

INTRODUCTION

A Symposium on David Myer Temin's Remapping Sovereignty: Decolonization and Self-Determination in North American Indigenous Political Thought

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Angélica María Bernal, with a response by David Myer Temin

David Myer Temin: *Remapping Sovereignty: Decolonization and Self-Determination in North American Indigenous Political Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 2023), 288.

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Remapping Sovereignty examines how activist-thinkers from Indigenous societies in North America recast the relationship between decolonization and sovereignty over the course of the twentieth century. While political theorists have criticized sovereignty as the dominant paradigm of political authority, alternatives to sovereignty remain elusive. Recasting these debates, Temin argues that activists-intellectuals in the long Red Power movement of the twentieth century engaged in complex acts of contesting and remapping the logic of sovereignty. If logics of Westphalian sovereignty revolve around “the normative centrality and perceived necessity of the claim to final and ultimate authority over a bounded space” (6) then central to its institutional practice is a refusal of the webs of relationality and interdependence on the land and human and non-human others. Rather than upholding these sovereign logics, Indigenous claims to self-determination, Temin shows, are premised not the assertion of territorial control but on the cultivation of reciprocal relations of care for the earth.

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Creating alternatives to both the institutions of the sovereign-state and the very conceptual framework of sovereignty entails dismantling and repairing the structural hierarchies and conceptual frameworks that stem from the constitutive disavowal of these relationalities embedded in both the concept and practice of state sovereignty.

Bridging intellectual histories and conceptual analysis through extensive archival research, Temin shows how key figures in Indigenous anticolonial struggles reshaped the philosophical substance, collective agencies, and normative goals of the twentieth-century global languages of self-determination and decolonization. Offering in-depth interpretations of activist-intellectuals such as Zitkala-Ša (Yankton Dakota), Ella Deloria (Yankton Dakota), Vine Deloria Jr. (Yankton Dakota), George Manuel (Secwépemc), Lee Maracle (Stó:lō), and Howard Adams (Métis), *Remapping Sovereignty* contends that these neglected thinkers can help reimagine anticolonialism as a politics of earthmaking. Distinct from anticolonial visions of worldmaking that imagine relations of international non-domination beyond the nation-state, earthmaking offers a paradigm of anticolonialism that responds to the imposition of colonial sovereignty as a gendered form of earth-destroying violence. Understood as earthmaking, decolonizing practices aim to structurally transform institutions and social relations so as to create reciprocity-oriented relationships between humans and the earth.

In this way, the pursuit of Indigenous self-determination entails creating a pluralistic world order that dethrones the normative and practical centrality of territorial sovereignty. A central component of decolonization as earthmaking is what Temin calls a “stewardship world order” (18 and *passim*) in which kinship relations between relatives provides a broader model for diplomatic networks of reciprocity and interdependence. Within this framework, Indigenous internationalism is better understood as a form of “transnational internationalism” (22 and *passim*) that refuses the designation between domestic and inter-state spheres of politics. If sovereignty’s disavowal of webs of reciprocity operates through the bifurcation of these spheres, then a core component of Indigenous transnationalism entails remaking the kinship relations of interdependence severed by sovereignty. *Remapping Sovereignty* reconstructs a historically grounded language of anticolonial critique as well as alternative visions of sovereignty, self-determination, citizenship, and planetary order.