian morality, came to define national cultural practices symbolically entrenched in the home.”<sup>64</sup> The image of the bound woman by a mesa in the Navajo Nation causes one to consider the ongoing gender battle that stems from colonial times.

Elizabeth Claire Kalbfleisch emphasizes the connection of US colonization in the Middle East and the Navajo Nation and the very slippery sense of gender oppression that the bound hands and *burqa* could imply. Certainly, US media targeted the veil and the *burqa* as emblems of sexist Muslim cultural inferiority, with little to no reflection on how gendered colonialism structures ongoing inequalities in American Indian nations, in the larger US society, or upon the Iraqi people who are subject to US oppression. Perhaps Tsinhnahjinnie's images foretold a growing heterosexist imposition against the *dilbaah*, lesbian, or nonconformist Navajo woman's body. To what extent might the Diné Marriage Act of 2005 represent the kind of international US *burqa* of gender suppression that Tsinhnahjinnie intimates in her provocative images? Some Muslim feminists might question whether the *burqa* can be an appropriate vehicle for that message because the *burqa* is often used "to justify (colonial, imperial) intervention, erasing local women's movements, and conflating culture and politics."<sup>65</sup> Srimati Basu stresses that Muslim women see the *burqa* as a symbol of sexist oppression and as a means of cultural and gender resistance. In this light, one can view Tsinhnahjinnie's particular use of the US flag *burqa* as an artifact of US censorship and ideologies meant to mask a diversity of Native and Muslim women's activism—without assuming that the *burqa* universally codes sexist oppression.

Where Tsinhnahjinnie's work critiques ongoing Navajo- and Muslim-gendered colonization, House's *I Am* documents Navajo and two-spirit struggles against the gendered limitations popularly placed upon them within restrictive Native and US nationalisms.<sup>66</sup> House thankfully notes that he is from two "matriarchal" cultures, Navajo and Oneida.<sup>67</sup> His *I Am* situates Navajos among intertribal two-spirit urban communities, organizations, and cultural dynamics. For example, House focuses on two-spirit women whose jobs defy common US gender conventions. House begins with Che, a self-identified Mohawk Iroquois, who has worked nine years in ironwork, a job that is iconically that of a Mohawk biological male. Che easily describes a workday in construction, working the "man lift" and welding. House presents a cacophony of clanging ironwork, heavy machinery, and men speaking as he films a quick series of ironwork scenes: an extreme close-up of newly riveted metal floors, a close-up of Che's long ironwork tools hanging from a leather belt, a metal bucket of bolts and screws, a still shot of crossing I-beams, a pan down the length of a yellow crane, a panoramic shot of welding sparks, a distant image of the shadowing figures of men at work, and Che working the man lift and banging an I-beam with a heavy hammer. With the ongoing construction sounds at regular speed in the background, House slows down the frame progression as he slowly zooms in on Che stealthily climbing up a high vertical I-beam. Facing away from the camera, Che wears battered blue

jeans, a weighty tool belt, gloves, a hard hat on a shaved head, and boots. In slow motion, Che demonstrates strength by playfully holding with one hand and boyishly grinning toward the camera. Che then uses his/her hands and feet to slide down the I-beam as muscular arms show impressively through a sleeveless shirt. With a slow-motion zoom-in gaze that admires the strength of Che's two-spirit body, House moves against the gendered restrictions that US and Native heteropatriarchies might hope to enforce. Che's physical strength resonates with a long history of physical work that Native American women and two spirits of various gender identities accomplished as welders, soldiers, hunters, farmers, and gatherers.

House also films Thomas, but in a context of a Navajo AIDS Network conference in Gallup, New Mexico. Thomas reads a prepared statement about the need to expand HIV/AIDS services to gay Natives, noting that AIDS will not simply bypass the Navajo Nation and that "the Navajo people who leave the reservation for a very short period of time . . . to attend a conference, workshop, training or visit a relative are among the most vulnerable" to AIDS. Thomas's brief speech is placed within narratives and images of HIV-positive two-spirit men such as Damian Grey (Chippewa Cree) and gay, Native HIV activists such as Randy Burns (Northern Paiute), founder of Gay American Indians in San Francisco. Grey, Burns, and Thomas affirm the need to honor and protect HIV-positive two-spirit peoples from the social and physical consequences of AIDS phobia and AIDS/HIV contagion despite the social pressure to conform to US heteropatriarchal expectations. They plead for the improved support of two-spirit peoples from American Indian nations, families, and health networks. As improved HIV/AIDS medications were not widely available until 1996, House's 1997 *I Am* documents the critical need for HIV/AIDS activism from those who fought through more than a decade of AIDS-related deaths and AIDS phobia. His film makes clear that merely to conform silently to homophobia only leads to greater numbers of deaths and social isolation for many two-spirit peoples. Whether House films male- or female-bodied two-spirit peoples, she makes clear what *Two Spirits* intimated: Navajo and pan-Native two-spirit activism is essential in order to maintain a healthy spirit, body, and community.

## CONCLUSION

Nibley's *Two Spirits* helps to open up comparative analysis with the *nádleeh*, two-spirit, Native transgender, gay, bisexual, lesbian, and straight identities that other Navajo films consider. In working with Thomas and Mitchell, Nibley's film succeeds in dramatizing the importance of honoring *nádleeh* and

two-spirit roles in the face of the gender violence that lead to Martinez's brutal murder. *Two Spirits* aired on PBS's Independent Lens in June 2011, becoming the most popularly viewed depiction of two-spirit and *nádleeh* people in the United States. This edited version gained much activist two-spirit support across the nation, especially at community screenings. What a *nádleeh* gaze makes obvious is a need to depict clear two-spirit and *nádleeh* activisms and to include the Native transgender representations that were muted in the film. As a multimedia resource that reaches more than sixty thousand households a month, NativeOUT provides strong Native transgender and two-spirit activist representations that *Two Spirits* did not directly affirm.<sup>68</sup> For example, the 2007 *Miss Indian Transgender Arizona Crowned* short opens up dialogue surrounding Native transgender pride. Heterosexist activities involving the Navajo Nation inform *Two Spirits* and transgender *nádleeh* issues. The Diné Marriage Act of 2005 gives a new context to the gendered films that Navajos previously created. Given Denetdale's linkages of the Iraq War with the Diné Marriage Act, Tsinhnahjinnie's video eerily predicts the gender constraints that the Iraqi War would have on the rights of two spirits of the Navajo Nation. In resistance to white heteronormativity, House continues to create films that display gender nonconformity among two-spirit peoples. Because her film *Two-Embrace* (2009) reclaims the kinds of two-spirit histories that were erased when her Navajo Nation passed that 2005 law, we anticipate that his Balancing Factors media project will continue to be a force in two-spirit representations into the future just as *I Am* was in the past. As Naswood, Enfield, Nibley, House, Tsinhnahjinnie, and NativeOUT differently affirm, film can and should proliferate *nádleeh*, Navajo, and pan-Native LGBTQ2 activism.

## NOTES

1. Clifford T. Manlove, "Visual 'Drive' and Cinematic Narrative: Reading Gaze Theory in Lacan, Hitchcock, and Mulvey," *Cinema Journal* 46, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 103.

2. *Ibid.*, 84.

3. Edison Cassadore, *Re-Imagining Indians: The Counter-Hegemonic Representations of Victor Masayesva and Chris Eyre* (PhD diss., University of Arizona-Tucson, 2007), 21, 31.

4. M. Elise Marrubio, *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2006), 100.

5. Channette Romero, "The Politics of the Camera Visual Storytelling and Sovereignty in Victor Masayesva's Itam Hakim, Hopiit," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 71.

6. Lisa Tatonetti, "Visible Sexualities or Invisible Nations: Forced to Choose in *Big Eden*, *Johnny Greeyes*, and *The Business of Fancydancing*," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, nos. 1-2 (2010): 158.

7. Native American lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (hereinafter referred to as LGBTQ) peoples may also identify as two-spirit peoples or as a specific third- or fourth-gender identity



within a Native American language. Gabriel Estrada, "Two-Spirit Film Criticism: *Fancydancing* with Imitates Dog, Desjarlais and Alexie," in "Native American/Indigenous Film," ed. M. Elise Marubbio, special issue, *Post Script: Essays in Film and the Humanities* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 106–18.

8. This article will use the terms *Navajo* and *Diné* interchangeably, acknowledging that speakers of the *Diné* language will often prefer to identify in their own language. Some speakers of *Diné* also translate the term *two spirit* into a *Diné* meaning that is negative, indicating the presence of a foreign or evil spirit, a body that is possessed by a second spirit. This article will use the term *two spirit* without that negative intention, and it will refer to *two spirit* and *Native American LGBTQ2* interchangeably even though *two spirit* may imply a more traditional sense of gender roles. The terms *American Indian* and *Native American* are used interchangeably as well to refer to US indigenous peoples.

9. Louva Hartwell, "About NativeOUT," NativeOUT, <http://www.nativeout.com/home/about-nativeout.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

10. NativeOUT, "Native LGBT Crime Murders," NativeOUT, <http://www.nativeout.com/digital-library/researching/321-hate-crime.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

11. For a discussion of Southern California Indian two-spirit roles, see Deborah Miranda, "Extermination of the *Joyas*: Gendercide in Spanish California," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, nos. 1–2 (2010): 253–84. L. Frank Manriquez (Tongva/Ajachmem) is a California Indian artist, two-spirit activist, language advocate, tribal scholar, and cartoonist who often goes by the name of L. Frank.

12. Also see San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, *2010 American Indian Heritage Month Leadership Awards: Elton Naswood*, KCET SoCal, Los Angeles, <http://www.kcet.org/socal/leaders/leader-elton-naswood.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

13. Elton Naswood, personal interview with author, July 7, 2010.

14. Michelle Enfield, personal interview with author, July 7, 2010.

15. *Reel Injun*, directed by Neil Diamond (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 2009).

16. Carolyn Epple, "A Navajo Worldview and *Nádleehí*: Implications for Western Categories," in *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, ed. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 177.

17. The *Diné* *Bahané*, Navajo-origin oral tradition, introduces the *nádleeh* twins as "hermaphrodites," the first children of First Woman and First Man. They are the inventors of pottery, grinding stones, and other domestic utensils. They play an important role in accompanying the men when the division of sexes occurs and partake in the negotiations to end the division of sexes. Paul Zolbrod, *The Diné Bahané: The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press, 1984), 354.

18. In a filmed interview, two-spirit organizer Richard LaFortune (Yupik) mentions famous historical two-spirit persons such as the revered Navajo *nádleeh*, Hastiín Claw. The film depicts a photograph of the famed medicine person weaving as proof of the great depth that *nádleeh* roles once had before US colonization, transphobia, homophobia, and Christianization became more influential in many Native societies. See Will Roscoe, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998), 64.

19. Joe Watson, "The Crying Game: Despite a Celebrated History, Native American Transgenders Struggle in the Modern World," *Phoenix New Times News* (December 22, 2005), <http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/2005-12-22/news/the-crying-game/2> (accessed March 26, 2010).

20. *As They Are: Two-Spirit People in the Modern World*, directed and produced by Mark Garrido and Tarek Tohme (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2009).

21. During the separation with the women, *nádleeh* crossed a river with the men and brought along the key utensils of grinding stones and pottery they had created, saying: "We each have a set of

grinding stones that we have made. . . . We have baskets and other utensils.' . . . To which Altse hastiin the First Man had this to say: 'Go fetch those things and bring them here; for you must come with us.' . . . So the men ferried across the river, taking the nonchildbearing twins nádleeh with them." Paul Zolbrod, *The Diné Bahané: The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press, 1984), 60–1, 354.

22. Garrido and Tohme, *As They Are*.

23. Naswood personal interview.

24. See Scott Lauria Morgensen, "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, nos. 1–2 (2010): 105–31.

25. Naswood personal interview.

26. Enfield personal interview.

27. Brian L. Ott and Eric Aoki, "The Politics of Negotiating Public Tragedy: Media Framing of the Matthew Shepard Murder," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 5, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 494.

28. Michelle H. Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and *Atanarjuat* (The Fast Runner)," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2007): 1161.

29. Northwest Two-Spirit Society Board of Directors, "Co-optation of Two-Spirit Identity," <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/two-spirit/message/763> (accessed June 30, 2011).

30. Mark Thompson, Will Roscoe, and Bo Young, *The Fire in Moonlight: Stories from the Radical Faeries 1975–2010* (San Francisco: White Crane Books, 2011).

31. Heeding calls for greater Native American visual sovereignty is an ongoing evolution in white documentaries and fictional films. For example, the Euro-American Mormon director Travis Hamilton relates that he "took cues and advice from the Navajos on the set, changing the script when a good suggestion came his way" while making *Turquoise Rose*, a film that cast 100% Navajo actors and a majority Navajo crew. See Richard Ruelas, "Navajo Film Reaches across Cultural Lines," *The Arizona Republic* (September 8, 2007), <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/arizonaliving/articles/0908turquoiseroserose0908.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

32. Mark Thompson, *Gay Soul: Finding the Heart of Gay Spirit and Nature with Sixteen Writers, Teachers, Healers and Visionaries* (San Francisco: Harper One, 1995).

33. Joseph Gilley, *Becoming Two-Spirited: Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 127, 197–98.

34. Carolyn Epple, "Coming to Terms with Navajo Nadleehí: A Critique of Berdache, 'Gay,' 'Alternate Gender,' and 'Two-Spirit,'" *American Ethnologist* 25, no. (May 1998): 267.

35. Naswood personal interview.

36. Enfield personal interview.

37. Margaret Ann Waller and Roland McAllen-Walker, "One Man's Story of Being Gay and Diné (Navajo): A Study in Resiliency," *Queer Families, Queer Politics: Challenging Culture and the State*, ed. Mary Bernstein and Renate Reimann (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 97.

38. Jaime M. Grant, Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis with Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling, *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* (Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011), 36.

39. Leslie Feinberg, "Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come," *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephan Whittle (New York: Routledge, 1006), 220.

40. See *The Celluloid Closet*, directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (Culver City, CA: TriStar Pictures, 1995).

41. Enfield personal interview.

42. The black-and-white photo appears centered over a color photo of a mass of mostly white LGBT protesters from the early 1970s, who hold up signs that read “New York Mattachine” and “Love Is A Many-Gendered Thing.” This clip will not air on PBS, but it is one of the outtake selections available on the DVD that focus on the Radical Faeries. The film only briefly flashes the image with the commentary that *nádleeh*, the Changing Ones, resemble the medieval European Mattachine Society in their ability to model qualities of cultural change and adaptation. This comparison is curious because *nádleeh* do not represent a kind of European jester society within Navajo culture.

43. Gene Greenhill, “Pauline Mitchell, Mother of Slain Cortez Boy Describes Her Anguish at Sentencing,” *The Durango Herald* (June 4, 2002), <http://www.tampabaycoalition.com/files/604ShaunMurphyGets40Years.htm> (accessed June 30, 2011).

44. Sharon Cowan, “‘We Walk Among You’: Trans Identity Politics Goes to the Movies,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 21, no. 1 (2009): 117.

45. *Thorn Grass*, directed and produced by Robin Hammer (Boulder, CO: Light Circle Films, 2002).

46. Sophie Mayer, “This Bridge of Two Backs: Making the Two-Spirit Erotics of Community,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 45.

47. Maureen Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman: Navajo Views of the Human Body and Personhood* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 250–51; Mayer, “This Bridge of Two Backs,” 25.

48. Epple, “A Navajo Worldview and Nádleehí,” 181–82.

49. Schwarz, *Molded in the Image of Changing Woman*, 251.

50. Louva Hartwell, “2007 Miss Indian Transgender Arizona Crowned,” NativeOUT, <http://www.nativeout.com/multimedia/video.html?task=videodirectlink&id=8> (accessed June 30, 2011).

51. Watson notes the rising rates with 250 HIV+ cases reported on the Navajo Reservation and 56 AIDS-related deaths since 2000. Watson, “The Crying Game,” 3. Contact Navajo transgender woman, Supervisor Mattee Jim, of the First Nations Community Healthsource’s HIV Prevention Programs at (505) 262-6554 (Albuquerque, NM) for more information.

52. Kristel Lee, *Miss Indian Transgender 2010–2011*, [www.myspace.com/missindiantransgender2009](http://www.myspace.com/missindiantransgender2009) (accessed June 30, 2011).

53. Jennifer Denetdale, “Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses: The Navajo Nation, Gender, and the Politics of Tradition,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 20.

54. “Navajo Nation President Receives Human Rights Award from LGBT,” directed and produced by Louva Hartwell (January 26, 2009), <http://www.nativeout.com/multimedia/video.html?task=videodirectlink&id=3> (accessed June 30, 2011).

55. *Wind Talkers* (directed by John Woo [Los Angeles: Lion Rock Productions, 2002]) was a film that only marginally acknowledges this aspect of the Navajo Enemy Way because the World War II film focuses on the perspective of its white protagonist (played by Nicolas Cage) who will actually kill the Navajo code talkers (played by Adam Beach and Roger Willie) rather than have the Japanese and Axis powers break the Navajo code that helped US Allied forces prevail.

56. Tomasina Grey, “Navajo Lesbian Speaks Out About Same-Sex Marriage,” NativeOUT (April 24, 2006), <http://www.nativeout.com/digital-library/article-archive/63-samesex-marriage/167-navajo-lesbian-speaks-out-about-same-sex-marriage.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

57. Chris Finley, “Decolonizing the Queer Native Body (And Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke),” *Queer Indigenous Studies: Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, ed. Quo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 33.

58. Jennifer Denetdale, “Carving Navajo National Boundaries: Patriotism, Tradition, and the Diné Marriage Act of 2005,” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (June 2008): 292.

59. Ibid., 294.
60. Denetdale, "Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses," 11, 21.
61. Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie, "An Aboriginal View with Aboriginal Dreams" (MFA thesis exhibition, University of California, Irvine, 2002), <http://www.hulleah.com/Video/AWV.htm> (accessed June 30, 2011).
62. Elizabeth Claire Kalbfleisch, "Bordering on Feminism: Home and Transnational Sites in Recent Visual Culture and Native Women's Art" (PhD diss., Program in Visual and Cultural Studies Arts, Sciences and Engineering School of Arts and Sciences, University of Rochester, 2009), 350.
63. Veronica Passalacqua, "Hulleah J. Tsinnahjinnie," in *Path Breakers*, ed. Lucy Lippard (Indianapolis and Seattle: Eiteljorg Museum and University of Washington Press, 2003), <http://www.hulleah.com/essay.htm> (accessed June 30, 2011).
64. Mishuana R. Goeman, "Notes Toward a Native Feminism's Spatial Practice," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 170.
65. Srimati Basu, "V Is for Veil, V Is for Ventriloquism: Global Feminisms in *The Vagina Monologues*," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 31, no. 1 (2010): 42.
66. Carrie House, *I Am*, Balancing Factors, NativeOUT, <http://www.nativeout.com/multimedia/34-video/349-balancing-factors.html>2010 (accessed July 30, 2011).
67. The gendered pronouns *he*, *his*, and *her* are used with House's suggestion, which was sent in an e-mail on July 25, 2011. House previously writes of "he-she" and "she-he" as well, indicating that two-spirit identities defy simple binary dualisms. Carrie House, "Navajo Warrior Women: An Ancient Tradition in a Modern World," in Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang, *Two-Spirit People*, 223, 225.
68. Hartwell, "About NativeOUT."