

Indigenizing the Anthropocene

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The language of postmodernism is ethnocentric and insufficient.

— Guillermo Gómez-Peña¹

Art is supposedly well within the digital age of fusion, beyond boundaries and anthropology.

— Loretta Todd²

When I was a little girl in the 1990s, my dad, Métis artist Garry Todd, used to take my little sister and me to his painting studio in Edmonton. It was a basement warehouse space in the inner city, a dusty and creaky building used by artists and theatre troupes and photographers and others to *make things*. We had little easels on which to paint, and we used non-toxic acrylic paints my Dad bought for us. Early on, he taught me about cross-hatching and shading, dimensions and perspective, how to mix colours, and how to view the world as a series of pigments mixed together in shadow and light. While he painted landscapes and images of buildings slated for demolition in my hometown of Edmonton, Alberta, my sister and I painted flowers and cats and other things that struck our fancy. Once, he cut out wooden templates for us to try our hand at carving our own wooden spoons, and he supervised us as we worked with his chisels. My Dad says I was obsessed with coyotes (properly pronounced in central Alberta as *kai-oats*), and I drew them over and over and over again, referencing the haunting howls of packs of coyotes that would call over the water when we spent our summers at Baptiste Lake at my mom's family's summer cabin. There, I learned how to fish and pick berries, and to see the land with a painterly eye as my dad sketched out drawings of the landscape. My mom took me out in our little rowboat and I would cast a fishing rod into the water. She gutted and cleaned what we caught, cooking it in a hot frying pan. Land, art, animals, material, and space all intertwined in my understanding of myself as a Métis person from very early on.

Fifteen years later I walked into the warehouse where my Dad used to paint, only now it was a high-end condominium and I was there to attend a poetry reading in a private residence. The cognitive dissonance of entering space that I had known so intimately as a child, that had loomed so large in my *making* as an artist and as an urban Indigenous person, only to find it finished with ten-foot ceilings, burnished metal and tasteful art, was jarring. The space had literally been gentrified.

As I stood there in the condo listening to poetry being read, I was struck by how I had stopped making art; how I had stopped writing poetry and fiction; how I



Fig. 01 Daffodil and coyote—an early work saved by my dad.

had stopped believing I could make a good life for myself as a “creative” person. I had watched my dad struggle to support himself as a Métis artist in Canada, and imperceptibly and slowly, I stopped making art because I did not feel welcome in the gentrified, *intensely white* spaces where I perceived “real art” and “real literature” were made. And, when I stepped out for a bit of fresh air that evening, I cried because I realized that I had lost a part of myself in the process of trying, and failing, to make my body and my practice fit into those spaces. When our gritty,

dusty, poor lives were erased to make way for shiny condos, so too had my belief that I could participate in the world of *making* as it is defined by a persistently white, Eurocentric academy and art world.

To be at the margins, be they aesthetic, intellectual, or physical, is a shared experience for Indigenous people in Canada. What shape this marginalization takes is different for each person, and each Nation or People. But it occurs again and again, in slightly different forms: gentrification (or colonialism in the form of gentrification) appears as a shape-shifter.³ When spaces are gentrified, which intellectual buildings are Indigenous and/or People of Colour allowed to occupy? I draw the building analogy from Sara Ahmed, who points out:

To account for experiences of not being given residence (to be dislodged from a category is to be dislodged from a world) is not yet another sad political lesson, a lesson that we have had to give up in order to keep going. We learn from being dislodged about lodges. We come to know so much about institutional life because of these failures of residence: the categories in which we are immersed as forms of life become explicit when you do not quite inhabit them.⁴

Despite the shock of seeing my dad's former studio transformed into gleaming high-end downtown real estate, there was a part of me that I reclaimed that evening in the warehouse-condo. There was a part of me that suddenly stepped into the "explicitness of my category,"⁵ as an Indigenous woman, as an outsider. Looking around at the crowd that night, I realized I *could* make things, that I *could* insert my Indigenous self into white spaces without apology or shame. Ever conscious of my complex position as a white-passing Métis woman and scholar, I insert here a note about the ways that my identity is contradictory, and acknowledge that the very act of occupying white spaces as someone who *looks white* courts the simultaneous familiarity and distance that comes with "passing" in non-Indigenous contexts. Everything I write in this essay is couched in the simultaneous belonging/not-belonging that I straddle as I study and work between Canada and Europe.

What follows is an examination of art and the Anthropocene as variations of "white public space"—space in which Indigenous ideas and experiences are appropriated, or obscured, by non-Indigenous practitioners. First, I offer a short exploration of how to use Indigenous philosophy and teachings from Indigenous legal orders, specifically the work of Papaschase Cree scholar Dr. Dwayne Donald, to decolonize and Indigenize the non-Indigenous intellectual contexts that currently shape public intellectual discourse, including that of the Anthropocene. Second, I explore how the Indigenization of the Anthropocene is taking place through Indigenous thought, praxis, and art. This decolonization/Indigenization is necessary in order to bring Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and practices to the fore in a meaningful and ethical way.

A Crisis in Search of a Name

In a time of anthropological engagement with diverse and urgent environmental crises, current academic discourses in the Euro-Western academy have coalesced around the notion of the Anthropocene as a narrative tool.⁶ Popularized by Paul Crutzen in 2002, and subsequently taken up by the humanities, the Anthropocene references an epoch in which humans are the dominant drivers of geologic change on the globe today.⁷ As a Métis scholar, I have an inherent distrust of this term, the Anthropocene, since terms and theories can act as gentrifiers in their own right, and I frequently have to force myself to engage in good faith with it as heuristic. While it may seem ridiculous to distrust a *word*, it is precisely because the term has colonized and infiltrated many intellectual contexts throughout the academy at the moment that I view it with caution. However, my distrust is well-founded: Swedish scholars Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, among others, highlight the manner in which the current framing of the Anthropocene blunts the distinctions between the people, nations, and collectives who drive the fossil-fuel economy and those who do not. The complex and paradoxical experiences of diverse people as humans-in-the-world, including the ongoing damage of colonial and imperialist agendas, can be lost when the narrative is collapsed to a universalizing species paradigm. As Malm and Hornborg state, “a clique of white British men literally pointed steam-power as a weapon—on sea and land, boats and rails—against the best part of humankind, from the Niger delta to the Yangzi delta, the Levant to Latin America.”⁸ Not all humans are equally implicated in the forces that created the disasters driving contemporary human-environmental crises, and I argue that not all humans are equally invited into the conceptual spaces where these disasters are theorized or responses to disaster formulated.

As an Indigenous scholar working both in Canada and the UK, I am intensely aware of how discourse is deployed within and between geographies, disciplines, and institutions. Whenever a term or trend is on everyone’s lips, I ask myself: “What other story could be told here? What other language is not being heard? Whose space *is* this, and who is *not* here?” With the prevalence of the Anthropocene as a conceptual “building” within which stories are being told, it is important to query *which* humans or human systems are driving the environmental change the Anthropocene is meant to describe. What “modernist mess,” as Fortun eloquently describes it,⁹ characterizes this moment of “common cosmopolitical concern”—Latour’s term to describe the fact that the climate is a shared heritage, cross-roads, site, or milieu that we all inhabit, and one which deserves our deep attention as a commons and context for engaged involvement in the crises of climate change¹⁰—that is the Anthropocene? And, finally, who is dominating the conversations about how to change the state of things?

I am not alone in questioning the Euro-Western academy’s current approach to human-environmental relationships. A number of other scholars have critiqued current popular trends in the Euro-Western humanities: posthumanism and the ontological turn have all been queried and challenged as Eurocentric.¹¹ These

critiques re-centre the *locus* of thought, offering a reconfiguration of understandings of human-environmental relations towards praxis that acknowledges the central importance of land, bodies, movement, race, colonialism and sexuality. Human geographer Juanita Sundberg, for example, takes posthumanism to task for its erasure of non-European ontologies. She writes, “the literature continuously refers to a foundational ontological split between nature and culture *as if it is universal*,”¹² and points out that posthumanist theories tend to erase both *location* and Indigenous epistemologies. Sundberg urges scholars to enact the “pluriverse” as a decolonial tool, in her case drawing on Zapatista principles of “walking the world into being,” as one locus of thought and praxis to decolonize posthumanist scholarship and geographies.¹³ As Sundberg notes, “the Zapatista movement theorizes walking as an important practice in building the pluriverse, a world in which many worlds fit.”¹⁴ For Sundberg, walking and movement are necessary to bring a decolonizing methodology to fruition because, “As we humans move, work, play, and narrate with a multiplicity of beings in place, we enact historically contingent and radically distinct worlds/ontologies.”¹⁵ This methodology of decolonization through walking worlds into being aligns very closely with geographer Sarah Hunt’s (Kwakwaka’wakw, Kwagiulth) discussion of dance at a Potlatch as a mode through which Indigenous ontologies—she specifically describes her own experience of engaging with Kwakwaka’wakw ontology—are brought to life.¹⁶ Hunt outlines the epistemic violence inherent in Euro-Western academic treatments of Indigenous knowledge, specifically by analyzing the ways that Indigenous ontologies are reified and distorted in the ongoing colonial structures of the European and North American academy. In fact, she notes that “the potential for Indigenous ontologies to unsettle dominant ontologies can be easily neutralized as a triviality, as a case study or a trinket, as powerful institutions work as self-legitimizing systems that uphold broader dynamics of (neo)colonial power.”¹⁷ Hunt argues that the systems of knowledge production that we, as Indigenous scholars, engage with and legitimize through our presence in the academy, must be changed.¹⁸ Hunt evokes dance as a way to negotiate the demands of colonial academic institutions and praxis, for it is through dance that Indigenous ontologies are brought to life.¹⁹ Zakiyyah Jackson also problematizes the erasure of race from posthumanist philosophies, bringing the focus back to topics all too often sidestepped by posthumanism, including “race, colonialism, and slavery.”²⁰ By returning to decolonial theorists overlooked and forgotten by dominant posthumanist discourses, such as Aimé Césaire, Jackson reminds scholars of the continuing need to decentre the Eurocentric, heteropatriarchal focus that posthumanist studies ironically perpetuates within the “order of rationality” that shapes Euro-Western institutions.

Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe scholar Vanessa Watts operationalizes a principle of “Indigenous Place Thought,”²¹ which can stand in place of, or alongside, discourses such as an “ontology of dwelling,”²² the theoretical position advanced by British anthropologist Tim Ingold, based in part on his close reading of Irving Hallowell’s ethnographic work with Anishinaabe people.²³ This Place-Thought “is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking, and that humans and

non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts.”²⁴ Watts takes Euro-Western Science Studies theorists to task, including Latour and Haraway, for operationalizing non-human agency in Eurocentric, colonial ways.²⁵ For example, Watts points out that:

Haraway resists essentialist notions of the earth as mother or matter and chooses instead to utilize products of localized knowledges (i.e. Coyote or the Trickster) as a process of boundary implosion: “I like to see feminist theory as a reinvented coyote discourse obligated to its sources in many heterogeneous accounts of the world” (Haraway, 1988, 594). This is a level of abstracted engagement once again. While it may serve to change the imperialistic tendencies in Euro-Western knowledge production, Indigenous histories are still regarded as story and process—an abstracted tool of the West.²⁶

Watts also rejects the “hierarchies of agency”²⁷ imposed by common understandings of Actor Network Theory. She urges an understanding of non-human agency that integrates Indigenous Place-Thought and which implodes the mechanistic, hierarchical delineation made by some Euro-Western scholars between flesh and things. Rather than situate elements like soil as mere “actants,”²⁸ who can only have agency in relation to the interactions they have with humans and exist “where the plane of action is equalized amongst all elements,”²⁹ Watts suggests that “if we think of agency as being tied to spirit, and spirit exists in all things, then all things possess agency.”³⁰

In critiquing the locus of agency, and by re-centring motion, bodies, spirit, race, and sexuality within the frame of the posthuman, Sundberg, Hunt, Jackson, and Watts plainly demonstrate the dangers of a Eurocentric conception of ontology and posthumanism. What do these critiques of posthumanism have to do with the Anthropocene? Put simply: both threads of inquiry, posthumanism and the Anthropocene, share a terrain, even if they do not have in common the same central emphasis in their respective discourses.³¹ Posthumanism (and, more specifically, its concurrent stream of work on multispecies ethnographies) “aims to decenter the human”³² in Euro-Western scholarship, whereas the Anthropocene is *intensely pre-occupied with the human, the anthropos*. John Hartigan recently examined the prevalence of the terms “multispecies” and “Anthropocene” at the recent meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Washington, D.C. in December 2014. Noting the “overlapping concerns highlighted by these two keywords,”³³ Hartigan was struck by the dominance of the word Anthropocene, rather than the term multispecies, throughout the conference presentations. Hartigan deems the Anthropocene a “charismatic mega-category,”³⁴ which sweeps many competing narratives under its roof.

So, the Anthropocene narrative gathers discursive steam, dominating contexts where other discourses struggle to circulate. And, it dominates in what is an

undeniably *white* intellectual space of the Euro-Western academy. It is perhaps unsurprising for popular thought to be Eurocentric when the institutions and structures within which it is generated continue to be largely heteropatriarchal, Eurocentric, and white. For example, Sara Ahmed takes the British academy directly to task for the whiteness and sexism of its praxis: she describes the problem of “white men” as an institution and code of conduct within the academy that reproduces whiteness and is inherent in what she calls the “citational relational” practice of citing white men generation after generation, reinforcing the white, patriarchal Eurocentrism of our disciplines.³⁵ To drive the point home in a quantitative manner, journalist Jack Grove reports on the under-representation of people of colour, and particularly women of colour, in *Times Higher Education*. There were only eighty-five black professors of a total of 18,500 professors in the United Kingdom in 2011.³⁶ And as philosopher Catherine Clune-Taylor points out, none of those professors were working in the discipline of philosophy.³⁷

Anthropologists Karen Brodtkin, Sandra Morgen, and Janis Hutchinson have studied the experience of people of colour in American anthropology departments, revealing widespread racism and discrimination within the discipline in North America,³⁸ and describing it as “white public space,” a term they credit to a 1994 article by Page and Thomas.³⁹ For Brodtkin, Morgen, and Hutchinson, anthropology in America is “white public space” because it operates both to: a) *physically* and *procedurally* discriminate against people of colour in anthropology departments; and, b) *conceptually* discriminate by minimizing or denying experiences of racism within departments. So, the “buildings,” or “white men as buildings” that Ahmed describes,⁴⁰ within which ideologies are produced, serve to both literally and figuratively reinforce whiteness. If the academy’s structures reproduce whiteness, what can we expect of the stories it is telling about the Anthropocene and our shared struggles to engage with dynamic environmental crises on the planet? Anthropologist Paul Stoller suggests that the current state of things—which has arguably arisen within a configuration of the “academy as white public space”—has not produced an engaged or *active* response to the challenges of the Anthropocene. As an anthropologist, Stoller suggests that “the politics of the Anthropocene is an anthropological challenge,”⁴¹ which requires an *active* and *engaged* academic praxis as crucial to responding to the impacts of the Anthropocene. I argue that in order to enliven and enact *active* scholarship and praxis as responses to the Anthropocene, the academy must dismantle the underlying heteropatriarchal and white supremacist structures that shape its current configurations and conversations.

However, academia is not the only white public space; Guillermo Gómez-Peña describes the appropriation of the bodies/aesthetics/epistemologies of people of colour/Latinos, and the uncritical centralization of whiteness of the American art world. He claims:

In the same way the US needs a cheap undocumented labor force to sustain its agricultural complex without having to suffer the Spanish language or

unemployed foreigners wandering their neighbourhoods, the contemporary art world needs and desires the spiritual and aesthetic models of Latino culture without having to experience our political outrage and cultural contradictions. What the art world wants is a “domesticated Latino” who can provide enlightenment without irritation, entertainment without confrontation.⁴²

As Gómez-Peña demonstrates, the erasure of Latino/Latina bodies and the sanitization of rage or dispossession in contemporary art obscures the visceral, racialized, gendered, and geographically distinct experiences of socio-political and environmental crises in the world today. His critiques resonate with my aunt Loretta Todd’s critical analysis of the North American art world and its treatment of Indigenous people, bodies, and ideas today. She says: “Our ‘past’ was once the preoccupation of the colonizers, and we developed codes to negotiate the performative nature of being the Aboriginal of an imagined past. Now our future is the growing preoccupation *but the power dynamics seem to remain the same.*”⁴³

In a special issue of the journal *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* on Indigenous art, Jarrett Martineau and Eric Ritskes emphasize critiques resonant with that of Gómez-Peña. Martineau and Ritskes both highlight the ongoing whiteness of mainstream art praxis, positing Indigenous art as a counter-narrative to the heteropatriarchy and white supremacy that informs artistic discourses. They argue that “the task of decolonial artists, scholars and activists is not simply to offer amendments or edits to the current world, but to display the mutual sacrifice and relationality needed to sabotage colonial systems of thought and power for the purpose of liberatory alternatives.”⁴⁴ I would add that the non-human must also be incorporated into this equation. The “sacrifice and relationality” asserted by Martineau and Ritskes evoke the analysis of contemporary Indigenous materialist art by art historians Jessica Horton and Janet Berlo. Horton and Berlo suggest that in works by Indigenous artists like Rebecca Belmore and Jolene Rickard, which engage with materials (water, pollutants, corn) and urgent politics, “material might act as a bridge, instead of a mirror”⁴⁵ to Euro-Western scholars, artists, and ideologies. Material as bridge—between people and non-human agents—can allow a different understanding of the Anthropocene to emerge. In other words, the materials as conceptualized and enacted in the work of the Indigenous artists that Horton and Berlo review are no mere actants. They are, rather, as Watts proclaims in her intervention into Euro-Western materialist thinking, enlivened with spirit.⁴⁶ With relationship. With sentience, will, and knowing. They thus bind whomever they encounter to the relationality that Martineau and Ritskes evoke. This understanding of material-as-bridge is therefore one site where Martineau and Ritskes’s “mutual sacrifice and relationality” is possible.

There is no way to get around the fact that the business of making knowledge and making art in the European and North American academies is still very much a Eurocentric endeavour. But I would offer: *An effective art of the Anthropocene is*

one that directly engages with the structural violences of heteropatriarchy and white supremacy as they shape discourse and praxis. This is where the work of Indigenous scholars and artists promises to speak back, reshape, and change the direction of current human-centric and Eurocentric framings of the Anthropocene. I now attend to the promise of Indigenous praxis and thought as decolonizing tools in the Anthropocene.

Indigenizing the Anthropocene: Dwayne Donald's "Ethical Relationality" and Indigenous Métissage

Thankfully, there are ways to counter the Eurocentrism of the academy and the art world and its discourses about global environmental crises. I investigate here how Indigenous scholarship can accomplish what anthropological and arts discourses struggle to do: decolonize the academy and its contemporary concerns, including the Anthropocene. As discourses of the Anthropocene heat up across and within various disciplines, Papaschase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald, who teaches and writes about education in Canada, has called for an "ethical relationality."⁴⁷ Though his work originates in education and curriculum discourses, his thinking serves as a powerful tool with which to examine underlying assumptions about, and responses to, human and non-human relationships in the Anthropocene. He advances two related ideas that can serve as strong responses to the current structures and frameworks that shape discussions about the Anthropocene, and indeed our complex existence on the planet. The first idea is "ethical relationality," which in a 2010 talk he defined as:

an enactment of ecological imagination. Ethical relationality doesn't deny that we're different, so it's not a way to say we're all the same. But it seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other. It puts those at the forefront: who you are, where you come from, what your commitments are, what your experiences have been. So, it's a desire to acknowledge and honour the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences position us in relation to each other, and how our futures as people in the world are similarly tied together. *It is an ethical imperative to see that despite our varied place-based cultures and knowledge systems, we live in the world together and must constantly think and act with reference to those relationships.*⁴⁸

Donald envisions ethical relationality as rooted in what he defines as our "ecological imagination."⁴⁹ At its core, Donald's approach to our position as humans on this fraught planet is rooted in balance and reciprocity:

I use that term "ecology," and this comes from, I guess, the little bit I know about Cree and Blackfoot philosophies, which I know are connected in this

way. And of course I use ecology not in the sense I use it, typically, in Science. I don't mean "ecology" in that you study the environment separate from where we live or who we are as people. Actually, ecology, the way I think of it—the way I've been taught to think about it—is: paying attention to the webs of relationships that you are enmeshed in, depending on where you live. So, those are all the things that give us life, all the things that we depend on, as well as all the other entities that we relate to, including human beings.⁵⁰

In turn, his notion of "ethical relationality" also "seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other,"⁵¹ and provides an Indigenous framework through which to read the discourses of the Anthropocene. Donald unambiguously emphasizes the relationality between *all* things, all relationships. Though humans may drive some changes on the planet, Donald's framework re-centres how these connections are enmeshed in "webs of relationships."

The second idea that Donald advances is that of Indigenous Métissage, which he defines as "a place-based approach to curriculum informed by an ecological and relational understanding of the world,"⁵² one that fosters reciprocal discourse between colonizer and colonized. In outlining the logics and praxis of Indigenous Métissage, Donald reminds readers that in order to mobilize Indigenous Métissage, there must be an "ethic of historical consciousness":

This ethic holds that the past occurs simultaneously in the present and influences how we conceptualize the future. It requires that we see ourselves related to, and implicated in, the lives of those yet to come. It is an ethical imperative to recognize the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences are layered and position us in relation to each other, and how our futures as people similarly are tied together. It is also an ethical imperative to see that, despite our varied place-based cultures and knowledge systems, we live in the world together with others and must constantly think and act with reference to these relationships. Any knowledge we gain about the world interweaves us more deeply with these relationships, and gives us life.⁵³

An orientation towards Donald's philosophical framework helps to address the shortcomings that Malm and Hornborg⁵⁴ identify in the current framings of the Anthropocene, which currently acts as white public space and erases the differential histories and relationships that have led to current environmental crises. Historical consciousness, ethical relationality, and Indigenous Métissage—rooted in reciprocity, relationships, and responsibility—are among many principles the Eurocentric academy struggles to address in current framings and responses to the Anthropocene. Donald offers a philosophy rooted in the things he has learned from Cree and Blackfoot legal orders and his experiences in the world. His ethical relationality and Indigenous Métissage are processes through which to move away from human-centric discourses about the Anthropocene, and to envisage ourselves

as rooted in reciprocal, ongoing, and dynamic relationships that are informed by Indigenous legal orders and our embeddedness in the meshworks that connect us through an “ecological imagination.”⁵⁵ Such relationality can inform decolonizing approaches to both art and anthropology in the Anthropocene.

In the brief space remaining, I attend to ways of “Indigenizing the Anthropocene,” or at least providing Indigenous responses to the notion *of* the Anthropocene, in order to mitigate the gentrifying forces it is embedded in.

Conclusion

When discourses and responses to the Anthropocene are being generated within institutions and disciplines which are embedded in broader systems that act as *de facto* “white public space,” the academy and its power dynamics must be challenged. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s call for the “permanent decolonization of thought”⁵⁶ must be coupled with a radically decolonizing praxis: a praxis that dismantles and re-orientes not only the academy’s and the art world’s presuppositions about themselves, but also dismantles the heteropatriarchy, racism, and whiteness that continue to permeate political and intellectual systems in North America and Europe. It is important that the academy’s current push to challenge the Euro-Western ontological split between nature and culture not obscure the concurrent, ongoing radical questioning and disruption of racism and colonialism that permeate academic institutions. Decolonization requires that we change not only who is spoken about and how, but also *who is present* in intellectual and artistic “buildings.” This is because there are so few of us, so few Indigenous bodies, within the European academy. Even when we *are* present, we are often dismissed as biased, overly emotional, or unable to maintain objectivity over the issues we present.

Ultimately, what I am contesting are the ways in which well-meaning contemporary artists and academics recreate exploitative patterns from the past. The Anthropocene, like any theoretical category at play in Euro-Western contexts, is not innocent of such violence. Exploitative patterns, when they manifest, in turn concentrate the *voice* of Indigenous issues in white hands. It is precisely these power dynamics that must be questioned and challenged. Gómez-Peña puts it beautifully: “‘We want understanding, not publicity.’ We want to be considered intellectuals, not entertainers; partners, not clients; collaborators, not competitors; holders of strong spiritual vision, not emerging voices; and, above all, full citizens, not exotic minorities.”⁵⁷

As Indigenous actors, we do not need anyone to speak *for* us. And, all of us involved in the business of art and academia need to question existing relationships in intellectual and/or art contexts that privilege white voices speaking Indigenous stories. In order to engage in global conversations about the state of the world, such as the current discourse of the Anthropocene, there must be a concomitant

examination of where such discourses are situated, who is defining the problems, and who decides the players involved. Rather than engage with the Anthropocene as a teleological fact implicating all humans as equally culpable for the current socio-economic, ecological, and political state of the world, I argue that we should turn to examining how other peoples are describing our “ecological imagination.” To tackle the intertwined and complex environmental crises in which the world finds itself, a turn towards the reciprocity and relationships that Donald addresses in his writings and talks must be seriously considered, as locally informed responses to *in situ* challenges around the globe cannot be constructed using one philosophical, epistemological, or ontological lens. Art, as one mode of thought and praxis, can play a role in dismantling the condos of the art and academic world and help us build something different in their stead. The Anthropocene, after all, need not genrify our discourses of outrage at the state of things when there are so many other ways to engage with our shared plight as beings on this planet. In order to resist the hegemonic tendencies of a universalizing paradigm like the Anthropocene, we need joyful and critical engagement through many forms of praxis. I see Indigenous thought and practice—including art—as critical sites of refraction of the current whiteness of Anthropocene discourses.

In recent years, my dad has engaged with the complexities of space and place, environmental degradation, and Indigeneity in his own work. In one series, he painted landscapes in diptych—one half presenting a landscape as it was pictured a hundred years ago, and the other half presenting how a landscape appears in his *pleine air* bicycle painting trips today. He also painted a series of ships, capturing their economic, political, and environmental presence in Vancouver harbours today, juxtaposed against the sea, mountains, and sky. The incursion of capitalist, resource-hungry interventions in the land is perhaps unavoidable at this point in time; however, Indigenous artists offer an important perspective on the intertwined and relational connections between people and land, and through their art can craft concrete responses to the mess and violence of the economies operating in the Anthropocene. Ironically, when my dad tries to show this new work, he is told it is not “Indigenous enough” by non-Indigenous curators and gallery owners, and so he continues to quietly paint on his own terms, radically questioning the landscapes and materials around him. Maybe someday this type of work will be seen as an “authentically Indigenous” response to the Anthropocene, too. This will only happen, though, if we manage to shift the ethical relationality of the academy and the art world, and the understandings of the Anthropocene produced within these “white public spaces.” I know that I am already doing everything that I can to make that change possible. And I know there are many others involved in the same gleeful disruption.

Notes

- An earlier version of this piece, exploring voice and appropriation, appeared on my blog *Urbane Adventurer* in 2014. See www.zoeandthecity.wordpress.com/2012/09/25/art-and-solidarity.
- 1 Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "The Multicultural Paradigm: An Open Letter to the National Arts Community," in *Negotiating Performance: Gender, Sexuality and Theatricality in Latin/o America*, ed. Diana Taylor and Juan Villegas (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 183–193.
 - 2 Loretta Todd, "Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years," curated by Candice Hopkins, Steve Loft, Lee-Ann Martin, Jenny Western (Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art, 2011).
 - 3 Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, "Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism," *Government and Opposition: An International Journal of Comparative Politics* 40, no. 4 (2005): 597–614.
 - 4 Sara Ahmed, "White Men," Feminist Killjoys Blog, 4 November 2014, www.feministkilljoys.com/2014/11/04/white-men.
 - 5 Ibid.
 - 6 Understandings of the Anthropocene as a narrative are articulated in John Hartigan, "Multispecies vs Anthropocene," *Somatosphere*, 13 December 2014, www.somatosphere.net/2014/12/multispecies-vs-anthropocene.html, and Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative," *Anthropocene Review* 1, no. 1 (2014): 62–69.
 - 7 Ibid.
 - 8 Ibid., 64.
 - 9 Kim Fortun, "From Latour to Late Industrialism," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 1 (2014): 309–329.
 - 10 Bruno Latour, "A Shift in Agency—with Apologies to David Hume," Gifford Lecture, University of Edinburgh, 19 February 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7s44BEDaCw.
 - 11 See, for example, work by Sarah Hunt, Zakiyyah Jackson, Juanita Sundberg, and Vanessa Watts.
 - 12 Juanita Sundberg, "Decolonizing Posthumanist Geographies," *Cultural Geographies* 21, no. 1 (2013): 35.
 - 13 Ibid., 39.
 - 14 Ibid.
 - 15 Ibid.
 - 16 Sarah Hunt, "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept," *Cultural Geographies* 21, no. 1 (2014): 27–32.
 - 17 Ibid., 30.
 - 18 Ibid., 29.
 - 19 Ibid., 31.
 - 20 Zakiyyah Jackson, "Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism," *Feminist Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013): 671.
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