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Poetics and Extraction 2

Max Karpinski

> the proceeds of the sale of said lands shall be applied
> feet of frontage
>
> the slash burned as a precautionary measure, under control
> at all times
>
> spark from the old sound embers
> at the shoreline of resuscitation. breath on tinder
>
> —Cecily Nicholson, *From the Poplars*

In early June of this year, less than a week after the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences at York University, I stepped out of my apartment building in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood and smelled smoke. Soon after, a particular genre of photo began to circulate on social media as a cascading series of cities—Ottawa, New York, Washington, DC—saw the sky turn hazy orange in the smoke plumes from the wildfires in northern Ontario and Quebec. Over the first two weeks of June, these same cities would alternate claims to the worst air quality in the world. In the broader Canadian context, the early June wildfires of northern Ontario and Quebec came immediately on the heels of record-setting wildfires in Nova Scotia, including the Barrington Lake and Tantallon wildfires (Chisholm; Cooke). Weeks earlier, on 6 May 2023, fires had pushed the province of Alberta to declare a state of emergency (Meilleur). In British Columbia, the Donnie Creek wildfire has been identified as the largest in provincial records (Kulkarni) while the McDougall Creek Wildfire forced evacuations in West Kelowna ("BC"). In mid-August, a full evacuation order was given for Yellowknife residents ahead of approaching fires (Minogue). On 19 August 2023, the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) listed 220 active, out-of-control fires, primarily in BC and the Yukon. In their year-to-date numbers on the same day, the CIFFC counted more than 5,800 fires and more than 139,000 square

kilometres burned. This latter number, in particular, exceeds last year's total by a factor of more than twelve ("National").

Across Turtle Island, this summer has felt like something different and unusual—or, perhaps, something intensified. After the smoke of early June, the first week of July was named the world's hottest on record ("Uncharted"); in late July, ocean surface temperatures off the coast of Newfoundland approached ten degrees centigrade above normal (Meko and Stillman); and still, out on the land, the fires continue and the smoke plumes grow. This issue of *Canadian Literature*, with its special section that extends the work and discussion begun in issue 251, the first special issue on Poetics and Extraction, has taken shape in the context of this summer's fire season. From threats to life, livelihood, and community to the protracted fallout of smoke pollution, the wildfires crystallize the ways that risk is unevenly distributed in environmental crisis. In what follows, I work through a pair of related questions: How does an attention to the *pyro-* inflect our thinking about extraction? And, from within the strangled air of what Paiute scholar Kristen Simmons names "settler atmospherics," how can those most at risk begin to breathe freely?

While fires have long been a planetary reality and a crucial ecosystem process, the research is clear on the relationship between anthropogenic climate change and wildfire intensification.[1] Additionally, histories of forest and land management, including strategies of fire suppression, have altered ecosystems, paradoxically creating regions of increased fuel density that deepen the risk of more extreme fire events. Indeed, this is part of Stephen J. Pyne's argument in his articulation of the *Pyrocene*, a "fire-centric" reappraisal and alternate narration of the Anthropocene that argues: "The sum of humanity's fire practices [have] overwhelmed the existing arrangement of ecological baffles and barriers" (3, 5). In Pyne's analysis, the Pyrocene arrives from within the simultaneous escalation of fossil fuel extraction, production, and consumption—what he terms the burning of "lithic landscapes" (82)—and the concerted extinguishing of "good fires" (2). Significantly, these include as well the "fire practices" that had been cultivated for millennia by Indigenous science; of the American

West and Australia, Pyne notes, "The suppression of fire practices was part of colonizing the land" (135-36).

Pyne's gesture to the ways settler colonialism has contributed to contemporary catastrophes of fire and smoke allows us to rescale the potentially totalizing effects of a term like the *Pyrocene*, and to clarify, instead, how particular communities are differentially impacted by crisis. This is to think with Jean-Thomas Tremblay's notion of an "ecology of the particular," a "methodological principle" that reminds us of the uneven distribution of harm within global or wide-ranging phenomena that might otherwise be understood to "homogenize, and as such departicularize, experience" (20). Put differently, for Tremblay, in the context of crises of breathing, changes in the air are "registered with particular acuity by marginalized individuals" (21). To particularize the 2023 wildfire season in so-called Canada, it is necessary to register the disproportionate impacts of wildfires on Indigenous communities. In mid-July, an Associated Press article citing Indigenous Services Canada claimed that "23,000 people from 75 Indigenous settlements have had to evacuate this year" (Webber and Berger). The same article cites Amy Cardinal Christianson, a Métis fire specialist with Parks Canada, whose co-analysis of the Canadian Wildland Fire Evacuation Database found that fourteen of the sixteen communities evacuated five or more times between 1980 and 2021 were First Nations reserves.

Christianson's broader discussion of the state of fire preparedness suggests that colonial fire management strategies, as well as a lack of community and fire suppression resources, have contributed to the intensification of wildfire seasons over the last half-century. Additionally, however, the analysis of the Canadian Wildland Fire Evacuation Database shows how, for many Indigenous communities, the risks and disruptions of wildfire seasons exceed the moment of burning, rising instead to the level of chronic and debilitating. In other words, for those communities that remain on the front lines, there is an additional, enervating quality to the preparation and anxiety, the everyday threat. Simmons identifies the "foundational violences" of "militarism, industrialism, and capitalism" as "the surrounds of settler atmospherics." From our vantage point, the uneven distribution of risk and chronic

disease in the wake of the wildfires' fallout might be understood as yet another articulation of the "normative and necessary violences found in settlement—accruing, adapting, and constricting indigenous and black life in the US [and Canadian] settler state[s]" (Simmons).

Developing her concept of settler atmospherics, Simmons traces the use of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), a mechanism that allows US states to share emergency personnel in response to acute crises. Outside of environmental catastrophes, including wildfires, Simmons notes, EMAC has been invoked only twice: to push back water defenders at Standing Rock and to quell Black Lives Matter protests. These linked experiences of carceral state violence lead her to consider Christina Sharpe's theory of "the weather," which Sharpe defines as "the totality of the environments in which we struggle; the machines in which we live" (111). Building with Simmons and Sharpe, we might understand settler atmospherics, then, as enfolding the sum of settler-colonial and racist practices and apparatuses that contrive an environment hostile to BIPOC life and flourishing in the contemporary moment. If, in Simmons' settler atmospherics, crises of breathing are related to militarized police tactics, from the tear gas and pepper spray used at Standing Rock and Baltimore to the malodorous "skunk" deployed by the Israeli Defence Forces, in the Pyrocene we might also include the fallout from the fires. To position wildfire smoke in the context of settler atmospherics implicates intensified fires in historical and ongoing land dispossession via extractive projects, as well as in centuries of "colonial governmentality [that] necessarily strangulates" Indigenous epistemologies and "other forms of relationality and coalition building" (Simmons).

Could a conspiratorial collective breathing, or shared breath, open something akin to an air pocket, disturbing the smooth flow and function of the racist settler state? Sharpe thinks through *aspiration* as a word for "imagining and for keeping and putting breath back in the Black body in hostile weather" (113; see 108-13). Simmons, drawing from Timothy Choy, plays with *conspire* as, at once, breathing together and mobilizing *conspiracy*: "We need to conspire to strategize logics of agitation, which displace and unsettle." Rereading

Simmons this summer, in the context of the wildfires, I'm reminded of Cecily Nicholson's contribution to the forum for issue 251 of *Canadian Literature*, which invited poets to reflect on how extraction figures in their poetics. Underlining the imbrication of community and literary work in her writing, Nicholson advocates for "community-based practices of mutual aid, education, and sharing material in modes that are lateral, reparatory, conciliatory, and humble" (156). This is a model for the coalition-building named above, a practice attuned at once to the differential impacts of various kinds of extraction—of so-called resources, methods, theories, experiences—and to an otherwise that aspires to something like good relation.

To shift from *extraction* to *poetics*, we can track this expansive, coalitional practice in Nicholson's 2014 collection *From the Poplars*. In the terms laid out in this editorial, we might understand *From the Poplars* to model Tremblay's "ecology of the particular," attending to the entanglements of a specific place or piece of land, and spanning temporal, material, and discursive scales. The collection examines the history of Poplar Island, a presently uninhabited island in the north arm of British Columbia's Fraser River that is the traditional territory of the Qayqayt, through an investigation of archives relating to the various colonial and industrial projects that have marked the island since the invasion of settlers. *From the Poplars* implicates, at different moments and in varying degrees, the island's history of colonization; the settler-colonial imposition of the European system of private property; resource extraction, from lumber to coal and oil; and the military-industrial complex. All of this and more, in a mix of poetic registers and forms that unfolds new resonances on each reading.

Critical response to *From the Poplars* has already discussed the collection as a literary articulation of coalition-building that calls up the shared but differential experiences of struggle within settler atmospherics. Evangeline Holtz-Schramek, in issue 247 of *Canadian Literature*, keys in on the text's references to "Strange Fruit" to read Poplar Island as symbolic of "the shared grief of Black and Indigenous peoples" over the historical and ongoing violence of the "white supremacist Canadian state" (61). Stephen Collis similarly identifies

"a generosity—a wide-armed poetic solidarity—in Nicholson's method" (157). In Collis' analysis, the text becomes "a gathering of wounds, tangled histories, mismatches and obliterations . . . It is also a poetic politics that is firmly located in place—on the *land* and what the land has suffered" (157). Following Collis, the island itself might be understood as capable of a kind of utterance that circulates alongside or in opposition to the colonial archive, the undocumented conversations that Nicholson acknowledges at the collection's conclusion, and the dense and layered intertextual references—like "Strange Fruit"—everywhere entangled with the poetry.

The opening pages of *From the Poplars* inaugurate a sense of the land as a lively presence, something exceeding the modes and mechanisms of containment embodied by the archival documents the collection investigates. Nicholson's poetic line is varied, but a common tactic is a short line that resists grammatical coherence and that has the effect of posing two words alongside, with, or against one another. Almost immediately on entering the text, the reader is met with the self-contained phrase "stratifying dialects," two words that enfold language, history, and the land (2). In the same way that "*the maps are not the territory*" (9), the histories of this place exceed the text of colonial archives. Instead, and throughout *From the Poplars*, a form of land-speaking emerges through sustained attention. For example, we read about "cottonwood trees" and how their "growing tips 'see' light / *causing seedlings to bend toward the source*" (3). The subtle movement of plants towards light returns later in the collection as something like a material mode of agency made legible through reference to Anishinaabe writer, and member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Gerald Vizenor's landmark concept: "given to *tropistic* / *survivance* // toward light" (79). This recurring image might be understood as the island or the "resource" under erasure articulating a presence in and through the text. The image resonates also in the context of the collection's relation to archival work, the movement "toward [the] light" or exposure of historical violences, obfuscated histories, and Indigenous ways of being and knowing.

Foregrounding an attention to the island's material agencies and a critical interrogation of the language of European property systems,

From the Poplars tracks the reduction of land to property through the colonial mindset that approaches land as "infinite and tractable" (9). Put differently, the land is imagined as endless in supply and open for settler inscription; *tractable* fuses the sense of *manageable* with the potential to transform living presence into title and deed. As suggested in the first lines of the opening epigraph, this is to understand the island in all its variability and dense histories through the schematic of "feet of frontage" (91). Here, on the penultimate page of poetry in the collection, the island moves quickly from the sales process—"the purchaser shall be / entitled"—to the industrial clear-cutting and harvesting of lumber (91). The "slash," logging debris that Pyne calls "as volatile a fuel as any on the planet" (138), is "burned as a precautionary measure"; again, "control" is the operative term through which settler industry engages *tractable* land (91). But in my reading, something shifts in the page's final couplet: "spark from the old sound embers / at the shoreline of resuscitation. breath on tinder" (91). The "old sound"—either the land itself, in the sense of *sound* as a geographical term, or the "sound" of the land—issues a "spark." "At the shoreline of resuscitation," someone breathes on "tinder," calls into presence a flame yet dormant. *Tinder* echoes the *embers* above it, the words a sequence of near- or half-rhymes (*tin-*/*em-*, *-der*/*-bers*). At the end of the island's colonial narrative movement through its parcelling out and desiccation, something familiar emerges; breathes again.

Back at Congress, before the smoke in Toronto, the topic of poetry's efficacy sprang up in questions after an ecopoetics panel in which I was involved. In my experience of literary critical discussions, this concern about what poetry can *do* is a common anxiety, perhaps impossible to beat back. But thinking again of the forum in issue 251 of *Canadian Literature*, with its contributions by activist poets like Cecily Nicholson, Rita Wong, and Jennifer Wickham (Witsuwit'en), I am moved and inspired by the ways contemporary poets, writers, and thinkers remind us that literature can be one part of a practice that includes action away from the page. Similarly, I have been moved and inspired by the very process of editing the special issue and follow-up special section on Poetics and Extraction, by the work of scholars engaging questions of climate and extractivism across methodologies and positions. I am

grateful for the pleasure of reading, thinking with, editing, and, now across both issues, seeing some of these pieces through publication.

The articles included here form a special cluster, one that extends the critical conversations of the first special issue on Poetics and Extraction. Each of these articles was initially read by me and Melanie Dennis Unrau, the guest co-editor of that special issue, and each was edited in relation to the critical work that our call invited scholars, artists, and activists to consider. In testimony to the increasingly interdisciplinary character of ecocriticism, the articles included here draw connections across disciplines and fields, working alongside, among others, Indigenous studies, history, cultural studies, political science, and archival studies. The contributors dwell in the discomfort of inhabiting complex positionalities and compromised positions, thinking reflexively about how to do literary criticism in the contemporary moment, how and when to speak from within settler atmospherics. I am very glad to be able to share this second set of critical engagements on the theme of Poetics and Extraction.

Emily McGiffin's "Transatlantic Extractivism in Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*," the first article in this cluster, calls back to the first special issue in its return to the work of Brand, as well as in its intensive critical engagement with a range of theorists—including Kathryn Yusoff, Imre Szeman, and Jennifer Wenzel—that grounds that issue's theoretical framing of extractivism. McGiffin identifies a critical absence in Canadian ecocriticism, arguing that critics working at the intersections of environment and empire have insufficiently engaged with Black Canadian literature and scholarship. Drawing on Tiffany Lethabo King, she parses the ways dominant ecocritical traditions in Canada have reduced the settler/Native/slave triad to a dyadic schema that absents Blackness, in turn profoundly shaping how the field theorizes questions of land, place, property, and extraction. Shifting across theory, literary criticism, and a personal narrative of her and her family's recent movement between Canada, the United Kingdom, and West Africa, she turns to Brand's memoir as a text that articulates the Canadian nation-state's historical and ongoing embeddedness in an imperial cartography predicated on colonization, Indigenous genocide, and chattel slavery.

Sasha Fury's "Migratorial Embodiments, Paradox, and Entangled Gifts: Decentring Colonialist Seeing in *Tungijuq (What We Eat)*" focuses on the 2009 collaborative short film by Inuk throat singer, avant-garde composer, and author Tanya Tagaq, Inuk filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk, and Canadian filmmakers Félix Lajeunesse and Paul Raphaël. Fury reads *Tungijuq* alongside other media and performance art by Tagaq, including an *X* (formerly *Twitter*) post during the 2014 #sealfie movement and the repurposing, in her *Nanook* performances, of settler filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty's 1922 silent film *Nanook of the North*. Fury foregrounds her positionality as a settler engaging these Inuit texts; central to her analysis is an attention to the ways Inuit art represents an impasse for modes of settler perception. Thinking with xwélmexw (Stó:lō/Skwah) scholar Dylan Robinson's theorization of colonialist "hungry listening," Fury attends to *Tungijuq*'s rebukes to colonialist seeing and the extractive logics that underwrite both land acquisition and the government's attempts to disappear Inuit lifeways. Self-reflexive and thinking with care, the article models a kind of non-extractive settler scholarship—one that may resonate for a range of readers thinking through Indigenous literary and artistic practices.

Andrew Law's "'Excavated from His Own Memories': Excavation, Erasure, and Extraction as Generative Refusal in Jordan Abel's *The Place of Scraps*" intervenes in existing scholarship that focuses on the ways Abel (Nisga'a) deploys appropriative poetics and erasure in his 2013 collection. Law reads *The Place of Scraps* through Abel's more recent experimental memoir *NISHGA* (2021), which emphasizes the poet's critical engagement with Canada's genocidal residential school program. Thinking alongside *NISHGA* and Indigenous theoretical articulations of the generative capacities of refusal, Law approaches *The Place of Scraps* as a text that at once performs a retrospective critique of the salvage ethnographer Marius Barbeau's *Totem Poles* (1950) and transforms that same text into a "doorway" onto the articulation of Nisga'a identity in the present and future. Drawing on Abel's self-reflexive accounts of the poetry collection's production, Law foregrounds the range and multiplicity of literary forms that Abel deploys, over and above the conceptual writing techniques of appropriation that have already received attention in critical responses to *The Place of Scraps*.

The final two articles in the special section shift their analysis from literary or cultural texts to public and government policy and political science. Adam Carlson's "'Such Are the Advantages of Autochthony': Extracting Indigeneity through CanLit and Settler-Colonial Historiography" turns a literary-critical eye to the work of Barry Cooper and Tom Flanagan, two figures affiliated with the infamously climate-denialist Frontier Centre for Public Policy and the so-called Calgary School, a cohort of political science ideologues that has shaped and directed conservative policy in Canada. While other essays included in this issue aim to model a non-extractivist mode of literary-critical close-reading, Carlson attends precisely to the ways Cooper and Flanagan deploy reading and writing strategies associated with literary studies to manufacture the myth of settler normativity on Indigenous land. Both writers, Carlson argues, engage in an extractivist settler-colonial historiography that draws on structuralist narratives perpetuated by Canadian literary-critical scholarship. In this way, Carlson underscores the complicities of CanLit scholarship with the mythmaking strategies of contemporary right-wing policy writing, emphasizing especially how Cooper and Flanagan are invested in eliminating Indigenous priority and collapsing the distinction between First Peoples and settlers to prop up visions of regional and national identity grounded in white supremacy.

In "The Settler-Colonial Jouissance of Western Alienation: Mapping the Ideological Terrain of Canadian Pipeline Politics," Isaac Thornley examines public discourse and governmental rhetoric that promotes the expansion of Canada's pipeline infrastructure. In particular, Thornley focuses his analysis on the 2020 Buffalo Declaration, a thirteen-page document penned by four Conservative MPs from Alberta, as well as the public statements of Canadian politicians, such as former premier of Alberta Jason Kenney and the prime minister of Canada Justin Trudeau. Deploying a psychoanalytic framework that draws on Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek, Thornley shows how proponents of fossil fuel development harness the concept of *jouissance*—"the (painful) pleasure taken in repeating failure" (121)—in the construction of an imagined subject of Western alienation

with which the public, and particularly people in Western Canada, are invited to identify. Thornley demonstrates the applicability of psychoanalytic concepts to environmental politics, showing how pro-pipeline discourse at once constructs a desire for extractivist expansion and positions the subject of Western alienation as thwarted by outside forces or actors.

As before, I am grateful for the opportunity to work with the editorial and support staff at *Canadian Literature*, in particular Christine Kim, amanda wan, and Sharon Engbrecht. Throughout my writing of this editorial, I have conceived of it as building with the broader theoretical framework that Melanie Dennis Unrau and I articulated in issue 251 of *Canadian Literature*. My thinking here has been shaped by Melanie's critical care, attention, and thought; I'm thankful for the collaboration in putting this work out into the world.

Notes

1. The US Global Change Research Program's *Climate Science Special Report* collates recent research on wildfires in the United States. Among its findings: increases in temperature have led to a concomitant increase in the "aridity of forest fuels during the fire season," and "increased fuel flammability driven by warmer, drier conditions and increased fuel availability driven by antecedent moisture" have impacted fire frequency and intensity (243).

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Emily McGiffin

Transatlantic Extractivism in Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*

Geologies of Canada

In the closing pages of her memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*, Dionne Brand writes:

> I've seen that castle in photographs, the one at Elmina. I've seen it from the angle of the sea, whitewashed and sprawling. There are photographs of what look like narrow low-ceilinged corridors; bats hang in these corridors' dark reaches. I know that if I go to that place I will be destroyed. Its photographs take my breath away. These places became known as the Gate of No Return, the Door of No Return. Does all terror become literary? These are the places that made everyone who went through forget their names. Here, walls ate the skin, footsteps took the mind. . . . It was a gift. Forgetting. (223)

The castle in question, the one at Elmina—"the mine"—was built by Portuguese merchants in 1482 as a trading post for gold. The quantities procured were not small: "From the completion of the fort at Elmina until the mid-sixteenth century, Portugal's caravel runs back and forth to the Gold Coast averaged between 46 and 57 kilograms" per month, bathing the royal court in Lisbon "in material luxury of a level only recently imaginable" (French 96-97). Yet barely was the fort built, barely had gold begun to change hands, when a traffic in humans became part of the exchange. That is, Elmina was literally a gold mine, before the gold mine became figurative. As the commodity transmuted, European powers laid the foundations of Western modernity: violence, racial antipathy, and an economic system in which no life is sacred. In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand remaps these imperial geographies and

geologies, calling attention to the forms of forgetting that they both produce and rely upon.

I read *A Map to the Door of No Return* in the quiet winter hours following the birth of my son. I had left my home in British Columbia temporarily in the summer of 2020, when border restrictions eased in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, because my partner's West African passport doesn't allow him ease of mobility beyond the region. We lived for the better part of a year in West Africa before work took us to the United Kingdom. I'd thought it would be a short stay before coming home, and that our son would be born in Canada, surrounded by friends and a large extended family. Instead, he was born in London, where we knew almost no one, because we'd been professionally advised that our request for a Canadian visitor's visa could well be turned down. Our circumstances called for a degree of certainty and the United Kingdom readily granted the visa we needed. Several months later, when we did apply for a Canadian visitor's visa from London, with a newborn son *and* a UK work permit valid for nearly five years, our request was indeed denied. The rejection letter explained that immigration officials doubted that my husband would leave Canada at the end of his visa but rather would choose to remain in the country illegally. This outcome was upsetting, but it didn't surprise me. I knew that Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) routinely bars entry to African professionals invited to conferences in Canada (see "African Delegates") and African students accepted into Canadian university programs (Venne), and that the IRCC is characterized by an internal culture of racism in which certain African countries are routinely referred to as the "dirty thirty" (*IRCC* 11).

Around the time that we were denied the right to visit our family in Canada, eight African mine workers—six Burkinabè, one Tanzanian, and one Zambian—died in the Perkoa zinc mine thirty kilometres from my husband's hometown (Sy and Williams). The mine, operated by a Vancouver-based corporation, was flooded by heavy rains, leading government and non-profit observers to comment on the mine's inadequate flood prevention infrastructure (Hosgood). I see these two matters as intimately connected. Canadian companies extract minerals from West African nations as they please, with inadequate

regard for the lives of husbands, sons, and fathers toiling underground. Meanwhile, West African husbands, sons, and fathers are routinely barred from visiting Canada and their families who live there on unfounded suspicion of criminal intent.

Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*, which traces the contours of empire through a series of personal journeys and interrogations of the colonial archive, reveals the continuities between the intimate and the geopolitical. In the process, the work maps a route to understanding racial and environmental violences in the present via the rifts and discontinuities of the past. This essay thinks alongside Brand's writing on issues of geography, mobility, and the afterlives of imperialism. I offer my family circumstances as a preface to my discussion because from my position as a White Canadian scholar living abroad with a family life increasingly affected by anti-Blackness everywhere, I personally feel the imperative for ecocriticism to more deeply contend with long histories of anti-Blackness in Canada that shape human and environmental relationships within and beyond our country.[1] While ecocriticism in Canada is increasingly engaged with anti-colonial concerns, particularly through critiques of settler colonialism and attendant environmental injustices (e.g., Banting; Pickard), Canada's role in other imperial injustices, including slavery and anti-Black violence within Canada and beyond, is in need of greater attention. The gap in ecocritical engagement not only with Black literature but also with Black scholarship has important consequences for theorizations of land, place, and extractivism in Canada. Specifically, like the broader narrative of "the Canadian nation-state" itself that "organizes and narrates its racial conflict and reconciliation along settler and Indigenous lines," ecocriticism in Canada tends to "prioritize the settler-Indigenous binary and subordinate—erase—the nation's own history of slavery and anti-Black racism" (King 10). As Tapji Garba and Sara-Maria Sorentino note in their detailed critical engagement with Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang's "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," eliding questions of race in favour of a settler-Indigenous binary creates a number of problems, including subsuming Blackness within a settler-colonial project of land and resource acquisition in which Black people remain invisible and aspatial subjects. In her

criticism of a dyadic approach to settler colonialism, Tiffany Lethabo King emphasizes that, across the landscape of the Americas, "the practice of enslaving Black people and making them fungible and accumulable symbols of spatial expansion happens *alongside* and *in relationship to* Indigenous genocide" (11; emphasis mine). In contrast to a dyadic settler-colonial framing, Black Canadian studies theorizes "racial violence through a triadic European-Native-Black frame" (11), an orientation that addresses more broadly the "material consequences" of colonial impulses to "inhabit, map, and control" Canadian landscapes while absenting those who are inconvenient to see (McKittrick 95). This framing also opens space for theorizations of Canadian extractivism that promise to expand and enrich discourses of sovereignty, resurgence, and identity in Canadian ecocritical discourse.

Scholars of Black geographies and Black ecologies have long decried the absenting of Blackness from environmental humanities and related environmental disciplines (Hosbey et al.). These disciplines "are often marked by an un-named colonial Whiteness that erases knowledges, bodies, and spirits that potentially offer more complex engagement with pressing issues that are never strictly or simply 'environmental'" (Girvan and Garcia Chua 2). Indeed, the relationship between Black studies and ecocriticism, which remains largely the purview of White-settler scholars, has often been troubled. Canadian ecocriticism stands to benefit considerably from closer engagement with Black literatures of all descriptions as part of a process of interrogating ideas about space, place, and nature that derive from post-Enlightenment European thought. This article therefore aims to attend to the "insurgent ecocriticism" of Black ecologies and Black geographies through an analysis of how Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return* challenges and reinscribes imperial cartographies and the environments they depict (Moulton and Salo).

This analysis proceeds in two parts. First, I situate the discussion within current theorizations of extraction and extractivism. Building on Kathryn Yusoff, I argue that such theorizations must keep the racialized violence of extractivism firmly within their scope. Next, in conversation with existing scholarship on Brand's *Map*, I analyze how the text challenges the hegemonies of colonial cartography and re-maps the contours of empire. Like other Black and Caribbean writers

in Canada, Brand writes from an internationalist perspective with a strong awareness of Canada's place within the legacies of global empires. *A Map to the Door of No Return* and other texts like it—Esi Edugyan's *Washington Black* and Lawrence Hill's *The Book of Negroes* are prominent examples—illustrate Canada's role within broader imperial structures that perpetuate violence against Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples. These works reveal a geography of empire that is not an Atlantic triangle but a global web in which Canada has been and remains both a source of and sink for imperial wealth. Contemporary Canadian extractivism is built on the imperial histories that entrenched racial disparities and created conditions amenable to further extraction. In examining *A Map to the Door of No Return*, this essay also critiques Canada's leading role in an anti-Black, extractivist world order.

Empires and Their Afterlives

In a recent special issue of *Textual Practice*, Imre Szeman and Jennifer Wenzel consider the distinction between *extraction* and *extractivism*, asking, "[W]hen does the *act* of resource extrac*tion* become a policy, an ideology, or a logic of extractiv*ism*?" (506). They note, "The relations between extraction as a concrete, physical practice, on the one hand, and extractivism as the cultural and ideological rationale that either motivates extraction or is the consequence of it, on the other, are necessarily complex and difficult to untangle" (508). In their discussion, they critique the "conceptual creep and adjectival ubiquity" of the term *extractivism* in the humanities. That is, "just as *Anthropocene* seems to be increasingly—and often rather loosely—invoked as a new synonym for modernity, there is a danger that *extractivist* may become the adjective and epithet *du jour*," the latest in a series of catch-all terms used as shorthand to designate "a litany of exploitative badness" (510). As they argue, various rhetorical treatments of extractivism risk rendering the term meaninglessly vague. In fact, as these authors point out, scholarly practices of textual extraction are qualitatively different from the regimes of terror enacted against Black and Indigenous peoples by extractive industries. While metaphors of extraction and extractivism can offer useful insights into damaging discursive or scholarly practices, the rhetorical sleight of hand that

implicitly equates citational practices with open-pit mines risks obscuring the deleterious material and cultural effects of extractive industries (Szeman and Wenzel 510-11).

Yet the "resource logic" at the heart of Szeman and Wenzel's critique offers an important entry point to extractive capitalism's constitutive logics of race and racialization. Noting the tendency to conceptualize nature as something other than human, subject to human manipulation, control, and exchange, the authors write:

> The central importance of natural resources in the practice and analysis of extractivism thus demands further thinking about this use (and abuse) of nature. The key question, even more fundamental than the relationship between extraction and extractivism, is this: by what set of imaginative, cognitive, economic, and other material operations does nature become figured as a resource? . . . Too often, nature is always-already construed as "natural resource," an orientation that can be described as a "resource logic," in which humans understand nature primarily as something other than themselves, disposed for their use, and subject to their control. (508-09)

The tenor of the conversation shifts with the acknowledgement that commercial extraction has been and is not only of minerals, trees, animals, and other so-called natural resources, but also of human beings, who are first figured as "nature" then constituted as a resource.

At this juncture, critics might turn to well-worn theorizations of the body as the foundation of capital via extracted labour that arise from Marxian conceptions of workers as bodies "transformed . . . into appendages of capital in both the workplace and the consumption sphere" whose labour power and surplus value are extracted (Harvey). While the transformation of humans into "human resources" under capitalism is an important object of ongoing study, chattel slavery is not synonymous with labour exploitation. Neither is it equivalent to forms of enslavement that existed on the African continent and beyond prior to the arrival of Europeans. Instead, the complete loss of bodily sovereignty experienced by the enslaved person was distinctive to the form of slavery that emerged with capitalism and European expansion from the fifteenth century onward. Kathryn Yusoff eloquently

describes the relationships among capital, chattel slavery, colonialism, and geology, and her thinking is worth quoting here at length:

> While the search for geologic resources instigated the imperative to enslave, geology quickly established itself as an imperial science that both organized the extraction of the Americas and, in the continued context of Victorian colonialism, became a structuring priority in the colonial complex, especially in India, Canada, and Australia. These territories became organized as material resources and markets for Empire, and the geologic practices established in these colonies continued to underwrite current neocolonial extraction processes by Canada and Australia throughout the world (Canada, for example, is the largest national global mining corporation). (82)

In her work on extractivism and Black Anthropocenes, which she defines as "the proximity of black and brown bodies to harm in [their] intimacy with the inhuman" (xii), Yusoff shows that the science of geology is far from neutral or disinterested. Rather, "White Geology makes legible a set of extractions . . . from black and brown bodies, and from the ecologies of place" (4). Through this process of signification, "a transmutation of matter occurs . . . that renders matter as property, that makes a delineation between agency and inertness, which stabilizes the *cut* of property and enacts the removal of matter from its constitutive relations" (4). Through geology's signification, Black Africans were rendered property and extracted from their continent of origin not in dribs and drabs but on a scale that vastly exceeds that of almost any extractive enterprise before or since.

In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand speaks of a "rift" (4), the break with the past that the Door created. This rift permits the extractivist present. Opening the Door to the open-market buying and selling not of human labour but of human bodies and bodily autonomy—and the mind, spirit, and intimate relations that go along with them—opened the way to the market valuation of every other thing. In this sense, the Door was never again closed; through that opening moves a steady flow of animals, timber, minerals, and—even now—people.[2] These dynamics are deeply relevant to Canadian ecocriticism, not only because chattel slavery was constitutive of the British colonialism that produced

(and produces) the environments of Canada, but also because this history of racialized plunder continues to serve White imperial projects of Canadian extractivism at home and abroad.

Of these dynamics, first consider the sheer scale of the extraction. From the late 1400s to the mid-1800s, tens of thousands of slave ships embarked from Africa. The total number of bodies extracted is unknown but the best estimates suggest at least 12.5 million ("Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade"), which is almost certainly a significant underestimate. The 12.5 million bodies transported does not include the innumerable people who died in exportation ports while waiting in deplorable conditions for a ship to arrive. It does not include those who died during long overland routes to the nearest port, or those who died in battles fought between African peoples to secure new supplies of slaves. In any case, body counts alone do little to further our understanding of how this trade in African lives continues to destabilize, impoverish, divide, and drain Africa of strength and intellect. The transatlantic slave trade was not something that happened to the African diaspora alone; the trade has had lasting, debilitating effects on Africa itself. Research has only begun to explore the deep and lasting effects of the trade on the African continent, but it is clear that every aspect of African life was affected and the repercussions of the trade continue to reverberate (e.g., Nunn; Whatley).

A Map to the Door of No Return probes for meaning in the wake of such horrors. "Those men," Brand writes,

> raiding villages, leading coffles, throwing buckets of water, those examining limbs and teeth, those looking into eyes for rebellion, those are the captors who enter the captive's body. Already inhabiting them as extensions of themselves with a curious dissociation which gave them the ability to harm them as well. Slaves became extensions of slave owners—their arms, legs, the parts of them they wished to harness and use with none of the usual care of their own bodies. These captive bodies represent parts of their own bodies that they wish to rationalize or make mechanical or inhuman so as to perform the tasks of exploitation of resources or acquisition of territory. These captive bodies then became the tools sent out to conquer the natural world. (30-31)

The rift created by bodily extraction and the horrific violence that it entailed is both a social and environmental trauma with lasting traces on people and the lands they inhabit. As Brand emphasizes here, even as Black bodies were recast as inhuman to justify and enable the extractive violence against them, they were simultaneously recast as mechanical agents of environmental transformation and conquest.[3]

Canadian mining companies, whose affairs at home and abroad take shape in the environments of corruption and collusion, unevenness, division, and racial hierarchy that this calculated destruction and upheaval produced, actively benefit from these histories. Through the historical and ongoing work of geology to produce systems of signification favourable to extraction, Canadian corporations enrich both shareholders and the nation-state. According to Natural Resources Canada, "Canada is home to almost half of the world's publicly listed mining and mineral exploration companies. . . . Canadian companies were present in 97 foreign countries in 2020 [and] 99 countries in 2019. Mining assets abroad accounted for about two thirds of the total value of CMAs [Canadian Mining Assests]" ("Canadian Mining Assets"). As in the case of the Perkoa zinc mine, these corporations often operate without sufficient oversight or sufficient accountability, and resultant harms to Black and Indigenous peoples worldwide through such enterprises are widely documented (e.g., Bonokwane and Kassa; Connolly and Kamphuis).

Scholars have examined *A Map to the Door of No Return* as an example of diasporic writing that attempts to "work through" traumatic histories as a necessary way for the African diaspora to "move on" from them (Bertacco). Yet there can be no moving on from the inhumanities of a past that is still present. Furthermore, grappling with a past that saw both Indigenous genocide and the rendering of human lives and bodies as property to be disposed of in the most cost-effective way is a task that doesn't belong to Indigenous or African peoples alone. The collective nature of these historical traumas, and their embeddedness in contemporary Canadian culture, demand collective responses. The map that Brand offers invites Canadians to chart a history of the present from a broader understanding of Canada as not only a settler-colonial nation but also as an artifact of empire and a practised

imperial power in its own right. This reading of Brand's text adds to ecocritical understandings of the racial dimensions of Canadian extractive imperialism both in Canada and elsewhere by drawing on the insights of Black literature and critical scholarship.

Mapping Empire and Imperial Violence

Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return* is a memoir; but, with its intertextual structure and non-linear timeline that tracks back and forth across the decades of the speaker's life and the centuries of the slave trade, it might better be called a book of remembrances. The book opens with the line, "My grandfather said he knew what people we came from" (3). Yet over the course of the opening section, "A Circumstantial Account of the State of Things," the thirteen-year-old protagonist pesters her grandfather for knowledge, listing all the names of African peoples she knows in the hopes of jogging his memory, and gradually realizes that the knowledge is lost. The awareness of this loss, and of her grandfather's fallibility, Brand writes, was deeply upsetting and "gathered into a kind of estrangement" between the two of them (4):

> [T]he rupture this exchange with my grandfather revealed was greater than the need for familial bonds. It was a rupture in history, a rupture in the quality of being. It was also a physical rupture, a rupture of geography. . . . We were not from the place where we lived and we could not remember where we were from or who we were. My grandfather could not summon up a vision of landscape or a people which would add up to a name. And it was profoundly disturbing.
>
> Having no name to call on was having no past; having no past pointed to the fissure between the past and the present. That fissure is represented in the Door of No Return: that place where our ancestors departed one world for another; the Old World for the New. The place where all names were forgotten and all beginnings recast. (5)

Ironically, the book's remembrances are called into question by its central theme: forgetting. Both this forgetfulness and the fragmented nature of the text produce a memoir that is honest about lapses in memory and the need to compile versions of history from secondary

accounts. Meanwhile the form evokes the movement of memory: memory is always patchy and fragmented; memory always skips backwards and forwards through time, pausing to ruminate at length on what pleases or puzzles it. Where the speaker's remembrances are missing, the archive stands in; throughout the book, there is a merging of the realities produced by the archive and by memory.

A few pages later, Brand addresses forgetting and its connection to maps and place: "My grandfather never remembered our name and perhaps therefore, in a large sense for me, our way. . . . For the name he could not remember was from the place we could not remember. Africa. It was the place we did not remember, yet it lodged itself in all the conversations of who we were" (16). As this passage suggests, the extractions of the slave trade entailed the destruction of memory. This destruction was wilful on the part of colonizers and colonized alike. For the speaker's grandfather, for instance, forgetting was imperative for self-preservation. The speaker notes, "His forgetting was understandable; after all, when he was born the Door of No Return was hardly closed, forgetting was urgent" (223). In the extractive zone of the Caribbean and its plantation legacies, unwelcome memories are an inevitable by-product: tailings, as it were, buried underwater as a safeguard against their corrosive effects. Extraction of people is also destruction of memory, of history, of culture, of a psychic sense of belonging. The "absent presence," Brand contends, is the Door, which "in its historical connectedness was the point of departure, not only physical departure but psychic rending, of our ancestors" (21). From one angle after another, Brand considers the pernicious, intergenerational consequences of these losses for the African diaspora—the losses an immense burden that lives on as a haunting—as well as the fact that it is forgetting that makes empire possible. Perhaps more accurately, forgetting is a condition of empire; it is necessary to empire's survival and growth. It is inherent to the rupture of empire, colonialism, and extraction.

In the space of forgetfulness, in the absence of Africa and its culture and traditions, Brand and her family "were inhabited by British consciousness" and each day "went out to be schooled in Englishness" (17). Inhabited by a conflicted "duality"—Afro-Caribbean and English—Brand grew up with an awareness of this duality as a

contest between desirable and undesirable aspects of the self, with "the sense that some being had to be erased and some being had to be cultivated" each day.[4] More obviously than the Canada of today, the Trinidad of Brand's remembrances leans toward the metropolis; it is keenly aware of itself as part of the British empire. Of her inaugural trip to London in June 1999, Brand writes:

> I've been here several times. I know this place. How? It is not any country I've lived in, yet it is a country I have lived in, . . . I know the narrowness of the street; I know the circus I'm walking toward. I know the pace of other pedestrians and I know how long I will have to wait at a coffee shop to be noticed and then to ask for my coffee. I know all this because it is England. (75)

Joining "an oddly familiar" multinational queue to pass through customs, Brand sees in the faces around her "an unnameable familiarity among us" and names it: "Empire" (75). She knows this multi-ethnic blend of foreign travellers because, she says,

> we marched into schools to the same classical music, we wore the same uniforms, we walked with writing slates hung around our necks, we sat at the same desks, we read from the same Royal Readers perhaps, we drank the same condensed milk, we ate the same butter from cows in Jersey or New Zealand, we tailored our speech in the presence of officialdom, we read the Brontës and Enid Blyton[.] . . . And here we were in a line entering England, a place we were all too familiar with and a place all too familiar with us. (76)

In the decades since Brand was schooled in Britishness, both Canada and Trinidad have forged independent national identities. In 1976, Trinidad and Tobago—united in 1889 and independent since 1962—became a republic. However, Canada stubbornly retains its imperial ties. Currently, Canada is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, a network of countries with the reigning British monarch, King Charles III, as its head of state. The Crown is the most important of "Canadian legal and governmental institutions," serving to unify them under one entity (Romaniuk and Wasylciw 109).[5] Remarkably, although the "Crown has remained both a symbol of strength and a connection to Canada's historical roots . . . Canadian scholars,

like many Canadians, seldom concern themselves with the Crown as an important institution. While it remains omnipresent in Canadian society . . . it is hardly ever seen, heard, or studied" (109). Such forgetfulness is convenient. It enables the Canadian nation to quietly benefit from imperial, White supremacist histories that are actively upheld through the symbolism of the British monarchy. King Charles III, a figurehead of colonial and imperial histories despite his personal efforts at reparations, lends a patina of power and legitimacy to Canada and Britain's neo-imperial pursuits. Forgetting the country's imperial history and the Whiteness that our head of state stands for enables Canadians to ignore, forgive, or rationalize our nation's colonial ventures more easily. These ventures include extractivist projects on stolen Indigenous lands within Canada's own borders and across landscapes in Africa, South America, and the Caribbean, along with the anti-Indigenous and anti-Black violence that these projects give rise to.

Forgetting or denying the past and its repercussions is more difficult in other contexts. Of Germany in the wake of the Holocaust, Brand writes:

> Only the brazen can say, "I was not here, I did not do this and feel that." One hears that all the time in Canada; about what people feel they are and are not responsible for. People use these arguments as reasons for not doing what is right or just. It never occurs to them that they live on the cumulative hurt of others. They want to start the clock of social justice only when they arrived. But one is born into history, one isn't born into a void. (81-82)

Whether or not Canadians wish to remember, Canada's lasting engagement with empire is unequivocal, and the roots of Britain's nefarious trade in human bodies extend deep into the foundations of the Canadian nation-state and its cultural imaginaries. The map of Canada, for instance, is spangled with the names of historical figures who either dealt directly in the trade in human bodies or otherwise upheld and promoted it. While the City of Toronto has taken the decisive step of renaming Dundas Street following criticism of Henry Dundas' role in actively "delaying the abolition of the transatlantic

slave trade" (Moore; Mullen), Dundas' name still designates Canadian landmarks from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. Lord Horatio Nelson, who "fought the French and Spanish in the late eighteenth century to preserve British dominance on the high seas and in the Caribbean, in particular, at the very height of the American slave trade," and who was "a fierce defender of the transatlantic traffic in Africans in his private life as well," is the namesake of innumerable streets across Canada, as well as a famously left-leaning town in southeastern BC (French 121). These names colonize Canadian environments with histories of enslavement. They act on the Canadian subconscious, at once reflecting and reaffirming White supremacist values.

Campaigns to rename streets or remove statues actively challenge what aspects of the past a nation commemorates. Yet public ceremony hides even more important histories from public view. The celebration of British abolition, for instance, erases both the British brutality that preceded emancipation and the enormous compensation paid to British slave owners in its wake ("Doing Reparatory History"; Mhaka). As Catherine Hall reports, "£20m (equivalent to 40% of state expenditure in 1834) was paid in compensation by the British government to the slave owners to secure their agreement to the loss of 'their' property—despite the fact that the moral basis of the campaign against slavery was that it was wrong to hold property in people" ("Britain's Massive Debt to Slavery").[6] Many of those compensated for the loss of "property" in the Caribbean following abolition went on to invest their newly acquired funds in colonial ventures, including the Canada Land Company, the Canada Company, and the Hudson's Bay Company. Through these compensatory payments, as well as through former slavers' investments in Canadian institutions of their plantation earnings, slavery underwrote the colonization of Canada.[7]

As Brand notes in her comment on Germany in the wake of the Holocaust, many Canadians argue that they aren't responsible for their country's history, or that these aspects of the British colonial past were peripheral to Canadian history and geography and therefore to the lives of its current population. Even if such reasoning were true, Brand reminds us that nations are made up of peripheries, that those who live at society's margins are the fabric of which a society is made.

"What holds poetry together in this city," she writes of Toronto, "is the real look of things. . . . I see its needs and its discomforts locked in apartments, its time that no one has—the growing citizenry of homelessness. . . . These are people on the edges of the city, some would say, not emblematic. I know they might be the edges and easily ignored, but they curl into the middle" (100-01). She writes of the importance both of witnessing and, as a citizen of Canada, of taking responsibility for her place in the troubled history of the nation:

> I could, I suppose, see about myself only. I could be unaffected. I could come to the easy belief that, really, what is there to speak against? I could develop that voice so full of cold address to beauty. I could with some self-defacement go about the business of making my living. I could say in that way that many do: oh, it's not so bad, your writing need not show your skin, it need not speak of trouble, history is a burden after all. But Neruda summons me, is waiting for me at the end of every sentence. I cannot ignore my hands "stained with garbage and sadness." (100)

The quoted phrase is drawn from Neruda's "Letter to Miguel Otero Silva, in Caracas"; Brand offers an expanded passage on the preceding page. "*I . . . went through the tunnels of the mines*," writes Neruda,

> *to see how other men live.*
> *And when I came out, my hands stained with garbage*
> *and sadness*
> *I held my hands up and showed them to the generals,*
> *and said: "I am not a part of this crime."* (qtd. in Brand 99)

Are we to take Neruda's words as sanguine? Brand's writing complicates questions of who is part of a crime and who bears responsibility for the burdens of history. The unvoiced question to the reader is what we are to make of our own stained hands.

Mapping Common Ground

My family's request for a Canadian visitor visa was declined because immigration officials felt there was a reasonable doubt that my husband would leave Canada by the expiry date of the visa. This is the same reason they gave for declining our previous application, in late 2019, when our circumstances were very different. Both decisions

strike me as rooted not only in socio-economic realities but also in the pervasive idea that Africans are desperate to quit their continent by any possible means. One of the dominant images of Africans in the world, routinely propagated by global media, is of impoverished masses willing to risk everything to launch themselves through contemporary Doors of No Return: on overloaded pirogues headed for the Canary Islands; through deadly overland routes across the Sahara; on repurposed fishing boats loaded to the gunwales and pointed towards Lampedusa. In asking what happened at the Door, Brand presses against the limits of what language can articulate, its inability to signify in the face of the unspeakable inhumanity of the slave trade. To "leave," she writes, implies a destination (21). "Taking, taking too might suggest a benevolence" (21), and *migration* conveys intent. "What language," Brand asks, "would describe that loss of bearings or the sudden awful liability of one's own body?" (21). This inadequacy of language persists. What words can articulate the persistent idea of human transfer, movement, flight inscribed on the continent? Or the subsequent idea too often attached to Africans abroad—one that dogged my husband in London—of presumed illegality and illegitimacy when Africans move through privileged spaces?

Contrary to these ideas, many Africans travel for pleasure, work, or pilgrimage, and subsequently return home. *A Map to the Door of No Return*, however, grapples with a condition of permanent estrangement in which no return is possible. The work is densely intertextual, and Brand curates selections of canonic literature by such writers as Toni Morrison, J. M. Coetzee, Derek Walcott, Pablo Neruda, and V. S. Naipaul. Yet I couldn't help seeing the fundamental gaps and silences in this conversation. Because Africa is generally so poorly known and so poorly imagined, because the world's relationship with the continent is so fraught, I wished its voices found their place in the book. I wished that it were better represented.

Yet this absence is purposeful. As Brand makes clear, the rupture of the past is not one that can be placed in a physical location, nor on an actual continent. In this book, Africa is forgotten, significant for its absence both in the speaker's reality and in the terrain of the book. At the same time, Africa is omnipresent; the meanings that inhere in Black

bodies always "return to the Door of No Return" (35). In the world after this fundamental rupture, the body remains "the place of captivity" as the "Black body is situated as a sign of particular cultural and political meanings in the Diaspora. . . . It is domesticated in the sense that there are set characteristics ascribed to the body which have the effect of familiarizing people with it" (35). These meanings inhere perhaps even more strongly in the bodies of Black Africans, who are made to stand in for White fears and desires (Cole), and are routinely figured as the non-agential subjects of global saviour projects (Kapoor 39-42), even as their freedom of movement is restricted by heavily policed border regimes.[8] Africa's subaltern status in the world is mediated by the place, perception, and policing of Blackness everywhere, and the ache of the new-world diaspora is echoed by grief on the other side of the Atlantic. The absences in *A Map to the Door of No Return* suggest that although transatlantic conversations and solidarity may be deeply desired, the ruptures of history and the violence and forgetting that colonial geologies have imposed all create barriers to understanding and connection that are difficult to overcome—and in certain instances may simply be too painful to face. As George Elliott Clarke notes in his review of *A Map to the Door of No Return*, "the distance to bridge, the wound to cauterize, is even more traumatic, for the site of loss, of original dispersal and dismemberment, is impossible, now, for most, to identify or acknowledge" (557).

For nearly a year I've lived with my family in Conakry, Guinea, on a West African coastline studded with Doors of No Return. Studying cultures of mineral extraction in this context, it is clear to me that current mineral enterprises map onto long imperial histories of extraction and larger structures of racialized violence. Guinea, for instance, is the world's bauxite zone, home to almost a third of the global supply of the mineral from which aluminum is derived. Along with Jamaica, it has been the source of much of the raw material for Canada's aluminum smelters—key features in our economic infrastructure—because Canada has no bauxite of its own. Paradoxically, aluminum is largely absent from the Guinean landscape. Few people own private vehicles or computers; there are no public rail or bus services, no national airline; and widespread electrification—made possible elsewhere thanks to abundant

supplies of cheap aluminum—has yet to be fully realized. Each day, when I step onto the crowded streets of the capital, I am made aware of how differently history has positioned me from the citizens of this country, or the descendants of those who made their way in shackles from stone cells farther along the coast up the gangplanks of waiting ships. Here my skin is a flag proclaiming wealth, order, legitimate governance, and functioning institutions that further advance my privilege in the world. My skin tells a story of an expensive set of plane tickets between here and an elsewhere that would welcome my arrival while barring others', a portal standing open to people with passports like mine.

Dionne Brand doesn't write about bauxite, and yet she does. She writes of the history that we are born into, of the global geographies with which we are in continual conversation. This history includes not only slavery and maroonage within Canada's own borders (Chopra 79-135; Nelson 4-8; Whitfield 324-26), but also the embeddedness of Canadian settler colonialism within broader slave economies. Imperial pasts have produced an inequitable contemporary world starkly divided along racial lines. They have also produced Canada, a nation built on extractivist projects and enterprises within its own national boundaries and elsewhere. The physical distances between Canada and Africa, the Caribbean, and other subaltern spaces of empire conceal the consequences of Canadian extraction, past and present. Nevertheless, Canadians participate daily, implicitly, and intimately in environmental degradation and material deprivation in the world's hinterlands. Together we make—and can unmake—histories of injustice that are bound up in the extractive undertakings sanctioned by our state.

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Notes

1. This article follows the recommendation of the National Association of Black Journalists that "whenever a color is used to appropriately describe race then it

should be capitalized within the proper context, including White and Brown" ("NABJ Style Guide").

2. The International Labour Organization, Walk Free, and the International Organization for Migration estimate that, in 2021, fifty million people were living in modern slavery, an increase of ten million people over 2016 figures.
3. Joshua Bennett's intervention on this topic addresses "the broader set of ethical concerns that have emerged from African American experiences of living as socio-legal *nonpersons*: a subgenre of the human, always already positioned in fraught proximity to animal life" (4-5). He argues that, "animalization of [B]lack peoples within a contemporary US context" is "ongoing" (9), and that Black lives are too "often positioned outside the human-animal divide altogether and placed elsewhere in a zone of nonbeing where the kinds of extravagant violence so often deployed against, and solely reserved for, animals is made allowable, deemed necessary in order for white civil society to function at peak performance" (6).
4. In her essay "Dualities," from *Bread Out of Stone*, Brand elaborates on this conflicted duality. Thank you to the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this piece.
5. The Government of Canada summarizes the role of the monarchy in Canada as follows: "As the living embodiment of the Crown, His Majesty's role is to unite Canadians and give a collective sense of belonging to our country. . . . New Canadians swear allegiance to The King, so as Members of Parliament and the Legislatures, military and police officers. We do not swear allegiance to a document (a constitution) or a political entity. Rather we swear allegiance to a person who embodies all these as well as our collective values as a people" ("The Monarch").
6. For more details, see the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery (ucl.ac.uk/lbs), for which Catherine Hall is principal investigator. This project includes databases of estates and plantations in the British Caribbean and an online database of compensatory payments.
7. The Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery at University College London has assembled databases of plantation owners, their estates, activities, reparations payments, and investments that illustrate the multifaceted legacies of British slavery. A similar project exists in Western Australia (*Western Australian Legacies of British Slavery*, australian-legacies-slavery.org). My research and correspondence with experts in the field has not turned up any comparable projects specific to Canada.
8. See, for example, Jean-François Venne on Canada's appalling rate of refusal to grant study permits to African students *already accepted* to francophone Canadian universities: between seventy-eight and ninety percent of accepted African students' applications were refused between 2019 and 2022.

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Migratorial Embodiments, Paradox, and Entangled Gifts: Decentring Colonialist Seeing in *Tungijuq (What We Eat)*

Tungijuq (What We Eat) is a 2009 collaborative short film by Inuk throat singer, avant-garde composer, and author Tanya Tagaq; Inuk filmmaker and Igloolik Isuma cofounder Zacharias Kunuk; and Canadian filmmakers Félix Lajeunesse and Paul Raphaël. Produced by Igloolik Isuma, *Tungijuq* confounds colonialist seeing via image, sound, and a representational mobility rooted in normative Inuit practices and complex, nonfixed ontologies. In recent decades, sealing bans have imposed unprecedented poverty on the Inuit North. These policies, enacted with little to no Inuit consultation, were largely influenced by massive PETA and Greenpeace protest campaigns, which also ignored Inuit cultural and material realities. Such policies and campaigns posit the living seal over disregarded Inuit life and align with, for example, the "disappearing Indian" motif, which sees Indigenous life as simply disappearing* in the face of an inevitably advancing settler civilization. The policies and campaigns also displace complex relationalities as embodied in the Inuit seal hunt with simplistic ontologies designating life as only for either extraction or conservation. *Tungijuq*, though, sidesteps rights-based discourses and settler-state contexts. It represents complex ontologies and relationalities—living and dying, human and more-than-human, hunter and hunted—as embedded in the seal hunt and as normative to Inuit life in ways that unsettle colonialist seeing. In this way, the film offers distinct experiences to different kinds of viewer-listeners: (1) a present, grounded representation of embodied Inuit being to those who recognize its ontologies and (2) a perplexing, marginalizing experience to those ensconced in settler perception and positionality. Following Isuma's and other Inuit activists' leads, I consider both

Tungijuq and this impasse in terms of Inuit gift, an affective reminder of reciprocity, relationality, and obligation. As a film not fully comprehensible by way of settler positionality, and perhaps *because* of this, *Tungijuq* might offer affective bearing for deconstructing "largely lost" phenomenological orientations in and in context of Inuit Territories (Sheila Watt-Cloutier, qtd. in Callison 66). That is, rooted in Inuit sovereignty and normativity with the capacity for confounding settler perception, *Tungijuq* paradoxically might offer—*give*—the possibility of a radical (to settlers) ontology for deconstructing settler economics, being, and seeing in Inuit Territories.

A few cautions: This paper isn't an argument on what Inuit ontologies are. To clarify my positionality, I'm a settler, trans, and disabled scholar living on Treaty 1 Territory. I take my lead from Tagaq, those at Isuma, and other Inuit writers and activists, though I sometimes correlate these discussions with discourses by non-Inuit Indigenous writers. This paper also isn't meant to posit or *extract* what *Tungijuq* means—it isn't some Northwest Passage through the territory of this complex film. Rather, I emphasize that, in ways, this film marks an impasse, one that provokes an essential crisis of settler perception that perhaps isn't resolvable. The perceptual crisis, not its resolution, is what I want to draw attention to. xwélmexw (Stó:lō/Skwah) scholar Dylan Robinson, in his *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, builds on American musicologist Susan McClary's work to emphasize that decolonizing listening involves becoming "no longer sure what listening is" (72). Robinson writes that in "encounters between nation-to-nation sound sources and perception," effecting a "decolonial crisis in the act of listening" doesn't mean simply willing away patterns of "colonial listening" or even "listening better"; rather, "it means shifting the places, models, and structures of how we listen. At times, it may also mean an approach led by artists, composers, curators, and musicians to impose new listening impasses through their work" (72). My point isn't to effect a perceptual crisis and then resolve it; rather, it's to consider the crisis itself, the impasse—to *not* find a way around it. That this paper won't seem to *arrive* will frustrate some, but for those of us who are settlers, I wonder why we might feel entitled to not be frustrated by Indigenous texts, why we feel entitled to extract

something from them. Robinson writes that the hungry listener "orients teleologically toward progression and resolution" (50), and I don't expect readers will find a conclusive reading of *Tungijuq* here.

Yet getting lost presents its own contradictions. Does one just stay lost? Does a reorientation betray the essential, if counterintuitive, information of getting lost in the first place? And what of this impasse, one seemingly so much to do with entanglement? The sovereignty *Tungijuq* inscribes with its simultaneities, multiplicities, and interconnections quietly halts, without even regarding, the dualities and separations underwriting settler ideology and, thereby, also incursions like sealing bans and anti-seal-hunt protests. But it also calls us all to complexities we can't so simply turn away from. So what do we do when we can't go forward and we can't go back? Do we who are disoriented simply talk our way out—of our perplexity, disorientation, dislocation, self-doubt, and lack of belonging in Territories we don't understand—until we supposedly find our bearing, ourselves, again? This is another impossibility, this "hearing oneself speak," what Jacques Derrida calls "auto-affection," an impossible self-presence nevertheless underwriting subjecthood and thus the phenomenological appearance of the world as such (*Speech and Phenomena* 78). And how much does settler phenomenology rely on a coherency of selfhood separate from the seen (and therefore known) world? Why do the representations of complex Inuit ontologies in this film, and in other media I'll soon discuss, seem to produce such a crisis of not only settler perception but also settler subjecthood? In sitting with these questions, I also consider phenomenological implications of *Tungijuq*'s impasse, which also seems to be gift, entanglement, and a performance of Inuit sovereignty—these paradoxes, pluralities, and simultaneities that accrete in the encountering of *Tungijuq*. Here, I amass questions in a reconsideration of and intervention into Derrida's impossibility of the gift, its phenomenality and beyond-phenomenality, not as a turn to the European and not as arrival but rather as an act of entanglement, one rife with paradox and inevitable contradictions: not a way around, through, or back but an affective call to entanglement, to how entangled we already are, how entangled we are yet to be—and to entangled phenomenologies to come.

Sealfies, *Nanook*, and Ocular Extractivism

Before approaching *Tungijuq*, I want to first consider autoethnographic and ethnographic representations in the "sealfie" movement, *Nanook of the North*, and Tagaq's *Nanook* performances. In 2014, Tagaq tweeted a "sealfie" of her daughter next to a freshly killed seal as part of the #sealfie movement, an Inuit-led social media response to anti-seal-hunt, settler-underpinned rhetoric from and activism by PETA and Ellen DeGeneres. The term itself is a play on *selfie* and *seal*. As part of the movement, people, many from Northern Canada, posted pictures of themselves wearing sealskins. Tagaq's own tweet provoked violent retaliation on *X* (formerly *Twitter*), including death threats, a photoshopped image of her baby getting stabbed, and other tweets invoking historical colonial violences (Rule 743; Dean):

> That's actually abusive to the child. Nothing like putting your baby next to a dead body for fun. (My bleeding heart)
>
> She should have the baby taken off her. She isn't a fit mother, she's obviously inbred, lacking intelligence. (Lisbon-Dowson)
>
> Another Inuit tradition we are supposed to be OK with? They are savages plain and simple. (Michael [suspended account], qtd. in Dean)

Discussing these virulent responses, Driftpile Cree Nation writer-scholar Billy-Ray Belcourt states that the tweet "represented that which was firmly outside what one might call . . . a public capacity to represent" (235)—i.e., Tagaq's image represented what was beyond colonialist seeing.[1] In this way, her tweet's power perhaps lies in its incomprehensibility to colonialist knowledge *and* in its simultaneous signalling of complex embodiments of life and death recognizable to Inuit understanding. Scholar and enrolled citizen of the Chickasaw Nation Elizabeth Rule writes that such responses invoke historical settler-state removals of Indigenous children and other attempts to "eradicate sources of Indigenous life and livelihood" and that they frame Tagaq as deserving violence that seals do not (746; see 741-47). Such opposition to the image demonstrates a greater settler capacity to imagine violence upon Inuit bodies than to imagine the possibility

of their own, deficient settler understanding. It also performs colonial seeing by clearing Inuit presence from the geography of a public discourse *about Inuit realities* to make space for settler imagination.

Settler perception is phenomenologically oriented and imbued with extractivist logic. Robinson frames settler-colonial positionality as a state of perception he terms "hungry listening," or "a settler's starving orientation" (2). He grounds the term in the first meetings of *xwélmexw* (Stó:lō people) and *xwelítem*, or colonists, "largely men," who arrived by the thousands in concurrent states of bodily and extractivist starvation—i.e., they were hungry for both food and gold (2). He writes that the term derives from "two Halq'eméylem words: shxwelítemelh (the adjective for settler or white person's methods/things) and xwélalà:m (the word for listening). shxwelítemelh comes from the word xwelítem (white settler) and more precisely means 'starving person'" (2). Settler positionality has long been framed in terms of phenomenological ocularity. A trope of settler literature is the settler standing amid his "new" geography, simultaneously seeing and unseeing obstacles to his agrarian project: everything *other*wise—trees, rocks, any Indigenous presence—vanishes within his sight. Settler scholar Laurence Ricou, in his *Vertical Man/Horizontal World* (1973), emphasizes this geometry: "Vertical man in a horizontal world is necessarily a solitary figure; the fiction of the Canadian prairies is the record of man conquering his geographical solitude, and, by extension, his other solitudes, not so much physically as through imaginative understanding" (6). For the settler, settlement is a project of self whereby space is claimed by seeing and filled simultaneously by imagination. Robinson, though, builds on Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's elaboration of extraction, which she discusses in conversation with Canadian settler writer Naomi Klein, to write that settler perception rooted in hunger is also therefore rooted in extractivism (10).[2]

Having to hold complex realities against reductionist understanding is familiar territory for Tagaq. In 2012, the Toronto International Film Festival commissioned Tagaq to score accompaniment to its screening of settler Robert J. Flaherty's 1922 silent film *Nanook of the North*, a film criticized for its ethnographic portrayal of Inuit. Centring on the daily lives of Nanook (played by Inuit actor Allakariallak) and his

family in northern Quebec, it employs tropes of Indigeneity, including the romanticization of a People it frames as disappearing in the face of what is implicitly understood as an inevitably advancing settler society. It presents Nanook's family as seen, but it also works to establish their disappearance. While the film's Inuit actors are sometimes shown practising their traditional culture, the film's shots, title cards, and editing frame the characters as "savages": e.g., Tagaq calls the film "a bunch of bullshit happy Eskimo stereotypes" that, when she saw it as a child, made her feel "embarrassed and annoyed," though she now finds "moments in the movie where . . . my ancestors, they're so amazing . . . I'm very proud of my ancestors," adding that her performances "reclaim the film" ("Inuk throat singer"). Flaherty has historically been framed as either a *vision*ary who captured in film a heroic people on the cusp of their disappearance or an opportunist who *took* what he *saw* via filmic participation in settler extractivism. While the latter is true, Tagaq and others complicate such dichotomized views by emphasizing the film's essential collaborative Inuit labour, including that of actors, camera operators, consultants, and other production crew (Gagnon 54; Yue 169). This Inuit filmmaking and production tradition also includes Tagaq's own work, such as her 2014 *Nanook* concert tour and other *Nanook* performances.

Crucial to Tagaq's *Nanook* performances is how her voice and stage presence render Flaherty's colonialist seeing an object itself to be seen and how she displaces the film's textual, narratorial speech with the sounds and visuals of her own performance. *Nanook*, a silent film, employs title cards as a narratorial framework that summarizes, contains, constrains, reframes, and speaks for and about the film's subjects, intersplicing and interpreting what the camera "sees." Media artist and media studies scholar Ming-Yuen S. Ma frames this narratorial displacement of non-Western voices in ethnographic films as extractivist: "The discursive power of the voice is stolen from the subject of these films, whose silence parallels the exploitation and depletion of natural resources, human labor, and political and cultural sovereignty by the larger projects of colonialism and imperialism" (28). Tagaq's heavily improvised Nanook performances juxtapose, overlap, and interact with the screened film behind them; her voice and

embodied performance marginalize Flaherty's settler perception of Inuit being. Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor emphasizes that members of cultures objectified by ethnographic projects have historically rarely seen, benefited, or been able to comment on such representations of themselves (170). Analyzing "Couple in the Cage," an improvised art performance tour wherein artists Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco presented themselves as members of an "undiscovered" Indigenous group, Taylor writes that audience members who failed to perceive such "marked theatricality . . . attested to how deeply invested they were in maintaining the colonial fantasy" (168). In her performances, Tagaq anticipates and rejects such colonialist seeing directly: e.g., she describes herself as having growled at audience members who laughed at the parts of *Nanook* that mock Inuit (Chana 34), and performance studies scholar Olivia Gagnon points out that Tagaq's throat singing "talk[s]" or "sing[s] back" to Nanook (50). Yet Gagnon also points out that Tagaq voices Inuit being in ways not merely relational to the film but embodied themselves and "structured by imaginative and speculative logics of spectral kinship and belonging" (60).

While *Nanook* sees and unsees Inuit being, taking what it wants, Tagaq's *Nanook* performances unsettle Flaherty's vision with a performance framework that destabilizes centred perceptions, focal centres, objects, and subjects. Tagaq inhabits complex positionality as audience to and participant in (or with) the film. Her performed contextual framework also ensures *Nanook*'s lens is made an *object* for her audience's own perception, thus enabling audience members to see Flaherty's seeing and to see also their own perception reflected in Flaherty's. They, too, are part of this perceptual tangle. But, just as fundamentally, this troubled ocularity is already unsettled by the sounds of Tagaq's rescoring, which destabilize perceptual focus—i.e., where one focuses, what they focus on, and which sense they focus with.

Embodiments, Ontologies, and Mobility

Like Tagaq's *Nanook* performances, *Tungijuq* employs complex visual and sonic representations that centre Inuit being. Even before *Tungijuq (What We Eat)* is seen and heard, its title is already centring

Inuit being via its use of Inuktitut, its use of the first person, and how it marginalizes, via parenthesis, the English "*(What We Eat)*." The title plays on the idiom "you are what you eat," but it also confronts the common perception of *Eskimo*, an offensive word no longer much used in Canada, as meaning "eaters of raw meat." The parenthetical rejects the historical, colonialist perception of Inuit existence as defined by a relationship to meat considered sub- or pre-human, a perception that persists and relates directly to violence Tagaq received for her sealfie. As well, the title's use of the first person plural positions *Tungijuq* as an autoethnographic film—a film by *us* about *us*, not by *you* about *us*—situating *Tungijuq* against a history of ethnographic representations of Inuit life, including *Nanook*. If the viewer-listener belongs to the title's *We*, then the title is a potential invitation or acknowledgement of shared understanding, while if the viewer-listener doesn't belong, they must confront how the film positions them as marginal in relation to its representations of Inuit being in Inuit Territories.[3]

Tungijuq's use of image *and* sound, like Tagaq's *Nanook* performances, disrupts the seeing of itself, the seal hunt, and Inuit being as empirical to colonialist perception. Tagaq's throat singing and *Tungijuq*'s other sounds mark a complex sonic territory that perhaps confounds the ocularcentrism of a colonial gaze that wants to clear the land of who's seen but cannot contend with what's heard. Indeed, when Belcourt, writing on *Tungijuq*, says "Indigeneity requires us to reckon with that which cannot be seen," we might think of sound:

> [Indigeneity] enables the not-seen to warp one's field of vision. So it is the not-seen of indigeneity, which is partly the not-seen of an encounter of slow violence, that paradox brings into focus. . . . Indigeneity ropes us into a world that is polyphonic, and it is by way of this noisiness that we attune to an ethics that takes paradox as a condition of possibility. (238)

Such polyphonics might include how Tagaq's voice interweaves with Jesse Zubot's violin, often played just above silence and evoking environment—e.g., wind, ice, or isolation. The film opens with sounds of a violin fragilely played, Tagaq's low vocal drone, and the wind itself—at times, these sounds are not easily distinguished; they drift and merge. The light off the snow pulses, threatening to overwhelm. It's unclear

where the thin clouds and blown snow begin and end. The bow scrapes and skitters across the strings. The violin slips up in register, aligning with what might be Tagaq double-tracked or the sound of the wind but turns out to be the violin itself. For a second, it's like an animal call, something I don't quite recognize. Likely processed through effects pedals and a guitar amplifier, the harmonics of Zubot's violin, played with the bow's edge, create a simultaneity of sometimes discordant textures that draw my ear to similarities in the wind—here, I note that while I've considered concurrent sound textures of winds, it hasn't occurred to me to think of wind as having harmonics. What I hear and how I describe it suggests to me this is a space without clear (to me) delineations and markers—where ontologies slip across settler-imagined borders and where things I'm used to thinking of as one thing turn out to be something else. I include these descriptions, and others below, not because I think they're accurate, though I try, but to point out that I don't know whether they're accurate. I attempt to describe such sounds, but often they are beyond what I as a settler can name.

Yet *Tungijuq*'s aesthetics resist simplistic naturalizing of Tagaq and Zubot's avant-garde score and of Inuit culture. I always know I'm listening to a performance: *Tungijuq*'s sounds clearly aren't recordings of wolves or caribou but are highly stylized and virtuosically performed. The visuals, likewise, employ an uncanny digital animation and a bluish CGI overexposure. Tagaq's and Zubot's voices together with the visuals evoke deep relationality, and the discordances seem just as crucial. Unlike speculative fiction, which requires suspension of belief, here, the juxtaposition of the more-than-human with the technologically human creates an uncanniness emphasizing complex relationality between Inuit culture and the more-than-human.

By grounding itself in Inuit embodiments of being—i.e., migratorial ontologies[4] that are a complex flux of living and dying, human and animal, hunter and hunted—*Tungijuq* renders itself recognizable to those who understand such ontologies and as something other than object to settler perception. Robinson calls such a "sonic encounter" a "space of subject-subject relation" (15). The film briefly follows one life after another, human and non-human, through a series of deaths and killings that are also not-quite-deaths while

implying a continuity of being from one life to the next made possible by those same killings. Tagaq plays figures throughout—*characters* doesn't seem the right word—who are distinct yet share an implied continuity. These include the more-than-human, whose breath and sound she suggests vocally, and the human, whom she performs visually and sonically. The opening figure, who reads as Sedna, the Inuit sea goddess credited with creating sea life, is clothed in wolf fur and crouches over what seems to be a recent kill, her mouth bloody—even the idea of Sedna, a figure responsible for sea life who also hunts that life, presents a markedly different understanding of species relationality than settler ontologies allow for. Sensing caribou, she turns: her irises are frosty blue, her pupils stark black (Fig. 1). The film cuts to the caribou, then back to the eyes of the Sedna figure, then to a wolf pursuing the caribou—an implied continuity between each. Her pupils, now surrounded by white, dramatically evoke a solar eclipse. She sees both caribou and wolf, yet I sense also that she might see *as* the wolf or *be* the wolf, which is reinforced sonically: As the caribou runs, Tagaq's singing sounds like the breath of an animal running, a motif that continues and intensifies as *Tungijuq* cuts back and forth between these figures visually. Tagaq's rhythms and tempo synchronize with the wolf and caribou running. When the wolf lunges and kills, Tagaq's gasp could be the wolf or caribou or both—Zubot's brittle violin sound is suddenly like birds scattering, a second later like ice cracking.

Figure 1. Still from *Tungijuq* (*What We Eat*) (0:55). Reproduced in greyscale.

Such continuity of breath and sound suggests a carrying-through of being from one figure to the next; in this way, the film's sounds destabilize the film and the hunt alike as knowable objects to colonialist perception. Tagaq's throat singing, at least as much as the film's visuals, provides the ontological thread(ing) that follows the transmigration of being from one kind of life to another, including through deaths that are not so simply deaths: she sounds like a baby crying, then evokes the breath of a missing or murdered Indigenous woman in the snow, then a seal rising to the surface—she stops when the seal is suddenly shot but re-emerges as two Inuit hunters (Tagaq and Kunuk) intimately cut open and eat part of the seal. Ma, in his *There Is No Soundtrack*, considers how the colonialist gaze informs the predominant understanding of film as a visual medium and that "some of the very places most affected by histories of imperialist invasion and colonial expansion are, in turn, repositories of radically different cultural approaches to sonic emplacement" (20). Yet Ma also writes that "Tagaq also runs the risk of re-inscribing Flaherty's colonial ideology through her vocal otherness. Witness the constant descriptions of her singing as 'primal,' 'elemental,' or 'intuitive' in press coverage and reviews" (53). To my ear, it isn't that Tagaq risks reinscribing Flaherty but that colonialist perception can't account for what's connected because it's premised on not seeing connections in what's already sighted as *for* extraction. The failure of descriptors like "elemental" to accurately represent Tagaq's voice points to how her voice might represent, to paraphrase Belcourt, what's beyond a public settler *ear* to comprehend, for Tagaq also stresses the importance of connection to the more-than-human. Describing her sealfie, she says, "I put baby next to the seal, touching side by side, the seal was still warm. Just kind of to show, 'Look, these are equals, these beings are, they're equal to each other. They're the same, we're all flesh'" (Tagaq, "Tanya"). That Tagaq expresses frustration at having to explain to settler perception what's culturally self-evident to her speaks to Inuit ontologies that settler positionality and epistemology can't see or does not allow to be seen.

Isuma, Inuit Normativities, and Survivance

Katajjaq, or traditional Inuit throat singing—also called Piqqusiraarniq, Iirngaaq, Qiarvaaqtuq, or Nipaquhiit, depending

on region (Nunavut Arctic College)—is an everyday Inuit practice wherein two women exchange and mimic each other's vocals in playful competition; it ends when one laughs or has lost their breath (Gagnon 49). Throat singing is deeply rhythmic and improvisational and is produced via inhaling and exhaling that cause vibrations above the windpipe. It also includes vocalizations. Performers evoke sounds of the more-than-human environment, drum songs, hymns, local geography, and ancestor names (Robinson 140). The practice was banned by priests in the North and in residential schools as "part of a project of cultural genocide" (Gagnon 58). Inuit throat singer Sylvia Cloutier emphasizes the shame her mother's generation felt for the practice and why she teaches it: "[T]hese songs really don't belong to me; they belong to our people. . . . What I really try to work hard at is trying to work with young people and trying to find ways to empower them through the arts" (qtd. in Robinson 138-39). Tagaq, though, emphasizes that *her* throat singing is far from traditional. When far from home and isolated, Tagaq taught herself throat singing by listening to tapes her mother sent her and by adapting them to her circumstances, experience, and politics (Gagnon 58). Tagaq's singing is resurgent, a continuation and adaptation of traditional practice out of a history of removal, relocation, and residential schools, as well as her own mobility.

Tagaq's vocals in *Tungijuq* might be considered a powerful sounding of "grounded normativity" to those who share that Inuit normativity and a voicing of Inuit "survivance" (Coulthard 60; Vizenor 15). Here, I correlate discussions by Simpson, Yellowknives Dene First Nation member Glen Coulthard, and Anishinaabe and enrolled member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Gerald Vizenor, not to create a pan-Indigenous rationale but to include ideas adjacent to *Tungijuq* and to discussions by Tagaq, those at Isuma, and other Inuit writers and activists. Both grounded normativity and survivance describe a flourishing of and focus on Indigenous practice that is continuous from within Indigenous history. Survivance focuses on storytelling while grounded normativity includes much else. Coulthard defines grounded normativity as "Indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge" but not as direct refusal of settler politics and ideas, which would centre colonial power (60). Simpson reinforces this by

adding that grounded normativity and "resurgence" centre Indigenous people "in our Indigenous presents, rather than centred in responding to the neoliberal politics of the state" (192). Survivance describes Indigenous storytelling traditions as resurgent, as active presence—what Vizenor calls "the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name" (15). He continues, "Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry" (15). These ideas have a parallel in *Tungijuq* and in Isuma's filmmaking, which make Inuit practices "active and perpetuated" via both their production methods and their on-screen content (Isuma co-founder Norman Cohn, qtd. in Evans 27), effecting a resurgence embedded in Inuit storytelling and conveyed irrespective of colonialist positionality.

The seeing and hearing of *Tungijuq* constitutes an affective demand that the film be approached on grounds, or in a context, of subject-to-subject sovereignty, something Igloolik Isuma has been cultivating since its 1990 inception. Based in Igloolik, Nunavut, Isuma is an Inuit film collective formed by Inuit members Kunuk, Paul Apak, and Pauloosie Qulitalik, and US-born Norman Cohn. Its highly praised and commercially successful *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* was the first Inuit-written, -directed, -acted, and -produced feature film and the first in Inuktitut (Evans 17). Isuma formed after Kunuk grew dissatisfied working with the hegemonic Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, with its Southern formatting, decisions, labour, and ideals imposed on the North, albeit via Inuktitut-language content: "We were proud to get into television. The IBC was important to us. But it was only a name," Kunuk says (qtd. in Evans 123). Michael Evans, who's written helpful books on Isuma, tends to frame Isuma in confrontational terms—it is "a resistance cell" in "an ideological war against the IBC" and "the colonializing powers" (30; 128)—but this positions Isuma as relative to centred state power and doesn't really align with how Kunuk and Cohn elsewhere describe Isuma as Inuit-centred. Kunuk and Cohn describe Isuma in Inuit terms: Inuit labour, Inuit organization, Inuit stories, and Inuit culture for an Inuit audience. By prioritizing the preservation and revitalization of Inuit culture and Igloolik economic vitality, Isuma ignores hierarchical, auteur-led filmmaking for Inuit cultural approaches, including collectively led processes and making

cultural knowledge active. Kunuk stresses that Isuma is participating in a thousands-of-years-old storytelling tradition (Evans 117; Alioff 19), one he and Cohn intend to keep alive for "another thousand years," or more, via "new ways of storytelling," i.e., film (Evans 27; Alioff 19). Kunuk also emphasizes their Inuit audience: "Our first audience is always Inuit—elders who are still alive and young people looking for a future beyond unemployment, boredom, suicide, and global warming. . . . Our film [Isuma's second feature, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*] tries to answer two questions that have haunted me my whole life: Who were we? And what happened to us?" (qtd. in Krupat 608). Kunuk's first-person-plural focus—films by *us*, for *us*—is crucial and anticipates and aligns with *Tungijuq*'s autoethnographic title, described above. During production, Isuma can grow to include a large part of the Igoolik community as collaborative actors, designers, builders, and other production crew (Evans 17; 22; 56), an Inuit tradition that traces back to *Nanook*. Kunuk and Cohn also explain how they look to elders when lacking cultural knowledge themselves, e.g., how to make a sealskin tent: "If Rachael [an elder] makes a tent and her three daughters learn how by watching her, then the knowledge is not archived. It is active and perpetuated," Cohn says (qtd. in Evans 27). In this way, Isuma's filmmaking and films revive cultural practices, what might be considered "grounded normativity," and teach something like Vizenor's survivance.

Sheila Watt-Cloutier, an Inuk activist and former international chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, talks about the seal hunt similarly, emphasizing how listening is culturally trained in the hunt. Speaking to Tahltan environmental journalist and scholar Candis Callison, she says:

> You have to look at the larger picture of how our hunting culture is not just about going out and killing animals; it is about preparing our young people for everything, challenges and opportunities. And it is because of that disconnect between our children being prepared with the character building that a hunting culture gives and the institution separating that completely in terms of how to be taught, how to be patient, to be bold under pressure, to withstand stress, how to be courageous, how not to be impulsive, how to have

> sound judgment and wisdom. That is all the hunting culture that *gives* that. (49; emphasis mine)

Watt-Cloutier emphasizes the hunt as an affective reminder that *gives*, despite anti-seal-hunt claims that the hunt only *takes*. She also describes the hunt as a practice, similar to survivance, that trains the recognition of continuities throughout Inuit being. *Tungijuq* likewise sidesteps rights-based discourses to focus on Inuit modes of being and to represent far-reaching Inuit normativities embedded in the hunt.

Continuities, Simultaneity, and Inuit Animism

Confounding settler-state notions that Inuit life can be systematically accounted, *Tungijuq* represents Inuit life as that which can't be so simply understood as *only* human life or that one life can even be thought of as just *one* life. For instance, in the film, after the caribou is hunted, a woman is revealed on the ground draped in caribou skin (Tagaq)—her body and movements echo the fallen caribou's as Zubot plays elegiacally and Tagaq's voice evokes sobbing. The woman both is and isn't the hunted caribou, which, though killed, isn't only dead. Soon, she's shown with a caribou head pelt and antlers snug over her own head like a hood. Another shot reveals her bloody footprints, her feet dragging in the snow as she struggles to walk; Tagaq's throat singing underscores this struggle. Then, from above, the film reveals a seemingly different woman, also played by Tagaq, naked on the snow. A drum briefly plays like a heartbeat as the woman cradles a portion of the caribou's body against her abdomen like a newborn baby (Fig. 2). The freshly killed flesh—not so simply *meat*, a term connoting unintimate death that's at odds with this film—seems as if birthed in the act of hunting. Then, a bird's-eye shot shows the woman rolling to the ice edge, a trail of bloody footprints behind her implying continuity with the previous figure wearing caribou skin.

It's unclear how continuous, separate, or overlapping the figures Tagaq plays are, but such continuity aligns with a simultaneity of identities Kunuk and Cohn stress in interviews as culturally important to Inuit. Describing how Inuit often have multiple ancestral namesakes, Kunuk explains how he was "raised in many ways as a girl" (Evans 57): "I carry five namesakes. All of them used to be women. So traditionally

. . . [t]o my father, to my mother, and to other existing people in the age group . . . [t]hey call me 'mother,' they call me 'the old lady.' And every time I speak, they sort of feel, have to listen" (qtd. in Evans 58). *Tungijuq* gestures at such complex identities, defying Canadian government serialization of Inuit Peoples and other attempts to fix and track Inuit lives, identities, and kinship relations (Belcourt 236); at the same time, it does not acknowledge settler power at all, instead depicting Inuit ontologies as normative and sovereign.

Figure 2. Still from *Tungijuq* (*What We Eat*) (3:15). Reproduced in greyscale.

Life in *Tungijuq* is made possible by an endless exchange of life and death among a plurality of species. Likewise, what's killed is resurgent. The woman's bloody footprints in the snow, her human body falling into freezing water, and the cloud of blood that blossoms over her in the water evoke Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S), an issue Tagaq has returned to throughout her career (see, for example, her dedication in *Split Tooth* or her 2014 Polaris gala performance). Such honouring is vividly present in *Tungijuq*: MMIWG2S are brought into presence via how the woman's body, entering the water, refuses to disappear or become a mere dumped body, a symbol also of eventual Inuit disappearance. This is further entangled with the film's contestation of the human-animal binary. Resurfacing as the hunted seal eaten by her simultaneously present human self, Tagaq's depictions of paradoxical embodiments create a presence of MMIWG2S bound up in representations of

resurgent Inuit being and seal hunting—we might think of Vizenor's survivance and active presence here. Tagaq also expresses frustration at settler inability to hold multiple ideas at once: "I had a scrolling screen of 1200 missing and murdered [I]ndigenous women at the Polaris gala but people are losing their minds over seals" ("I had"). In this way, the film represents "unseen" violence against MMIWG2S as inextricably entangled with the "unseen" violence of sealing bans on Inuit life: "Like c'mon, let's get with it. They're connected, it's important," Tagaq says, linking her "Fuck PETA" comment at the 2014 Polaris Awards to MMIWG2S ("Tanya Tagaq" 00:44-50).

The figures in *Tungijuq* can't be contained to a single species and resist easy accounting, and the seal, likewise, isn't separate from or discrete in the hunt: human and seal are bound up in undelineated presence and being. The life of the hunted doesn't cease being life the moment it's killed—far from it. In this way, *Tungijuq* implies that human prevention of animal death (e.g., sealing bans) is an arbitrary delineation between the human and more-than-human worlds. Belcourt writes that *Tungijuq* "imagines a world in which Inuit and animals are co-constituted subjects that both hold the right to kill" and "illuminates an ontology in which species is ungovernable, where a human-animal binary cannot survive the weather. Tagaq is both human and animal, hunter and hunted, and it is because of this ontological mixing that the sights and sounds of killing become enmeshed in an affective structure we might call intimacy" (239). That the continuity of being that begins with the Sedna figure eventually becomes the seal *and* the one who eats the seal disrupts reductionist colonial dichotomies, definitions, and categorizations by focusing on Inuit ontologies. Inuit animism holds people and animals as equal and sharing in a continuity of human qualities, including "soul (*inua*), character, and the capacity to think (*isuma*)," and "every object, every rock, every animal indeed even conceptions such as sleep and food are living" (Loukacheva 203).

I don't aim to expansively describe Inuit modes of being, merely to indicate that such ontologies are active in *Tungijuq*, even if unavailable or unclear to those who don't already share that Inuit-specific understanding. When the woman's body (Tagaq) is plunged into a swirling green underwater world, her framing becomes vaguely

embryonic, a death-birth soundtracked by creaky sounds—Tagaq, Zubot's violin, or both—suggesting a seal's vocalizations. A second later, Tagaq and Zubot's musicianship becomes playful as the woman revives and swims away. Next, a seal swims in the same direction as the woman, using the same movements; an abruptness in Tagaq's voice parallels the seal's thrusts—the woman seems to have become the seal. Suddenly, the seal is shot approaching an opening in the ice: Tagaq vocalizes the seal's last gasp; Zubot's violin and Tagaq fall silent; the seal sinks. Next, two Inuit hunters (Tagaq and Kunuk), shown from above, cut the seal's hunted body, which has become so much more. The cut evokes a vulva, the woman's gentle touch across the wound gesturing various intimacies—birth, death, sensuality, sexuality, and embodied existence—all present at once (Fig. 3). Zubot's violin is again heard above the wind, evoking the film's opening. As the other hunter (Kunuk) begins to eat, Tagaq's throat singing also re-emerges.

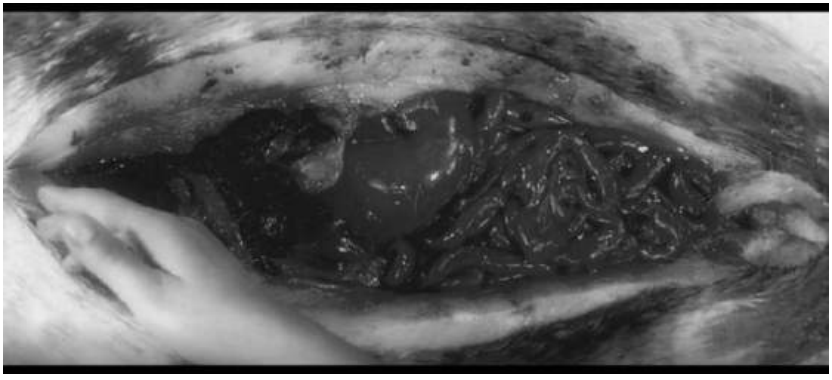

Figure 3. Still from *Tungijuq* (*What We Eat*) (5:26). Reproduced in greyscale.

Affective Gifts, Sovereignty, and Entangled Reciprocities

Tungijuq represents the killing of seals in Inuit contexts as not simply the taking of life. Meanwhile, settler activism's framing of the seal hunt as an unjust taking of life is inextricably tied up with a logic of extractivism and capitalism that can only see the seal as either bound for or to be protected from simple consumption and death. Though Inuit seal hunters have adapted to capitalist intrusions into

the North, *Tungijuq* represents the hunt as radically beyond the settler understanding of seals as an exploitable resource. In *Tungijuq*, the hunt is a kind of giving in which the giver, receiver, and gift are themselves unclear and shifting. Likewise, the film, at once perfectly legible to those who share its normativity but perhaps perplexing to untrained settler eyes and ears, might also be thought of as a gift, an object that reminds us all, whoever we are, of our tasks and responsibilities within the decolonial project.

Expanding on Watt-Cloutier's emphasis on what the seal hunt gives, Callison explains that such cultural practices can give knowledge, data, and awareness for fighting climate change, which we'll all need to survive. Watt-Cloutier also emphasizes the gift in other Inuit-specific contexts, adding that a gift might not even appear as a gift to others. Speaking about a petition she and sixty-two other Inuit submitted to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which "names the United States as a violator of the 1948 Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man" (Callison 65), Watt-Cloutier says:

> [The petition] was not an aggressive act, it was not a confrontational act, and we were actually reaching out, not striking out. It was more of—much more—the powerful assertion of our rights than a lawsuit would have been. . . . So I always say that *our petition was a gift, a gift from our hunters and our elders to the world*. It is an act of generosity, in fact, from an ancient culture that is deeply, deeply tied to the natural environment and still very much in tune. And it is a gift from us to an urban industrial modern culture that has largely lost its sense of place in position to the natural world. I always say that the petition is the most caring, loving act I have ever brought forward in the protection of my ancient culture, and it is the most loving and caring act I have ever brought forward in the protection of the future of my grandson, who is learning to hunt with his father. (qtd. in Callison 66)

Without the literacy embedded in Inuit cultural practice, it might be difficult for settlers to appreciate the petition as generosity, a work of labour given with care and good faith. Yet I wonder if such difference isn't essential to the kind of gift Watt-Cloutier describes: a marker of

what is always incomplete, especially including understandings and relationalities that are always yet to be. Research scientist and cultural anthropologist Noor Johnson writes that in Inuit contexts the gift's persistence as a material object is an affective reminder of relationships and obligations of reciprocity, "a sense of being part of the same field of lived experience" (170). It strikes me that such gifthood perhaps sits at an affective intersection of sovereignty and entanglement: impossible to give or receive without the former and yet beckoning to reciprocities that persist or that are always incomplete. It's certainly not difficult to see Isuma's "collaborative multimedia platform for indigenous filmmakers and media organizations," *IsumaTV*, as the most generous of gifts: a searchable, indexed digital archive of Isuma's and countless other Inuit- and Indigenous-made films and videos going back half a century (*IsumaTV*). But as an affective marker, a bearing, for a "largely lost" settler positionality to begin deconstructing its own "position [with respect] to the natural world" and to Inuit sovereignty, *Tungijuq* might also be thought of as a gift.

Much like how Watt-Cloutier discusses seal hunting as teaching more than hunting seal, settler scholar of Indigenous literatures Keavy Martin, in a discussion on reciprocity and *Tungijuq*, writes that eating seal might teach about reading and analyzing Inuit texts. She talks about "the implications of understanding [Indigenous] songs and stories . . . as nourishment, as meat, or as animals to be hunted and harvested" (446). She suggests that because the principles of reciprocity are inherent to the "the protocols of Inuit hunting and harvesting," these same protocols "can provide valuable guidance in the pursuit of ethical ways of 'consuming' Indigenous texts" (146). She also suggests that the reverse is true: that the "hunting and harvesting of Indigenous texts offers readers the opportunity to enter into reciprocal relationships—and to transform their scholarly practice accordingly" (446). Such hunting and harvesting perhaps need not be extractivist, because if we accept, for example, *Tungijuq* as a gift given in generosity and care, then it's a reminder of our obligations for return. As a text grounded in Inuit cultural practices that remain uncomprehended by those of us who are settlers or ensconced in settler perception or epistemology, then *Tungijuq* is also a reminder of the

literacies we lack when living in or thinking about Inuit Territories and, as Martin suggests, perhaps a need to entangle ourselves further.

Yet Robinson urges the importance of understanding that Indigenous songs, and we might include film here, can function as "primary legal and living document[s] with importance for conveying the embodied feeling of history" (46). He also warns that the literacy necessary for understanding such "documents" may not be possible for outsiders: "those who are not members of the Indigenous community from which these legal orders derive may always be unable to hear these specific assertions of Indigenous sovereignty, which is not to be understood as lack that needs to be remedied but merely an incommensurability that needs to be recognized" (53). Grounding his discussion in a specifically Gitxsan context but extending it to other Indigenous contexts, Robinson stresses the difference between written Western law and Indigenous law as it manifests in song, which is irreducible to "merely an alternative form of Western documentation" (46). He stresses that it is crucial to not think about such legality as fixed and dismisses the idea that contemporary Indigenous music doesn't also contain such affective legal knowledge and information (45-46).

Such legality might (and seems likely to) be present in *Tungijuq*. Russian Canadian scholar of international and constitutional law Natalia Loukacheva, author of *The Arctic Promise: Legal and Political Autonomy of Greenland and Nunavut*, writes that traditional Inuit social normativities and legal actions are contextual, rooted in "situational pluralism," and contingent on environmental and seasonal conditions (205). She emphasizes that "emotionality and *musical/visual* views of conflicts and norms of morality underpinned the traditional Inuit legal system; thus, postulates with juridical functions were entrenched in *song-duels, dancing, music and mythological narratives*" (205; emphasis mine). It isn't my intent to argue how *Tungijuq*'s sounds and visuals inscribe sovereignty or other legality, merely that I *think* they do. I also want to suggest, somewhat counterintuitively, that my not knowing is important to this assertion, or rather that, remembering Robinson's warnings, my not knowing renders such

potential "legal orders" or performances of sovereignty all the more crucial. In an article discussing Inuit "performative jurisprudence" and "legal pluralism" in Isuma's *Atanarjuat* (556, 566), Ian J. MacRae and Samantha Mackinnon write:

> Not even Isuma's self-stated "first audience," the Inuit themselves, have some sort of plain or naturalized access to the legal values practised and performed in *Atanarjuat*. Traditional systems of Inuit law are not easily "read" by us today, either in Nunavut or beyond, as Inuktitut speakers or otherwise. They are neither readily transparent nor simply transferable, and are neither simple nor fixed. (549)

Tungijuq, like *Atanarjuat*, might also be engaged in performative expression of Inuit law, but how it does this, or even confirming that it does do this, is less easily ascertained or achieved. Hungry listening and hungry seeing take what they hear and see without regard for sovereignty—so how do those of us who are settlers read Inuit texts when we barely, if at all, understand Inuit sovereignties? And what if, as Robinson suggests, those sovereignties mark an impasse of listening, not a need to listen better?

Here, I turn briefly to Derrida's deconstruction of Marcel Mauss' framing of the gift and of the phenomenality and beyond-phenomenality of the gift, not to position Derrida as a final word, *especially* a Qallunaat one, but the opposite: to hopefully follow Watt-Cloutier's lead in considering how an Inuit gift, here *Tungijuq*, might function for settlers as an object that, perhaps *because* it cannot be fully understood, provides an affective bearing by which those of us who are settlers can begin deconstructing our own orientations. I especially focus on Derrida's argument about the impossibility of the gift, of gift without counter-gift or reciprocity, and on his horizonal orientation toward the gift (*Given Time* 24). Derrida emphasizes that the gift is impossible, for as soon as it is perceived as a gift, by either the giver or receiver, it is entered into and encoded with obligations of acknowledgement, exchange, contractuality, debt, and reciprocity, thus nullifying it as gift: "If the other *gives* me *back* or *owes* me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift" (12).

Derrida is preoccupied with phenomenological horizons in that his impossible gift recedes as it's perceived, like the unapproachable horizon, and in his criticism of Mauss' framing of culturally different conceptions of gift, especially Indigenous ones, as reciprocity: "What is the semantic horizon of anticipation that authorizes [Mauss] to gather together or compare so many phenomena of diverse sorts, which belong to different cultures, which manifest themselves in heterogeneous languages, under the unique and supposedly identifiable category of gift, under the sign of 'gift'?" (26). Derrida is working from a Western context that includes capitalism, wherein he posits that the gift is the impossible disruption of economic encirclement: "But is not the gift, if there is any, also that which interrupts economy? That which, in suspending economic calculation, no longer gives rise to exchange?" (7). Yet it strikes me that Derrida's impasse is drawn simultaneously at reciprocity and pan-Indigenously. The gift Derrida imagines as impossible arrives impossibly *from without* to interrupt the circle of capitalist exchange in ways nothing *from within* capitalist economy can. That is, the gift he imagines as impossible is already inscribed with foreignness and a sovereignty beyond capitalist control of space, and we might here consider how important Inuit and Indigenous sovereignty may be to the very idea of the gift. Meanwhile, something like Inuit gifting, inscribed as it is by reciprocity, might, paradoxically, be the gift Derrida's phenomenology imagines as impossible *and* can't see.

The affective reinforcement of reciprocity that Watt-Cloutier and others describe has less to do with power one might hold over someone else and more to do with a kind of justice—a justice much like Derrida discusses in "Force of Law," one that can't be foreclosed upon, that is irreducible, including to law, that which always "remains, is yet, to come" (27). If the gift's affect is a reminder of the necessary shared work of deconstructing the same colonial logics that make that justice necessary, that's hardly capitalist debt and exchange. I'm struck by how horizonal phenomenology aligns with the settler imagination, especially with how subject-object relationality and the geometry of that imagination privileges itself within space. This perceptual geometry and geography is encoded into Derrida's framework of the gift.

But what if it's gift and reciprocity that call us to acknowledge such ways of seeing? How do *Tungijuq*'s ontologies, its paradoxical representations of Inuit being and presence *for and by themselves*, the seeming opacity of its sounds and images to settler hearing and seeing, constitute Indigenous sovereignty to settler perception? Might the gift of that perceptual sovereignty be what impossibly extricates *us all* from systems of exchange and debt by calling us to greater entanglement in the decolonial project? How do the mobilities *Tungijuq* represents undermine the spatial geometry of settler imagination and the horizontality of gift without reciprocation? How does that imagination change when the geometry of subject-position also changes? How does settler imagination change when those of us who are settlers realize we're marginal to other kinds of being and seeing that better understand Inuit and Indigenous Territories and the reciprocities necessary for surviving in them?

Tungijuq doesn't readily appear as gift, yet its possible gifthood reveals itself in how it interrupts and confounds settler seeing of the tundra and everything in it, human and non-human, as for capitalist extraction. As Inuit grounded normativity and survivance, *Tungijuq* represents embodied sovereignty to extractivist logic. It also provokes what Gagnon describes as entanglement. She writes that

> *feeling entangled* . . . speaks to a broader sense of ecological, political, and social interconnectedness . . . [and] pushes back against the presentist discourse of neoliberal individualism and the drive toward forgetting . . . in favor of ways of being-with the past that are predicated on an unfinished relationship to that past. (50)

Such entanglement might itself be entangled in Watt-Cloutier's and others' discussions of Inuit gift—i.e., we can think of reciprocity as entanglement. The degree to which *Tungijuq* unsettles, as feeling, settler positionality might be its affective power to compel settler reorientations.

And while Derrida's impossible gift seems to shrink from entanglement, it might be that the entanglement Derrida would be free from is really the entanglement of capitalism. Perhaps, counterintuitively, the impossible gift that interrupts capitalist encirclement is one that requires greater entanglement, the kind *offered* in *Tungijuq*.

Conclusion

Tungijuq ends as Tagaq and Zubot reach a crescendo, Tagaq with syllables and melody that now, to my ears, evoke the more-than-human. The Inuk woman (Tagaq) stares persistently into the camera as she eats seal meat. Her relentless seeing fixes knowingly on the viewer, a knowingness that shatters the construction of the film as object-only to colonialist viewing (seeing) and understanding. Tagaq knows what the settler viewer does not, and she knows what the Inuk viewer also knows, a shared intimacy of knowing between them. Suddenly, Tagaq's seal eating is less unsettling to settler viewing than how her stare marginalizes colonial seeing as mere witnessing to a centred, grounded performance of Inuit embodiment in Inuit space. Those of us who are settlers might recognize vague shapes of ontologies that aren't our own, but understanding is another matter.

Insofar as the film provides context for a possible *feeling* of settler marginalization, such possibility might also be thought of as a gift—as generosity. For that feeling might be understood as a call to deconstruct why such feeling might be new to settler sensibilities, especially in terms of how legal, social, and political structures protect settlers from ever having to experience these feelings in the first place. We might thus understand the seal hunt and *Tungijuq* as a giving of radical ontology for deconstructing settler economics, being, seeing, and phenomenology in Inuit and other Indigenous Territories.

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*Erratum Notice

In the print edition of this issue, "lost" was incorrectly substituted for "disappearing." The author's original wording has here been restored.

Notes

1. By colonialist seeing, I hope to signal an indebtedness to Robinson and to shift the colonial or imperial gaze, a noun, to the verb or gerund seeing, which better emphasizes the act of seeing, allows for greater flexibility in considering how the gaze manifests in one's own seeing, and perhaps more overtly indicates the suppression of other kinds of perception.
2. Robinson focuses on listening and music, but I consider how his discussions might also sometimes apply to seeing.
3. I don't want to suggest that the only positionalities possible in encountering *Tungijuq* (or *Nanook*) are Inuit or settler or that these aren't without complexities, complications, hybridities, etc.; however, my intent isn't to make claims about positionalities that aren't mine, but about the crisis of settler perception that can't recognize *Tungijuq*'s ontologies and normativities.
4. I'm purposefully ambiguous here for two reasons: (1) to minimize fixing what *Tungijuq* is clearly mobilizing in relation to colonialism's fixing sight; (2) to nevertheless suggest what I think *Tungijuq* implies—Inuit animism (see Loukacheva; also, Tagaq's album *Animism*), unfixed ontology connecting different kinds of life rather than categorically separating them, and Inuit nomadism; and (3) to hopefully be flexible enough to include what I don't perceive.

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Andrew Law

"Excavated from His Own Memories": Excavation, Erasure, and Extraction as Generative Refusal in Jordan Abel's *The Place of Scraps*

Nisga'a poet Jordan Abel mobilizes conceptual writing[1] techniques in *The Place of Scraps* to rework pre-existing text in a way that simultaneously highlights the biases underpinning the settlement of "the West" by the settler-colonial Canadian nation-state and works to process his own experiences of disconnection from his Nisga'a heritage as a result of colonial impositions. This article endeavours to consider settler scholar Sarah Dowling's argument that some poets, Abel included, "use appropriation to make obvious its continuities with dominant systems of property," thereby "leverag[ing] appropriation conceptually" (109), to intervene in Indigenous material dispossession in light of Métis theorist Jo-Ann Episkenew's observation in *Taking Back Our Spirits* that Indigenous authors "manipulate the English language and its literary traditions to narrate Indigenous experiences under colonialism in an effort to heal themselves and their audiences from the colonial trauma" (12). I argue that Abel's appropriation of writing by anthropologist Marius Barbeau in *The Place of Scraps* echoes Episkenew's claim. Rather than manipulate the English language in general, *The Place of Scraps* manipulates Barbeau's specific language, and the anthropological and ethnological traditions that Barbeau's work operates within, into poetry that expresses, at least in part, Abel's experience of colonialism. This use of appropriative techniques to manipulate Barbeau's language serves both to mirror settler-colonial acts of violence and erasure and to generate poetic expression by reflecting on, and engaging with, the erasures that have influenced Abel's own life.

While Abel's poetry in *The Place of Scraps* engages multiple source texts, the most common are Marius Barbeau's *Totem Poles*, prose passages written by Abel to mimic Barbeau's prose, and a separate series of dated prose passages reflecting on events in the life of "the poet." Abel's engagement with Barbeau's work resists Barbeau's efforts to confine Indigenous peoples and cultures to the past via salvage ethnography,[2] while simultaneously refusing to allow the political impacts of Barbeau's work to be imagined as existing only in the past. This political message is generated, at least in part, by placing excavated passages from Barbeau's work in direct conversation with Abel's imitations of Barbeau's prose, Abel's diary-style passages describing events in the life of "the poet," and the erasure poems that Abel creates out of these different sources. This approach is, I argue, an example of refusal as creative practice. Métis/Michif scholar Max Liboiron summarizes Indigenous theories of refusal by looking to scholars like Audra Simpson (Mohawk), Eve Tuck (Unangax̂), and Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Goenpul), who "have elevated refusal into a practice of affirmation, repair, and resurgence, looking upstream to see structures of violence rather than effects and harm" (34). Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg theorist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson argues that "refusal is an appropriate response to oppression, and within this context it is always generative" (33). Abel's work functions as refusal because, while it highlights the connections among Barbeau's scholarship, settler colonialism's attempts to erase or assimilate Indigenous peoples, and Abel's own experiences of alienation from his Nisga'a heritage, it refuses to be defined by those influences. *The Place of Scraps* identifies anthropological study of Indigenous nations (and *Totem Poles* in particular) as an often harmful project rooted in extraction and erasure, but defiantly refuses to be bound by Barbeau's depiction of the past or his imagining of the future. My argument in this paper is that *The Place of Scraps* uses the poetic techniques of excavation, erasure, and extraction to challenge Barbeau's anthropological method and purpose, to expresses Abel's own experiences of being "forced to search for / Indigenous knowledge through Marius / Barbeau" (*NISHGA* 78), and to seek out connection

in the face of the disconnection generated by intergenerational trauma. The key here is that Abel reclaims Barbeau's language to express his own experience and search for connection, not that doing so is in any way a cure-all for the damage of settler colonialism.

The Place of Scraps puts the poetic techniques of appropriation to work in a way that simultaneously generates multiple registers of meaning. In his recent creative and critical memoir *NISHGA*, Abel refers to such techniques as "asymmetrical hinges" that are used to negotiate the relationship between the two key foci of *The Place of Scraps*. One side

> 15:44:12 holds [Abel's] experience and position as both an intergenerational survivor of trauma and lived experience as an urban Indigenous person,
>
> 15:44:19 *and on the other side* of the excerpt holds [his] dismantling of colonial authority and simultaneous articulation of an Indigenous voice. (78)

Abel explains that these hinges are constantly present throughout *The Place of Scraps*:

> 15:44:27 . . . every moment in which a material excerpt comes up. . .
>
> 15:44:32 the moments that precede that excerpt are also the moments in which I, as the author, am attempting to grapple with my own experiences as an intergenerational survivor.
>
> 15:44:41 The moments that precede these excerpts are the moments where I am forced to search for Indigenous knowledge through Marius Barbeau
>
> 15:44:50 because of the ways in which intergenerational trauma has impacted my ability to connect directly with members of my community. (78)

Abel's theorization of the asymmetrical hinge offers insight into the poetic structure of *The Place of Scraps*. Not only does *The Place of Scraps* make a political statement through Abel's erasures from the work of Marius Barbeau, and not only does it articulate the poet's own

experiences of intergenerational trauma and of being forced to seek connection through the work of Barbeau, but the asymmetry of the text communicates something about the complexity of these feelings and the relationship between them—their potential irresolvability amid the perpetual search for an unambiguous return. Thus, while extraction and erasure are used in *The Place of Scraps* to perform a critique of Barbeau's work, these techniques also express Abel's feelings of loss and anguish as a result of the intergenerational trauma of genocidal Canadian structures, chiefly the residential school system. All at once within *The Place of Scraps*, excavation, erasure, and extraction are (1) the poetic techniques through which Abel creates his poetry, (2) harmful components of Marius Barbeau's salvage ethnography, and (3) the central thematic concerns of the text.

From an anthropological and archaeological perspective, *excavation* refers to the act of digging out a space within the ground itself so that an object or objects might be extracted. Where *extraction* refers to the actual process of removal, *excavation* refers to the process of preparing for that removal. Abel's poetry often takes the form of sequences of erasures, and these sequences often begin with a reproduction of a short passage from Barbeau's *Totem Poles*. I see these reproductions as excavations: *The Place of Scraps* selects particular locations within Barbeau's text and isolates them so that they might be prepared for further engagement through the more specific technique of erasure. Once excavated, passages from Barbeau's work are subjected to a series of erasures, a transformative process that works, ultimately, to extract unintended meaning from Barbeau's text. My use of these terms is intended primarily to foreground the complexities of Abel's treatment of found material. Here I return to the work of Dowling, who argues that poetic appropriation is almost always connected to the concept of property, but that critics have not "adequately examined how these logics of property are intertwined with settler colonialism and its attendant ideologies of race," and that "to understand the poetics of appropriation, it is necessary to examine the legal frameworks undergirding it, to go beyond the surface-level claims about intellectual property law and to interrogate the metaphors related to land that animate the practice" (100). As Dowling argues,

poetic appropriation is inherently connected to real-world acts of appropriation and, especially, settler colonialism's appropriation of Indigenous lands. *The Place of Scraps*, by contrast, uses these particular techniques of poetic appropriation in a way that is very much cognizant of the harmful legacy of appropriation and its connection to settler colonialism's defining project of appropriating Indigenous lands.

Erasure both describes a specific poetic technique through which Abel engages Barbeau's anthropology and appropriately describes Barbeau's anthropology itself. In poetry, erasure is a technique where selected elements of a source text are removed in order to change, or comment on, the meaning of that text. In *The Place of Scraps*, erasure is both the mechanism by which Abel extracts unintended yet politically vital meanings from the passages he has excavated and a descriptor of the effect of Barbeau's original text and the anthropological milieu to which it belongs. Settler scholar Patrick Wolfe argues that the salvage ethnographic gaze can best be understood as "a look that killed what they, the ethnographers, were [claiming to be] rescuing" (153). Barbeau's work relies on the false assertion, expressed in the preface to *Totem Poles*, that "Native arts, however ancient or recent, are now a feature of the past" (xii). This premise erases the living vitality of Indigenous culture, language, thought, and process in the service of settler colonialism's modus operandi of removing Indigenous people from the land to speed settlement, thereby denying them a living present and confining their cultural life to the past. This serves as an expression of, and an aid to, settler-colonial acts of violence towards Indigenous peoples.

Extraction necessarily evokes resource extraction, fossil fuels, and even extractivism, which settler journalist and author Naomi Klein explains is "a term originally used to describe economies based on removing ever more raw materials from the earth" (169). Klein notes that extractivism is, ultimately, "a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth, one purely of taking" (169). As Klein, in an interview with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, observes: "extraction isn't just about mining and drilling, it's a mindset—it's an approach to nature, to ideas, to people" (Simpson 75). Simpson's response highlights the ways that extraction and assimilation are linked, and she notes that

extraction "is taking without consent, without thought, care or even knowledge of the impacts that extraction has on the other living things in that environment" (75). Barbeau's anthropological work exemplifies this aspect of extraction because it removes both cultural materials and cultural knowledge from the context of living Indigenous communities. Barbeau's work ostensibly creates a record of Indigenous cultures, but it does so in an extractive manner that alienates that material from its source and creates instead a "deeply distorted colonial / representation" of the Indigenous cultures it claims to preserve (*NISHGA* 44). My aim in applying this term to Abel's poetry is to highlight the ways in which Abel's appropriative poetics represents a refusal of Barbeau's anthropology, ironically reclaiming the very language of *Totem Poles* in order to generate not just a critique of Barbeau's work but new meaning and insight out of Abel's engagement with it.

Barbeau's anthropological extractions and excavations serve the wider project of the erasure of Indigenous peoples and cultures, which ultimately contributes to the central project of settler colonialism: the appropriation of Indigenous lands. Barbeau's insistence in *Totem Poles* that Indigenous cultures are necessarily in a state of decline arises from a belief that only pre-contact Indigenous traditions are authentically Indigenous, a rhetorical classification that erases Indigenous people from the present and the future. Métis writer Chelsea Vowel argues in *Indigenous Writes* that there exists to this day a pervasive belief among settlers that "Indigenous traditions require us to use technologies that were only available to us precontact, or more generously, slightly post-contact" and that this outlook "freezes us in time, and for no good purpose" (166). Wolfe notes similarly that settler colonialism's goal of "assimilation [of Indigenous peoples] was premised on a classificatory scheme, a definition of authentic Aboriginality, that would have been altogether superfluous in the first place" (175-76). Abel's engagement with Barbeau's work in *The Place of Scraps* must necessarily be understood as connected to Barbeau's perpetuation of these myths and the fact that, as Abel notes in *NISHGA*, the poet first views Nisga'a culture through the distorting lens of Barbeau's myth-making (Abel, *NISHGA* 46). Abel's engagement with Barbeau's work functions, I contend, as an act of generative refusal.

Abel's poetry rejects Barbeau's positioning of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous art as locked in the past while simultaneously generating a poetic narrative of his own experience of disconnection from his Nisga'a heritage and his steps towards reconnecting to that heritage, a journey that brought him to the work of Barbeau. As a result, these poems reflect upon the ways that Abel has been personally impacted by Barbeau's work and by the ongoing processes of settler colonialism, but they refuse to be bound by those impacts. I argue that this process of excavation, erasure, and extraction enables *The Place of Scraps* to transform the text of Barbeau's anthropological writing into artwork that testifies to Abel's personal experience of Indigeneity. In this way, *The Place of Scraps* reclaims cultural materials seemingly rendered inert by Barbeau's text, refuses to be bound by that text's intentions or adverse implications, and begins to transform that text into a generative story of seeking out connection in the face of intergenerational trauma. In doing so, however, *The Place of Scraps* does not resolve Abel's feelings of disconnection, as he elaborates powerfully in *NISHGA* (270-73). Erasure and extraction become both a way of reclaiming and refusing Barbeau's text and the method by which Abel generates his own poetic voice, but they do not, and cannot, completely resolve the impacts of intergenerational trauma.

Marius Barbeau and Anthropological Erasure

By positioning Barbeau's *Totem Poles* as its most obvious found source, *The Place of Scraps* makes it an example of the way that anthropology is complicit in the erasure of Indigenous cultures and nations. *Totem Poles* is, ostensibly, both a record of Barbeau's dealings with the Indigenous nations of the Pacific Northwest and an ethnographic study of those nations. As Abel notes in *NISHGA*, "Barbeau's writing was the first / imperfect glimpse [he] had into Nisga'a culture" (46), a fact that reflects the ongoing impact of Barbeau's work itself. As Abel explains in *NISHGA*,

> 15:29:23 . . . [In] *The Place of Scraps*, the main narrative revolves around the role Marius Barbeau played in dismantling Nisga'a culture,

15:29:29 along with many other nations in the Pacific Northwest,

15:29:34 by the buying and often stealing of totem poles and other cultural items from struggling communities

15:29:39 and very often struggling community members. (44-45)[3]

Abel also registers a second connection to Barbeau's work, noting that "Barbeau essentially stole a / totem pole from the community that [Abel's] / grandparents were born in," and that another important narrative in *The Place of Scraps* involves Abel "encountering this totem pole at the / Royal Ontario Museum when [he] was a child / without knowing or understanding its signifi- / cance in [his] life" (45). This structure connects Abel's personal experience of Indigeneity to Barbeau's anthropological removals as related examples of the ongoing process of settler-colonial extractions.

The Place of Scraps highlights the connections between Abel's personal experience and Barbeau's salvage ethnography through a process of poetic erasures that render clearly through poetry the ongoing impacts of erasure on Indigenous people. Abel explains in *NISHGA* that he feels readers often "end up missing a key detail" (45) about why *The Place of Scraps* uses erasure:

15:31:00 . . . *The Place of Scraps*, in addition to being about Marius Barbeau and salvage anthropology, is also about what it means to be an intergenerational survivor of Residential Schools

15:31:15 It's about what those experiences can look like,

15:31:21 and it's about having no choice but to learn about your own family history through the now-debunked work of a dead, white anthropologist. (46)

While *The Place of Scraps* does not name residential schools as a particular focus, their importance is instead made clear through the poetry's erasures. In one of the collection's diary-style entries, Abel

recalls being asked by his mother "if he remembers" seeing "the pole that was removed from his ancestral village" in the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) as a child (*The Place of Scraps* 63). He finds that he "does not hold that memory" (63). In reflecting on the significance of this absence, "the poet is surprised and ashamed that the pole that was removed from his ancestral village has also been excavated from his own memories" (63). Abel closes this entry by noting that the "recurrence of the totem pole in the poet's life combined with an apparent failure of memory carries with it a multiplicity of subtle emotions" (63). Abel's use of the word *excavated* here connotes both the removal of these memories from his mind and also his own poetic endeavour of digging into both his own memories and Barbeau's written anthropology through poetry.

Abel's use of the language of excavation to describe the absence of this memory highlights the connection between the extraction of cultural objects like totem poles and other settler-colonial extractions by identifying the connection between the removal of this pole and the feeling that his own memories have been excavated. This is also a moment where the forced removal of children from their communities through the Canadian Indian residential school system becomes a poetic focus. Abel's inability as a youth to recognize the totem pole in the ROM as important to him is connected to Barbeau's removal of the pole from its community, but it is also a consequence of the removal of children from their families and communities through residential schooling. These two removals are linked examples of settler colonialism's extractive relationship to Indigenous people, nations, and cultures. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report makes clear, the genocidal residential school program sought to take children from their families and communities specifically for the purpose of erasing Indigenous cultures and identities through assimilation:

> For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and

> racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as "cultural genocide." (*Canada's Residential Schools* 3)

The residential school system is one way that Canada has treated Indigenous children as a resource to be extracted for colonial benefit. As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson explains in her interview with Naomi Klein, "my children are [seen by settler colonialism as] a resource because they are the potential to grow, maintain, and uphold the extraction-assimilation system" (75). Chelsea Vowel explains the intergenerational dimensions of such removals by noting that, while she "never attended residential school" and her "experiences are all secondhand," she "cannot think of any Indigenous people of [her] generation who have not been touched by it, one way or another" (171-72), as is the case with Abel. Residential schools loom over *The Place of Scraps* as the mechanism that has produced Abel's feelings of disconnection from his Nisga'a heritage and forced him to turn to Barbeau's work to learn about Nisga'a culture.

Thus, *The Place of Scraps*' focus on colonial erasures emphasizes residential schooling's ongoing relevance as a thematic concern. Settler scholar Sophie McCall analyzes such connections in her article "Re-Framing, De-Framing, and Shattering the Frames," which reflects upon a panel presentation where "the late Cree author Greg Younging . . . argues that much of the history and practice of publishing Indigenous literatures in Canada has been about extraction" (1). McCall explains that in "referring to extraction [Younging] is invoking not only the appropriation of Indigenous stories, but also the mining of resources from the land and the taking of children from their families and communities" (1). Abel's poetry highlights the absence of memory as an example of yet another kind of extraction, demonstrating "what the experiences of an / intergenerational survivor of Residential / Schools can look like" (Abel, *NISHGA* 49).

As I am a settler myself, it is important to recognize that there is potential for my own work to unintentionally contribute to this history. My hope is to instead bring more attention to the way that Abel's use of the poetic techniques of appropriation throughout *The Place of Scraps*

works both as a critical intervention to Barbeau's writing and as an expression of the realities of Abel's experience. As Liboiron explains in *Pollution is Colonialism*: "Different groups have different roles in alterlives, reconciliation, decolonization, indigenization, and anticolonial work" (22). As a settler scholar of poetry, I believe it is important for me to engage with Abel's poetry in a way that privileges the poetry itself, because I believe that this is one way that I can help to draw attention to Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism and its structures.

I hope that my contribution to the scholarly analysis of *The Place of Scraps* can help to encourage further discussions about Abel's poetry and about the nature of poetic appropriation. Younging notes in *Elements of Indigenous Style* that academic writing by non-Indigenous peoples often "has observational and analytical value," but also that it "has ultimately not expressed Indigeneity and Indigenous epistemologies, nor has it expressed Indigenous Peoples' internal unique perspectives on contemporary Indigenous political and cultural issues" (10). My work cannot change this dynamic, but it is my sincere hope that it will help to open up space for scholars who are better equipped than I to engage with other elements of Abel's work.[4]

Abel's poetry highlights the manifold and protracted impacts of Canada's genocidal policies towards Indigenous peoples in service of a more personal narrative about his own experiences. Through depictions of the extraction of totem poles from communities, Abel interrogates the attempted erasure of Indigenous nations and knowledges and the experiences that can arise as a result of those extractions. Métis theorist Warren Cariou explains the resonance of such erasure to contemporary settler mindsets: unlike early colonizers who endorsed notions of *terra nullius*,[5] "non-Native North Americans now once again see Indigenous spaces as blank, but in a different sense: they don't imagine those spaces as tantalizingly empty zones of potential wealth and possibility; instead, they don't see them at all" (35). *The Place of Scraps* is poetry about erasure and extraction. Just as totem poles are extracted from territory, people are extracted from communities, memories are excavated from minds, and, ultimately, Indigenous nations are erased and replaced by the Canadian nation-state. In this way, erasure and extraction function

as tools to enable settler-colonial land theft. Cariou's observation therefore resonates with the excavation of memory that Abel confronts within his poetry. At the same time that settler colonialism acts to drive a wedge between Indigenous peoples and their communities and histories through policies of cultural genocide and assimilation, it also works to excavate the awareness of settler colonialism from the minds of settlers themselves: if settlers do not see Indigenous people at all, then we need not consider the implications of our own existence as settlers or of the violence that has been done, and continues to be done, to Indigenous people in our name.[6] Cariou argues that "one of the things that Indigenous poetry and other arts can do is help shake up this kind of compartmentalized thinking by placing different realities side by side, thereby showing readers what they sometimes prefer not to notice" (35). *The Place of Scraps* very literally places Abel's personal reflections side by side with excerpts from Barbeau's anthropological work in a way that forces readers to consider both the broader implications of erasure as a tool of settler-colonial land theft and also a series of personal recollections from Abel's life. To consider these issues is to consider both what is explicitly written into the poetry and what has been erased from it. Even when poems in *The Place of Scraps* do not specifically address Barbeau's work, they are placed in proximity to others that do. The result is that readers of *The Place of Scraps* are never entirely free from Barbeau's influence, nor are they able to escape what Barbeau's work means to Abel.

Abel's poetic extractions in *The Place of Scraps* thematically link the removals of totem poles, resources, people, and even memories by settler colonialism. Thus, while *The Place of Scraps* focuses attention on Barbeau's legacy and the legacy of works like *Totem Poles*, it uses that focus to generate an impersonal conceptualist critique of those legacies at the same time as a personal rumination on Abel's own life and his connections to—and disconnection from—family, history, language, and culture. If Abel has been divested of his memories of the pole that stands in the ROM, it is as a direct result of both the residential school system and Barbeau's salvage ethnography, influences that Abel both recognizes and repudiates through his poetry. The transformative

nature of *The Place of Scraps* comes from the way that each of these registers is generated by the same sequence of poetic interventions, such that the main narratives of the poetry are always already linked together.

Appropriation, Imitation, and Temporality in *The Place of Scraps*

Let us return, for a moment, to Abel's explanation that "Barbeau's writing was the first / imperfect glimpse [he] had into Nisga'a culture," and to his explanation that "*The Place of Scraps*, in addition to / being about Marius Barbeau and salvage / anthropology, is also about what it means to / be an intergenerational survivor of Residential / Schools" (*NISHGA* 46). This information is necessary not just to understand why *The Place of Scraps* engages with Barbeau or uses erasure, but also how it does so. Abel's first entryway into Nisga'a culture was "through the / now-debunked work of a dead, white / anthropologist," and that very same work becomes, for readers, their first entryway into *The Place of Scraps* (46).

In recognition of the way that "the main / narrative" of *The Place of Scraps* focuses on "the role Marius / Barbeau played in dismantling Nisga'a culture" (44), I believe it will be helpful to consider *Totem Poles* before analyzing the erasure poetry that Abel creates in *The Place of Scraps*. What does Barbeau's "deeply distorted colonial / representation" of Nisga'a culture actually look like, as a piece of text, prior to Abel's poetic influence (44)?

Barbeau opens the first volume of *Totem Poles* with a dedication that reveals a great deal about his beliefs and priorities:

> *Let this book be a memorial to the native artists of the north Pacific Coast!*
>
> *Their genius has produced monumental works of art on a par with the most original the world has ever known.*
>
> *They belong one and all to our continent and our time, and have shown how creative power may thrive in remote places. Independent of our great moderns, from Turner to Gaugin, Van Gogh, and Cézanne, they were nevertheless their contemporaries.*

Barbeau insists first of all that his work be understood as a "memorial," rhetorically situating both Indigenous nations and artists in the past.

Barbeau repeats this rhetorical strategy throughout *Totem Poles*, including in the already referenced claim in the work's preface that "Native arts, however ancient or recent, are now a feature of the past" (xii). Similarly, the description of Indigenous artists working in "remote places" centres the settler Canadian urban metropolis and relegates Indigenous communities to an imagined periphery. In this way, Barbeau deploys the logic of *terra nullius* in order to justify settler colonialism by insisting that Indigenous Territories are empty, even when faced with objective proof to the contrary.

Abel's poetry very clearly critiques this aspect of Barbeau's text, but there exists nonetheless some danger of reinscribing colonial teleology by revitalizing a historical colonial text, even for the purpose of critiquing that text's dispossessive functions. Settler scholar Pauline Wakeham offers a relevant exposé of such danger in her article "Salvaging Sound at Last Sight." Wakeham considers a twenty-first-century restoration of Barbeau's short film *Nass River Indians*, which had been lost shortly after its initial creation in 1928. Those who led the twenty-first-century restoration project were aware of the film's colonial aspects, and Wakeham notes that, "to recontextualize *Nass River Indians* as a product of colonial history and its racist discourses, [art historian Lynda] Jessup prepared a prefatory set of intertitles that would precede the original credits and would seek to explain the fraught circumstances in which the documentary was initially produced" (77). Despite this attempt to contextualize the problematic colonialist dynamics of the original work, Wakeham argues that the revised film nevertheless "runs the risk of reinscribing the *grand récit* of Western progress and extending its teleology into a narrativizing of postcolonial politics in Canada's present tense" (78). In short: returning to a historical colonial text, even in an attempt to critique that text, runs the risk of contributing to a narrative of historical progress that confines acts of colonialism to the past. Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard similarly observes in *Red Skin, White Masks* that "in settler-colonial contexts—where there is no period marking a clear or formal transition from an authoritarian past to a democratic present—state-sanctioned approaches to reconciliation must ideologically manufacture such a transition by allocating the abuses of settler colonization to the dustbins of history" (108). Positioning a

colonial text as a kind of historical relic can problematically reinforce these attempts to relegate the abuses of settler colonization to the past. These arguments resonate with Abel's poetic work and the fraught terrain of appropriative artwork in general, but I believe that *The Place of Scraps* sidesteps this danger by refusing to situate *Totem Poles*, or Barbeau's influence in general, as a part of the past.

The views espoused in *Totem Poles* are significant precisely because they have been influential, as evinced by *Totem Poles* being the first text Abel could find in his search for Nisga'a culture and knowledge. Abel's personal narrative is therefore connected to his critique of the content of *Totem Poles*, and the result of that link is that *The Place of Scraps* criticizes not just the outlook and impact of *Totem Poles* but its ongoing influence. *The Place of Scraps* demonstrates that *Totem Poles* is a text that is heavily influential in the present day rather than merely an example of historical attitudes. *The Place of Scraps* is thus concerned both with the particular influence of *Totem Poles* and also with a broader set of settler-colonial beliefs that are reflected in *Totem Poles* but do not originate there, such as the notion of *terra nullius*. Where *Totem Poles* actively attempts to confine Indigenous people, arts, and cultures to the past, *The Place of Scraps* simultaneously rejects that conclusion and also refuses to confine *Totem Poles* (or the ideas it expresses) to the past. Instead, *The Place of Scraps* depicts *Totem Poles*, for Abel and for readers, as a doorway into the present.

Reclamations ReWritten: The Poetic Insistence/Resistence of Jordan Abel

Abel explains in *NISHGA* that "instead of providing [him] a pathway to / Indigenous knowledge, Barbeau's work opened / another doorway": a doorway into his family history (44). *The Place of Scraps*, I am suggesting, transforms the text of *Totem Poles* into a kind of poetic doorway. Part 1 of *The Place of Scraps* consists of poetic sequences that typically begin with a passage excavated from Barbeau's *Totem Poles*. With every page the reader turns through those sequences, *The Place of Scraps* engages more deeply with that passage.

To demonstrate how *The Place of Scraps* interrogates the ongoing impact of Barbeau's excavation of totem poles, erasure of Indigenous nations and cultures, and extraction of Indigenous knowledge, I will now consider a series of three consecutive poetic sequences from part 1 of *The Place of Scraps*. These include two of the most personal sequences, "R.O.M." (57-63) and "The Wooden Spoon" (95-105), and the section located between them, "The Myth of the Dragonfly" (65-93), which functions most obviously as a response to and critique of Barbeau's anthropological project. The oscillation between Abel's personal recollections and his responses to Barbeau's work helps to demonstrate the relationship that *The Place of Scraps* develops between these two seemingly distinct projects, as well as the function of *Totem Poles* as a doorway into the central theme of *The Place of Scraps*: the experience of dispossession through erasure, and the difficulty of finding the language necessary to address those erasures.

The first of these sequences, "R.O.M.," consists of two of what I have called diary entries and a single erasure that combines both. The sequence spans eighteen years: The first entry details the aforementioned trip taken by the poet and his mother to the ROM, where he must have seen (but does not remember) the totem pole taken from the Nass River Valley by Barbeau. The second entry details Abel's recognition of the origin of that pole and the "multiplicity of subtle emotions" that he feels upon his realization that he does not remember having seen it previously (63). The next sequence, "The Myth of the Dragonfly," begins with an excavation from Barbeau's *Totem Poles*, follows that with a series of poetic erasures, and concludes with an original prose passage that imitates Barbeau's style. The concluding sequence, "The Wooden Spoon," consists of only two diary entries and three erasures. The first and last of these erasures are drawn from each of the diary entries, and the second combines both. These entries focus on Abel receiving "a wooden spoon that his absent father carved" as a gift (97), but he finds that he cannot bear to use it. Instead, he places it on a shelf as "an object designed for the uncontrollable nakedness of spectacle" (105). Each of these passages mixes the emotions that are conveyed with markers of uncertainty such that, rather than conveying

a narrative progression that builds towards resolution, these sequences instead effectively refract the enduring complexities of Abel's emotions. These sequences also function as crucial interpretive context for the middle sequence, "The Myth of the Dragonfly."

The intermingling of Abel's personal reflections with his critical-poetic response to Barbeau's work demonstrates the degree to which those two concerns are intrinsically linked. "The Myth of the Dragonfly," the sequence between "R.O.M." and "The Wooden Spoon," epitomizes this modality of Abel's poetics. The excavated passage from Barbeau's *Totem Poles* that opens this sequence reads as follows:

> *The myth of the Dragon-Fly.* A young unmarried woman of this clan, whose name was Yaw'l, broke her seclusion taboos to play with her brothers. Although it was summertime, a heavy fall of snow covered the ground at night. When the brothers and sister looked outside, they found themselves in a strange country; their house was nearly covered with snow. Huge-Belly, a monstrous being, appeared from time to time, calling the young taboo-breakers outside, one by one, in order to cut them open with his long, sharp, glass-like nose, and hang their bodies on the rafters of his lodge to smoke and dry like split salmon. One of them managed to kill him. The slayer took to flight with his sister and remaining brothers, but to little avail. A female being of the same kind, Ksemkaigyet, who could draw out her nose into a sharp knife, pursued them. As they hid in a tree at the edge of a lake, she detected their shadows in the frosty waters and dived several times to capture them, until she was quite frozen. Then they killed her. But before she died, she declared, "The people will always suffer from my nose." From her remains were born the mosquitoes and other pests. (*Totem Poles* 24)

As Stephen Collis acknowledges in his identification of Abel's "hinge page" technique (qtd. in Abel, *NISHGA* 76), the erasures within *The Place of Scraps*, as Abel himself explains, "flow forward and / backward and intersect in the middle" (76). The passage above is followed by twelve erasures, but only the first six are taken from this passage of Barbeau's writing. The latter six are erasures from the passage that concludes the sequence, a shift that allows Abel's erasures

to appear before the source text from which they have been created. This structure results in erasure poetry that anticipates its concluding passage rather than responds to it; as a result, these erasures serve both to demonstrate the haunting influence of Barbeau's work on the poet's present reality (as his first window into Nisga'a culture) and to challenge audience expectations of the reading process by continually adding unpredictable new elements to Abel's erasure sequences. Even an extremely attentive reader will struggle to identify the hinge on a first reading, because the only way to reliably do so would be to compare each erasure to the original passage.

One of the most poignant poems Abel creates out of this passage reads as follows:

summertime
in a strange country;
time
with
the
remaining
and
the
remains (75)

This poem is buoyed by its resonant closing image: the remaining and the remains. Through this reference to both the remaining (or the people who remain) and the remains (the bodies of those who came before), Abel transforms Barbeau's language into something that resists the practice of erasure inherent in Barbeau's ideological basis for *Totem Poles*, expressing instead a sense of resilience and continuity. Referencing time spent with both "the / remaining / and / the / remains" (75), this poem transforms the very language of *Totem Poles* into a message that both affirms the continued presence of Nisga'a people in the present and reaffirms the presence and legitimacy of the nation itself by recognizing a historical and geographical continuity between the remaining and the remains. Abel rejects Barbeau's attempt to confine Indigenous peoples to the past through his insistence on their imminent demise and demonstrates that, contrary to Barbeau's expectations, Indigenous people are not only extant via the physical

remains of the dead; rather, they remain. In doing so, this poem articulates presence through reference to a "strange country," a turn of phrase that evokes the feelings of disconnection expressed by the poet's description of having felt "surprised and ashamed" upon recognizing his lack of memories in "R.O.M." (63). Thus, the same process of erasure simultaneously generates an image of geographical continuity and a recognition that some Indigenous people may not feel they have access to that image as a result of having been "dispossessed / and severed from the land" (*NISHGA* 266).

One of the later poems in this sequence highlights a group of words that draw attention to the relationship between erasure and creation: "split open / fill in / what had happened / and / had become" (*The Place of Scraps* 89). This phrasing evokes both Barbeau's damaging creation of a "deeply distorted colonial / representation" of Indigenous cultures through the writing of *Totem Poles* and Abel's own process of generating meaning through erasure in *The Place of Scraps* (*NISHGA* 44). Abel's poetry unmakes Barbeau's work through erasure so that it can be made anew in a manner that affirms, rather than denies, Indigenous continuance. This affirmative unmaking is highlighted by the passage that closes this sequence, one of the passages that Abel has described as his own "historic fiction masquerading / as Barbeau's work" (76). By using this sequence of erasure poems to gradually transform an excerpt of Barbeau's work into a piece of creative writing that mimics Barbeau's style but challenges his message, Abel's formal erasures serve both to reveal and to symbolically refuse Barbeau's more ideological erasures. *The Place of Scraps* subjects *Totem Poles* to erasure in order to extract from it a story about the dispossession, and the perseverance, of Indigenous peoples. The closing passage to this section, one of Abel's imitations of Barbeau's prose, acts as a bookend to the excavated section of Barbeau's work, telling roughly the same story but changing details in significant ways. Abel's passage reads:

> *The Tale of the Blacked-Out Sky at Noon*. That winter the snow had blanketed the Nass River Valley, but the old man Ksemkaigyet barely noticed. He had secluded himself from the village, found comfort in the solitude of his work—spliting [*sic*] open dragonflies, determining their

> inner workings. But each specimen he opened revealed something different. Some were filled with sand, others with blood or pine needles. He allowed himself to crack open only one each day. But Ksemkaigyet's desire to know how they worked soon became a ravenous hunger. And he found himself spliting open every specimen he had until he came upon one dragonfly that was filled with smoke—wreaths upon wreaths—and ice water. Ksemkaigyet was stunned. The smoking creature he held in his palms was not a dragonfly at all, but a spirit in disguise. The glass-nosed spirit rose from the smoke and spoke in a language that he did not understand. But before Ksemkaigyet knew what had happened the spirit transformed into a dragonfly once more and flew out of the lodge. He followed the spirit out into the woods and saw that the sky had become blackened with the beating wings of dragonflies, that all those wings together were melting all of the snow. He had indeed found himself in a strange country. (*The Place of Scraps* 93)

The core similarity between the passages is clear—both tell the story of Ksemkaigyet and the dragonfly—but the specific details have changed. Barbeau's version of this story features a female Ksemkaigyet who unleashes pests to punish a group of disobedient children. Abel's version, by contrast, concerns an old man (Ksemkaigyet) who, in pursuit of knowledge about dragonflies, splits open a spirit and finds the woods in which he lives covered in dragonflies as a response.

Cognizant of the limits of my cultural knowledge as a settler scholar, I will focus my analysis on the function of this retelling within *The Place of Scraps*. Historical studies reveal that "Barbeau's transcriptions of Indigenous narratives followed 'an interpretive method' that itself amounted to a process of erasure," and that Barbeau "actively altered [at least one] story's language to suit his preconceptions" (Karpinski 4). Settler literary scholar Max Karpinski argues, following the work of settler scholar Andrew Nurse, that Barbeau "sees his disregard as beneficial, even restorative" (5), and Nurse observes that "Barbeau's salvage ethnography relied on a circular logic that legitimized the anthropologist's intuition as part of an interpretive 'science,' which simultaneously legitimized his position as the arbiter of authenticity" (Nurse 63). This approach contributed to the

construction of "a canon of authenticity determined by anthropologists, often with little reference to the views of the people actually under study" (63), a situation that contributes to the erasure of Indigenous voices and at the same time inhibits the ability of anthropologists to understand anything they do not already believe. It is poignant, then, that Abel's version of the dragonfly story focuses on a figure who causes a great deal of pain as a result of his desperation to understand something that he, too, never ultimately comprehends. Abel's passage describes a Ksemkaigyet whose desire to learn becomes "a ravenous hunger" that compels him to increasingly destructive action. His eventual discovery of the spirit only magnifies his lack of understanding when the spirit speaks "in a language that he [does] not understand" (93). This tale offers a clear critique of destructive attempts to acquire knowledge. The erasures that build towards this passage ruminate on the same issues. Abel's erasures here focus on "the / remaining / and / the / remains" (75), on "the people" (77, 79), on the feeling of being in "a strange country" (75, 83), and on the harm caused when bodies are "split / with / the kind / knife" (73), a phrase that Karpinski has already identified as carrying two "utterly opposed significations" because it evokes the "accumulation of poles by supposedly sympathetic . . . salvagers" like Barbeau (7), and also Abel's poetic intervention, which is a "regenerative act, rooted in the reassertion or endurance of ancestral genealogies" (7).

Note that Abel's concluding passage reuses key phrases from Barbeau's work, deepening this connection by allowing the erasures generated from Abel's imitation to emulate not just Barbeau's style of writing, but also to include a series of easily identified phrases from Barbeau's opening passage. Abel also reuses a number of individual words from Barbeau's work: *water*, *smoke*, *people*, and *sand*. The result is that erasures from both passages contain immediately identifiable words and phrases, but their locations on the page have subtly shifted. The poem on page 77 reads: "broke n / , calling / the smoke / the water / the / people," which is echoed a few short pages later by the similarly structured poem on page 81: "with sand with blood / with smoke / with / snow." The shared references to smoke and the similar

structure of these poems helps to drive home that these particular erasures are connected despite their being taken from opposing passages: the poem on page 77 is drawn from Barbeau's passage and the poem on page 81 is taken from Abel's imitation. A similar connection can be drawn between the first and last poems of the sequence: these poems reprint all of the punctuation, and only the punctuation, of the adjacent passage. This sequence of transformative erasures reinforces the depiction of historical continuity, rather than Barbeau's colonial split between past and present: *Totem Poles* becomes a doorway, not a historical document.

Abel's poetic reflections highlight that his inability as a youth to recognize or to feel a connection to the totem pole stolen from the Nass River Valley is connected to Barbeau's "ravenous hunger" to understand and "preserve" Indigenous cultures and arts that he perceives, "however ancient or recent," as "a feature of the past" (*The Place of Scraps* 93; *Totem Poles* xii). For Barbeau, this desire for preservation justifies

> 15:29:34 . . . the buying and often stealing of totem poles and other cultural items from struggling communities
>
> 15:29:39 and very often struggling community members
>
> (*NISHGA* 44-45)

—so that they might be placed on display in colonial institutions of nationalist mythology such as museums. Between Abel's critical engagement with Barbeau's work and the narrative of his personal feelings of loss and disconnection, there arises a thematic focus on the nature of erasure. Overall, then, this sequence highlights not one but two allegorical implications of Abel's "The Tale of the Blacked-Out Sky at Noon." On the one hand, Abel's Ksemkaigyet represents Barbeau, ravenous for knowledge but fundamentally lacking in understanding. On the other, Ksemkaigyet's alienation echoes Abel's own feelings of disconnection from his family and from Nisga'a knowledge, feelings highlighted in "R.O.M." and "The Wooden Spoon." This poetic sequence puts these two disconnections into conversation in a way that forces consideration not only of these two possibilities but also of the connections between them. By poetically highlighting the

links between Barbeau's extractions and his own experiences, Abel simultaneously refuses to be subject to Barbeau's attempt to quarantine Indigenous people and arts in a distant historical past and transforms Barbeau's anthropological writings into a poetic doorway, leading into a consideration of the experience of seeking knowledge and connection in the face of settler-colonial erasures.

Through this process of excavating passages from Barbeau's work, erasing from those passages, contrasting those words against his own imitations, and placing the resultant poetry in conversation with narrative poetic reflections upon his own experiences, Abel ultimately extracts crucial meaning from Barbeau's writing. This meaning enables *The Place of Scraps* to poetically explore the connections among Barbeau's anthropological erasures, other settler-colonial erasures of Indigenous peoples, and Abel's personal feelings of disconnection from his Nisga'a heritage. As Karpinski argues of Abel's poems, these "erasures might be understood as an act of requiting: the poetics of appropriation constitute an appropriate return" (5). In bringing these concerns together, Abel's poetry reflects the erasures that have impacted his own life, yet Abel refuses to be bound by that impact. Abel's refusal here enables *The Place of Scraps* to extract from Barbeau's text an artistic expression of Abel's experiences, reflecting Abel's explanation, in *NISHGA*, that his work often focuses on "rearticulating Indigenous / presence" (266). Literature offers a way for Indigenous authors to "manipulate the English language and its literary traditions" in order "to narrate Indigenous experiences under colonialism in an effort to heal themselves and their audiences from the colonial trauma" (Episkenew 12), and this potential is magnified by Abel's extraction of a narrative about his own experiences out of Barbeau's text. *The Place of Scraps* moves through and past *Totem Poles*, and the manipulation of the very text of *Totem Poles* becomes an important part of how *The Place of Scraps* begins to express what Abel calls his "positionhood as both an urban Indigenous / person and an intergenerational survivor of / Residential Schools" (*NISHGA* 49). *Totem Poles* becomes a doorway to Abel's personal knowledge because of the manipulations of *The Place of Scraps*.

Part 1 of *The Place of Scraps* concludes with a description of Abel meeting the totem pole stolen from both his homeland and his

memories and asserting that "the pole is here; the poet is here" (143). That these sentences are split by a semicolon is fitting, given Abel's focus on punctuation and the act of splitting throughout "The Myth of the Dragonfly." The semicolon reflects both the split and the connection between the pole and the poet: they are separated, but nonetheless remain connected. Their meeting signifies resilience in the face of colonial erasure. Barbeau's project of "preservation" is rooted in his belief that Indigenous artistic expressions belong in the past, and that the arrival of settlers somehow renders Indigenous cultures inauthentic (Karpinski 4). The reunion of poet and pole offers a striking image of refusal to be limited by Barbeau's imagined future, even as *The Place of Scraps* affirms that Abel's journey to understand and reclaim what has been erased from his life remains incomplete.

Notes

1. Conceptual writing is in some ways a difficult term to pin down. Vanessa Place and Robert Fitterman explain in *Notes on Conceptualisms*: "Conceptual writing mediates between the written object (which may or may not be a text) and the meaning of the object by framing the writing as a figural object to be narrated" (17), but also indicate that they "use the term . . . in the broadest sense, so that it intersects other terms such as: allegory, appropriation, piracy, flarf, identity theft, sampling, constraint and others" (12). Fitterman suggests also that "Conceptual Writing . . . might best be defined not by the strategies used but by the expectations of the readership or *thinkership*" (12).
2. *Salvage ethnography* describes early-twentieth-century anthropologists whose work specifically highlighted cultures that were said to be on the verge of extinction. That these anthropologists typically studied the Indigenous peoples of North America serves as an example of the ideological underpinnings of the practice: to position Indigenous cultures within the past and advance the goals of settler colonialism.
3. Abel notes that it is important to distinguish between the communities themselves and these individual members because "in many cases / [Barbeau] did make some kind of arrangement with an / individual within the community, but it wasn't / a community decision" (*NISHGA* 45).
4. I am thinking here in particular of Abel's explanation in *NISHGA* that it is helpful to

    15:31:40 . . . frame urban Indigenous
    experiences and experiences of intergeneration-
    al trauma . . .

    through the theoretical frameworks of Indigenous identity and position and to

> 15:31:40 . . . subsequently understand these lived experiences as not only being manifestations of Indigenous identity and position,
>
> 15:31:46 but also as being deeply misunderstood and under-theorized categories of Indigenous identity. (46-47)

My hope is that my work will help to maintain an ongoing critical conversation about Abel's poetry and, in doing so, will open doors for Indigenous scholars who can speak to aspects of Abel's poetry that are beyond my comprehension.

5. *Terra nullius* is, as Glen Coulthard explains, a "racist legal fiction that declared Indigenous peoples too 'primitive' to bear rights to land and sovereignty . . . thus rendering their territories legally 'empty' and therefore open for colonial settlement and development" (175).
6. I use *our* here as a way to highlight my own relationship to these concerns as a settler, rather than an assumption about the relationship that my readers have to these issues. My intention here is to draw attention to the fact that those of us who are settlers are by definition connected to settler colonialism, which remains operational in Canada to this day. To borrow Patrick Wolfe's repeated phrase: "invasion is a structure not an event" (2, 3, 163, 207, 209).

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Adam Carlson

"Such Are the Advantages of Autochthony": Extracting Indigeneity through CanLit and Settler-Colonial Historiography

Following the December 2022 passage of the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act, the bill's architect, Barry Cooper, argued that Alberta needs protection from Ottawa because "the way that First Nations have been treated, and Métis, has been no different than the way settlers have been treated" ("Conversations that Matter" 00:11:11-19). "The Indian Act," he said, "was imposed from Ottawa . . . on a typical British imperial model, on how you rule . . . Indigenous peoples, wherever they are" (00:11:26-39). In this statement, Cooper, a political operative and long-time professor at the University of Calgary, collapses both the difference between First Peoples' and settlers' historical experiences and any essential difference *between* these groups. Ottawa's rule makes them equally "Indigenous." Nevertheless, Cooper prefaces his remarks by claiming his own "great-grandmother was Sarcee, or T'suut'ina" (00:11:03-08).[1] Cooper, along with his fellow University of Calgary professor Tom Flanagan, is affiliated with the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, an institute whose current list of publications features topical works like Jack Buckby's *Extremist Opportunism in the COVID Economy: How Extremists Are Using the COVID Economy as a Recruiting Tool and a Springboard for Radical Ideas*, as well as Cooper's own *COVID-19: The Politics of a Pandemic Moral Panic* (with Marco Navarro-Génie). These texts frame COVID-19's social disruptions as dog-whistle threats from a hysterical left bent on curtailing economic freedom and security, in the same way Flanagan has blamed Indigenous and feminist activists for orchestrating the "moral panic" that would lead to his public downfall over his child pornography remarks (*Persona* 92, 4). Flanagan's most recent proposal for Indigenous assimilation through

extractivism, *The Wealth of First Nations*, is on the Frontier Centre's list, too, alongside residential school apologist and disgraced former Mount Royal University professor Frances Widdowson's *Separate but Unequal: How Parallelist Ideology Conceals Indigenous Dependency* and a collection called *From Truth Comes Reconciliation*, which the publicity blurb says is "Dedicated to the thousands of people—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—who were good and honourable servants to the children in Canada's Indian residential schools and hostels," together with former students "for whom the residential school experience was demonstrably positive . . . but also to those who greatly suffered as a result of their experiences" ("From Truth"; and see "Books").

While despicable, such titles are not exactly surprising from a right-wing, pro-oil think tank. But what may surprise some is how deeply Cooper's and Flanagan's works are rooted in literary-critical close-reading strategies and CanLit structuralist narratives. Attention to these authors' texts reveals the structures shared by work done on the fringes of extractive partisan politics and a form of extractivism at work in more mainstream cultural production—each aimed at legitimating settler claims to lands and resources. For example, on 16 November 2021, the anniversary of Métis leader Louis Riel's execution—when the Gabriel Dumont Institute was hosting Métis scholars Maria Campbell and Marilyn Poitras, and while the federal government was acknowledging the need to work "together to end systemic racism" (Willick)—Flanagan was invited on to an episode of *CBC Kids News* to answer children's questions on the topic, "Should land be given back to Indigenous people? Why or why not?"[2]

Flanagan and Cooper have long moved freely between the right-wing fringe and the mainstream of Canada's mediascape. They belong to the so-called Calgary School, a political-science cohort of academic, activist, think-tank ideologues who engineered the rise of the Reform Party and of Stephen Harper, and who cultivate and propagate an Alberta-based ideology that continues to steer Canadian politics through University of Calgary grads including Harper, Flanagan protegés Ezra Levant and Danielle Smith, and Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre (see Gutstein 58-60). In this paper, I examine how Flanagan and Cooper draw on Canadian literary conventions and structuralist narratology to construct an extractivist settler-colonial

historiography that maintains the seemingly objective normativity of settler culture by assimilating Indigeneity into white supremacy.[3] I argue that a literary-critical methodology is necessary to interrogate the mythmaking at work in contemporary political science, historiography, and policy. As right-wing discourse increasingly leans on mythologizing and dehistoricizing strategies, for example in the Jungian archetypes promoted by Jordan Peterson, intervention into the literary basis of current conservative politics is crucial. Adding to critiques of Flanagan's more recent output,[4] I look at early essays by Cooper and Flanagan that map a structural rhetoric by which ongoing settler-colonial dispossession, extractivism, and cultural genocide operate.

Cooper's early work centred on French theory; his tome on Alexandre Kojève's notion of the "end of history" predates Francis Fukuyama's by several years. He has published monographs on Maurice Merlot-Ponty, Michel Foucault, and the French Christian philosopher Jacques Ellul; he uses the latter to argue that trans people don't really exist (Cooper, "The Political Significance"). Like Flanagan, Cooper has moved in his later work from academe to newspapers, TV, and think tanks like the Fraser Institute, applying conservative philosophy to current events. In *Deconfederation* (1991, with David J. Bercuson), Cooper's provocation—that the petulant, backwards Quebec is preventing Canada's liberal-democratic modernity—is based on the Kojèveian premise of a post-historical, uniform global culture. In 2009's *It's the Regime, Stupid!*, Cooper applies Leo Strauss' political philosophy to Canadian politics, arguing that Stephen Harper represents the virtuous, masculine, "cowboy" ethos characteristic of Western Canada, while Liberals must be understood vis-à-vis the corrupt, effeminate essence Cooper imputes to "Laurentians," i.e., Canadians residing in what Donald Creighton called the empire of the St. Lawrence River. While working with the climate-denialist advocacy organization Friends of Science, Cooper oversaw a University of Calgary research trust that was shut down for sponsoring partisan attack ads (see CanWest; "Friends of Science"). Most recently, he produced a report for then Alberta Premier Jason Kenney's Canadian Energy Centre, or "Energy War Room," warning that climate activists resemble "jihadists" and wish to recruit Indigenous peoples into a Marxist revolution (Cooper, *Background Report* 27, 20-22; see "Jason Kenney's Inquiry");

he then co-authored the *Free Alberta Strategy*, the blueprint for Alberta's Sovereignty Act.

Flanagan and Cooper are examples of what Antonio Gramsci would call the organic intellectuals of a regional resource economy. They thus fit in perfectly at the Frontier Centre, but they have also helped the Calgary School exercise an underexamined national influence on the assimilation and elimination of Indigeneity that is instrumental in Canada's settler-colonial extractive state. This essay aims to intervene in literary studies by foregrounding how the structuralist literary premises that subtend our field enable greater colonial, extractive structures. It traces how Canadian literary history and historiography are complicit in the greater settler-colonial project of appropriation and assimilation, which has been challenged by Métis scholars like Adam Gaudry and Chelsea Vowel, as well as by settler scholar Darryl Leroux.

The cover of Flanagan's *The Wealth of First Nations*[5] neatly demonstrates how extractivism relies on the appropriation of Indigeneity. The cover design is divided into three horizontal segments, the topmost showing a postcard-worthy vista of the Rocky Mountains. The middle segment features the hips and legs of a fancy shawl dancer. (This complete, uncropped image has become something of a viral stock photo appearing on settler sites across the internet, notably including the homepage for Kenney's War Room.) The bottom segment shows a pumpjack genuflecting against a mellow sunset. In this pictorial logic, raw nature passes through Indigenous presence, emerging out of the colourful ribbon skirt as wealth in the form of a healthy oil sector. The mediating step of a faceless Indigenous woman signifies the function of inhabitants in a wealthy nation, i.e., transforming "nature" into capital, as interpellated by the text. And the book itself does the same work, offering statistical interpretations of the wealth that *ought* to redound to Indigenous peoples in Canada, once cultural differences are translated into demographical values of official statistics. The text thus performs the epistemic violence that Métis scholar Chris Andersen critiques regarding the administrative category of Métis, by which settler-colonial official projects use abstract statuses to integrate diverse populations into structuralist taxonomies (see also Green). And indeed, throughout their careers, Flanagan and Cooper have performed a similarly colonizing structuralist approach, beginning with the figures of Louis

Riel and the Red River, that explicitly prioritizes myth over history, advancing cultural genocide, or the systematic elimination of cultural difference in the service of white supremacy.

Method and Cultural Genocide

Cooper and Flanagan figure Indigeneity as a position within a synchronic mythical structure. For Cooper, the Red River settlement acts as what I call an *originary market-ecology*: a framework in which humans are figured universally as *homo economicus*, while particular cultural identity expresses a Romantic-nationalist essence that is organic to the regional environment. In such an ecological milieu, rational economic behaviour signifies legitimate autochthony. Mirroring his book cover, which figures Indigeneity as a bridge between raw nature and extractive capital, Flanagan uses this structural approach to claim that Louis Riel must be understood as an archetype of what he calls elsewhere "welfare-dependent Indians" (*First Nations?* 8), and that white hegemony is threatened by Indigenous colonization. Cooper and Flanagan thus unabashedly offer examples of a settler logic of elimination, which, as Patrick Wolfe describes it, "seeks to replace [I]ndigenous society with that imported by the colonizers" (93), eliminating Indigeneity as anything other than one identity in a multicultural market. Radicalizing this method allows Flanagan to argue that the *true* indigene is the white settler and so-called First Peoples are genocidal colonizers.

The rhetorical method Cooper, Flanagan, and many neo-liberal knowledge producers share derives from the work of Leo Strauss, a thinker popularized by, among others, Allan Bloom at the University of Chicago and the University of Toronto.[6] I mention the oft-loaded topic of Straussianism not as an ad hominem attack, but because Cooper and Flanagan do,[7] and it neatly explains the portable synchronic paradigm they employ. According to Marc C. Henrie, Straussians engage in "'close reading' of the 'Great Books' of political thought; they strive to understand a thinker 'as he understood himself'; they are unconcerned with questions about . . . historical context"; and, they believe, "in any given Great Book from the past, one may come across something that is *the truth*, simply." This fidelity to such a Book's author, whose greatness is already established *by* their book's success, has the felicitous effect

of affirming that truth will always be self-referential, that authority is authority. As Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith might contend, this naive commitment to one universal *truth* reproduces a specifically colonial epistemology as general common sense (see esp. Smith 28-38). In explaining Strauss' "interpretative principle," Cooper quotes Strauss' belief that, "if in a given case [a great author] apparently happens to do a bad job as a writer, or as a thinker, he actually does it deliberately and for very good reasons" (qtd. in "Hunting" 30, 31; see Strauss, "The Spirit"). Even bad work affirms the great author's complete mastery, with such flaws strategically protecting meaning from unworthy readers, while flaws in *non*-great writers' arguments betray self-interest. Cooper employs this latter view to argue that Northrop Frye's garrison mentality is evidence of a Laurentian project to impose Central Canadian values on the nation.

Like analytic philosophers or New Critics, Straussians presume their reading strategy to be a universally applicable technique. This universality means the same interpretive strategy can be applied to any particular context, which suits it well for dissemination through mass media and think tanks in what F. A. Hayek famously called the "marketplace of ideas."[8] Applied to historiography, the method allows academic production to be weaponized, as evidenced in Flanagan's characterization of his own work as "a heat-seeking missile aimed at the emerging orthodoxy that Indians were sovereign 'First Nations' capable of dealing with Canada on a nation-to-nation basis" (*Persona* 20). Strauss' and Bloom's city-man analogy explains the translation from philosophy to practise: the individual's, or "man's," ultimate authority is the metafictional truth of all texts, while the social, or "the city," makes up the individual's material context, the public to whom the philosopher must appeal to earn a living (see Strauss, *The City*; Bloom, "Interpretive Essay"). The philosopher cannot alienate patrons by offending vulgar tastes, and registering these tastes is what, for Strauss, Cooper, and Flanagan, counts as historical fidelity. Throughout his work, Flanagan defends his oeuvre entirely in terms of awards, money, and prestige,[9] i.e., in terms of the hegemonic conservative tastes his work affirms. Substituting popularity for knowledge as the ultimate criterion for expertise is apropos of the reading strategy Henrie

defines: "the Straussian method . . . does not require field research, extensive contextual historical investigations, technical skills such as paleography, or the acquisition of multiple foreign languages. All that is necessary is a properly trained mind and a Great Book." In other words, neither Flanagan (e.g., in his role as a Crown witness in land-claims cases) nor Cooper (when he's producing reports refuting climate science) are troubled by an utter lack of knowledge when claiming expertise. Indeed, Flanagan's own account of how he became an expert on Riel by capitalizing on his complete ignorance of Métis history is a masterwork of Straussian dehistoricized reading.[10]

Rejecting historicism in favour of a mythographic structure, the Straussian philosopher sells myths in a marketplace of ideas. In his influential essay on Plato's *Republic*, Bloom explains the crucial function myths of Indigeneity play: political stability derives from a shared origin myth, the noble lie that subsumes difference within shared bonds, ensuring all will submit to and defend their *polis* (365-66). Participation and investment in the polis' official myths constitute true Indigeneity. Bloom concludes, "Such are the advantages of autochthony" (366).
I argue such instrumentalization of the origin myth is critical to the work of extractive intellectual production. In this discourse, battles over resources and land are essentially battles between competing origin myths, and the myth that best conforms to the naturalized market-ecology succeeds. The formal equality of diverse myth-peddlers competing for consumers dehistoricizes differences among imaginary communities, who are, like the Great Men in each Great Book, versions of the same fundamental transhistorical truth. With no historical claim to the land at issue, competitors must then be judged on their virtues and behaviours alone. Thus, when Flanagan says, "Aboriginal peoples have to adopt Canadian norms of behaviour if they hope to share the Canadian standard of living" (*Persona* 5), he is not merely engaging in racist trolling; he's asserting that First Peoples are not entitled to the advantages of autochthony because they adhere to myths and norms that have proven unsuccessful in the marketplace of ideas, whereas, by partaking of successful myth-making, settlers are the autochthonous polity of the lands currently called Canada.

Barry Cooper: Myth as Method

Barry Cooper's 1984 essay "Western Political Consciousness" takes on Frye's garrison mentality thesis to conclude that Central Canadian myths are inapplicable in Canada's West, which needs its own myths of autochthony. Drawing from W. L. Morton, Cooper figures mytho-poesis as the expression of identity, translating history into synchronic structure. He takes Frye's myth-criticism literally, as though it were sociology, in order to posit a naturalist market-ecology in which Indigeneity is the basis for settler identity. While I'm not interested in endorsing Frye, it's important to recognize that Frye's garrison is *imaginary*: early settler writers thematized the threatening strangeness of their non-European environments, and such thematics can be traced throughout Canadian literature. But—importantly—Frye distinguishes between the *kinds of threat* writers imagine and the *forms of writing* such threats produce: "as Yeats would say, we make rhetoric out of quarrels with one another, poetry out of the quarrel with ourselves" (Frye 228). Figurative writing is a "form of play," and there are two such forms: the rhetorical "contest" and the poetic "construct" (228-29). By quarrelling with the garrison's applicability to the Western provinces, Cooper reduces Frye's work and all CanLit to the form of writing germane to partisan threats, attack ads, and competition in the marketplace of ideas. Rhetorical contests, Frye says, articulate "social attitudes," which "help to unify the mind of the writer by externalizing his enemy, the enemy being the anti-creative elements in life as he sees life" (233). In other words, threats are structurally synchronic and substitutable. Frye elaborates a diachronic dimension, a dialectic driven by conflict between form and content, "between the poetic impulse to construct and the rhetorical impulse to assert," concluding that "the victory of the former is the sign of the maturing of the writer" (231). But through the lens of the Great Books formula, different modes of writing—like historiography and myth criticism—make the *same* universalizing claims in different styles, some of which are grounded in a naturalist analogy to geographic regions, and the garrison is only *one* of those styles. Since these regions predate the nation, Cooper says, they cannot be understood through ideas he imputes to Frye, like "national unity" ("Western" 214). Frye, of course, would agree, attributing what predates the nation to rhetoric

and contest, and what follows to the constructive force of poetry, the maturing of which articulates a national scope.

Cooper states, "Regional identity is at the heart of Western political consciousness. For many Westerners . . . the significant public realm is not Canada but the region or province" ("Western" 213). Seen regionally, the nation is "a legal structure that performs certain administrative functions," while "the region, the West, carries a constant and positive emotional valence: it is here and us" (213). Thus, Frye's "Where is here?" isn't asked west of Ontario (see Frye 221). Cooper explains that, for Frye, identity is "local, regional, cultural and imaginative; unity is national and political" ("Western" 214). Ignoring what is diachronic in Frye's account allows Cooper to posit Frye's starting point—"the essential element in the national sense of unity is the east-west feeling . . . *a mari usque ad mare*"—as though it were Frye's central conclusion: "The east-west feeling, [Frye] said, has developed historically along the axis of the St. Lawrence drainage system" (214). Cooper discerns the synchronic structural features of Canadian literary history as a part of colonial-imperial knowledge production (which is, of course, Frye's point, too): "The earliest maps of the country showed only forts. . . . The cultural maps of a later time also showed only forts, according to Frye" (214). Literalizing the rhetorical equivalence of geographic texts and literary texts, Cooper uses Frye's figures as evidence for a literal naturalist ecological structure upon which regional experiences struggle. Cooper next collapses literary and administrative functions. Synthesizing Frye with Margaret Atwood, he argues that both critics partake of the same project:

> As Margaret Atwood, one of Frye's most gifted pupils, put it: "The central symbol for Canada . . . is undoubtedly Survival, *la Survivance*." The point of garrison life, evidently, is to survive. Garrisons are also sites of military and administrative rule. ("Western" 215)

Synthesizing literary critics like Frye, Atwood, and Dennis Duffy, and literary and socio-psychological discourses, renders Central Canadian prejudice and colonial administration indistinguishable.[11] Following what he sees as Frye's "identification of imaginative Canada with the

political unit," Cooper here posits a universal, mythographic structure beneath Canadian history, a structure visible in his recent insistence that Alberta's sovereignty must be protected, as Indigenous peoples' experiences are "no different" from "the way settlers have been treated." Thus, I argue, Cooper's work is not (as Frye's is) *about* myth and the literary imagination; rather, it *is* imaginative literature, exemplifying a settler-colonial, extractivist reading strategy that reduces political, history, and policy writing to mythography.

Cooper reads the thematics of Canadian literary criticism like a sociology of literature; the already-achieved status of truth means that writing is instrumental, or what the Straussian approach calls *poetry*: the technique of employing historiography to advance myth.[12] The phenomenological priority of the local environment—the "it is here and us"—enables the historical claim that the ecological milieu is literally prior to politics. This phenomenology derives from Frye, whose "east-west feeling" is no ethnological claim, but an articulation of the ambiguity of settler experience, the origin of the immigrant's relation to new geography, as well as the way the literary imagination has unfolded in historiography. Frye is not proposing that Canadians adopt the Laurentian myth; he's describing English Canada in self-consciously mythical terms. Frye is not, as Cooper takes himself to be, describing a particular "political consciousness."

But Cooper is not simply misreading; he's performing a reading and writing strategy crucial to settler-colonial knowledge production: extracting narrative material to legitimate colonialism. Frye's myth-critical structuralism provides a form by which Cooper can posit that the Laurentian identity belongs to a multicultural variety of equally autochthonous identities available to consumers. This market-ecological, ahistorical historiography equates such choice with the pursuit of self-interest, which emerges in Cooper's Straussian reading of Frye:

> When the discourse of sensitive and intelligent minds contains elementary contradictions, these are not necessarily errors. . . . Frye's account is interested. . . . [And] truth is never disinterested. It is always limited, always deployed against another truth and so never independent of power. ("Western" 214)

Cooper elaborates Frye's "contradiction":

> Frye maintained *both* that identity is regional and local and imaginative, which is why the literature of one's own country can provide the cultivated reader with "an understanding of that country which nothing else can give him," *and* that there is a Canadian mentality expressed imaginatively in a Canadian literature. If one holds to the first insight, by implication Frye becomes something of [an] emptily gesturing cultural nationalist. That is, the survival of the garrison, which is by all arguments the symbolization of an identity of some kind, has become an expression of a national identity. (214-15)

The "contradiction" that Cooper identifies is only a contradiction because Cooper puts it in a syllogistic form of "both, and, then," i.e., a sophistic structural substitution of relations for attributes. Cooper's substitutions continue: for Frye, he writes, "the 'country' is identified with the abstract political unit and not with the concrete and etymological sense of land lying opposite an observer, which is to say, a local meaning" (215). Here, literal and figural become indistinguishable, and we see how Cooper's Western identity is based *on* and not *against* Frye's Central identity. Because "local" is abstract, too, i.e., part of a structure, the coordination of meaning within which is, for Frye, the work of the faculty he calls "imagination." Yet by collapsing the distinction between literal and figural, Cooper can claim that "Frye has said that the national sense of political unity is an East-West feeling centred upon the St. Lawrence. This, let us say flatly, is nonsense. There is no Laurentian feeling in British Columbia. The dim memories of such a feeling on the prairies are mostly hostile" (215). Cooper next cites Duffy, who, in Cooper's words, concludes his own myth-critique of Upper-Canadian literature "standing at the corner where Mythology runs into Politics" (216). Having presented his case regarding mythology by way of literary criticism, Cooper accordingly turns to politics, insisting that "national unity is a symbol expressing 'Canadian' identity, the identity of the Loyalist heartland," i.e., Ontario (218). Cooper is now ready to extract a local identity—*an Indigenous identity*—from historiography concerning the Red River Settlement.

Western Canadian Historiography: Market-Ecology

Following the mytho-poetic strategy that equates literary criticism and social science, Cooper refutes Frye and Atwood, saying, "the West is not a transplanted imaginative Ontario garrison" ("Western" 219). Instead, European explorers of Canada's West faced landscapes that challenged their vocabulary, an experience thematized throughout Canadian literature:

> After the early explorers, who were more interested in markets than landscape anyhow, descriptions turn technical or fictional. . . . Explorers were supplanted by expeditions, hastily scribbled journals by official reports, by scientific accounts and scientific speculations. . . . From the start, then, the West has felt the impact of the most advanced technology of the day. . . . [F]or example, the prairie town [with its] identical elevators, banks, and railway stations, a main street called Main Street, and a dirt road beside the tracks called Railway Avenue. (220)

Far from an East-West feeling, for Cooper, Western Canadian history recounts the encroachment of rationalizing administration and imperialist technology. "[T]he earliest settlers, from Britain and Ontario," employed this technology towards political subjugation as they "clung to the cultural forms they left behind. Consequently, they made inappropriate responses to the new environment" (220). Literalizing Frye's own discussion of the settler struggle to imagine their new milieu, Cooper's history is structural, substitutional, and figurative in that *things from Europe*, like explorers and journals, were replaced by surveyors and reports.[13] But, between the explorers and the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), there still had to be the event of the first Europeans to live west of Ontario—those who are then "Indigenous," not simply first in a substitutional series. The clue to this originary subject is its opposition to the first explorers, who, Cooper tells us, "were more interested in markets than landscape" (220). This missing, naturalized subject—who both *is* and *is subordinated by* the "earliest settlers," i.e., bears, in other words, the settler conscience interpellated by the myth; they feel the truth of originating from the landscape to find themself imposed upon by successive waves of immigration.

In Cooper's settlement myth, when railways and geological surveys "provided knowledge of the Shield," "ambitious and expansionist men" ventured beyond the Great Lakes and incorporated what is now the West into the nation (222). For a reader of Foucault,[14] Cooper understands *knowledge* very narrowly, arguing as though the earlier settlements in the area of Red River belonged to a fundamentally different episteme than the national project:

> This deployment of knowledge [i.e., geographical surveys] ended the [I]ndigenous self-understanding of the Selkirk settlement: Red River acquired a destiny. It ceased to be a link between the wilderness and the maritime civilization of Europe . . . and became an outpost with a future tied, in the eyes of the eastern expansionists, to Canada. (222)

Rather than the diachronic *continuation* of the first explorers and settlers, Cooper figures the arrival of nineteenth-century surveyors in Red River as a first contact, creating a synchronic origin myth in which all inhabitants of the space—settlers, Métis, and First Nations—are equally pre-colonial, and thus Indigenous.

Like the settlers who both were and weren't European, knowledge here is deployed along implicitly natural, regional lines rather than as part of an immanent European episteme that orders areas as regions. Rather than narrating a struggle between European settlers, along with and against diverse Indigenous peoples, over lands, resources, and powers, Cooper's history narrates a struggle over historiography. He details expansionist propaganda in nationalist history writing, countering with examples of the "resistance" of regional historiography, like the work the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba was founded to encourage.[15] Thus Cooper is able to acknowledge the project of Central assimilation while ignoring the fact that he has assimilated Indigenous history into "Western political consciousness":

> The significance of this early historiography is that it testifies to the experience of a real distinction. . . . Even for the immigrants from Canada the Loyalist myth proved unsatisfactory since it corresponded not at all to their Western experience. The myth of Red River, in contrast, could be adopted by all settlers. (225)

This Western myth, rhetorically distinct from the Central Canadian myth, need not distinguish between history-writing and mythography, and Métis history becomes the archetype of Canada's East-West struggle, in which Indigenous settlers resist the imperial garrison. The Red River myth affords the Western Canadian settler precisely those advantages of autochthony that Bloom describes, namely an origin story that naturalizes Westerners' claims to the lands they've occupied and defends their *polis* against an encroaching Central Canadian enemy.[16]

Cooper cites Morton once again to argue that the nation was artificially imposed upon a prior, more natural economy by which Westerners were naturally connected to other polities by trade. This pre-Confederation, "'neo-archaic' economy of the prairies was integrated, not with Canada nor even with the continent, 'but rather by the sea with the British Isles—a reminder that the prairies were, to a degree are still, a maritime rather than continental hinterland'" (225, quoting Morton). In 1882, the CPR replaced "the old water route up and down the North Saskatchewan," completing the East's technological imposition and "separating Indians and Metis from the modern settlers and ending forever the neo-archaic polity" (226). In Morton's historiography, and the mythical market-ecology Cooper builds from it, this was an Indigenous economic polity, organically connected to the British Empire and the United States. Here a quite literal narrative—the original settlers and their First Nations and Métis neighbours were "Westerners" within what would only later become Canada—is superimposed on a mythic-archetypal form of struggle between autochthones and outside invaders. Cooper quotes Morton to this end: "For over two generations the Red River settlers had outrun the Industrial Revolution. They could escape it no longer" (226). Throughout his career, Cooper has used Frye's garrison to claim that Confederation, the CPR, and the CBC are instruments of narrow-minded Laurentian arrogance.[17] In Morton, too, technology is understood in terms of an East-West struggle, rather than a historical conjuncture that includes the complex relations between governments and transnational corporations that allowed Earl Selkirk to purchase the land from which his originary Westerners ostensibly chose to eschew industrialization. Morton and Cooper, by mythologizing the Red River settlement as a "neo-archaic polity," posit the Canadian "West" as a

market-ecology of self-interested agents who resisted industrialization because it was technologically inappropriate to their region.

Like Cooper, Morton mixes literary and sociological modes, critiquing the Old World pastoral aesthetics through which Central Canadian historians have narrated Canadian experience. He stresses that a unified Canadian identity cannot be based on European imaginative vocabulary because, for example, "[t]he severity of the winters and the attacks of wolves ensured that no pastoral economy developed in Red River" ("Agriculture" 306).[18] This neo-archaic economy

> resembled not so much any contemporary one as the then vanishing economy of the Mandans on the upper Missouri and their extinct predecessors of the great river valleys of the high plains to the southwest of Red River. Those primitive societies are described by W. R. Wedel in terms which have a close application to the hunting and farming economy of Red River. (307)

Morton acknowledges, "The comparison is admittedly not to be pushed too far; the Red River settlers were, in varying degrees, the representatives, if isolated, of the dynamic society of western Europe" (307). That is, unlike the Mandans, the settlers were not technically Indigenous to the west of what's now called Canada. But if, like Cooper, one ignores that the first settlers were necessarily also colonizers, then "[t]he resemblance, nevertheless, if not exact, [is] fundamental" (307). Both the Mandans and the Red River settlers constitute a market-ecological *us*, while the Europeans and Laurentians are *them*: colonial interlopers imposing invasive, continental norms on a prior and original market-ecology. Locating the essence of identity in resemblance and synchronic relations rather than in historical particularity, Cooper asserts: "The United States, moreover, was less a threat to Red River than an economic partner" ("Western" 226). The claim that Westerners are closer to Americans than Central Canadians relies on the fact that "Selkirk settled Red River without Canadian involvement or [Hudson's Bay] Company opposition" (223), which discloses the radical priority Cooper gives to literal, local, and material history over more abstract dynamics such as European affiliation. Red River wasn't overseen by the Dominion's government; therefore,

it was technically outside colonialism's (semantic) ambit. But even Cooper can't argue that the Red River settlers traded with US-based, isolated, "neo-archaic" communities; trade *with a nation* proves (as Morton's imperial connections do) that complex spatial perspectives exist: individual, community, national—all of them "local." Cooper simultaneously acknowledges and eliminates this complexity as he translates it into a naturalist economic idiom:

> Until the Canadian government provided an alternative transportation system and an artificial barrier to trade in the form of the tariff, lengthening cart brigades and steamboats on the only major and navigable river that crosses the border told of strong ties to the commercial capital of the region, St. Paul. (226)

Like Morton's pre-existing polity, temporally prior routes indicate this economy's Indigeneity. Building on this structuralist assumption, Cooper can complete the argument Morton began: that diachronic attempts to understand cultures crumble in the face of synchronic immigrant-settler experience. This market-ecological formal relation structures what Morton and Cooper see as the ills of modernity, such as technology and regional inequality, as so many diverse contents imposed upon unwilling Indigenes.

Morton's mix of literary and sociological modes exemplifies Frye's claim that Canada's (not yet mature) literary imagination originated in historiography (Frye 231). For his part, Cooper revises history into historiography. Indeed, Morton's famous regionalist interpretation of Canadian historiography "Clio in Canada" is the source of many of Cooper's CanLit literary figures, figures not literal or historical, but historiographic—pertaining, like "Clio," to the *writing* of history. Morton himself characterizes Confederation as held together by a "'Protestant garrison'" ("Clio" 233), transplanting the British metaphor into a New World context; Morton's essay also describes Canadian culture's thematic focus on "survival," from which Frye and Atwood would draw. Cooper, however, eliminates distinctions, equating Frye, the ideas, themes, and objects with which he's engaged with the regional "Laurentian regime," which seeks to colonize the settler-Indigene who naturally belongs to, and owns, Western Canada and its

resources. Thus the settler—made Indigenous through the Red River myth—becomes the true victim of colonialism.

Tom Flanagan: Extracting and Eliminating Indigeneity

Through Cooper and Morton, I've shown several ways Indigeneity has been appropriated into a conservative, literary-political discourse as the basis for Western Canadian identity, and how the resulting myth synthesizes Indigenous peoples and settlers into originary, market-ecological beings. But even writers as untroubled by historical particularities as Cooper or Tom Flanagan need to acknowledge the fact that there were Indigenous people in the New World before settlers. They must acknowledge, too, that these first inhabitants have continually contested such assimilation.

In decades of academic, political, and policy work, Flanagan has taken on the challenge of eliminating Indigeneity and anti-colonial struggle as meaningful concepts. In the 1977 essay "Louis Riel: Insanity or Prophecy," he narrates Riel as a prototypal victim of poor choices incentivized by an oppressive collectivism. Deploying market-ecological structural premises, Flanagan's origin myth explains Indigenous struggle as irrational economic behaviour. Explicitly ignoring Indigenous readings of history in favour of a rigidly literal attention to Riel's journals, Flanagan's historiography compiles synchronic conservative clichés, a method that allows him to claim, in 2008's *First Nations? Second Thoughts*, that Indigenous peoples of the Americas were simply "first immigrants" pursuing economic advantage (111).

Louis Riel has played a complicated role in Canadian historiography—as both heroic opponent of Anglo-European assimilation and a figure for assimilative official projects.[19] Adam Gaudry has detailed how Riel's biography has been employed by settler-colonial authors and discourse to construct various nationalist myths. Flanagan's 1977 essay presents an argument for assimilation disguised as a fair-minded reassessment of Riel's biography. The Métis, Flanagan instructs, believed they "were actually descendants of the ancient Hebrews (Riel believed that a ship bearing a group of Hebrews crossed the Atlantic around the time of Moses, thus

establishing the Indian race)" ("Louis Riel" 18). Riel, who became "a modern sacred monarch, priest, and king in one person," may appear strange, Flanagan says, "to a modern observer in a rationalistic climate of ideas," but we should remember that "all religious dogmas are equally unprovable, and hence equally strange" (18). Ultimately, the marketplace of ideas confers rationality: "There is some safety in numbers. If a man tells me the pope is infallible, I don't think he's mad, I think he is a Catholic" (16). Thus, "Riel's creed is no more bizarre than, let us say, Roman Catholicism, it is simply less familiar because it has had many fewer followers" (19). Flanagan therefore concludes: "Madness is a sort of residual category used to describe those who make individual aberrations from common opinion, as opposed to those who espouse beliefs supported by a group" (16). Indeed, against the individual, all others—whether friends or states—are structurally identical as antagonists.

From Max Weber, Flanagan derives a dramaturgical structure for reading Riel's history: "Riel, disappointed with the role of politician, decided to play the role of prophet" ("Louis Riel" 20). But in the competitive market-ecology in which this "prophet without followers" found himself, Riel's "associates refused to accept his prophetic claims, countering them with the imputation of insanity" (21). His friends thought they were helping him, "but in fact there was a definite clash of interests. . . . Had Riel emerged as a prophet, they would have been embarrassed both as his individual acquaintances and as supporters of the French Canadian cause" (21). Here we recognize the Straussian problematic, in which the individual's authority is the truth of all texts, and the social makes up the always potentially antagonistic political context: "His friends . . . discredited his prophetic claims as insanity, which was their justification for taking control over his life. His friends did what his enemies could not—they deprived him of his liberty" (19). But Riel was still responsible for his confinement, since, Flanagan explains, even before being imprisoned, he "had no longer been self-supporting. He had lived exclusively by the largesse of friends, who gave him food, shelter, and often money" (20). Riel "had sacrificed his independence," finding himself within a stifling nanny state in

which his friends manipulated him to defend their Catholic and French interests (20). If he'd made better choices, "[h]ad he been wealthy, or even self-supporting, he could simply have broken with his friends, and gone about his business" (22). Had he better understood the marketplace of ideas, he "might have become an author," perhaps trading religious followers for book buyers (22). Like a university grad who moves back home, Riel's poor choices prevented his success.

Flanagan is less concerned with proving that Riel was not insane than with arguing that Riel was fully rational and therefore responsible for his poor choices, which turns Riel into a synchronic libertarian allegory. His friends play the role of the caring-but-stifling Canadian state, while Riel handily stands in for all Indigenous people, whom Flanagan stereotypes as state dependents. Flanagan deploys further saws of neoliberal discourse: "Under the camouflage of institutional psychiatry, Riel was punished for heresy, or as we would call it today, for free speech" ("Louis Riel" 35). Moreover, Flanagan's ahistorical historiography and structuralist narratology support the current conservative obsession with both-sides rhetoric: "If we disregard the comfortable rationalization of madness, we are left with uncomfortable questions about men's responsibilities for their own actions" (35-36). While Flanagan allows that "[t]he government must be held accountable . . . for its shabby treatment of Riel" (36), he contends that the governmental power that put Riel to death is no different in kind from Riel's own responsibility. That is, as contemporary conservative discourse frequently asserts, Riel shouldn't have broken the law:

> One cannot ignore the fact that he precipitated the Rebellion only after the failure of his private efforts to extract a sum of money from the government and that the Rebellion itself was a foolhardy effort which marked the submergence, not the emergence, of the Métis as a people. (36)

Complementing the law-and-order meme, there are three white-supremacist assertions here, each based on a market-ecological premise that human beings universally pursue self-interest, and their success corresponds to the particular myths they've chosen to adopt. The first is that Riel was originally *financially* motivated. He began with rational "private efforts" to "extract . . . money" (36), and his behaviour

only became less rational once he succumbed to outside interests. Riel thus serves as the archetype for the racist stereotype of Indigenous dependency which Flanagan has spent his career hawking.

Second, Riel aimed to "extract" resources that did not belong to him, in the same way Flanagan frames "welfare-dependent Indians" extracting money from governments and taxpayers (*First Nations?* 8). In *The Wealth of First Nations* (2019), he elaborates this peculiar usage of *extraction*—equating Indigenous economic activity with extracting money from the state—through the difference between *making* and *taking*:

> "making" means the creation of wealth by offering for sale or lease something owned by the makers. . . . [M]akers enter the economic marketplace through exchanges for mutual benefit in voluntary transactions. . . . "Taking," on the other hand, is involuntary. It means using the power of the state to appropriate the wealth that others have generated through voluntary transactions. It is part of what Acemoglu and Robinson call . . . "extractive institutions." (*Wealth* 6)

In effect, Flanagan shows how extractivist claims are normalized in the settler-colonial resource economy. Extraction is best done by settlers.[20]

Third, Riel's role in Western Canadian struggle is cast as a moment of decline, the "submergence of the Métis as a people" ("Louis Riel" 36). Only by restoring the dignity of economic agency can Riel's descendants free themselves to act rationally. Riel's market-ecological essence must be rescued from the bad decisions that continue to hinder the historical figure.[21] Therefore, Flanagan claims he's tried to "rehabilitate Riel's reputation" and "would like to see his name cleared of the unjustifiable smear of madness which has become attached to it" (35). Once this work is completed, Riel and his progeny may attain the status of Selkirk's economic Indigenes: "If he regains his dignity as a rational being, Riel has much to answer for" (36). Extending far beyond the assimilationist historiography of Cooper's Red River, Flanagan's historiography reverses history, making the origin of anti-settler struggle into the *telos* of settler colonialism.

Appropriating Indigeneity and Cultural Genocide

I conclude by looking at a small section of Flanagan's "heat-seeking missile," *First Nations? Second Thoughts*. The book constitutes a

prototypical argument for cultural genocide, attacking the very idea of Indigeneity as anything other than one multicultural identity among many. Dehistoricizing spiritual and epistemic claims to firstness, Flanagan complains, "Aboriginal people routinely use phrases such as 'thirty thousand years of history' to emphasize the supposedly great period of time in which they have occupied Canada" (11). Rebuffing anthropologists' figures of 40,000 and 27,000 years (17, 12), he argues that it's only clear that humans have inhabited the Americas for 12,000 years. Well, *actually*, he continues, there *is* evidence that *some* human beings were in Chile 13,000 years ago, but "there is no verified route of migration" (12). Cooper cites established trade routes to argue that the Selkirk settlement was authentically Indigenous compared to artificial routes imposed by Canadian expansion. And while Morton acknowledges that the "neo-archaic" settler economy and Indigenous economic activity, despite bearing "fundamental resemblances," are not identical, Flanagan follows Cooper by insisting on the validating force of established migratory routes. He asserts that the lack of a verified route disproves earlier figures, especially when compared to the literal resemblance of skin colour:

> The physical appearance of Indians from the Arctic to Terra del Fuego is remarkably similar. Moreover, equatorial South America is the only tropical region in the world where the [I]ndigenous people are not dark-skinned, suggesting that the South American tropics were settled as part of a relatively recent and rapid wave of immigration across the New World. (*First Nations?* 12)

Flanagan next colonizes the prehistory of the New World by presenting political geography as naturalist synchronic structure. If, he says, the ancestors of First Peoples living in what is now Canada previously had lived in what is now the United States, they weren't literally in Canada, and thus cannot be *First* Nations. Clearly, Flanagan's point lies beyond priority and location. When we consider that Canada's borders changed numerous times *after* Europeans arrived, whether people were on the "Canadian" side of the border thousands of years ago is irrelevant. Flanagan, we see, is eliminating the concept of Indigeneity, reducing it, by formal resemblance, to immigration.

Moreover, he claims, science confirms that this "immigration" must have occurred at more than one time, so it's impossible "that bands, tribes or peoples occupied land as the glaciers receded and then stayed there continuously until the arrival of the French and English" (17). Evidence from the earliest Europeans shows, in Flanagan's words, that "[A]boriginal peoples contested with each other for the control of their territory and *that conquest, absorption, displacement, and even extermination were routine phenomena*" (17; emphasis mine). Such movements were, then, "not caused by [A]boriginal people losing their own lands to white settlers, but by their taking advantage of new technology secured through trade" (19). Fully dehistoricized, this claim enables a nauseating, anachronistic conclusion:

> Thus even though the events [i.e., tribal warfare conducted with guns] occurred after contact with European colonists, they suggest a pattern of behaviour that *likely prevailed* in earlier centuries; it *seems clear* that the Indian peoples' collective control of land was fundamentally based on power. (19; emphasis mine)

Thomas King characterizes Flanagan as a "latter-day terminator" aiming to terminate treaties and privatize tribal lands so that "the properties can be picked off by real estate agents" (199). But the revisionist *epistemic* violence performed by this mainstream academic text is breathtaking: *First Nations? Second Thoughts*—peer-reviewed, written by an established professor, published by one of Canada's top university presses, mass-marketed with the subject heading of "native studies/political science," sold in the Native Studies sections of Chapters Indigo stores for more than a decade after its release, and currently enjoying its third print run—claims that *genocide is a pattern of behaviour inherent to those dispossessed by the European settlers*.

And yet, even this violence can't disprove that those who claim Aboriginal status were here first. Flanagan therefore claims Indigeneity for himself, explaining, "As an immigrant from the United States, I arrived in Canada in 1968. I now have been here . . . longer than most [A]boriginal people now alive have lived in Canada" (*First Nations?* 21). Nevertheless, "even though I am individually prior to most [A]boriginal people in Canada, they would all claim to be ancestrally prior to me by

virtue of having one or more direct ancestors who lived in Canada (in some cases, actually in the United States) before any of my ancestors lived in North America" (21). Since some of these peoples' ancestors weren't technically in what's now Canada but were in what's now the United States, they must be immigrants from the United States, like him! In the dehistoricized market-ecology, immigrant and Indigene are formally identical.

"[F]or most Aboriginal people," King writes, the Canada-US border is a "line [that] doesn't exist. It's a figment of someone else's imagination" (xvi). King, moreover, helpfully distinguishes between immigration and other kinds of border-crossing, explaining, "I get stopped every time I try to cross that border, but stories go wherever they please" (xvi). As a self-proclaimed expert on Métis history, Flanagan might also consider how "[h]istorical figures such as . . . Louis Riel moved back and forth between the two countries, and while they understood the importance of that border to Whites, there is nothing to indicate that they believed in its legitimacy" (King xvi). Still, for Flanagan, Indigenous communities' movements and battles prove that they were actually the first colonizers. And now, he claims, by insisting on what he calls "special rights," i.e., by asserting the right to resist colonization, they are colonizing the original Indigene, the white settler.

Through his work of historical extraction and elimination, by replacing historical content with synchronic form, Flanagan weaponizes Patrick Wolfe's assertion that colonialism is not an event, but a structure (Wolfe 96). Attending to Flanagan and Cooper's misreading strategies shows how colonialism works via structuralism. Cooper's historiography rendered settlers as neo-archaic polities; Flanagan's equates colonial powers and warring tribes:

> The recent practice of calling the right of [A]boriginal self-government "inherent" is a way of claiming that history doesn't matter. . . . But history does matter. Government depends on power. New and more powerful tribes—the European tribes—entered Canada and established a new political order, as must have repeatedly happened before the arrival of the Europeans. (*First Nations?* 25)

Flanagan cannot rest having eliminated the historical or even lexical meaning of "Aboriginal"; the genocidal project must continue. Indigenous assertions of inherent rights are unfair, since, he claims, "they had the right to drive each other from different territories as much as they liked, even to the point of destroying whole peoples and taking over their land, but Europeans had no similar right" (25). Flanagan's new myth of autochthony is total, guaranteeing the right to extract, consume, exploit, and eliminate all resources, including identity.

Notes

1. Cooper has put his great-grandmother to different kinds of work throughout his career. In 2009's *It's the Regime, Stupid!*, he presents her as a "native-born Albertan" who bravely shot and killed an Indigenous man who was threatening her on her property (15-16). In a 2017 article decrying territorial acknowledgements, Cooper retells this story, adding that his great-grandmother "was of [A]boriginal descent" (see Cooper, "How Being Politically Correct Can Muddy Complex Waters").
2. The CBC has since pulled down the page and made the video private, presumably in the face of substantial backlash. References to Flanagan's guest appearance on the segment still exist online, however (Dar_Oakley; "POD: Jason Kenney's Fossil Fuel").
3. *Extractivism* is defined differently across the disciplines that converge in the energy humanities. Here, I draw on Jen Preston, whose concept of *racial extractivism* "acknowledges the multitude of ways in which colonial histories and reiterations of race-based epistemologies inform the discursive practices used by the oil and gas industry, for example, and by the Canadian white settler government in promoting and managing 'resource extraction'" (356).
4. Flanagan's anti-Indigenous racism is well documented in activist sources (see Barnsley; "POD: Jason Kenney's Fossil Fuel"). I build here on work by Michael Fabris and Thomas King who elaborate, respectively, Flanagan's extractivist efforts to privatize reserve lands and to terminate treaty relations. Anne Boerger, Frédéric Boily, Manuel Dorion-Soulié, Donald Gutstein, and Christian Nadeau have done important work on the Calgary School during the Harper era. See also my PhD dissertation *The Market at the End of History: Literary Structuralism and Canadian Infrastructural Aesthetics* (2020), in which some parts of this paper appear in different form.
5. The book cover can be viewed online at fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/wealth-of-first-nations-2019.pdf.
6. See the Calgary School's Rainer Knopff, "How Love and Plato."
7. Cooper, for example, draws heavily on Strauss in his political defence of close reading ("Hunting"); Flanagan insists, however, that the Calgary School are not followers of Leo Strauss and that Stephen Harper was never taught by Straussians ("Legends").
8. On Hayek and think-tank knowledge production, see Mirowski and Plehwe.

9. Flanagan, *Persona*, chapter 1; and "Legends."
10. See especially *Persona* (16-18); but then please see Barnsley's "Lawyer Pulls Out the Stops to Discredit Crown Expert."
11. Frye himself distinguishes between literal and figurative garrisons: "Frances Brooke . . . wrote of what was literally a garrison; novelists of our day studying the impact of Montreal on Westmount write of a psychological one" (227-28).
12. See Strauss' *On Tyranny* and *The City and Man*; and Bloom's reading of *The Republic*.
13. Frye explores settler negotiations of Old World ways of seeing throughout *The Bush Garden*.
14. Cooper published a book on Foucault in 1981 and later recounted how he "examined the study of western politics from a base in central Canada as the deployment of 'power-knowledge'" ("Weaving" 380).
15. Founded in 1879, this society awarded its 1992 Book of the Year prize to Flanagan's *Métis Lands in Manitoba*, which, Flanagan brags, "contained the evidence that, when I presented it in court as an expert witness, caused the Métis claims to be rejected" (*Persona* 18).
16. On how white settler identity and political structures have appropriated and continue to appropriate Riel and Métis history, see especially Gaudry; Leroux; and Vowel.
17. See Cooper, *It's the Regime, Stupid!*; Cooper and Miljan.
18. Frye, likely drawing on Morton, agrees that pastoralism is inadequate to Canadian settler experience. See "Canadian and Colonial Painting" in *The Bush Garden*, pp. 201-04.
19. Once again, see Cooper, *It's the Regime, Stupid!*; Cooper and Miljan.
20. Such is the main premise of Ezra Levant's *Ethical Oil* and the slogan "I ♥ 🍁 Oil and Gas."
21. See Fabris on how Flanagan's "restoration" trope aims at privatizing reserves and resources.

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Isaac Thornley

The Settler-Colonial Jouissance of Western Alienation: Mapping the Ideological Terrain of Canadian Pipeline Politics

Recent years have reaffirmed how large-scale, complex, and remote events can trigger drastic fluctuations in oil prices, resulting in dramatic changes to the well-being of millions of Canadians. From the price drops exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic to recent surges triggered by the war in Ukraine, all against the backdrop of ecological crises and the need for swift decarbonization, there is considerable uncertainty tied to oil markets and the political economy of Canadian extractivism. Despite this, or to some degree spurred on by it, proponents of fossil fuel developments[1] (e.g., political leaders in Canada and Alberta and fossil corporate entities) engage in a strategy of disavowing the antagonisms inherent to neoliberal extractivism in Canada, including class struggle, economic inequality, ecological degradation, environmental injustice, and colonial dispossession, displacing them onto various scapegoats such as foreign-funded environmentalists or so-called OPEC dictators.

Take, for example, the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion (TMX), a project that will triple the capacity of an existing pipeline that runs from Edmonton, AB, to Burnaby, BC. The official corporate justification for the TMX is to ensure that Canada "gets full value for its oil," ramping up pipeline capacity to address the discount at which Canadian crude trades relative to world oil price benchmarks by moving Canadian energy products to "new markets . . . in Asia Pacific" ("Expansion"). Speaking in November 2016, when the federal government approved the project for the first time, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated that the project would open up new international markets, lessen Canada's dependence on the United States as its near-exclusive trade

partner for oil, bring short-term economic prosperity to Alberta and to Canada, and provide a long-term revenue stream to invest in clean energy initiatives ("Prime Minister"). In the face of large-scale forces dictating commodity prices well beyond the scope of Canadian pipeline capacity, the federal narrative disavowed the antagonistic character of Canada's role as a staples exporter in the global capitalist economy. As underscored by Melanie Dennis Unrau, "Oil and gas production in Canada is premised on forgetting, first through the myth of *terra nullius* that underpins settler-colonial claims to Indigenous land and resources, and subsequently through the erasure of memory involved in the boom-and-bust cycles of a staples economy" (16). In addition to this disavowal and forgetting, there is a related, psychoanalytic aspect: the (painful) pleasure taken in repeating failure, i.e., *jouissance*.

The term *jouissance* was popularized by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who recast Freudian theory in terms of French structuralism, analyzing subjectivity, enjoyment, and unconscious processes in terms of linguistic structures. The impossibility of ever satisfying desire and experiencing total enjoyment is what produces jouissance—a kind of pleasure in pain, a joyful suffering resulting from and compelling further failure to acquire once and for all the *objet petit a*, or object of desire. Yannis Stavrakakis describes jouissance as an "unconscious energy, difficult to displace, which invests displeasure with a pleasurable quality" (181). The ambivalence of jouissance can be explained via the distinction between desire and drive. With desire, the subject attempts to rectify its ontological loss or lack by fixating on an object, only to miss it and re-enact that loss. With drive, loss is itself the object. Desire is the process of tending toward but always missing an object, while drive is the continual orbit around the object. Or, as Jodi Dean has it, "Desire is like the path of an arrow; drive is like the course of the boomerang" (221). Jouissance figures into both: it is always out of reach in the context of desire and impossible to get rid of in the context of drive, thus sustaining the repetition and failure.

Analogous to the endless loop of loss and desire characteristic of jouissance, capitalism's logic is one of endless territorial expansion and accumulation. As Ilan Kapoor explains, "the capitalist development drive . . . turns crisis into triumph, generating enjoyment, not from

success, but repeated failure" ("What 'Drives'?" 66). In its drive to accumulate for the sake of accumulation, capitalist development produces a "libidinal kick," or jouissance, a pleasure derived from the impossibility of satisfaction, which helps explain "capitalism's continued obstinacy and endurance" (66). Contemporary settler-colonial regimes, such as Canada, have emerged and are co-produced in relation to the global political economy of capitalism (Pasternak and Dafnos 2). As S. Harris Ali explains, "the initial role of Canada as a white settler colony was to supply cheap food and primary resources to Britain, and as such, the major focus of investments was on staples extraction and not industrial manufacturing" (98). As this pattern of development continued into the twentieth century, with the discovery of the Leduc oil field in 1947, new infrastructures (pipelines) were increasingly relied upon to facilitate the transportation and export of emergent hydrocarbon staples, initially conventional oil and, a few decades later, diluted bitumen as well.

Transportation infrastructures, such as railways and pipelines, have historically embodied a story of Canada as a place where vast expanses of territory can be settled and subjected to scientific rationality, this story pairing technological-scientific mastery with rugged hard work in overcoming and deriving value from a wild natural landscape. The basic frustration or challenge of the oil sands has been the abundance of crude oil paired with the difficulty of its extraction, refinement, and transport, the elements that have always haunted the commodity's economic viability. While fossil fuel pipelines have often been promoted with a rhetoric of nation-building (Scott 23), they have also served to lock Canada into a staples economy, whereby an autonomous development of domestic manufacturing (and even oil refining) has been structurally limited by Canada's role as an exporter of primary products. Caught in the dialectic of the flow of oil and the fixity of infrastructure, the commodity's boom echoing the call of a "foreign" market, the ambivalence of fossil-fuelled freedom and Alberta's landlocked frustration, a settler-colonial jouissance, or a pleasurable pain, is generated at the recurring loss of political-economic autonomy.

This paper will explore the settler-colonial jouissance of the subject of Western alienation, an imaginary figure with whom proponents of

fossil fuel development encourage people in Alberta to identify, through an examination of the public discourses that promote pipeline projects in Canada. The pleasure-pain dialectic of the boom-and-bust cycle is mobilized into a settler-colonial jouissance that links fantasies of transcontinental settler conquest and triumph over harsh landscapes to the thwarted enjoyment and autonomy of communities whose well-being has been rendered contingent upon the commodity prices of staple exports. The dual aims of this paper are, first, to explicate some aspects of the ideological-discursive terrain of Canadian-Albertan pipeline conflicts with reference to concepts from Lacanian and Žižekian theory, and second, to show more broadly how psychoanalysis can be a useful tool for analyzing Canadian environmental politics. To explain why the subject's enjoyment is perpetually frustrated, I examine the rhetoric of fossil fuel industry proponents, such as former Alberta premier Jason Kenney, who invoke scapegoats responsible for "landlocking" Alberta oil. This scapegoating intensifies the drive to continually fail to achieve political autonomy and economic self-sufficiency. Pipeline proponents appeal to "new markets in Asia Pacific," overseas sites of total enjoyment that the landlocked subject of Western alienation is perpetually denied. These social fantasies work in concert to conceal the colonial, capitalistic, and climatic antagonisms inherent to oil sands development, and mobilize consent for pipeline projects. Ultimately, my claim is that Western alienation is the fundamental fantasy in much Albertan pro-fossil fuel extraction discourse, staging a desire for pipeline development and providing an explanation in advance for why the satisfaction of such desires are often thwarted. In so doing, this fantasy ultimately functions as a form of nationalism that disavows the violence of settler colonialism, displaces the inequalities inherent to Alberta's oil economy onto a supposed power imbalance along Canada's east-west axis, and reaffirms the legitimacy and necessity of neoliberal extractivism.

Signification and (Dis)Identification

Within the discourses promoting the TMX in Alberta, *Western alienation* is the central fantasy: it sustains historical continuity from settler origin myths to contemporary pipeline struggles. In Lacanian

terms, Western alienation functions as a *point de capiton* (quilting point) for pro-TMX discourses. It is a master signifier that "quilts" together a network of other signifiers, providing the semblance of a stable ground for their meanings. In short, Western alienation confers a set of cultural meanings and social explanations that prefigure the political subjectivities of Western settlers in the struggle over the TMX. Borrowing from Slavoj Žižek, who takes up Lacan's quilting metaphor, we might analyze the ideological space of the TMX as "made of non-bound, non-tied elements, 'floating signifiers,' whose very identity is 'open,' overdetermined by their articulation in a chain with other elements" (*Sublime Object* 95). Master signifiers and meanings, rather than being transcendent or immanent, are "fixed only by such factors as convention, habit, acts of authority and/or leaps of faith" (Kapoor, "Psychoanalysis and Development" 1122). Western alienation is the element that provides a phantasmatic continuity from settler origin myths to contemporary desires for pipeline development. As Žižek warns, "The experience of a linear 'organic' flow of events is an illusion . . . that masks the fact that it is the ending that *retroactively* confers the consistency of an organic whole on the preceding events" (Žižek, *Looking Awry* 69)—and this is precisely how Western alienation functions in both historical narration and ideological fantasy to mobilize support for oil sands development in the present.

Two crucial caveats are necessary here: first, ideological fantasy is not the same as falsehood or illusion; second, "the subject of Western alienation" is an abstract character constituted through fantasy and not a figure with which real people in Western Canada seamlessly identify. To claim that Western alienation is a fantasy is a claim about the *ideological function* of the signifier *Western alienation* within contemporary discourses promoting oil sands development and *not* a claim about the veracity of Western alienation in describing a feature of contemporary Canadian politics and history. According to Žižek, truth and ideology do not necessarily stand in opposition; a statement can be fully true, but no less ideological: "what really matters is not the asserted content as such but *the way this content is related to the subjective position implied by its own process of enunciation*," and the way this content is made "functional with regard to some relation of social domination . . . in an

inherently non-transparent way" ("The Spectre" 8). Alberta-based fossil fuel proponents who promote oil sands and pipeline development at all costs in the "national interest" attempt to construct a personage, the subject of Western alienation, with whom they hope working people in Alberta might identify. Critiquing oil executives' leveraging of the concept in 1976 (notably, before the National Energy Program or any of the contemporary pipeline debates), Larry Pratt argued,

> Western resentment has many legitimate roots. But it is fast becoming the illegitimate blunt sword of those who would play off one part of Canada against the others, keeping old wounds open and old animosities alive, diverting attention from real injustices to imaginary enemies. It is an old and vicious game and far too many Canadians seem prepared to play it indefinitely. (111-12)

Commenting on the discursive strategies undertaken by these executives and their political allies, Pratt added that "[i]t is ironic and depressing that many of today's Westerners who are the loudest in their denunciation of eastern exploitation are among the least exploited, most privileged people in the world" (111).

The second caveat is that, despite the desire of fossil fuel proponents to encourage regular working people to identify with their version of Western alienation and the interests of extractive corporations, this identification is for most working Albertans (even those directly reliant on the oil and gas industry for their livelihood) fraught, ambivalent, and partial at best. "Against the idea that oil and gas workers are hypocrites, dupes, or too implicated in the system to understand it" (35), and drawing from the work of both Michel Pêcheux and José Esteban Muñoz, Unrau emphasizes the "critical ambivalence of disidentification" in understanding these workers' relationship to industry (22):

> Disidentification is a linguistic and performative mode through which gestures or speech acts enact both complicity and resistance; its transformative potential lies in its rejection of the idea that subjects must be constituted as either for or against dominant ideology. . . . [R]ather than full identification or belonging, the critical ambivalence of disidentification is what it feels like to be an oil worker, or to be in solidarity with workers. (22, 29)

On the one hand, a "hegemonic social structure must make the interests of the dominant group appear as the general interest" (Eaton and Enoch 313), the inherent contradictions of which manifest in psychological ambivalence, opening possibilities for solidarity and universal politics. On the other hand, questions of (dis)identification are not only ideological and psychological, but also material and practical, i.e., related to how an individual or community is able to meet their basic needs and derive well-being from their social environment. Speaking with people from oil-producing communities in rural Saskatchewan, Emily Eaton and Simon Enoch note that oil firms' regional branches "regularly engage in strategic philanthropy and community engagement efforts that provide material benefits to communities" (316). Moreover, some

> oil-producing communities also rely on industry for the provision of public services and infrastructure that many would consider to be the sole purview of government, including fire and emergency response, health, education . . . and other community infrastructure. That many of these necessities are perceived as being supplied—or at least supplemented—by industry rather than by government is another reason why communities view their interests as inextricably tied to those of the oil industry. (316)

It is precisely this dependence on industry, which casts the government as both insufficient to and unnecessary in oil workers' well-being, that makes the fantasy of Western alienation potentially meaningful and compelling.

Colonialism Without Settlers in the Buffalo Declaration

One particularly potent expression of Western alienation can be found in the Buffalo Declaration, a thirteen-page document penned by four Conservative MPs from Alberta and released on 20 February 2020, amid the land defence and solidarity blockades in opposition to TC Energy's Coastal GasLink liquefied natural gas pipeline on Wet'suwet'en territory. The Declaration claims to articulate the frustrations of Albertans, provides social explanations for those frustrations, insists upon the cultural distinctiveness of Alberta, and constructs a time and place called Buffalo as an origin story for Albertan distinctiveness

and frustration alike. It also makes a set of demands under threat of provincial secession, the first of which is that the federal government "restore investment stability in Alberta's energy sector by formally acknowledging and promoting Alberta's energy sector as a source of sustainably produced energy" (Rempel Garner et al. 11). The document narrates a history of Alberta from the nineteenth century to the present day, weaving together Western alienation, settler innocence, historical and persistent ambivalences related to nationalization and energy policy, and contemporary political conflicts related to energy infrastructure and climate change, including the TMX, in Canada.

The Declaration's main argument expresses the central grievance of Western alienation. It contends that there is a fundamental inequality in Canada between the Eastern provinces, specifically between the so-called "power class" or "Laurentian consensus" of Ontario and Quebec, and the West, specifically Alberta and Saskatchewan, the roots of which "have been historically repeated and are entrenched in our political system" (1). Moreover, the authors claim that "the economic and social challenges faced by Canada today . . . are the symptom of the colonial power structures from which Alberta and Saskatchewan were born" (1). The latter sentence is striking in its apparent anti-colonial critique. The writers go as far as to call the solidarity blockades in support of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs in opposition to the Coastal GasLink pipeline an expression of "colonial ideology": "At time of writing, activists with a colonial ideology are breaking laws in blockades of critical industry, for the sake of closing down Alberta industry" (4). The Declaration is filled with statements that express anger and frustration in the face of Canadian colonialism, but it relies on a notion of colonialism that denies any acknowledgement of settler violence or complicity, treating it simply as a system imposed from outside on inhabitants, "indigenous [*sic*] and settlers alike," without consultation (2).

The particular critique of colonialism advanced in the Declaration evokes the early colonial history of Canada's North-West Territories (present-day Alberta and Saskatchewan), which in the second half of the nineteenth century "were governed by the Canadian Department of the Interior, essentially as a colony without representative institutions" (Ishiguro 128). In short, the "colonial relationship" identified and

critiqued in the Buffalo Declaration is one of "taxation without representation" (7), federal overreach over provincial autonomy. While there is no question that the Canadian state established a relation to the Western provinces and territories in the nineteenth century that was fundamentally extractive and colonial—not to mention that the originary *raison d'être* of Canada was to export staples to the colonial metropole—the Declaration simultaneously flattens the difference of Indigenous and settler peoples in their experience of Canadian colonialism while effectively indigenizing Western Canada's settler population: "Indigenous and settler alike, we were a people who forged a strong connection to the land in order to survive, and we still do so today" (Rempel Garner et al. 6). This framing aligns with previous analyses of settler colonialism that argue that "the typical settler narrative . . . has a doubled goal. It is concerned to act out the suppression or effacement of the indigene; it is also concerned to perform the concomitant indigenization of the settler" (Johnston and Lawson qtd. in Veracini 373). To summarize Lorenzo Veracini's psychoanalytic assessment of settler colonialism, a settler society is (1) premised on the violent dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples, (2) disavows its own founding violence, (3) narrates itself as a "fantasy of communities" free from conflict, and (4) appeals to "a situation where the transplanted settler collective would *get back a jouissance* that was historically taken away" (364-65). The Buffalo Declaration can also be understood as an example of what Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang have called "colonial equivocation," a "nuanced move to [settler] innocence" that entails

> the homogenizing of various experiences of oppression as colonization. Calling different groups "colonized" without describing their relationship to settler colonialism is an equivocation. . . . "We are all colonized," may be a true statement but is deceptively embracive and vague, its inference: "None of us are settlers." (17)

While "decolonization is not a metaphor" (3), following Tuck and Yang, it is clear that a specific metaphor of colonialism is serving Western alienation in a way that attempts to promote oil sands and pipeline development while disavowing the antagonistic dimensions inherent

therein, such as the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples and the contamination of land and water.[2]

Buffalo was the name proposed by the first North-West Territories premier Sir Frederick W. A. G. Haultain, who sought provincial status for the territories in 1904; the proposal was rejected by then Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier, and the territories were separated into the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905 ("Province of Buffalo"). Western alienation can be understood as an enduring attempt to retrieve this original unity that was lost at the hands of the governing Liberal party and is made mythical in the Buffalo Declaration. The irony of the name, not lost on Indigenous critics of the Declaration, is that by the time of Haultain's request, the bison herds of North America had been decimated, an event that both symbolized and materially contributed to the settler-colonial consolidation of power in northwestern North America:

> Especially as bison herds disappeared in the 1870s and Indigenous communities experienced ensuing starvation and disease, an emerging and increasingly powerful Canadian state project sought to dispossess Indigenous people and resettle white newcomers through treaties, reserves, land acts, immigration agreements and interventions into family life. (Ishiguro 128)

In response to the Buffalo Declaration, the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations Chiefs released a statement, which included the following: "The Buffalo are a sacred being to our ceremonies and our culture, and in no way should it be used for a political gain. The audacity to select the very four-legged being that your ancestors attempted to wipe out in an effort to annihilate our existence, is an insult to our people" (Confederacy 1). For a segment of Alberta's political leadership, *Buffalo* signifies a time and place characterized by the unity of hardworking people ("Indigenous and settler alike") living off the land, "innocently busy" (Veracini 371), while for many Indigenous peoples the word is a reminder of the genocidal violence, dispossession, famine, and disease brought about by settler colonialism.

The Buffalo Declaration also disavows the degree to which settlement in Alberta in the late-nineteenth century was a colonial

strategy of the Canadian state. By framing white settlement in terms of the spontaneous free will of individuals, the Buffalo Declaration fails to acknowledge how "agricultural white settlement became a predominant British and Canadian goal for the Prairie West" in the late-nineteenth century (Ishiguro 128). Moreover, "during the mid-nineteenth century, the Canadian government . . . began to seek to attract white settlers to the Prairie West through immigration promotion and land policies intended to facilitate small-scale agriculture on individual homesteads" (129). The period between 1880 and 1940, as Barker and colleagues explain, "featured a transition from early forms of settlement and imperial economics towards private property regimes and the engineering of Settler-Indigenous segregation. It is no coincidence that many of the foundational myths and narratives of Canadian nationalism and identity emerged during this time" (154). The Declaration states that "[i]mmigration patterns of settlers to Alberta are . . . historically distinct. At a time when the East attracted bankers, lawyers and other capitalists into established industries, Alberta was drawing families who survived harsh climates and had an ability to live off the land" (Rempel Garner et al. 5), as if it were the land itself that beckoned settler migrants. Such an origin story supports an enduring narrative that, rather than being a site of colonial expansion and capitalist exploitation and extraction (of people and nature), Alberta is a place of independent, hardworking, self-sufficient people who simply want to "control their own destiny" (3). And yet the control that the average Albertan has over their own destiny seems to be thwarted time and time again by a political economy of boom and bust promoted by the same political class who penned the Buffalo Declaration.

Nationalism and Symbolic (or Neoliberal) Nationalization

The history of the Province of Buffalo illustrates the loss experienced by the subject of Western alienation upon entry into the symbolic order of Canadian Confederation, and the subsequent relations among the subject, desire, and the *objet petit a* as staged by the fantasy of Western alienation as origin story. It also provides a perfect example of the logic of the signifier. As Paul Eisenstein and Todd McGowan explain:

> Signification creates a retrospective illusion of loss. The subject of the signifier . . . has lost its privileged object as a result of its entrance into signification, but it has lost what it never had. The distortion created by the signifier produces the illusion of an actual object that was lost. But the lost object is not a privileged object that has been lost . . . but an object that attains a privileged status through being lost. (194)

The birth of Alberta and Saskatchewan as separate provinces and their integration into Canadian Confederation coincides with the emergence of Buffalo as *objet petit a*. In short, Buffalo emerged in history for the declaration's authors as something already lost to be regained. It is precisely this loss that elevates it to the status of privileged object or *objet petit a*, "the original lost object which . . . coincides with its own loss" (Žižek, *Sublime Object* 178). *Buffalo* expresses both an original unity, "a society which is not split by an antagonistic division, a society in which the relation between its parts is organic" (142), and an original trauma. While the original trauma, the splitting of the North-West Territories into the separate provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, is a historical fact, the original unity, Buffalo, is a colonial fantasy.

A fantasy conceals antagonism, establishes the coordinates for desire, and designates the subject's relation to the *objet petit a*. The *objet petit a* is the embodiment of the lack of original unity. As such, it is both the *object of desire* (the eternally fleeting object at which the subject repeatedly takes aim) and the *object-cause of desire* (the presupposed, originally lost object that sets desire in motion and prompts the subject to reconstitute its lost wholeness). This distinction, comprising the dual or diachronic aspect of the *objet petit a*, pertains to the distinction between desire as such, or the conditions of possibility of desire, and the desire for a particular, empirical object, such as a pipeline, that would embody or realize that desire. As Žižek argues, "the paradox of desire is that it posits retroactively its own cause, i.e., the [*objet petit a*] is an object that can be perceived only by a gaze 'distorted' by desire" (*Looking Awry* 12). This pertains, also, to the relationship between origin story as fantasy and historical narrative as social explanation, a relationship present in the Buffalo Declaration. Whereas Western alienation is a fantasy that stages the subject's desire and establishes

its relation to its object of desire, Buffalo is the *objet petit a* or object-cause of desire that sets desire in motion and makes possible contemporary, empirical objects of desire, such as pipeline projects. Over time, the *objet petit a* becomes embodied in new and different objects, sustaining the subject's drive toward repetition and failure:

> Throughout its existence, the subject will place forms of this object in its path, and it will repeat its failure to obtain the lost object. The subject will always seek its lost object in whatever particular empirical object it pursues, but no particular object will ever be the lost object. Any object that the subject does obtain ceases at just that point to embody the lost object. (Eisenstein and McGowan 195)

In other words, the subject's present-day desire for the *objet petit a* (variously embodied in new pipeline projects, oil sands developments, etc.), as expressed by the authors of the Buffalo Declaration, is staged by looking back at a phantasmatic history of Western alienation, where the entrance of Alberta and Saskatchewan into Canadian federation coincides with the loss of Buffalo (the original, mythical lost object). As desires are perpetually thwarted (either through cancellation of proposed pipeline projects or through their nationalization, as I will discuss next), the subject of Western alienation manages to derive pleasure from frustration, i.e., settler-colonial jouissance.

The nationalization of the TMX is an axis by which the ambivalence toward the TMX as *objet petit a* is expressed. On 29 May 2018, the federal government announced its intention to purchase the TMX from Kinder Morgan for $4.5 billion. The authors of the Buffalo Declaration state that the "nationalization of the TMX pipeline," along with the federal carbon tax, Bills C-69 and C-48,[3] and the demise of the Northern Gateway and Energy East pipelines, have "served to close Alberta's economy to investment and job growth" (Rempel Garner et al. 4). This is a paradoxical statement, given that the official federal justification for the purchase was precisely the opposite: to show the government's willingness to develop fossil fuel infrastructures to "enhance investor confidence" and make "500,000 barrels a day available for export to global markets" ("Economic Benefits"). Commenting on the far-right conspiracies that circulate "in the dark heart of oil country,"

Jen Gerson observes that many Albertans make sense of the TMX's nationalization by assuming "that Trudeau bought the pipeline to kill it—a conspiracy that doesn't make much sense when you consider the expansion would be dead already if the federal government had done nothing" (Gerson). To couch this in psychoanalytic terms, once the TMX's final regulatory and legal hurdles had been overcome—once it was "obtained," or purchased by the government—it ceased to embody the *objet petit a* for the subject of Western alienation. On one hand, polling data from the past few years has consistently shown that Alberta is the province that supports the TMX the most.[4] On the other hand, the response to the federal government's purchase of the TMX has been lukewarm, if not negative, even though the nationalization was instrumental in enabling the project to proceed. In fact, it was Kinder Morgan that instigated the sale of the project to the federal government since successful legal challenges and regulatory processes had delayed the project and threatened its economic viability (Tienhaara and Walker 127). One critic of nationalization sees it as an indication "that Canada's regulatory approval process for major infrastructure programs is profoundly broken" (Green). Conservative oil advocates thus perceive nationalization of the TMX once more as a kind of loss, a loss for the private sector and a loss for the capacity of Albertans "to control their own destiny without handouts from Ottawa" (Rempel Garner et al. 3).

The TMX does not represent a form of nationalization that would robustly distribute economic benefits to Canadians, but rather is what Kyla Tienhaara and Jeremy Walker have called "neoliberal nationalization, insofar as it pre-emptively compensates fossil corporates for the dangers of the unregulated environment that their own activism against climate policy achieved, and for poor investment decisions that were entirely voluntary" (128). The TMX was ultimately deemed too economically risky for energy company Kinder Morgan, which prompted the federal government to purchase it in May 2018 with a view to selling it back to the private sector down the road (i.e., "de-risking" it). On 30 August 2018, the Federal Court of Appeal released its decision that overturned Ottawa's previous approval of the project, citing two main issues: first, the National Energy Board's review process was flawed, since it did not account for the effects

of increased tanker traffic on the southern resident killer whale population in the Burrard Inlet; and second, the federal government had failed to meet its duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous peoples (Federal Court of Appeal, paras. 449, 767). This decision delayed the project and necessitated a second round of consultations with affected First Nations. Speaking during this second round of consultations in March 2019, federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau explained that the government's purchase of the TMX was always about de-risking the pipeline, i.e., alleviating its financial risks: "We see our function as de-risking the project, and once the project is de-risked then we see that it has the potential to get back into commercial ownership" ("Finance Minister"); the government is also considering the potential of partial or full ownership by Indigenous organizations, assuming there is a willing buyer (Yunker), given the concerns about the project's commercial viability (Allan). Justified as it was on the basis of "de-risking" the project for the private sector, socializing risks and privatizing profits, Tienhaara and Walker understand the TMX as more akin to government bailouts of banks following the financial crisis than to a robust form of government nationalization of fossil fuel projects that "would return control of extractive industries to public (state) ownership, converting resource rents otherwise expatriated as profit to foreign stockholders into income streams for government expenditure" (122). Displaced anxieties tied to foreign control and influence, which I will discuss in a later section, combined with an ambivalence towards nationalization inform much of the nationalist and populist rhetoric in support of pipeline projects.

Shane Gunster has analyzed the phenomenon of "extractive populism" in Canada, which he defines as "an inflammatory brand of political rhetoric that has increasingly taken centre stage across the country" (13). Gunster points out that one of the basic contradictions of extractive populist discourse is its simultaneous promotion of oil and gas industries in the name of "national interest" while remaining firmly opposed to actual nationalization. Gunster dates this reactionary movement to 1980s Alberta, amid provincial resistance to the National Energy Program: "While the oil and gas sectors fiercely opposed . . . 'real' nationalization as a threat to corporate profit and private sector-

led development, they gradually realized that *symbolic* forms of nationalization were extremely useful in legitimating the tar sands for publics outside of Alberta" (Gunster 14). This strategic ambivalence toward nationalization has played out recently in the context of both the TMX and the Keystone XL pipelines, where billions of public dollars have been earmarked for investment in the private sector. Thus, former premier of Alberta Jason Kenney had this to say on 31 March 2020, when he announced the government's plans to invest in Keystone XL (a pipeline project since cancelled by US President Joe Biden):

> This investment in Keystone XL . . . is a bold move to retake control of our province's economic destiny and put it firmly in the hands of the owners of our natural resources, the people of Alberta. Now, let me be blunt: I've always been sceptical about government intervention in the market, but our failure to get pipelines built has been a failure of government policy and politics, not of markets. . . . The project was delayed for years because of a very political US presidential veto and legal tactics by foreign-funded special interests trying to landlock Alberta energy. (Government of Alberta, "Keystone XL Pipeline" 4:02-51)

Kenney's comments illustrate what Gunster describes as the primary claims of Canadian extractive populism: (1) extractive industry is the core of the Canadian economy and provides universal benefits; (2) extractive industry is under attack by a foreign threat; and (3) we must therefore mobilize in support of extractive industry for the "national interest" (14-15), a phrase that is often used by politicians to tout the alleged universal social and economic benefits associated with a specific infrastructure or resource development project. These claims are bolstered by what Gunster calls "symbolic nationalization": "the principal rhetorical strategy through which 'the people' and the petro-industrial complex are sutured together" (14). The paradox is that symbolic nationalization is mobilized in part to counter actual, substantive forms of nationalization that could more effectively redistribute the wealth produced by extractive industry and natural resources.

Forms of nationalism and national identity have fixity not merely because they are sustained in a discursive network, which provides meaning and wholeness, but also because they involve the mobilization

of jouissance and passions such as envy. In short, the discourse "sticks" because it is able to channel jouissance. The repeated failure to secure control over their economic destiny is the source of jouissance for those who invoke the subject of Western alienation in pro-oil discourse. As previously discussed, the fantasy of Western alienation examined here involves a struggle against a colonial Canadian government, one where the establishment of settler society in Western Canada occurred independently of the structures of this colonial government and its genocidal origins. It is also a story about struggling to integrate political autonomy, economic independence, individual liberty, and an economy predicated on extraction—particularly of oil and gas from the twentieth century onward. This ongoing struggle is constitutive of the Western alienated subject: while its desires to integrate freedom and extraction are repeatedly thwarted, it nonetheless derives meaning and jouissance from this failure.

Envy and Enjoyment: Landlocked Oil and Mythical Markets

If the numerous fantasies quilted through Western alienation are predicated on a disavowal of settler colonialism—colonialism with neither settlers nor founding violence—then this obscures both the ongoing harms of settler colonialism against Indigenous peoples and the exploitation of workers and natural environments inherent to extractive capitalism. Yet colonialism and capitalism are based on and sustained by extraction (Simpson). "In the Canadian case," writes Travis Fast, "capitalist development has had a quintessentially extractive and exclusionary history," one predicated on excluding Indigenous peoples from their own land, extracting natural resources from the environment, and extracting labour from workers and families (31). For many Albertans, support for oil and gas goes beyond mere political pragmatism, becoming a point of pride and identity. However, as Laurie E. Adkin and Byron Miller point out, "the industry with which Albertans have for so long been encouraged to identify is in fact not 'Albertan,' but transnational. What drives its investment decisions has little to do with the provision of long-term, sustainable livelihoods for any particular community in Alberta" (qtd. in Massie and Jackson 53). In 2020, Environmental Defence and other advocacy groups reported

that seventy per cent of "oil sands production is owned by foreign companies and shareholders" (1); this means the majority of profits leave the country, while the majority of liabilities (abandoned wells, tailings ponds) stay in the country and fall to the public to pay for.

Several factors make the Alberta government's reliance on the oil and gas industry as a primary source of revenue and jobs damaging for many people in Alberta, particularly with regards to inequality and job precarity.[5] Because the extractive sectors are more capital intensive than labour intensive (i.e., they rely more on technology than workers), there is "a strong correlation between extraction (particularly oil and gas and mining) and high levels of inequality in the primary distribution of income" (Fast 50). Low corporate tax rates and weak royalty regimes mean that fewer and fewer of the surpluses produced through extraction end up as government revenues that are redistributed to the public (54). Reliance on resource extraction leaves government revenues at the mercy of commodity prices; when prices inevitably crash, governments are left with revenue shortfalls and a public that has grown "accustomed to relatively low tax levels" and high-quality social services (55). The economic precarity of Alberta is not reducible to the province's peripheral position relative to the centre of Canadian political power, as the authors of the Buffalo Declaration would have us believe. Rather, crisis, inequality, and instability are inherent to the political-economic foundations of Alberta's regime of neoliberal extractivism.

An ideological fantasy functions to smooth over and obscure a social antagonism; appeals to pipeline shortages and the need for new international markets conceal the struggle over how the benefits derived from extraction are distributed. Fantasies establish the coordinates for both desire and enjoyment. In this regard, one of the most common fantasies in the pro-TMX discourse involves the relationship between "landlocked Alberta oil" and "international markets" or "new markets in Asia-Pacific." There is a common refrain that Alberta oil is landlocked, that there is a lack of pipelines, and that constructing the TMX will open Canadian oil to new international markets (Quan), thus freeing Canada from relying on the United States as its near-exclusive trade partner for oil and thereby addressing the discount on Canadian oil prices (though surely not the volatility of oil prices in general). When Justin Trudeau first approved the TMX in November 2016,

getting "Canadian energy resources to international markets beyond the United States" was given several times as the primary justification ("Prime Minister"). This justification has been repeated by those who support the construction of the TMX. Trans Mountain Corporation (TMC), a subsidiary of the Crown's Canada Development Investment Corporation, has owned and operated the current Trans Mountain pipeline system and expansion project since its acquisition by the federal government in August 2018. TMC justifies the expansion project in the following terms on its website:

> With oil sands production expanding in Alberta in the years ahead, new markets and new opportunities are emerging. As countries in Asia Pacific begin to develop the same quality of life we enjoy here in Canada, they need to secure sources of energy. Canada is a natural trading partner for these countries, and with an expanded Trans Mountain Pipeline system, we will be in a position to provide for their growing needs for years to come. ("Expansion")

The existing Trans Mountain pipeline has since 1953 supplied crude from the oil sands to Pacific tidewater; there is already a route to get Canadian energy products to Asia Pacific, but it is rarely used. Only ten per cent of the tankers leaving the Westridge Marine Terminal between January 2013 and February 2018 were destined for refineries in Asia or Hawaii (Donaghy 6). While the design of the current Trans Mountain Pipeline "supports a pipeline capacity of approximately 300,000 barrels per day . . . based on a commodity mix of 20% heavy and 80% light" ("Management Report" 2), the expansion project "will carry heavier oils with the capability for transporting light crude oils" ("Expansion"). While the TMX would triple the pipeline's capacity, enable expanded production in the oil sands, and increase the scale of tanker shipments leaving the Pacific Coast, former Environment Minister David Anderson seems justified in contending that there is simply no guarantee that there will be more of a market in Asia Pacific for Canadian crude than what already exists (qtd. in Kane). In analyzing the case for the TMX in relation to oil production forecasts, J. David Hughes concluded that selling Canadian heavy oil to Asia will generate no price premium relative to the United States since the United States is better equipped with the refineries necessary to process heavy crude and

the transportation costs are lower (5). Moreover, as critic James Wilt has argued, the TMX will be "competing with producers in countries that can pay far less to ship their cheaper-to-refine oil in much larger ships." While investment in pipeline infrastructure by the federal government signals to Canadians and to the international community the intention to increase oil sands production and transport larger volumes of product, the business case for the project, let alone the economic justification weighed against the social and environmental risks (Indigenous Network on Economics and Trade), is highly contestable. In short, "[n]othing about a new pipeline will change the fact that Alberta's heavy oil takes more effort to refine into usable products and is located farther from major markets than most other sources" (Wilt).

The federal government claims that the TMX will "generate billions of dollars in revenue each year to help fund clean energy solutions" ("What Is the Trans Mountain Expansion?"), but recent analyses conclude that "there is no likely scenario in which [the TMX] will generate a net benefit to Canada" (Gunton et al. 68), and that the purchase and construction of the project will result in a net loss (69). The project's business case is compromised even further by operating-cost overruns: these costs have ballooned up by seventy per cent, hitting $21.4 billion by February 2022 (Allan 2). According to economist Robyn Allan, the toll methodology (i.e., the way prices for service fees are calculated) in TMC's contracts "with its oil product shippers are the source of Trans Mountain's lack of . . . commercial viability" (3). As Allan argues, "Trans Mountain is not commercially viable; and, [*sic*] this lack of profitability and commercial viability means more than $17 billion in debt owed to Canadians will not be repaid. Debt forgiveness is looming" (3). With so much uncertainty surrounding the long-term economic viability of the TMX, including the demand for Alberta crude by countries in Asia Pacific, the repeated appeals to "international markets" hint at an economy of enjoyment beyond a rational business case. "International markets" and "new markets in Asia Pacific" stand in opposition to Alberta's "landlocked oil": if the latter is the embodiment par excellence of the province's centuries-long experience of Western alienation—of being frustrated at the hands of Confederation, or some other external imposition, despite the hard

work and best efforts of Albertans—then the former stands in for the exact opposite: a new and unbounded frontier, a fantasy that promises a kind of limitless, total enjoyment.

Appeals to various scapegoats, foreign threats, and conspiracies were integral to former Alberta premier Jason Kenney's rise to power and to his strategies of mobilizing consent for oil sands development and pipeline construction. Against the backdrop of perceived external threats ("foreign-funded special interests," "the green left," "OPEC dictatorships"), Kenney ran his 2019 election campaign by championing a "fightback strategy" for Alberta and a promise to create "a rapid response war room" to "rebut every lie told by the green left" (Editorial Board). Kenney's overall strategy for promoting Alberta's oil and gas sector was about attacking on all fronts and pointing fingers in every direction, a seemingly paranoid discursive strategy that former Albertan Green Party candidate Chris Turner has described as "Facebook McCarthyism" (Turner). Perhaps the best example is the $2.5 million public inquiry Kenney's government launched in July 2019; in then Minister of Justice and Solicitor General Doug Schweitzer's words, the inquiry would investigate "the foreign sources of funds behind the anti-Alberta energy campaigns . . . and the extent of this foreign-funded misinformation" (Government of Alberta, "Premier Kenney" 13:00-10). Kenney alleged that, for more than a decade, Alberta had been the target of a well-funded, "sophisticated, multi-pronged" propaganda campaign to defame Alberta's oil and gas industry and "landlock" the province's energy resources (2:00-06). The conspiracy theory loosely tied together the Rockefeller Foundation, Russia, OPEC, and an alliance of North American environmental NGOs in a plot to specifically target Alberta's oil and gas industry—in short, a case of overseas and "American billionaires effectively killing Canadian jobs" (28:34-37).

Alongside his discourse of landlocked oil, Kenney introduces a story of foreign oil competitors issuing disingenuous thanks to Albertans for failing to build pipelines. In announcing the Fight Back Strategy, Jason Kenney shared an alleged interaction he had with an OPEC representative:

> You know, just three weeks ago, at the margins of a major international investment conference, I chatted with a former

> . . . senior official from OPEC. When I tried to explain to him the problem of landlocking of Alberta energy, he turned to me and said to me with a wry smile, he said, "I know, Premier, all about it, and on behalf of OPEC, I'd like to thank you for not getting those pipelines built." (6:47-7:11)

Kenney himself smiles wryly as he tells the story and impersonates the OPEC representative, displaying his own enjoyment and the satisfaction he gets from the "confirmation that other energy producers have benefited massively from the campaign to landlock our energy" (7:16-24).

Returning to the question of new markets in Asia Pacific for Alberta bitumen, and recalling the uncertainty that characterizes the future of those markets, my claim is that part of what makes them stick in the discourse is an implicit preoccupation with the excessive consumption of the Other. The pro-oil advocates who figure themselves as subject of Western alienation find themselves caught between contradictory desires.[6] The inflated sense of certainty with which proponents of the TMX imagine the untapped potential of international markets, paired with the paranoia about the conspiracy to landlock Alberta oil, hints at both a fascination with the enjoyment taking place elsewhere and the denial that such an economy of enjoyment could take place without Canadian participation.

The trope of landlocked oil conveys a blend of frustration and envy, an unbearable interruption of the libidinal flows of oil and capital. This fantasy stages the subject as constrained to a marginal position, forced to bear witness to the widespread enjoyment of others. To snatch back some of its jouissance, the subject of Western alienation centres itself in those libidinal flows, imagining a conspiracy aimed at denying its enjoyment. It is precisely this re-positioning of itself as chief victim of a conspiracy plot that allows the subject to take back jouissance, deriving enjoyment from its alleged loss. The subject regains a sense of control by understanding its loss of autonomy and enjoyment as a coordinated set of activities by "foreign" entities. This fantasy is more meaningful and palatable to these proponents of Western alienation than the alternative: that the subject's loss of autonomy and libidinal-economic enjoyment derives from a set of conditions that are much less coordinated and much more contingent (e.g., the material properties of bitumen, the

geo-physical location of Canada's Pacific Coast, global concerns around greenhouse gas emissions related to climate change mitigation). If "landlocked oil" captures the denial, frustration, and envy of the subject of Western alienation, "international markets" are precisely the embodiment of the Other's excessive enjoyment. They are the ultimate sites of "total enjoyment," the excessive consumption and reproduction from which the subject of Western alienation is perpetually denied.

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to show how the discourses promoting pipeline development in Canada constitute a network of social fantasies that presuppose a subject of Western alienation and mobilize a form of settler-colonial jouissance. I have argued that Western alienation functions as the central fantasy through which the others, such as landlocked oil, international markets, and foreign-funded conspiracy, are grounded and provided meaning. Western alienation is an origin story that weaves together a disavowal of settler violence and dispossession of Indigenous peoples with a timeless struggle experienced by the people of Alberta at the hands of Canadian Confederation and contemporary resistance to pipelines and oil sands development. This story is retroactively deployed to mobilize support for contemporary pipeline construction, provide an explanatory compensation for why the average Albertan so often feels that their economic well-being and political autonomy are thwarted by interests that are foreign to them, in one sense or another, and link this frustration to settler nostalgia for an independent, pre-federation state of prosperity and self-sufficiency. Moreover, I have argued that at the heart of both this explanatory fantasy and the desire for the TMX is an economy of jouissance in excess of a rational business case. Throughout this article, I hope to have shown how social fantasies both mobilize support for the TMX and conceal the often unspoken or disavowed antagonisms of settler colonialism, fossil capitalism, and climate change.

Notes

1. Throughout this piece I use the phrase "fossil fuel industry proponents" (or related phrases) to signify a mix of state, corporate, and civil society actors who

promote fossil fuel extraction and the development of fossil fuel infrastructures in public discourse. The main actors who I quote are current and former political leaders of Canada (e.g., Justin Trudeau and Bill Morneau) and Alberta (e.g., Jason Kenney), as well as promotional materials by Trans Mountain Corporation. While these are key sources of public discourse, they are only part of a larger web of social power known as "fossil capital" (Carroll), comprising a complex network of extractive corporations and financial institutions that exert various forms of influence over civil society (Carroll et al.), including think tanks, universities (Adkin, "Petro-Universities"), and media.

2. I want to acknowledge peer-review Reader A who highlighted this colonialism-as-metaphor point in their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.
3. Bills C-48 and C-69 are two pieces of federal legislation that received royal assent in June 2019. Bill C-48 (also known as the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act) prohibits oil tankers carrying more than 12,500 metric tons of crude oil from unloading at ports along British Columbia's north coast (Parliament of Canada, Bill C-48). Bill C-69 (also known as the Impact Assessment Act) establishes a new framework for assessing the environmental, health, social, and economic effects of major projects, such as pipelines, mines, and nuclear facilities (Parliament of Canada, Bill C-69). The bills prompted protests by oil patch workers in Alberta, who characterized Bill C-69 as the "no more pipelines" bill (Gerson).
4. Polling data from the past few years has revealed support for the TMX from a significant majority of Albertans prior to and following the government's purchase of the project. An Ipsos poll from May 2018 found that 84 per cent of people in Alberta support the pipeline expansion compared to 56 per cent of Canadians in general (Bricker). A 2020 poll by the Angus Reid Institute found that 87 per cent of Albertans want the TMX built compared to 55 per cent support of Canadians in general ("Opposition to Trans Mountain"). More recently, support seems to be waning slightly, though a strong majority of people in Alberta continue to support the TMX; a 2022 poll from Research Co. found that 69 per cent of people in Alberta support the TMX (Rodriguez).
5. In analyzing the labour demographics of the oil and gas sector in Alberta, Angele Alook (Cree), Ian Hussey, and Nicole Hill discuss how "disparities grounded in gender and in race and ethnicity are built into the division of labour in the industry" (333). While jobs in the oil, gas, and mining industry account for 6.1 per cent of total employment in the province, delivering relatively high median wages of $40.40 per hour for the disproportionately male workers in this sector, this work is made possible by the unpaid, low-paid, and precarious work of women, racialized people, and temporary foreign workers who carry out care work, service work, and other "social reproductive processes on which capitalist accumulation depends" (334). As Adkin points out, while only seven per cent of Alberta's workforce is directly employed in the natural resource sector, which includes forestry, fishing, mining, and oil and gas, 45 per cent of the province's jobs are directly or indirectly tied to oil and gas ("Ecology and Governance" 30).
6. On one hand, the pro-oil advocates wish to cash in on the growing demand for energy in countries such as China. On the other hand, they wish to justify their own extractive activities and climate disavowal by pointing to the energy consumption and carbon emissions coming out of the same countries to which they hope to export their carbon products.

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Maša Torbica

Tautologies

behind door number five,
a better life takes shape.

*

Most entries will lead to a sparse, drab room
where transplanted officials and local translators
wait to turn asylees back to the streets. Only one
will open to reveal skyscrapers, the sprawling park
from the pictures, kites over a shoreline. I study
each lock and handle. Which combination of
pleas and overheard phrases could move them?

Oh dear Lord
looters shot the dog
right on the threshold
please
everything that could burn is gone
only the graves remain
please please
returnees are stealing and selling
roof shingles
please please please
we can't earn bread in this country
this was never our country
please please please please
it will take years to reapply
all over again

please please please please please
let the children go back
to childhood

*

We are called from

Maša Torbica teaches at the University of Waterloo, located on the Haldimand Tract.

Rob Budde

Widzin Kwa

For Freda Huson

free and prior, the river
fast and sure, rocking
rolled boulders and fish

and the bridge onto
another way, land
first and the pine/spruce
smoke & sockeye offering

what the water provides
washes over previous versions
ancestors linked in
a circle can
stop a bulldozer

a watchful stance,
a peaceful assurance
unmoved under heli rotors

the colonial line
interrupted with a checkpoint

the unsurrendered circle
of firelight and cycles of
drying and canning, severing
the commercial flow

and opening the bridges within

Rob Budde teaches creative writing at UNBC in Prince George, BC. He has published eight books.

Elysha Snider

S(pe[c]tro)philia

Ectoplasmic tar conjured
through sands, machinic taunts.
Creeping in weeds, filling guts:
abundance to dehydrate.
Summoned by a dowsing
signal to hunt and devour;
injecting mud instead of water
to smooth the eager swallow.
Hallowed ground a
disturbed graveyard, fossils
lost to manufactured veins.
An unmaking sticky
with spectral grease,
haunted cracks,
revenant whispers:
which way is the heart?
A trace transitioned
from residue to ghost—
a black shimmer floating
amongst the brine and soil.
Leaking sludge onto concrete,
still slick by design. Parting
feathers to wax the skin.
Greasing pores. Becoming flesh.
Fuelling travel and
warming houses
with malefic pasts.
Interlacing wells and
interiors, crude oil with
chromosomes; an inverted

synthesis with resurrection,
all viscous to the touch.

Invasion seduces,
but desecration echoes.
So can we mine a spectre's smear, its reach?
Or are we tangled in cyclical hauntings
that tempt, spread, torture?

Our cannibalistic cravings grow; we soak
up the mess. Our hair a matted mop
when ambition bleeds
and
s
p
i
l
l
s
and mixeswith*pulses*.

Defile petroleum with hunger.
Replace lifeblood with trauma.

…We're just missing the

h
t andthe
e s
e p
t i
n
e
to seal it in bone.

Biography for "S(pe[c]tro)philia"

As we continue to inhabit a geologically terrifying world, the supernatural seems far more familiar—especially given our daily walk among ghosts. With traces of radioactive isotopes from Trinity's 1945 nuclear explosion still present in "the layers of the planet's marine and lake sediments, rocks, and glacial ice" (Waters et al. 47), for example, eco-spectres are irrevocably enmeshed within our existence and our biological composition. Inspired by Timothy Morton's *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* and Fritz Leiber's short story "The Black Gondolier," "S(pe[c]tro)philia" moves between concrete form and lyric poetry to explore the intimate entanglements humans possess with the non-human, particularly when thinking about the crude oil that pulses beneath our feet. Rather than viewing petroleum as something consciously malignant as Leiber does, "S(pe[c]tro)philia" considers the impulse to extract, and the consequential scars of such an invasion, as a convoluted exchange in which humanity enters and haunts itself in a twisted encounter.

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Published in filling Station *and* Poetry Pause*, Elysha Snider lives in Alberta.*

Lucie von Schilling

dirt on my hands

it rains each day: soft clouds release
their precious cumulations to earth
so the sun can then scoop up each
droplet

and return it to the sky's empty pockets.
below, fir giants whisper their secrets
to young roots and
mycelium lives

in vast blankets of electricity beneath my feet.
upon the dirt, spiders helter skelter as
my hand tucks strange seedlings into
shovel gashes.

my coniferous lungs love the air here:
i sometimes stand still
to breathe

atop the discarded bodies of sitka
spruce trees. around me, i see wasted old growth
piled haphazardly.
they once breathed here, too:

taught their babies to grow,
drank rain, danced naked
in storms, felt sun
on their outstretched arms.

Lucie von Schilling is an MA student currently writing about bodies for her poetry thesis.

Christopher Levenson

Threads

1
Big Brothers left a message on my phone:
"We will come by tomorrow to pick up
clean, reusable cast-offs for our Thrift Store"
Sometimes I visit there, to burrow through
the sartorial trickle-down, wandering a maze
of trenches to finger old uniforms, war surplus,
along with magazines, the rubble of spent lives,
abandoned finery. What am I looking for?

2
"Nice threads!". The imperial fashion houses
—Habsburg, Bourbon, Castille—
knew all about power dressing, but also depended on
remainders, planned obsolescence.
What yarns we weave around empire!
As the silver and gold of discarded opulence frayed,
all that survived of their costume drama were cockades
and threadbare tapestries whose heroic names unspool
into oblivion. In uprooted family trees,
their crowns destroyed, maggots unstitch the flesh
of disused majesty, a fabricated past.

3
Forensic pathologists do not find it easy
to salvage threadbare life from simple fabrics,
to interrogate cloth from crumpled jackets left

at the scene of atrocities. How can they pick clean
after all the damage done by rodents, mildew, time,
the unfederated bones? how test stains of semen and
blood?
or set aside from their minds the cries of neighbours,
as they reassemble cleansed fibres to restore
identity to the clamouring anonymous dead?
Yet those that survive still need,
more even than bodies, names.

First editor of Arc, *Christopher Levenson's most recent book of poetry is* Moorings *(Caitlin Press, 2023).*

María Helena Auerbach Rykov

on not knowing

After "On Not Knowing Greek"
—Virginia Woolf

broken we meet Orpheus & his lute
at play in sunlight among olive trees
the mind speaks darkly
time is short be content
stretch every metaphor

amplify reverberation
reflect meaning explode dramatic
at whatever cost
descend to process
painfully critically

dawn rises to music through the night
bare & abrupt
our emotions
break up before we feel them
being dead we bruise our minds

the nightingale sings
an image of reality
not reality itself
in the heart of
a boreal winter

laugh in the right place read quickly
to find out what happens next
the sea in their ears
fate a sadness at the back of life
yet alive to endure consolation

Puerto Rican Canadian María Helena Auerbach Rykov lives in Tkaronto.

Storying Responsibilities: Visiting Over Deanna Reder's *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*

"To Share and Visit Together": An Introduction

Sam McKegney

How we refer to an author tells a story. A disinterested scholarly tone, in analysis of "Reder's work," risks concealing meaningful relationships contributors to this forum hold with the volume's author—as friends, colleagues, mentees, and beneficiaries of the field-building work in which she has engaged for decades.[1] Calling the author "Deanna" risks relinquishing a level of scholarly esteem expected of those involved in critical discussion of one of the most important works of literary theory to emerge in lands claimed as Canada in recent years. Yet, as *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition: Cree and Métis âcimisowina* both argues and models, personal stories and relationships are not antithetical to intellectual work of value; they are integral, particularly in Indigenous literary studies. And relationships carry responsibilities.[2]

Deanna Reder reminds us, in her discussion of Cree intellectual Harold Cardinal's writings, that "knowledge [is] intertwined with self-knowledge," which "prods" Cree and Métis scholars to consider their "responsibilities to Cree knowledge and to generations before and after [them]" (*Autobiography* 122). Cree and Métis âcimisowina—stories about oneself, or autobiographies—are tools of understanding that weave personal experience into the layered fabric of familial, community, and cultural knowledge. For Reder, sharing âcimisowina constitutes "an act of autonomy in that it expresses the values of one's own story while at the same time an act of generosity, of sharing, that contributes to the history of the community" (18). To be fully oneself,

to be the holder of one's story, is not, therefore, an act of individuation, but a catalyst to community engagement as an expression of responsibility: "Including one's story is not a way to take centre stage as much as to share and visit together" (9).

By narrating her personal journey as critical praxis, Reder empowers Indigenous scholars and others to trust the intuitive and affective sites of knowledge formation that academia often conditions us to disavow; in this way, she engenders new horizons of critical possibility and authorizes intellectual work of heightened integrity. Anishinaabe scholar Johannah Bird discusses the world-building value of such authorization below—of celebrating, in Deanna's case, being "both an academic and a Métis woman without contradiction" (*Autobiography* 126). "Instead of considering my experiences as a deficiency," she writes, "I began to consider my life story as method, as a tool to rely upon when evaluating texts by Indigenous writers" (8). Such shifts in scholarly expectations, the contributors to this collaborative piece believe, demand that critics rethink even the genre of the readers' forum. For whom do we share these reflections? To whom are they directed? Where is each of us in the process? And how might our words express and honour our relationships and responsibilities? If I'm honest, the primary audience I imagine for these words is Deanna herself, followed closely by the other contributors to this forum. As Reder shows us in her book, engagement with another's words, experience, and story—with another's âcimisowina—is an act of trust that carries obligations not only to the author, but also to the communities and knowledge systems out of which a work emerges. This is why she takes such care with the stories of George Copway, James Settee, Maria Campbell, Edward Ahenakew, Absolom Halkett, Harold Cardinal, and her own mother: Reder is writing for them, to them, and for their families.

In the pages that follow, we spend a good deal of time considering the ethical and methodological implications of Reder's gently radical interpretive practice, which weaves together personal stories with familial, community, and cultural stories to develop layered understandings that are embedded in relationships—what Warren Cariou refers to as "relational reading" (170). The integrity of such praxis, however, is dependent upon and emboldened by meticulous primary research—research, in this case, that is expressive of Reder's

decades-long honouring of Cree and Métis thought by raising up the voices of Cree and Métis intellectuals and artists. *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* is field-altering because it challenges how Indigenous literary studies is imagined and conducted, but it is also field-altering because of the sources it brings to light for Cree and Métis communities. These include a never-before-studied essay by nineteenth-century Cree writer James Settee, a passage from Métis author Maria Campbell's pathbreaking autobiography *Halfbreed* that had been "expurgated against her wishes in 1973" and was believed lost (*Autobiography* 16),[3] and multiple unpublished "Life-Inspired Stories" by Cree intellectual and Anglican cleric Edward Ahenakew.

We shouldn't be surprised that Reder's work encourages us to share analysis and critical dialogue differently. In a critical reflection on "Thinking Together: A Forum on Jo-Ann Episkenew's *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing*," which won the *Canadian Literature* Essay Prize in 2014, Reder and settler scholar Susan Gingell expose the inconsistencies between author-meets-critics panels and Indigenous ethics of relational accountability. Unlike dominant dialectical models reliant on "academic competitiveness," Reder and Gingell advocate for a modality of communication that foregrounds "critics' accountability to the author" in efforts "to achieve the goal of building and maintaining a lively, healthy, productive, and respectful critical community" (Gingell and Reder 92). Here, as elsewhere, Reder (1) recognizes the tensions between standard scholarly expectations in the Western academy and Indigenous knowledge systems, (2) enacts an alternative more in keeping with Indigenous ethics and values, and (3) renders those alternatives legible in a manner designed to provoke further developments that might foster scholarly environments more inclusive of Indigenous thought. When we tend with care, humility, and rigour to our responsibilities and relationships, what emerges is intellectual work of greater value—even to those outside the immediate circle; in fact, such work might open up spaces of possibility for inviting others in.

After Reder's keynote address at the 2022 Indigenous Literary Studies Association (ILSA) gathering hosted by the Gabriel Dumont Institute on Treaty 6 Territory, I had several conversations with colleagues and friends about the significance of *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*, not only to Indigenous literary studies,

but to CanLit, to autobiography studies, to decolonial studies, and to Indigenous studies more broadly. A readers' forum seemed like a good way to illuminate the book's interventions and to bring it to the attention of those outside the ILSA community. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given all that Reder has done to support others in our field, every person I asked about contributing agreed enthusiastically. Our conversation in this forum is buoyed by Cree and Métis thinkers; involves creative writers, literary critics, and those who are both; and includes contributors at diverse stages of their careers. Johannah Bird lauds below the sustaining impact of Reder's validation of the knowledge emerging Indigenous scholars carry within themselves—knowledge that often presents itself through "instincts, hunches, signs, inklings" (163). Where Bird finds inspiration and confidence for a younger generation, NunatuKavut scholar Kristina Fagan Bidwell recognizes "the value of revisiting stories, ideas, and relationships over time" (176), lessons that those of us later in our careers would do well to take seriously. Foregrounding the humour in Reder's work and the stories she recounts, Cree creative and critical writer Dallas Hunt investigates the "ruptures" and "possibilities" that can be "generated out of laughter or 'the rolling of [one's] eyes'" (175). Acholi poet Otoniya Juliane Okot Bitek amplifies Reder's theorization of autobiography as a form of what she calls "world-making" urgently needed in the face of forces that would "erase us from ourselves" (168). Against such attempted erasure, Métis scholar and creative writer Warren Cariou emphasizes in Deanna's work the "true importance—the affective, spiritual and intellectual stakes—of the stories that nourish us and help to show us who we are" (170). To produce the forum you are reading, each contributor drafted an initial reflection; we then circulated them as a group and held a virtual conversation to think together about our insights, analyses, and ideas, and to identify areas of significance not yet covered in the dialogue. After that conversation, we all spent a little more time with our thoughts and words. What you read here is the result of those conversations and reflections—and an expression of our commitments and our gratitude.

Notes

1. Such field-building work includes, but is not limited to, Reder's participation on the inaugural council that launched the Indigenous Literary Studies Association

and her service to that organization as vice-president, president, past president, and acting president; her co-chairship, with Sophie McCall, of the Indigenous Voices Awards; her work with the Indigenous Editors Association; and her work as principal investigator for *The People and the Text: Indigenous Writing to 1992*.

2. I note that our community of contributors did not reach easy consensus on the question of how to refer to the author throughout this forum (as you'll see). And that's to be expected. This is not a problem to solve or a critical choice to make and then justify. Characteristically, Reder's work challenges us to think about the complexities—about what we *can* say, about what we *ought* to say, and about the relational and ethical dynamics that arbitrate the difference. Such is among the many gifts of her scholarship.
3. The passage, which was "incriminating [to] the RCMP," was located by Reder's research assistant Alix Shield, who, "following Indigenous protocols, return[ed] it to Campbell, which initiated the publication of a new edition of *Halfbreed* in 2019" (*Autobiography* 16).

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Learning to Follow the Trails

Johannah Bird

As I looked out the bus window, I watched the grasses and shrubs pass in a rapid succession of green. Sitting next to me was Warren Cariou, and we were visiting on the bus ride to Batoche during the 2022 gathering of the Indigenous Literary Studies Association. We

talked about research and writing, and I asked how he began making petrographs.[1] He described noticing bitumen seeping out of the ground along the Athabasca River and wondering if he could do something with it. Petrography (eventually) followed.

I listened while my eyes traced the flow of land we passed, and I thought about how much plant knowledge must have come from people noticing things and wondering about them. I said some version of this to Warren: "It seems to me that so much of research involves honouring your own instincts and observations. Following the hunches and testing them until they become fuller ideas or practices. It all rests on a kind of self-trust." I told him about an inkling I had while reading a text a couple of years prior, and which had been confirmed in conversation with someone I met at the conference.

"You should read Deanna's new book," Warren responded.

What Deanna Reder offers in *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* is an example of how we follow the instincts, hunches, signs, inklings that lead us down certain paths of research and inquiry, like the way tracing bitumen led Warren to make petrographs, like me following the traces in the archive. For Reder, a study of Cree and Métis life writing not only offers a study of genre; she also *enacts* âcimowina in her book, giving an example of how to practise life writing as Indigenous literary scholarship.

Reder begins her book with the central relationship that set her on a path to studying stories: her relationship with her mother. Through family stories of her mother and memories from Reder's childhood, the book builds out toward contextual issues of race, anti-Indigenous stereotypes, class, and gender that impacted the medical establishment's interpretation of her mother's health before she was diagnosed with myotonic dystrophy.[2] All at once, Reder narrates the inciting moments and instincts that motivated her research path, honours her mother with warmth and humour, and emphasizes the stakes of interpreting stories by drawing connections between the physical and conceptual effects of intergenerational colonial trauma and their impact on her mother's experience. As she describes her mother's skill as the family storyteller, Reder also locates herself in relation to Cree storytelling history by way of âcimowina, stories from daily life, and âcimisowina,

stories from one's own life and experience (6). These kinds of stories, Reder argues, are necessary components of understanding Indigenous story histories and practices, in addition to more collectively held stories such as âtayôhkêwina (sacred stories), kayâs-âcimowina (history), or kakêskihkêmowina (counsel).

For many of us who research and write, Reder's emphasis on âcimowina and âcimisowina works to authorize the presence of our experience and our selves in our scholarly work as they form in relationship with other stories and knowledge. Somewhere along the way, we acquire the idea that knowledge is not within us—that we must first gather other stories, learn "the field," and fully apprehend the critical discussion before we can know how to make our own contributions or even what contributions to make. Of course, work should be tested, and research involves seeking out what others have done while learning new information and approaches. These necessary practices of care and accountability, however, are not often framed as such, leading to fundamental distrust of one's own instincts and the forms of knowledge-in-relation Reder describes, thereby pressuring us to defer the articulation and sharing of what may be our most significant interventions.[3]

For Indigenous and other racialized scholars, the problem of disavowal is compounded by the effects of colonial erasure and displacement, which continue to assert themselves and which Reder addresses in her work. I have felt, myself, the strangeness as a child, without having words to express it, of noticing how Indigenous people kept disappearing from my history and social studies texts once Cabot and company appeared (only, sometimes, to reappear later as protestors). I recall picking up Penny Petrone's *First People, First Voices* for the first time as an undergraduate and feeling intuitively that I did not have what I needed to read it in the way I had hoped.[4] I remember the excitement of reading the first pages of Maria Campbell's autobiography, realizing only later that I was responding to how she wove together Métis history, her family stories, and her personal experience.[5] These moments of intuition, these inklings I now recognize as part of a heavy inheritance that writers like Reder and Campbell have addressed directly, generate innovative work in life writing and Indigenous literary studies that

challenges the inheritances of settler colonialism in Canada as they directly impact Cree and Métis people.

Research grounded in âcimisowin led Reder to the archive, as she identified problems in the work of scholars like Penny Petrone and Arnold Krupat, and to centring relationality in her approach. While I, as an undergraduate, was only beginning to learn about the contributions and limitations of Petrone's work, Reder was developing a critical analysis of scholarship on Indigenous life writing that was clearing the path for other researchers to follow—researchers who were also concerned with how we relate to our discursive histories in and through the archive. Through her own research and work on the project *The People and the Text*, Reder developed practices for studying early Indigenous writing informed by Indigenous relational thought, engaging with the archive, working with authors and their families in respectful ways, and cultivating the relational context of research with students and colleagues. This work has yielded significant contributions to Indigenous literary studies in collaboration with her research team, resulting in a restored publication of Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, a detailed manuscript comparison of editorial changes to Edward Ahenakew's *Voices of the Plains Cree*, discussions of accountability in research methodology and process, and many other contributions to the study of early Indigenous writing. In her narration of the research process in *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*, Reder shows how such projects require honouring âcimisowina and the relational contexts that support them. For Reder, âcimisowina are necessary precisely because they may be what we have to start with, the place from which to begin.

I use words like *instinct*, *hunch*, *intuition*, and *inkling* to indicate how many of us are often prompted in research by the somatic, affective, and intuitive. The instigating moments of our research can be deeply felt or sensed even before they can be described. A sense of something can become a wondering, and the work of âcimisowina often begins in this place before we have the story formed. Thus, âcimisowin requires a practice of attunement to the sensory and affective dimensions of intellectual work. In her address at the 2022 ILSA gathering, Reder described her experience of researching Absolom Halkett's

disappearance using language of instinct and intuition. As she noted in her talk, a research process that is responsive to these instincts helps mitigate the perfectionistic impulse cultivated in academia, which seems to demand that researchers achieve possessive or dominating control over both the search and the material. Even as she develops a literature review in her book, Reder weaves her discussion of scholarship with her own stories, citing her experiences of noticing how other writers incorporate autobiography as a research practice in their work. Even as she fulfills the requisite situating of herself and her research in relation to previous scholarship, she does so in a way that narrates her own experience of making the trail, with its movements and stalls, thereby refusing a depersonalized, dispassionate method. As she writes in her book, Reder found others whose work "emboldened" her to continue and to approach the experiential as a site of inquiry (8), especially in resistance to the gaps she worked to bridge. Similarly, *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* emboldens others to honour the places from which they begin in ways that expand our definitions of what "counts" as scholarship.

Notes

1. Visit warrencariou.com/petrography for an introduction to Warren's petrography practice.
2. Reder notes "few" people know "the characteristics of myotonic dystrophy: how it only takes effect in adulthood, slowing down one's metabolism and sapping energy as one's muscles slowly waste away" (5).
3. For a fuller discussion of this topic from a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe perspective, see Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation."
4. As Reder notes, the 1983 publication of Petrone's *First Peoples, First Voices* from University of Toronto Press was a "path-breaking" moment for the study of Indigenous writing (25). However, Reder and other scholars have also written about the problems in Petrone's analysis. For more, see Reder, *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*, 25-30.
5. See Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 1973, as well as the 2019 restored edition.

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Autobiography as Orientation and Reclamation

Otoniya Juliane Okot Bitek

This term, I asked students to listen to Lee Maracle's Writer's Trust Margaret Laurence Lecture to ground them for our Black studies course, African Literatures on These Indigenous Lands. This is a powerful lecture that reminds us that, in Canada, Indigenous women's voices often come last, and that we have work to do as we demand that our libraries, syllabi, curricula, bookstores, and writing-prize culture recognize the power and relevance of Indigenous women's stories. After all, Maracle says, "You live on Turtle Island. Where is your familiarity with the voices of its women?" (00:34:26-33).

It's a struggle to move students beyond thinking about African and Indigenous people according to well-established, dominant narratives of suffering and oppression. My syllabus is full of writers and artists to showcase how brilliant and powerful works can speak to one another and be read alongside each other to imagine beyond these destructive narratives. We read the first chapter of Daniel Heath Justice's *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* to prepare for the next week's reading—Therese Mailhot's memoir, *Heart Berries*—in order to encourage students to focus on the work of autobiography. From *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*, I read Deanna Reder's generous modelling of "life story as method" and her insight

that "âcimisowin *is a* preferred genre" steeped in Cree tradition (8, 11). I'm also thinking about how âcimisowina allow us to orientate ourselves, as readers, listeners, and storytellers.

In 2019, I went to my homeland in northern Uganda as part of the Transformative Memory Initiative, an organization that gathers people working in, with, and from communities that have come through mass violence. When we visited Burcoro, a few miles away from my hometown in Gulu, we were welcomed in English and Acholi, my mother tongue. I was struck that I was witnessing a land acknowledgement given as part of the welcome and as part of the hosts' visitor orientation. The elders told us about the lands on which we stood, who the clan was, and a brief history of the space we visited. Each of the survivors of the Burcoro massacre (April 1991) oriented us by introducing themselves with respect to the land, shared what happened to them, and spoke critically against the power structures that sought to victimize them and lock them in victimhood—arguments that resonate with Reder's insight in *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* regarding Donna Haraway's standpoint theory (8).[1] I think about how, in the last two decades, representations of Acholi people in the media have come fast and furiously, but have only ever depicted us as brutal rebels or deeply traumatized people. I think about the fictionalized dreadlocked, red-eyed, dark-skinned, machete-wielding leader of the Lord's Resistance Army as depicted in the James Bond film *Casino Royale*: he speaks in my Acholi tongue but is acted by Ivorian actor Isaach De Bankolé, who is far, far removed from the very real Lord's Resistance Army and the effects of their war on Acholi people. I think about the African woman in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* who was described as a "wild and gorgeous apparition," unreal and without a voice, even in her homeland, which was already complete with language, history, and culture. Deanna Reder reminds me that autobiography as knowledge-making, resistance, world-making, preservation, and reclamation is necessary against the forces that would tell stories about us to erase us from ourselves.

In my recent book, *A Is for Acholi*, I spend time responding to Conrad, illustrating the nonsense of his work through an excavation of this text in English, a language we share. I take space to orient myself, in the Acholi tradition, through introduction of my family and

community history all the way to our life on Turtle Island, three decades later. Through Deanna's book, I come to know that this kind of orientation is also a form of autobiography, a kind of storytelling from which we tell ourselves into being, into history, and into ourselves.

Notes

1. Reder recounts being "encouraged by Donna Haraway's idea of situated knowledge that posited that those who are oppressed—those who speak from the 'vantage point of the subjugated'—are better able to critique power structures" (8).

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Toward a Hermeneutics of Visiting

Warren Cariou

How often, when reading a work of literary criticism, does one get a genuine sense of who the writer is, how they relate to the works under discussion, and how they might connect to us as readers? This feeling of connectedness between writer and reader is all too rare in the practice of criticism, and it is something to be treasured when we find it, because it highlights the true importance—the affective, spiritual, and intellectual stakes—of the stories that nourish us and help to show us who we are. *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* is

suffused with that precious sense of connectedness, which is why I consider it a remarkable work of relational reading. Deanna Reder shows us what is really possible in literary criticism here, not only by interpreting works of literature, but also by enacting a crucial form of relationship-building that is so important in Cree and Métis cultures—and indeed in all Indigenous cultures I am familiar with. She does this by bringing her own stories into the work and highlighting the role of story in her family and her communities. The autobiographical elements of this book are not merely prefatory, are not a separate "position statement," but are in fact deeply connected to the arguments Reder makes about the works of autobiography she studies. Knowing the stories of her family helps readers to understand the complex forms of knowledge she brings to these works and the insights she finds therein. In addition, these family stories welcome readers into a circle and ask us to be part of a relationship that goes beyond a straightforward interpretive practice, toward something that is more deeply tied to ethics and community-building. "Including one's story," she writes, "is not a way to take centre stage as much as to share and visit together" (9). Indeed, this book is written in the spirit of sharing and visiting, and it is so much more powerful and profound for that.

As a scholar of Indigenous storytelling, I am struck by the ways that *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* brings the ethos of oral stories into its interpretive practice. I am reminded that storytellers are not only the performers of traditional stories but are also often the most skilful interpreters of those stories. For example, in his discussions with me, Omushkego Elder Louis Bird has often made fascinating observations about the meanings of stories he has told me over the years. Quite often, these observations take the form of other stories. In other words, the act of storytelling itself is not clearly demarcated from the storyteller's role as interpreter. This is so different from the history of literary criticism within the academy, where the story and the interpretation have usually been separated into two different realms. Reder, in contrast, utilizes the blended creative-interpretive practice of oral storytellers by bringing her own family stories into the analysis, and this choice has important effects upon the reader.

In an oral storytelling session, listeners have a clear, though often unstated and sometimes unacknowledged, role within the storytelling—

they are called upon to respond to the gift of the story with a gift of their own: their attention, their ability to listen carefully and with humility. I feel that readers of *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* are called to a similar kind of ethical engagement with the stories that begin each chapter of this book and, by extension, with the primary texts that are under discussion as well. Reder explicitly refers to the importance of listening when she describes the Cree relational ethics of wâhkôhtiwin in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, writing, "If people refuse to listen, or refuse to consider they have obligations to their neighbours, then the system collapses" (48). It's important that listening is linked here to the idea of ethical obligations—meaning not that one is obliged to listen, but that the very act of listening is an opening of the self toward ethical responsibility. I believe that Reder does something similar to this through the medium of text. This book approaches readers in a spirit of wâhkôhtiwin, inviting us into a relationship that develops from the gift of Reder's own stories of herself and her family. wâhkôhtiwin is, after all, an extension of family relationships beyond the strict bounds of blood and toward a broader sense of kinship. Like all gifts within the context of wâhkôhtiwin, Reder's story-gifts also contain an expectation that readers will carry a responsibility for what they have learned and that they will be expected to give back. How we choose to do that—through teaching, writing, or sharing our experience of the stories in other ways—is up to us. The key is that we have been welcomed into this circle of ethical relations by the author's choice to break with standard critical conventions, to show us how her own stories are interconnected with the primary texts she is studying. The result might be called "visiting on the page," and it evokes the very deepest and most thought-provoking kind of conversation that one could imagine.

Deanna Reder's approach here is perfectly suited to the works she is studying, which are all, in different ways, about the paramount importance of relations in the creation and maintenance of Indigenous selves. The book also provides an incredibly valuable model for other scholars—especially Indigenous scholars—who are seeking the most appropriate and fruitful ways of interpreting Indigenous literature. I predict that it will have a large influence on the future of critical work in our discipline and that it will continue to call scholars into the practice of story-based relational interpretation for years to come.

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"Who Is It That You Really Are?" Laughter and Ruptures

Dallas Hunt

At a gathering, while giving a speech on the importance of stories, Lee Maracle was asked by an audience member about Thomas King's oft-quoted phrase: "The truth about stories is that's all we are" (King 2). Maracle, without missing a beat, replied in a teasing manner, "If I am going into labour, I want a midwife, not a fucking story." I have not been able to find any evidence of this interaction, but it is an anecdote that I have heard circulated and one that I circulate as well. In doing so, my intention is not to dismiss âcimowina (stories) or Thomas King's work, but rather to consider how Maracle is nudging us to contemplate what is involved and embedded within story—what she will call elsewhere the "systemization of [Indigenous] knowledge" (Maracle 203). That is to say, our stories carry within them notions of science, law, governance, politics, and economics, among many other things. As well, Maracle is avoiding the logic that our stories are cute cultural curios, instead insisting they are forms of cultural and political production. Maracle follows and sits alongside other Indigenous women, queer, and Two-Spirit orators and writers, including Maria Campbell, Freda Ahenakew, and many of the other storytellers and weavers within Reder's

recent text, *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition: Cree and Métis âcimisowina*. All of these Indigenous women, as well as the Indigenous men in Reder's book, are in conversation with one another across time and space. While non-Indigenous theorists might refer to this as dialogic, I follow Reder's reading of these writers in seeing it as an act of visiting. *To visit* is a verb, an invitation to dwell, to learn, to laugh, and to be with one another. Reder's text, then, is an invitation to come visit.

And while our stories may be invested in political and ecological interventions and concepts, Reder also insists that they are deeply attuned to âcimowina, which are "stories or accounts of daily life," ones that provide knowledge and sustenance to the larger community (6). These accounts of the everyday are often forms of labour that are highly gendered, and precisely for this reason may be discredited or dismissed, even as they are simultaneously highly valued. As nehiyaw scholar Billy-Ray Belcourt asserts in "Indigenous Studies Beside Itself": "Indigenous studies misapprehends the tumult of everyday life" (182). While Belcourt's observation about the relegation of everyday life speaks to fault lines within the fields of Indigenous literary studies and Indigenous studies more broadly, there are larger conversations to be had, as illustrated by theorists such as Reder and Belcourt, regarding how âcimowina and those who practise it are the backbone of many communities. These forms of "felt theory" or "felt knowledge," as Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million dubs them, offer a "narrative that appeals as a history that can be *felt* as well as intellectualized," one that brings "down the barriers between the personal and the political" (59). Thus, when Reder speaks to the ways in which her "Mom's stories would sound rude if you didn't understand the context" (6), she is gesturing to how these deeply personal, funny, and intellectual stories both are highly individual and serve a larger purpose to the community.

And yet these âcimowina are also offered as a gift, with the theory of non-interference at the forefront (non-interference being a Cree practice): "Rarely would Mom dispense advice, and while her stories revealed her understanding of what was good or bad, she never told morality tales: she was always hesitant to tell other people what to do" (6). To accept this gift, one must embrace the "need to listen" and be willing to receive the knowledge that is being produced

in these pockets of livability, in the everyday (7). Non-interference thus provides the possibility for a radical rupturing of asymmetrical and hierarchal positions that can dominate in (some) communities. Viewing "visiting as Indigenous feminist practice," Eve Tuck, Haliehana Stepetin, Rebecca Beaulne-Stuebing, and Jo Billows write that it may have the possibility to enact "a practice that is queer, anti-capitalist, and rooted in the cosmologies of our communities" (1). Indeed, visiting "centres relationality and an ethic of care" (1). Reder states as much when she proclaims that "much of the work of interpretation was my responsibility" (Reder 7), meaning that both storytelling and active listening are acts of care, of being in relation. The story is a place of both telling and listening, mediated by what the teller chooses to share and what the listener chooses to attend to with care. In this way, the act of visiting is a shared space, an affective commons wherein we can envision different ways of being in relation to one another in a good way. Visiting and storytelling, though, as Reder and her ancestors remind us, are not just the domain of people(s)—they involve our non-human kin as well. Writing in *Literary Land Claims*, Margery Fee asserts, "Indigenous storytellers describe the land as speaking, as telling its own stories in every rock, stream, and headland" (7). In thinking of visiting beyond the human, Cree (and, by extension, Métis peoples) affirm their cosmologies, or their "nêhiyawimâmitonêyihcikan, translated as nêhiyaw thinking or Cree consciousness" (Reder 19).

Visiting and storytelling have the potential to be radical *political* acts, as assertions of "Indigenous cultural resurgence" (Reder 11). And yet we should not forget about the joy, about the everyday, about "wawiyatâcimowina (funny, humorous personal stories)" (7). Given that Indigenous peoples have often been relegated to social death, Reder contests these violences through stories and humour—through "the shared hilarity of life"—providing a methodology in the process (7). After all, Reder and her family "loved to hear her [Mom] tell stories because she was so funny" (6). Listening, storytelling, and laughter provide an intersubjective space wherein both the cultural and political can flourish for Indigenous communities. What possibilities can be generated out of laughter or "the rolling of [one's] eyes" (7)? What ruptures? What worlds?

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Revisiting in *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*

Kristina Fagan Bidwell

In his contribution to this forum, Warren Cariou argues that Deanna Reder's *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* constitutes an act of "visiting on the page" (171). Building on Cariou's insight, I would add that we can further read Reder's book as enacting a process of *revisiting*, of repeated returning over a long period of time. This revisiting is sometimes literal, as in Reder's descriptions of her repeated visits to family on the prairies, visits that often bring new revelations and deepening understanding. But revisiting also has a

more figurative sense, meaning to return to a subject from a different perspective and to revise one's initial thoughts. *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* is built upon revisiting in both senses. By showing how Reder's work has evolved over decades, this book powerfully claims the value of revisiting stories, ideas, and relationships over time and of not rushing to conclusion or publication.

By integrating Reder's individual and familial autobiography into her literary scholarship, *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition*, as Sam McKegney puts it, "engender[s] new horizons of critical possibility" (159). While such autobiographical material may appear to be readily available to scholars, the academy, as Johannah Bird argues, often teaches us that "knowledge is not within us" (164), and so working with our own stories within academic spaces can be a difficult process. Reder emphasizes that, for her, this process of integration has taken a lifetime. She recalls that her early experiences of school and university felt fundamentally separate from her Indigenous self: she found no Indigenous teachers or professors (*Autobiography* 116), no reflection of herself in the curriculum (25, 115, 125), and no vocabulary to describe herself or her family (115-16). Her undergraduate education in literature was, she writes, "completely separate from being a member of my family" (116). With her 2007 doctoral dissertation, Reder pushes back against that sense of separation by rooting her study of Indigenous autobiography in her mother's storytelling. She would go on to rethink and revise that dissertation project extensively over many years, focusing it ever more closely on the language, concepts, and people of her Cree-Métis community of northern Saskatchewan. The revision of the dissertation was a process of repeatedly revisiting her own stories and those of her community. While revision is a usual part of the writing process, Reder's book is unusual in the way that it makes her revision explicit, emphasizing her own growth and change, her formative collaborations, her discoveries, and her consequently changing view of texts. Her writing is peppered with phrases like the ones she uses in recollecting two very different encounters with Edward Ahenakew's âcimisowina: "Little did I know that a decade later . . ."; "It is only now . . ."; and "I have come to realize . . . " (*Autobiography* 66).

Reder's academic revisiting is grounded in her understanding of revisiting as an Indigenous storytelling practice. Over the course of the book, she again and again returns to the story, first heard from her mother, of how her kôhkum cured a man of blindness (*Autobiography* 23-24). Over time, she learns that this is a story shared by her wider family, with different members holding different pieces of it (59, 110). Perhaps most strikingly, she eventually learns from her uncle that the man in her mother's story was Absolom Halkett, who mysteriously disappeared with Jim Brady in 1967.[1] Her subsequent search for the remains of the missing men is an effort to complete Halkett's story. While she is not able, for now, to explain the men's disappearance, by placing it among several "unexplained deaths" in her family (108), Reder develops the story as more than simply one of loss. She comes to understand it as part of a pattern of systemic racism in policing which devalues Indigenous lives. And, in the face of this devaluing, she celebrates the ways in which Halkett's and Brady's lives "continue to be named and remembered" and emphasizes that there are, in Indigenous communities, "fragments waiting to be collected together" and continuing to be revisited and reassembled (135, 130).

Reder's attention to revisiting also shapes her reading of Cree-Métis literature. For example, in her analysis of the manuscripts of Edward Ahenakew, she focuses on Ahenakew's process of rewriting. She explains that he wrote at least four versions of his autobiography (*Autobiography* 61, 85), and she looks at these writings together, revealing the themes, motifs, and incidents to which Ahenakew returns repeatedly. Because she reads Ahenakew's writing as a lifelong process, she does not judge his words at any one moment. For example, Ahenakew's character Young Hawk buries the ceremonial pipe he has been given, an image that could be read as Ahenakew advocating for the abandonment of Cree culture. Instead, Reder reads this moment in the context of Ahenakew's body of writing, comparing it to similar moments from his other works and contemplating various possible meanings of the scene. By attending to how Ahenakew revisited questions about nêhiyaw spirituality over his lifetime, Reder is able to view with compassion the difficult choices he made and also honour his "great devotion to his nation" (93).

In her conclusion, Reder makes clear that this book does not represent an end to her revisiting process: "while we speak from specific positions, these shift and change as we grow and move and learn and age. We are hurtling through time and space, connected by these stories to those who have preceded us and those who will come after us" (*Autobiography* 135). With these words, she extends revisiting beyond her book and herself, reaching into future generations. In her acknowledgements, she writes to her children, "I hope this work resonates with you" (137). This metaphor of resonance—the creation of a full sound through the synchronous vibration of neighbouring objects—is perhaps the best way to describe Reder's book. Her own, her family's, and her community's stories reverberate with one another, becoming richer and fuller, and then extend further out across time and space to resonate with her readers.

For me, *Autobiography as Indigenous Intellectual Tradition* resonated deeply. I've grappled with how to be part of an academic world that often feels, to draw on Reder's words, "completely separate from being a member of my family" (*Autobiography* 116). To pursue my academic career, I have spent much of my life far from my Indigenous community and extended family, and I've struggled with the sense that being academically "productive" often seems at odds with family life. But I read Reder's book during my own time of revisiting. During the pandemic, my husband, my two young sons, and I moved temporarily to my hometown of St. John's, NL, and have been taking time to connect more deeply with family and community. In this context, I felt like Reder's book was speaking directly to me. Through presenting her own revisiting process as slow and ongoing, Reder creates an open, compassionate space for other Indigenous scholars to value our own stories and relationships and our own slow process of putting them together. I am grateful that this book tells me that I don't have to know it all, write it all, and tie it all together today. Instead, it opens up inspiring possibilities for work that slowly, thoughtfully, and vulnerably includes more of who we are—and who we are in the process of becoming.

Notes

1. Reder greatly expands on Brady and Halkett's disappearance and on her efforts

to solve it in *Cold Case North: The Search for James Brady and Absolom Halkett*.

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Returns: As We Have Always Done

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson
As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance. U of Minnesota P $24.95
Reviewed by Tiffany Lethabo King (University of Virginia)

Over the past year, I have witnessed—primarily on Zoom—a surge in the number of universities and institutions around the world offering land acknowledgements. While Canada long ago co-opted this Indigenous practice and made it a feature of liberal Canadian performances of multiculturalism, I have witnessed universities once unfamiliar with the protocol use it most recently to perform an institutional commitment to "diversity, equity, and inclusion" in the wake of George Floyd's murder.[1] Though proliferating, the practice of acknowledging Indigenous peoples and their ancestral homelands remains uncoupled from a commitment to Indigenous resurgence. It is at this political juncture that I review Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's popular 2017 book *As We Have Always Done*. I assert that the book should be revisited during different political moments.

I perform this return much like Simpson revisits the theme of resurgence repeatedly over the course of her diverse body of work. Because Simpson has witnessed the Canadian settler state respond and adjust to Indigenous resurgence through forms of political theatre, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, she has spent time revisiting, deepening, and rearticulating Indigenous resurgence. Struck by Simpson's reflective tone and enactment of the Nishnaabeg aesthetic of repetition (200), I am compelled to revisit the text from feminist and queer sites within Black studies.

Simpson's work resonates with me as a Black studies scholar. I have turned to Simpson's work for a number of reasons: its poetry, its experimentation with form, its theoretical import, its capacity to transform the reader's desires, and her full-throated commitment to building alliances with Black communities on Turtle Island. Because Simpson has spent time inside Indigenous movements like Idle No More, she has valuable insights about the challenges that twenty-first-century movement-building faces. Her work speaks forcefully in a political moment shaped by racial reckoning and a pandemic that has disproportionately devastated Indigenous and Black communities.

As We Have Always Done is an expansive and weighty book project with an urgent political message. Simpson begins the book with the present and future of Nishnaabeg resurgence: her children. Simpson sees the promise and hope of resurgence in her children. Simpson's goal in the book is to establish "an Nishinaabeg presence, an Nishaabeg present" (6). The book is a deep meditation on the political, intellectual, spiritual, artistic, and transformative project of resurgence. In each chapter, Simpson re-articulates and re-elaborates resurgence to develop an ever-deepening understanding for herself, Nishnaabeg people, and others willing to become co-resistors in the struggle for resurgence.

Throughout the book, Simpson covers a broad territory that includes defining radical resurgence, grounded normativity, Nishnaabeg intelligence, Indigenous internationalism, *kwe* as a gendered theory of dispossession and refusal, the meta-relationship of the dispossession of Indigenous lands and bodies upheld by the settler state, Two-Spirit and queer (2SQ) brilliance as resurgence, the role of

children's land-based education in resurgence, resistance to state recognition, and Nishnaabeg traditions of anticapitalism. Making an adamant appeal to refuse state recognition throughout the book, Simpson offers examples of everyday forms of generative refusal that resist Canadian deployments of a politics of grief, rights- and treaty-based frameworks, and electoral politics.

Simpson begins the first substantive chapter on Nishnaabeg intelligence by reflecting on and articulating a deeper appreciation for her elders after the two years that she spent with them at Long Lake #58. Nishnaabeg intelligence as a form of embodied thought or *Biiskabiyang*—a return to self, grounded normativity, and a form of flight—animates the chapter and the book (15-16). Chapter 1 is a contemplative chapter that gives the sense that Simpson is returning to the ways of knowing that she wants to reground herself in and articulate in a fuller way than she could previously in *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* (2012). A concept that Simpson has revised and honed over time with her colleague Glen Coulthard is *grounded normativity*. Glen Coulthard's (Dene) notion of "grounded normativity" provides both an anchor and a flexible space for Simpson to rearticulate Nishnaabewin, or place-based Nishnaabeg "practices, knowledge, and ethics" (23; see Coulthard, 60-64).

Nishnaabewin-like Dene notions of grounded normativity take into consideration "all of the associated practices, knowledges, and ethics, that make us Nishnaabeg and construct the Nishnaabeg world" (Simpson, *As We Have* 23). Simpson's adaption and expansion of grounded normativity is possible due to grounded normativity's function as a collection of "ethical frameworks generated by . . . place-based practices" (22). Like Coulthard, Simpson also brings Indigenous practices of resistance, resurgence, and intelligence into proximity with the Black Radical Tradition. Simpson explicitly connects grounded normativity to Black studies scholars Neil Roberts' and Alexis Pauline Gumbs' notions of fugitivity (18; see Roberts; Gumbs). In this eloquent and pensive chapter, Simpson names Nishnaabeg people as both land-based and migratory people who, like the elders at Long Lake #58, "knew flight" as a form of resistance to settler colonialism (18).

In chapter 2, Simpson rearticulates Nishnaabeg intelligence through *kwe* or a gendered recounting of the tradition of refusing colonialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy. While different from the colonial conception of *woman* constructed through a binary, *kwe*, as a term for *woman* within the spectrum of genders, allows Simpson to claim a collective practice and politics of refusal. Proclaiming that "my life as a kwe within Nishnaabewin is *method*" (29) Simpson outlines how *kwe*, as a process of *debwewin*, or producing truths with the head and heart (31), are central to her research. Of critical importance to scholars working within anticolonial, decolonial, and abolitionist traditions, Simpson's practice of *kwe* emphatically claims using first-person writing as a way "of taking accountability for [her] own thoughts" (32). This choice exceeds the stylistic and challenges the very premises of Western knowledge production, which continues to claim a neutral, bodiless universality that evades accountability. Simpson further grounds the tradition and practice within the legacy of Lee Maracle's *I Am Woman* (1996) and the activism of Ellen Gabriel, who acted as the spokesperson for the Mohawk nation during the Oka Crisis (32-33).

Further elaborating *kwe* as a method in chapter 3, Simpson theorizes *kwe* as opposition to "[t]he removal of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg bodies from the land, from the present, and from all of the relationships meaningful to [them]" (41). Within

this gendered frame, the body becomes a central preoccupation of *kwe* as a method of refusal because it excavates the sexual, gendered violence at the core of settler colonialism. The settler-colonial nation-state, as well as masculinist Indigenous political theories, tend to marginalize the heteropatriarchal aspects of settler-colonial violence. Thinking with Audra Simpson's *Mohawk Interruptus* (2014), Leanne Betasamosake Simpson articulates and affirms the Indigenous bodies of women, children, and Two-Spirit (2SQ) folks as "political orders" that represent a "lived alternative to heteronormative constructions of gender" and settler-colonial political systems (41). *Kwe*'s attention to gendered and sexualized (queered) Indigenous bodies as "political orders" that must be destroyed emerges from the specific forms of oppositional knowledge that Indigenous women, children, and 2SQ folks have developed (41). This "expansive" notion of dispossession that centres the Indigenous body resonates with Black feminist, queer, and trans traditions that rigorously theorize the Black body as a key site of violation for slavery and colonialism (41, 54).

Chapter 4's exploration of Indigenous internationalism expands notions of nationhood beyond narrow humanist parameters. Indigenous internationalism works to be in good relation with "plant nations, animal nations, insects, bodies of water, air, soil, and spiritual beings" (58). Indigenous internationalism also travels ethically. Thinking with Coulthard's engagement with Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952), Simpson argues for an Indigenous internationalism anchored in a grounded normativity that practises a form of ethical "theoretical promiscuity" in order to be a better co-resister with, for instance, the Black Radical Tradition (63, 66). Indigenous internationalism also affirms collective self-recognition as a practice that privileges Indigenous land-based intelligence systems over "Western liberatory theor[ies] already well established in the academy" (67). Simpson's critique of the academy and Indigenous scholars' relationship to it is incisive. Simpson bemoans the energy invested in "establishing [Indigenous studies] as a discipline" when energy could be directed toward "invigorating nation-based Indigenous intelligence systems on our own terms" (67). Just where to invest intellectual labour is an enduring question for movements and fields committed to decolonial and abolitionist struggles and study.

Simpson's fifth chapter, on Nishnaabeg anticapitalism, is essential reading for scholars committed to anticapitalist struggles. The chapter is devoted to centring Indigenous people's "rich anticapitalist practices" and traditions (72). For centuries, Nishnaabeg and Indigenous people have practised systems of living outside of capitalism that are instructive. Simpson's Nishnaabeg ancestors "didn't accumulate capital, they accumulated networks of . . . trust" (77). Colonialism undercuts Nishnaabeg practices of harvest distribution, the sharing of hunting grounds, and giveaway ceremonies that function as alternatives to capitalism (77). Simpson contends that Nishnaabeg practices of caring and sharing in a society of makers is the anticapitalism of Indigenous intelligence (82). A serious engagement with Nishnaabeg intelligence and political systems would reveal that there were no notions of private property or "the commons" (78). Similar to Coulthard, Simpson argues that "the goal of radical resurgent education and mobilization cannot be the proletarianization of our people" (82). Contemporary visions of an anticapitalist future must be shaped by Indigenous resurgence and anticapitalism.

In chapter 6, Simpson's tone becomes tenderer as she shares her pedagogical approaches when caring for the hearts and minds of her Indigenous students

who must contend with the ongoing sexual and gender-based violence of settler colonialism. Educators will be touched by the care and affirmation she shows her students as she deftly maps the history of gendered, colonial violence in Canada. Her lesson plan and care work, which unpacks and seeks to take some of the power out of terms like *slut* and *squaw*, allow students to confront and replace the degrading stereotypes with affirming descriptions of themselves. This exercise enables the students to "place the interrogation of heteropatriarchy at the center of [Indigenous] nation-building movements" (91). Simpson argues that undoing the gender hierarchy could change the lives of "Indigenous women, children and 2SQ" folks, which she calls the "measure of our success" for nation-building (91). The chapter ends with a discussion of the necessity of building processes of accountability to address sexual violence within Indigenous communities.

Chapter 7 continues to trace the legacy of sexual and gendered violence perpetrated by missions and the colonial education system. In this chapter, Simpson provides an astute gendered analysis that unearths the role that white women played in the violent disciplining and gendering of Native bodies at the missions, as well as white women in Canada's more broadly significant role in genocide as agents and enforcers of the Indian Act (97). Simpson implicates white literary figures like Susanna Moodie and Margaret Atwood in sustaining a discursive genocidal project through their literature and its demeaning depictions of Indigenous characters that reproduce the logics of the 1876 Indian Act. This historicization of white women's, and white feminists', complicity in heteropatriarchal, colonial violence leads Simpson to interrogate calls for feminist solidarity. Simpson makes her position clear that there can be no presumed solidarity as long as white feminists participate in genocide. This chapter ends on a very different affective register than the other chapters as Simpson angrily attends to her own pain. Simpson resists normative and ableist notions of healing as an inevitable and generative outcome in response to colonial sexual violence, proclaiming, "I don't want to be healed" (103). Rather, she wants to tap into some of the pain and rage that remains and use it. It is important for professed, non-Indigenous feminists to sit with Simpson's rage in order to interrogate and transform their own feminist politics, which often remain aligned with state practices of genocide.

Chapter 8 turns inward, as Simpson speaks to and affirms Indigenous people while addressing and holding settlers accountable for heteropatriarchal and anti-queer violence. The urgency of the issue of anti-queer violence is palpable as Simpson opens the chapter with a sweat lodge ceremony that she and her daughter attended when her daughter was questioning her gender. For Simpson, the stakes are very clear: heteropatriarchy and anti-queerness destroy the worlds of queer youth, as well as Nishnaabeg worlds, past, present, and to come (144). Simpson attempts to denaturalize the notion that queer folks and ways of life are new to Indigenous peoples. According to Simpson, her "Ancestors lived in a society where what I know as 'queer,' particularly in terms of social organization, was so normal it didn't have a name" (129). Simpson, like Cree scholar Alex Wilson, is arguing for a return to a normalization of queer life within Indigenous life.

Further, Simpson draws on the work of queer Indigenous scholars—like Alex Wilson (Cree), Billy-Ray Belcourt (Cree), and Ma-Nee Chacaby (Ojibwe-Cree)—as models for Indigenous intelligence that uncouple gender from constructions of land. Citing the work of the Women's Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health

Network, Simpson celebrates the work that Indigenous organizations are doing to ungender the land and water and reorient Indigenous communities' relations to *Aki* (the Nishnaabewin term for t*he land*); further, the land provides endless examples of queerness, diverse sexualities, and genders (122). Simpson argues that since Indigenous "thought is queer," and if Indigenous people are doing resurgence correctly, they "shouldn't have to queer resurgence, because the political, ethical, and social organizations that the 2SQ Indigenous community has held onto and protected so fiercely would already be centred" (138). Simpson laments that although 2SQ folks have contributed significantly to Idle No More, there is a lack of 2SQ representation in the Idle No More leadership (136).

The story "Binoojinh Makes a Lovely Discovery" organizes chapter 9, with Simpson retelling the story that her elder, Doug Williams, told her. The story is an open and revisable one that features a child, Binoojinh. Over the course of several retellings, Simpson advises, the child's gender changes (girl child, boy child, nonbinary child). In this version, Binoojinh is a nonbinary child whose self-led learning represents a tradition of land-based Nishnaabeg education and intelligence. The story celebrates the intelligence and world-making capacity of children and non-human relations, like the squirrel and the tree who consent to the production of maple sap and the sharing of knowledge. As a story of a child's self-led learning "*from* the land and *with* the land" (150), and whose learning process is honoured by adults, the story functions as a "theoretical anchor . . . and basis of" Nishnaabeg intelligence (150-51). Binoojiinh's story models how "[t]he land must once again *become* the pedagogy" (160). However, in order for the land to become pedagogy, the settler-colonial forces that violently prevent Nishnaabeg people from accessing the land must be eradicated.

In chapter 10, Simpson elaborates upon the stakes of a radical resurgence project that relinquishes claims to recognition. For Simpson, "a refusal of state recognition [is] an organizing platform and mechanism for dismantling the systems of colonial domination" (176). Rather than organizing around the state's modes of recognition and redress, Simpson argues for organizing around Audra Simpson's notion of "*fear of disappearance*," the "root" issue behind contemporary Indigenous debates "over membership and belonging" (176). An alternative form of recognition that Simpson affirms is "[r]ecognition within Nishnaabeg intelligence . . . a process of seeing" and mirroring "another being's core essence" (185), and a path toward "and a way of generating [Indigenous] society" (185).

Chapter 11 explores quotidian, mundane, and embodied acts as important sites of Indigenous resurgence that offer "flight paths out of colonialism" (193). Examples of everyday acts of resurgence include language immersion, building canoes, making syrup, peer-to-peer sexual health work, urban land reclamation and renaming, and artistic renaissance (194-95). Simpson draws on the artistic practice and scholarly writing of Jarrett Martineau's (Plains Cree and Dene) as an example of the ways that Indigenous art and cultural production model forms of "coded disruption and affirmative refusal" (199). Simpson argues that Martineau's sophisticated yet cloaked use of Indigenous intelligence protects it from settler commodification and control by "those that have not done the work within Indigenous intelligence systems to carry the knowledge in the first place" (199). Simpson's discussion of this dual practice of presenting and cloaking Indigenous knowledge makes me acutely aware of what I cannot, am unable to, and should not want to access in Simpson's work.

This practice of opacity is one that I both have practised and observe in Black studies. This form of resistance poses important challenges to long-accepted celebrations of the merits of accessible academic scholarship.

Simpson begins chapter 12 by considering the relationships that she most values, then uses these reflections to advance a discussion of constellations as an organizing principle in resurgence movement-building (216). Simpson writes in the wake of her involvement with Idle No More in 2012 and 2013, offering a diagnosis of problems that, in her opinion, resulted in Idle No More's inability to sustain its momentum. One of the drawbacks that Simpson identifies is the movement's reliance on digital organizing. Simpson emphatically argues that online organizing functions as a form of "*digital dispossession*" in contemporary movement spaces (221), and that "grounded normativity does not structurally exist in the cyber world" (221). This sentiment resonates with the reflections and critiques that Black activists have and are currently making about Black Lives Matter. Additionally, Simpson expresses regret about the inability of Idle No More to build the kind of relationships and solidarity that she desired with Black and Brown "individuals and communities on Turtle Island and beyond" (228). For Simpson, "[i]t matters . . . profoundly how change is achieved and with whom we achieve it" (230).

In the book's conclusion, Simpson offers a few examples of the kind of direct action that could provide models of radical resurgence. Simpson identifies the importance of "placing Indigenous bodies between settlers and their money" (236), implying the Oka Crisis succeeded in this regard where Idle No More did not. Simpson also references the ST̓ÁUTW nation's reclamation of PKOLS, colonially known as Mount Douglas (240). This direct action prioritized building relationships, joy, children, and generative refusal: the nation did not ask the state for permission to reclaim the land. According to Simpson, aspects of this act of resurgence model a politics wherein Indigenous people "don't need a list of demands, because we are the demand. We are the alternative" (237). Simpson's rejection of demand-based politics has some interesting discursive resonances with recent sentiments in abolitionist literature and rhetoric. Simpson's *As We Have Always Done* will continue to be essential reading as Indigenous and Black freedom movements chart their presents and futures.

Notes

1. George Floyd, an African American man, was murdered by Derek Chauvin in May of 2020, igniting global protests. In the wake of his murder and the subsequent, reanimated racial justice mobilization, public discourse has referred to the political moment following his death and the protests as a "racial reckoning."
2. For example, in "The Vel of Slavery" (2014), Jared Sexton argues for an abolitionist politics without claims. I bring this into conversation with Simpson's rejection of demands. And, more recently, in a 2021 press conference, Pam Africa of the Philadelphia-based MOVE organization refused to entertain accepting an apology and a possible official inquiry in light of the revelation that the University of Pennsylvania Museum had stolen the bones of two MOVE children, Delisha and Tree Africa, after their brutal murder by the state.

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Rethinking Celebrity

Jennifer Adese and Robert Alexander Innes, eds.
Indigenous Celebrity: Entanglements with Fame. U of Manitoba P $27.95
Reviewed by Katja Lee (McMaster University)

In *Indigenous Celebrity: Entanglements with Fame*, editors Jennifer Adese and Robert Alexander Innes have brought together a range of scholars from around the world to consider the "inherent complexities of Indigenous people's relationships with celebrity" (5). Their contention is that indigeneity is a particular (and particularly fraught) context that shapes how public life is expressed, experienced, negotiated, and represented: indigeneity matters. It's an argument that scholars, particularly in the field of celebrity studies, will acknowledge is both compelling and underappreciated. Hence this text represents a crucial intervention in the field that begins to untangle and sketch the scope of long-overdue conversations.

The collection opens with a productive and provocative introduction to the issues at stake. Through the figure of the reconciliation celebrity—Indigenous subjects whose public image has been used by settler-colonial cultures to embody the nation's *progress* towards reconciliation—Adese and Innes raise two critical trajectories that reoccur throughout the chapters. The first is that the celebrification of Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial contexts has a long history of furthering the aims of colonization. This is not simply because Indigenous peoples are represented in ways that serve and perpetuate colonial values and agendas, but because the entire system of celebrity is embedded in capitalist, individualistic, commodifying frameworks that sit in tension with Indigenous values and systems for honouring and serving community. The second is that within these systems of fame and celebrity, Indigenous subjects are active agents capable not only of negotiating these conditions but also of using them as a site of resistance.

Of the eleven chapters that follow, several explore these complex negotiations of indigeneity, agency, and the colonial framework of celebrity in specifically Canadian contexts. For example, in the chapter on Mohawk activist and model Kahn-Tineta Horn, Kahente Horn-Miller explores how her mother used her fame—built on her beauty and circulation in mainstream media—to strategically advocate for her community. In their exploration of the gentleman-versus-savage tropes in Justin

Trudeau's charity boxing match with Patrick Brazeau, Kim Anderson and Brendan Hokowhitu make salient connections between past and present legacies of colonial violence and gender in Canada.

Chapters that do not directly touch upon Canadian contexts nevertheless have much to offer Canadian scholars. In their chapter on "Indigenous Activism and Celebrity," Jonathan G. Hill and Virginia McLaurin distinguish between Indigenous celebrity that arises from activism and Indigenous celebrity that is mobilized in activist contexts and the politics of humility that can play a significant role in how Indigenous communities respond to the activist efforts of the famous. Another compelling chapter on activism (one I plan on using to teach Habermas' ideal speech situation) is Sheryl Lightfoot's "Collectivity as Indigenous Anti-Celebrity," which details how the principles and practices of the global Indigenous rights movement are grounded in "ancient and ongoing forms of Indigenous leadership" that stand in marked contrast to the hierarchical and individualistic systems that characterize modern celebrity (223).

As the chapters unfold, a third critical trajectory arises: the argument that, as Adese and Innes write, "Indigenous peoples have always had their own ways of bestowing respect, acknowledgement, admiration and appreciation on members of their own societies" (26). Public renown and reputation, they contend, are not new to Indigenous peoples but figure in Indigenous celebrity in profoundly different ways than in settler-colonial constructions of fame. Perhaps the most provocative argument to that effect arises from the first chapter, in which Anishinaabeg scholar Renée E. Mazinegiizhigoo-kwe Bédard argues in no uncertain terms that "Western concepts of celebrity are incommensurable with mino-waawiindaganeziwin" and that using *celebrity* to characterize Anishinaabeg peoples held in high-esteem in the community as *mino-waawiindaganeziwin* is both grossly inaccurate and part of the *cognitive imperialism* that disempowers Indigenous peoples when they use European languages (44). Bédard has harsh words for Western constructions of celebrity; while she's not wrong about the nature and effects of this capitalist juggernaut, her reading of celebrity theory is narrowly focused on those aspects that serve her argument. Other chapters, like Lightfoot's, agree that there can be no reconciling celebrity and Indigenous-centred practices and worldviews. In the final chapter, Anishinaabeg scholar w. C. Sy takes a more flexible approach, looking for alternative, Anishinaabeg-centred views of celebrity within Anishinaabeg practices.

The contrast between Bédard's approach and Sy's is, to my mind, one of the great delights of this book. It is refreshing and productive to see a conversation among scholars where there is not consensus but multiple viewpoints trialled and leveraged; it offers room for discussion and growth, and a glimpse of the sheer scope of Indigenous relationships with public life and fame. Also of particular interest are the methodologies practised by the scholars, particularly those that destabilize settler-colonial epistemologies (see, for example, the chapters by Horn-Miller and Sy, and the chapter on Pasifika rugby players in Australia by David Lakisa, Katerina Teaiwa, Daryl Adair, and Tracy Taylor).

Indigenous Celebrity is the first collection to interrogate Indigenous relationships to celebrity and is an important and rewarding read particularly for those working in celebrity studies, cultural studies, and Indigenous studies. The chapters are thoughtfully edited and organized: reading them in order, one can begin to appreciate the salient connections between seemingly distinct topics and

trace the emergence of the key questions and contradictions that these scholars are implicitly or explicitly grappling with. In short, I thoroughly enjoyed this text. It is well written and engaging, and also provocative. It offers a crucial challenge to scholars whose assumptions about celebrity have been formed and structured by settler-colonial cultures, to rethink how they think about celebrity.

An Object among Objects

George Bowering
Soft Zipper: Objects, Food, Rooms. New Star Books $19.00
George Bowering
Could Be: New Poems. New Star Books $18.00
Reviewed by Ryan J. Cox (Keyano College)

Conventional life writing is predicated on an intimacy rooted in the subjective—the idea that the author is a person sharing their (true) story with the reader. It moves around the formation of a subject-to-subject relationship in which the speaker constitutes a clearly constructed "I" that readers necessarily recognize as a subject like themselves. Formal variations—the difference between autobiography and memoir, for instance—can be read as variations in the strength of the truth claim or the degree of intimacy, but such works all seemingly revolve around the central construction of the speaker as a subject in relation to other subjects: the people in their lives, the reader. There are, of course, texts that disrupt these conventions. George Bowering's 2021 memoir, *Soft Zipper*, is one of them.

Calling *Soft Zipper* a memoir doesn't fully encapsulate it. It is not a memoir in the sense that it produces an intimate narrative of Bowering's life; nor is it marked by a subjective focus. When Bowering writes that his "favourite object in the world is a baseball" (35), he isn't describing a specific baseball with a singular story; rather he is situating himself in relation to all baseballs. Bowering may be revealed in his thoughts about how he never held a white baseball until adulthood, and how they now seem to accumulate rapidly and mysteriously, or in his brief reflection on the labour conditions that produce the baseball as material object, but this revelation is almost always indirect and accumulative because the formal structure and theoretical underpinning of *Soft Zipper* come not from the memoir and its practice but from modernist poets like Gertrude Stein and Charles Olson.

From Stein, Bowering gets the form of the work, using *Tender Buttons*' cubist-inspired portraits of objects as the conceptual foundation, with each vignette—like "The Cane," "Pie," or "Drunk Tank"—focused on a singular thing. However, despite going so far as to borrow the section titles "Objects," "Food," and "Rooms" from *Tender Buttons*, *Soft Zipper* doesn't read like *Tender Buttons*. Instead, as Lisa Robertson astutely notes in her introduction, it feels more of a piece with Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which deploys a plain-spoken series of rememberings marked by particular attention to the domestic details that position Toklas, and by extension Stein herself, within social spaces. Further, Stein's book functions as an indirect autobiography that allows her the opportunity to reveal and construct herself in ways she couldn't without using Toklas as a cypher. Similarly, Bowering's focus on things and places allows him to explore the self through the social, spatial, and symbolic networks that surround them. His experience of the cane in "The Cane" is linked to aesthetics and fashion, but also to family histories

and the material lives of specific objects. All of these constellate around Bowering's relationship to and understanding of the object.

This is important because *Soft Zipper* is predicated on understanding Bowering as an object among objects. As he writes in "Objects": "Charles Olson announced that it might be a good plan to regard oneself as an object among objects, and in that chance to share the secrets objects know. To me that suggests not holding oneself as subject with the material about one and in one's poetry as objects, subjects to one's gaze" (15). The refusal to privilege the gaze, to assert control through that gaze, allows for an intimacy that would not otherwise be possible. It allows Bowering to depict youth and aging through the slow shift in the object-to-object relationships *Soft Zipper* describes.

Aging is one of *Soft Zipper*'s major subtexts, always already present in each act of memory. In *Could Be*, Bowering's latest collection of poetry, aging seems to be the central theme, with many poems reflecting on both the decay and decline of the body and the persistence of life. References to the loss of friends and the acquisition of dentures are haunting reminders of Bowering's 2015 hospitalization and coma, a brush with death but one survived. In the opening lines of "Sitting in Jalisco," the beautiful twenty-two-page poem that closes the book, Bowering declares, "Jean had fish for lunch, dinner and breakfast, no Oxford comma for her, no more coma for me," before reflecting on the various greens of the umbrellas, the surf on the beach, and the eight per cent chance that he had to see it (85). There is an awareness of the fragility of life but also a stubborn defiance and a resolution "to get," as he advises his body in "Bloodlines," "older than anyone thought you would" (64). There are meditative moments in *Could Be*, but they are tempered by an extraordinary wit and energy. As a result, *Could Be* is an engaging work that rewards the reader's time.

The two books, it should be noted, work particularly well as companions, with *Soft Zipper*'s reflections on Bowering's life providing depth and resonance to *Could Be*'s poems, and vice versa. They share settings, spaces, events, and seemingly a moment of composition. Thus, each expands the other in exciting ways. The books are marked by memory and age but hold open the potential for more. They are innovative and playful, challenging both the conventions of memoir and the spectre of mortality. Bowering closes "Sitting in Jalisco" by declaring "the end I'm coming to is not mine" (107). The poem and the book close, but the animating life endures, an object fiercely among objects.

Longing for Belonging

Rosalind Silvester
Ying Chen's Fiction: An Aesthetics of Non-Belonging. Legenda $110.00 USD
Reviewed by Gilles Dupuis (Université de Montréal)

Ying Chen's Fiction: An Aesthetics of Non-Belonging is the first monograph to appear in English on the work of Asian Canadian author Ying Chen. Written by Rosalind Silvester, Senior Lecturer in French Studies at Queen's University Belfast and renowned specialist in migrant and francophone Chinese writing, it sets a hallmark for further studies of Chen's fiction. By focusing her attention on the aesthetics of non-belonging rather than the poetics of identity, as many scholars tend to do when approaching Chen's novels, Silvester not only coins a felicitous expression, but also chooses an ideal thread for the exploration of the labyrinth

of Chen's writing, from the first published novel, *La Mémoire de l'eau* (1992), to the last—at the time of publication of the book—*Blessures* (2016). Prior to my own essays in French, which deal mainly with the seven novels revolving around the poetics of reincarnation, Silvester's study offers a detailed account of the poetics of *non-belonging* or, as she dubs it elsewhere, the "belonging-in-transience" (3) common to all of Chen's fiction and non-fiction.

After the theoretical introduction, in which the main concepts for the analysis of the novels are announced and briefly discussed, and a first general chapter devoted to Chen's aesthetics in relation to non-belonging, which also provides a thorough critical review of the existing output on Chen's fiction, each following chapter is centred around one or two main concepts and the works they serve to enlighten. Thus the second chapter, which focuses on places and border crossings in relation to migrant writing, is devoted to the first three novels: *La Mémoire de l'eau*, *Les Lettres chinoises*, and *L'Ingratitude*. Chapter 3 is centred on *unnatural narratives* and the appearance of the figure of the reincarnated narrator in Chen's fiction: *L'Ingratitude* (even though the narrator of that novel is not yet reincarnated), *Immobile*, and *Le Champ dans la mer*. Q*uerelle d'un squelette avec son double* is also examined in this chapter, albeit from a different perspective: rather than just another avatar of the narrator, the *other* in that novel is considered a *doubled narrator*. Chapter four is concerned with non-human and post-human figures, such as monstrous others, as they pertain to *Le Mangeur* and *Un enfant à ma porte*, and *becoming-animal* in *Espèces*. Finally, and somewhat awkwardly—as Silvester herself is fully aware: "Portraying the endgame for both the narrator and the husband, it seems fitting that, although against convention, the text is analyzed in the first part of this Conclusion" (121)—*La rive est loin*, which in my view still belongs to "*the reincarnation cycle*," is examined in the conclusion alongside *Blessures* (a novel initiating a new cycle in Chen's writing), before a general assessment of the author's *reinvented aesthetics* is offered.

As the reader familiar with Chen's fiction will notice, the novels are examined in strict chronological order, *L'Ingratitude* being the only work re-examined in a new light at the beginning of the third chapter that underlines Chen's shift from migrant writing grounded in realism to what could be called transmigrant surrealism or rather surreal fiction (*unnatural fiction* in Silvester's terms). I fully agree with the pivotal function of that novel in Chen's work, although I offer a slightly different interpretation of its status in regard to the figure of the dead or reincarnated narrator. The narrator Yan-Zi is already dead at the beginning of *L'Ingratitude*, but she is not yet reincarnated, nor does she pretend to have been reincarnated in the past. It's only in *Immobile* that the anonymous narrator of the novel, initiating the reincarnation cycle, subtly hints at the fact that Yan-Zi was (or may have been) one of her avatars. On the one hand, that fact remains uncertain from a strictly narrative point of view, so that *L'Ingratitude* can be seen as a case of uncertain, rather than unnatural, narrative. On the other hand, the chronological order in which the novels are analyzed may have led the author to believe (or at least make the reader believe) in some sort of evolution in Chen's aesthetics, a point of view I would disagree with. But the way Silvester subtly varies the lighting for her methodical examination of the novels reflects, effectively, what takes place in each one of them specifically: migration, whether between generations, spaces, or even worlds, is the common denominator of the first three novels; unnatural narratives

regarding time and space, analyzed through the figures of the reincarnated narrator or her fictitious double, are shared by the next three; as for the following three, if they still belong to the reincarnation cycle, they do offer new paradigms of fiction revolving around the monstrous other, in relation to monster theory, and *becoming-animal*, a concept borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari, and to some extent Derrida. The analyses provided for each novel in the final chapter are quite compelling from a theoretical and methodological point of view, and feature among the most original of the entire study. Other critics have started to explore these multiple facets of Chen's later fiction, but none have presented an in-depth analysis of their function or meaning as convincing as Silvester's.

Finally, I cannot but agree with Silvester that the last novel of the reincarnation cycle, *La rive est loin*, offers a glimpse of hope through a form of *reconciliation* between the narrator and her dying husband, and even more so between the narrator and herself. I came to a very similar conclusion in my essay, even though the end of the cycle remains open to discussion and reinterpretation. As for *Blessures*, without breaking with unnatural narratives, which became the hallmark of Chen's writing since *L'Ingratitude*, it does introduce the figure of the *spectral other* at the beginning of a new cycle in the fictional work and world of the francophone Chinese author. It also provides, along with the preceding novels, an insightful reading of what is at stake when longing for belonging becomes a work of art.

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New Literary Landscapes

Denise Bolduc et al., eds.
Indigenous Toronto: Stories that Carry This Place. Coach House Press $24.95
Adrian de Leon, Téa Mutonji, and Natasha Ramoutar, eds.
Feel Ways: A Scarborough Anthology. Mawenzi House Publishers $22.95
Reviewed by Heather Dorries (University of Toronto)

Once a bastion of white, Anglo-Saxon culture, Toronto is increasingly thought of as one of the most multicultural cities in the world. This identity is often shaped by those who view the city from the metropolitan core, where proximity to whiteness and wealth means that multiculturalism can be enjoyed in the form of food and festivals, and opportunities for consumption during leisure time. Consequently, this view is ahistorical, ignoring the histories of the Indigenous peoples who have made this place home since time immemorial. It is also a view that fails to acknowledge the fact that, in addition to being increasingly multicultural, Toronto is also shaped by increasing socio-economic polarization. Toronto is a city in which racialized people are most likely to live in poverty and where poverty is increasingly being pushed to the suburbs (Hulchanski). It is in this context that *Indigenous Toronto* and *Feel Ways* make an important intervention. These two books not only complicate notions of multiculturalism shaped by elites in the city's core but also tell the stories of the people and places that define Toronto.

Indigenous peoples and urban spaces have long been understood as antithetical. *Indigenous Toronto* powerfully challenges this notion. Ange Loft's essay "Remember Like We Do" opens the collection by chronicling the history of Toronto through the lens of treaties and agreements made among the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Mississauga, highlighting Indigenous histories and connections to Toronto and explaining why they remain significant today.

The second and third sections focus on the lives of individuals who have played an important role in fostering and maintaining vibrant Indigenous life in Toronto, while the fourth section contains contributions that emphasize the ways that Indigenous peoples continue to transform Toronto today. There is a large and growing body of academic literature that details the history of Indigenous peoples in cities such as Toronto, drawing attention to the important role played by Friendship Centres and Indigenous arts institutions in making cities hospitable places. The chapters in *Indigenous Toronto* bring this history to life through personal narratives. For instance, Elaine Bomberry colourfully tells the story of her family's path to the city, detailing the challenges and joys that the family experienced building a life in Toronto while also maintaining connections to kin across a broad territory. The contributions offer engaging, personal histories that provide insight into the development of institutions such as Anishnawbe Health and the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto. As Brian Wright-McLeod puts it in his chapter describing Indigenous activism in the 1980s, "the only way to tell this thing is from personal experience. So sit tight and follow along as best you can" (212).

Personal experience is also a core feature of *Feel Ways*. This collection brings together a brilliant crew of young writers from Scarborough. The editorial introduction provides important context for understanding the significance of this work, recounting the multiple ways that Scarborough has often been positioned as faraway and banal, marginalized as a racialized suburb by those who govern from the city's core. The editors explain how "Scarborough, under the [w]hite gaze of academics, police, urban planners, economists, and politicians, is a place of disaffection. Black, Indigenous, and Brown pain, and likewise joy, registers as nothing but a sterile statistic, if it registers at all" (5). The intent of *Feel Ways* is to make the reader "*feel ways*: to stir up a plethora of emotions that compel you into action, not in the service of a liberal state that thrives off of a community's trauma, but one that is ultimately disloyal to the sentimentalism that Canadian Literature demands its resource frontiers" (5-6).

Feel Ways challenges these tendencies. This diverse collection of non-fiction and poems lovingly capture the intricacies and intimacies of life in Scarborough as only those who call Scarborough home can do. For instance, Chris Johnson's "Sleep Through Your Stop" illustrates the mundane complexities that shape his daily bus ride:

> As a high school bus rider
> from Port Union to Wexford,
> I watched Scarborough pass by windows
> for an hour at least twice a day,
> from end-to-end and in between.
>
> The sun often set on
> small business on Lawrence Ave E.

> Never built up, but surviving
> like every store in Cedarbrae Mall.
> Not a British Empire; a lot of empty stores. (26)

Rather than painting a unidimensional picture of Scarborough, the contributions capture the density of places and experiences to vividly capture a landscape filled with feeling. While Scarborough is often an afterthought in discussions of Toronto, a far-flung suburb understood only in relation to the core, these contributions centre Scarborough, and so it is the core that becomes distant and unrecognizable.

Both *Indigenous Toronto* and *Feel Way*s feature stories told by those who are often misrecognized, misrepresented, or simply forgotten in mainstream histories of Toronto. However, these books do more than simply present an addition to these histories. Instead, by refusing to mine these places as resource frontiers for stories that ultimately reinforce dominant narratives, they aid in the creation of a new literary landscape, creating an altogether new and nuanced understanding of this city.

Work Cited

Hulchanski, David J. *The Three Cities within Toronto*. Cities Centre, 2011.

Accessing Partition History through Disruptions

Madhur Anand
This Red Line Goes Straight to Your Heart: A Memoir in Halves. Strange Light $26.00
Reviewed by Rajeshwari Nandkumar (McMaster University)

In India, 15 August is a day of celebration. By commemorating the nation's acquisition of "life and freedom" after two centuries of British colonization, this national holiday exudes a spirit of achievement attained through the tireless resilience of the nation. Yet, what lies masked beneath the euphoric images of public celebration is the pain, the loss of life, and the continued suffering of thousands of individuals whose lives were forever altered on the same day by the Partition of the Indian subcontinent. Referred to as one of the worst peace-time upheavals in world history, the 1947 Partition continues to live within the collective memory of the three nations affected by it (Menon 2). As Antoinette Burton poignantly remarks, "Partition will never be over. It is destined to return again and again not just as memory, but as history, politics and aesthetics as well" (xvi).

The continued representation of the Partition through literature, film, and other fictional works plays a huge role in memorializing this tragedy. In their unique ways, these works are instrumental in holding space for the deceased while helping survivors to live in relation to their past (Simon et al. 4). While most celebrated works of fiction represent this tragedy by displaying a longing for an erstwhile united nation, it is reasonable to wonder whether this feeling of nostalgia accurately captures the emotions and everyday realities of Partition survivors.

By piecing together scientific theories and autobiographical anecdotes, Madhur Anand's award-winning memoir *This Red Line Goes Straight to Your Heart* paints a vivid image of how this tragedy subliminally influences the everyday realities of her parents and herself. The memoir reveals how the trauma caused by the Partition

should not be relegated to a specific historical time but instead should be assessed in terms of its *ongoingness*.

One of the book's major strengths is its deliberate usage of disruptions—the most apparent of which is how it organizes its contents. Anand separates the book into two inverted sections, marked as "Y" and "X." This separation compels readers to reverse the book as they move from one section to another. Like the *x* and *y* axes of a graph sheet, these two sections complement each other, thereby providing us with a comprehensive narrative on pain, loss, and resilience. We are conditioned to place *x* before *y*, but Anand disrupts the reading process by compelling us to read the section marked "Y" first. Also titled "The First Partition," this section contains fourteen separate stories told with the alternating voices of the author's two parents. These individual anecdotes reveal how Anand's parents individually coped with Partition as young children, before adapting to different conditions of everyday life, as first-generation immigrants, in Canada. We learn more about the author's parents as we move on to the section marked "X," also titled "The Second Partition," which is narrated in the voice of the author, who describes her experiences of growing up and living in Canada.

The effectiveness of Anand's memoir lies in the fact that it enables women's voices to be heard within the larger historic context of Partition. Scholars like Ritu Menon and Urvashi Butalia have remarked upon how the voices of women have largely been kept outside history (Menon 3). Interspersing her own understanding of the Indian Partition with her mother's constant connection with this tragedy, Anand's work re-frames this difficult history by capturing it from a feminist perspective. However, by not centring her narrative solely on the Partition, her work demonstrates how memories of the Partition ebb and flow through the everyday lives of its survivors. This is revealed through anecdotes wherein we see her mother confusing *parturition* for *partition* (74) or when her mother looks at the single tea set given to her and realizes that it is impossible to separate its contents: "No partition possible" (72). Moreover, in the chapter "April Dreams from April Notepads," the author briefly mentions the 2019 bombing of Pakistan by India and quickly follows this with a description of her mother's first cancer diagnosis. This brief description demonstrates how the seismic ruptures caused by Partition continue to impact the political relations of the two countries, while also showing that these ruptures play a role in the recollection of familial history.

The work's strength also lies in its clear demonstration of the sense of placelessness that exists within the psyche of many women. In many ways, Anand's memoir testifies to Ritu Menon's remark that women "have no country and so they make no claims on it, not even the normal fundamental claims of citizenship" (7). By showing how female figures, like her mother, are subjected to abuse in both India and Canada, Anand's work demonstrates how patriarchal violence can cut across borders and citizenship. For example, in the chapter "The Game Is the Same," the mother describes how she gave birth to her third child: "My father-in-law has died. No warning. My husband takes me to the hospital that night and asks the doctors to induce labour. He wants the baby to be born before he goes to deal with the death of this father" (105).

What also makes this account notable is how it differs from the father's account, which completely omits the information on inducing his wife's labour,

focusing solely on his father's death. This deliberate omission highlights how women's bodies are expected to perform according to patriarchal mandates. This issue also appears in the chapter "A Correlated Transition Not Unlike the Direct Unfolding (or Five Aunties)." Narrated from the author's perspective, this chapter describes the experiences of five South Asian women in Canada, who despite their class privilege and financial independence, are subdued by patriarchal violence in one way or another. The power of patriarchal hegemony is especially evident in the last sentence of the chapter:

> Though I had been calling her by her first name now for months, suddenly all of Aunty's many talents and skills—even her scientific discovery that *while unfolding is initiated by partial polymer collapse, the reversible re-unfolding of compact non-native structures proceeds as a correlated transition not unlike the direct unfolding*— paled, by the laws of culture, in the face of her husband, who remained seated in his black leather armchair in the living room reading the newspaper, hardly uttering a word, but silencing us with his presence. (17)

While much Partition literature written by male authors also reveals the violence meted out to women's bodies, Anand's memoir makes us aware of the ongoingness of this violence. She demonstrates how this violence is not exclusive to a particular historical moment but instead continues at the level of everyday experience, so naturalized that we often fail to recognize it.

It is difficult to delve into every aspect of this well-crafted book. The ease with which Anand introduces scientific theories into her narrative prose demonstrates her skills as both a researcher and a writer. One can only feel enriched after reading this book, as it makes us realize that there is more than one way to access and interpret the histories that shape us.

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