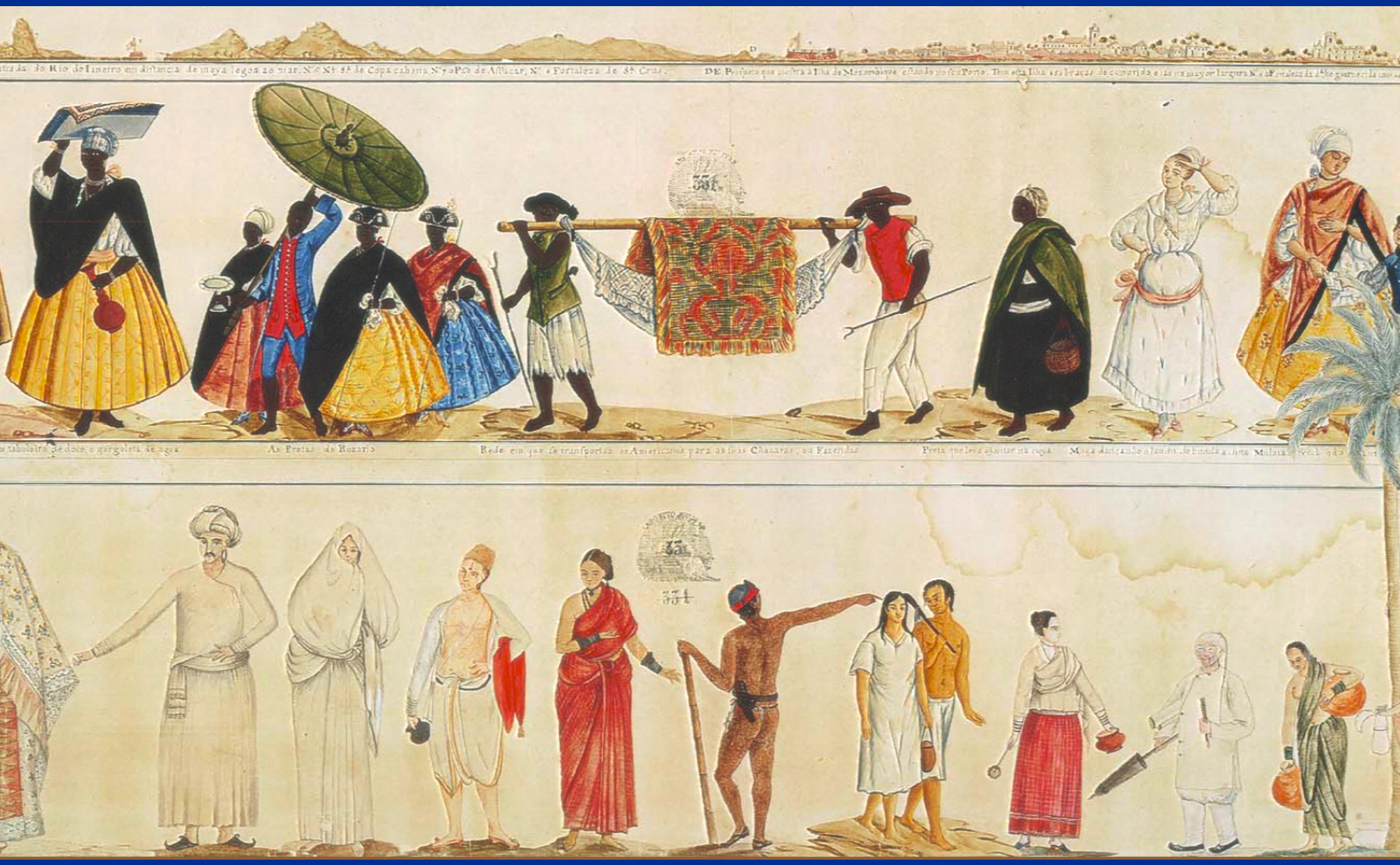
New Worlds: Frontiers, Inclusion, Utopias



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Between Rocks and Hard Places: Indigenous Lands, Settler Art Histories, and the "Battle for the Woodlands"

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In the summer of 2015, just before the expected arrival in Toronto of international visitors and participants for the Pan American Games, I arrived at the city's downtown airport on my way to see *Picturing the Americas: Landscape Painting in the Americas*, which had just opened at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). As I walked from the gate, I was greeted by a large mural-sized sign welcoming me to the city. An Aboriginal man in pow wow dress was shown riding up one of the airport escalators next to the message: "We're Here. You are Welcome in Toronto. The Mississaugas of the New Credit Host First Nation Welcome You to Toronto 2015." This offering of a first welcome by the traditional owners of the land acknowledges on a symbolic level the primary relationship of an Indigenous nation to a particular place identified with it by virtue of its members' descent from its totemic being or d*odem* (pl. *dodemag*). Although this protocol has been honored for some years in western Canada, it is a recent phenomenon in southern Ontario. Indeed, the advent of such signage might puzzle residents of Toronto who are aware that in 1787 and 1805, the ancestors of the Mississaugas of the New Credit transferred to British colonial officials the fourteen by twenty-eight mile piece of land that is roughly contiguous with their modern-day city. In the Indigenous world, however, people remain irrevocably tied to places through the *dodem* system. As Lakota historian Vine Deloria has written, "American Indians hold their lands—place—as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind."[1] Even though the Mississaugas' *dodem*, the eagle or thunderbird, can no longer be seen flying over Toronto, it still soars in graphic form on their welcome signage and the logo that represents their First Nation.

The 250,880 square acres of the Toronto purchase are now home to the 6,000,000 inhabitants of the Greater Toronto Area, the most densely populated region of Canada; the 1,900 members of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation are today in possession of a reserve one-fortieth the size, located about a hundred kilometers away near Niagara Falls. The Mississaugas are an Anishinaabe nation, closely related to other speakers of Anishinabemowin—the Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi, Algonquin, and Cree—who spread across the great geological

1 Quoted in Christopher T. Green, "Anishinaabe Artists of the Great Lakes? Problematizing the Exhibition of Place in Native American Art," 2015 *ARTMargins* 4:2 (June 2015): 80–96.

formation known as the Canadian Shield. Covering more than half of Canada, the Shield is the largest expanse of pre-Cambrian rock in the world; it extends west from modern-day Quebec to Saskatchewan, encompassing the five Great Lakes lying at the heart of the North American continent. During the last ice age, the retreating glaciers created a topography of forests, rivers, and lakes bordered by thousands of kilometers of rocky shoreline and wind-sculpted trees—a landscape made iconic of Canada during the early twentieth century by the paintings of the artists known as the Group of Seven.

In the Aboriginal world that has existed in this place for millennia, human beings share these lands with the powerful *manitous,* or "other-than-human beings," who can assume animal, human, and other forms. They roil the waters and electrify the skies, bringing wealth, fertility, and healing powers as well as danger, destruction, and death.[2] Humans can thrive only by establishing and maintaining relationships of reciprocity with the *manitous* and acquiring from them knowledge of empowering medicines. For at least two thousand years, the Anishinaabeg have done this by seeking contact with these beings through dreams and visions, and by making offerings at and marking with images places in the land where the presence of the other-than-human powers is most evident. Whirlpools are places where powerful underwater beings whip their long tails, mists indicate hidden spirit presences, high cliffs are sites where the all-powerful thunderbirds nest, and deep crevices in the rock face provide channels of communication with the fearsome underwater panther, the Mishipeshoo, and the little anthropomorphic *maymaygwayshi* who live inside the rock.[3] All are potential givers of medicines.

The figurative and abstract images painted on these sites are termed pictographs in the scholarly literature. They also occur as the mnemonic signs incised on birch bark panels and scrolls to record songs and the order of rituals of the shamanistic Midewiwin society, most of which are now regarded as sacred, culturally sensitive, and not suitable for public display. They are

2 Archaeological evidence for human habitation in the Great Lakes dates back approximately 11,000 years. http://www.trca.on.ca/dotAsset/37523.pdf

3 See "Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project: The Land that Gives Life, Nomination for Inscription on the World Heritage List," http://www.pimachiowinaki.org/sites/default/files/docs/Pim_Aki_Dossier_2015_tk301_LR%20Jun%209.pdf accessed 9 March 2017

also closely related to images painted or, in earlier times, tattooed on the body and painted, woven, embroidered, and carved on medicine bags, drums, rattles, and war clubs. These small portable articles have been collected and preserved by Europeans since the early years of contact and form the canonical corpus out of which histories of Indigenous arts in the Great Lakes are constructed. In contrast, rock paintings and petroglyphs have remained the concern of archaeologists and barely figure in narratives of the history of art in North America, whether settler or Indigenous. Yet this body of imagery, inscribed directly on the land, is the form of visual culture that speaks to us most compellingly about Indigenous conceptualizations of place and space. Its omission is therefore evidence of the processes by which Indigenous concepts and representations of land have been overwritten by those introduced by European settlers during the course of four centuries of colonial rule.

It was not until the mid-twentieth century that Selwyn Dewdney, a professionally trained artist and amateur ethnographer, made the first systematic effort to map, record, and interpret the rock art of the Canadian Shield. Commissioned by Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, he spent many summers canoeing the shorelines of lakes and rivers and interviewing local people, both Native and non-Native, in order to locate and, where possible, interpret the painted images. He drew, photographed, and made full-sized tracings of the anthropomorphic, animal, and abstract images he found at 290 sites in the province of Ontario.[4] Dewdney's work has been carried forward by archaeologists Thor Conway and Grace Rajnovich, who have advanced the project of interpretation through further intensive work with Aboriginal elders. Because the practice of rock painting ceased around the turn of the twentieth century, these elders are the last generation who were both trained in oral history and had direct contact with shaman-artists who painted on rock surfaces. The decisions they made to share knowledge with researchers are especially precious.

The vast inventory of images preserved on the sheer rock surfaces of the Canadian Shield constitutes, I would argue, the essential ground line for an inclusive art history in central Canada,

4 One hundred sixty-two sites are listed in Selwyn Dewdney and Kenneth E. Kidd, *Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967, rev. ed.). New sites continue to be discovered.

1. The Agawa rock art site, Lake Superior, Canada, showing the paintings by Myeengun (left) and Shingwauk (right).
Photo: Friends of Lake Superior Park

both literally and metaphorically, and the relative silence that surrounds it therefore invites interrogation. This silence suggests three different kinds of problems. The first is the uneasy fit of rock paintings with the Western construct of "art." Archaeologists prefer the term "pictograph" because they study these images primarily as a form of picture writing. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars like Garrick Mallory undertook broad comparative studies of world pictographic systems as representing an early phase of human literacy, and it is difficult today to divorce the term from the cultural evolutionist framework of that anthropological literature—now, of course, thoroughly discredited.[5]

For the art historian, however, a difficulty in categorizing this vast body of imagery as "art" arises from rock paintings' highly variable aesthetic quality. While some, such as the great Agawa image of Mishipeshoo, display a formal power that fully realizes the conceptual power of the subject, a great many others are crudely rendered (Fig. 1). Because they are painted on vertical cliff faces descending directly into the water, many must

5 Garrick Mallory, *Picture Writing of the American Indians* (Don Mills, ON: Dover, 1972), 2 vols. [reprint from *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology,* Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1893]

have been made quickly and in a summary fashion by someone standing in a canoe or balancing on a ladder on a narrow rock ledge many meters above water level. Over the centuries, weathering has further compromised our ability to recapture the aesthetic power individual examples may once have had. Yet at the same time, the aesthetic quality of the rendering would not have altered a rock painting's ritual and communicative functioning, just as a poorly designed and printed book can be read as easily as one designed with skill and style. And where images and texts are clearly distinguished in European languages, in Anishinaabemowin, the morpheme "mazi" or "mazena" is the root of the words for both "image" and "book."[6] Classifying all these images as "art" either finesses these issues or—if aesthetic appreciation of their radical simplifications is intended—interposes a modernist and primitivist lens on our viewing of them.

The problem of "art" is paralleled by a problem of "history." Rock paintings are notoriously difficult to date because the animal fats and fish glue binders that were mixed with powdered red ochre to make the paint have been washed away over the years. Without such organic substances, radiocarbon dating cannot be used. Other kinds of tests have produced results indicating a greater antiquity for these paintings than was first assumed, but have yielded no hard dates. Using other archaeological evidence found at rock painting sites, Rajnovich has made a convincing case that rock painting goes back two thousand years, to the beginning of the Woodland period, when peoples ancestral to the Anishinaabeg inhabited the same regions. Despite such finds, it may be that the failure of art historians to integrate rock art into their chronological narratives is due to the disciplinary divide between archaeological and art historical methods and disciplinary conventions.

A final problem has to do not with discursive, but, rather, physical erasures. As Dewdney's years of exploring rock art sites showed, most of the known sites are in thinly populated northern regions and only reachable by canoe or motorboat. Rock art specialists speculate that many sites that must have existed in the southern parts of the Canadian Shield have been physically obliterated or submerged under water in the course of two cen-

6 Alan Corbiere, personal communication; e-mail of August 4, 2015.

turies of urban-industrial development; rivers and lakes have been dammed to facilitate logging and mining, while streams have been paved over to build railways, roads, and cities. These transformations of the land have most affected the southern areas of the Canadian Shield, and because these are also the most densely populated regions of Canada, the impact of the erasure of Indigenous markings on settler historical consciousness is magnified. The biggest losses, however, are those of memory and knowledge that have resulted from forced Indigenous displacements from ancestral land, which have ruptured the bonds between people and topography, and from the cultural violence of assimilationist policies designed to obliterate Aboriginal languages which has walled off the Indigenous discourses and ritual practices integral to the meaning of the visual imagery.

Despite this history of erasure, however, important projects of recovery have been underway during the past fifty years, carried out not only by archaeologists, but also by Anishinaabe artists. In George Kubler's terms, artists have reopened the abandoned mine shafts of the conceptual and iconographic traditions expressed in rock art and brought up rich ores of image and form.[7] In the contemporary moment, rock is being explored as a site of inscription and identification by Anishinaabe artist Bonnie Devine. Where the preceding generation of Ansihinaabe artists, led by Norval Morrisseau, affirmed Indigenous traditions of mysticism, shamanism, and spirituality in a modern idiom, Devine's work engages with a contemporary politics of land and the environment. And where Morrisseau's concerns made it relatively easy for his early patrons and promoters to frame his work within the comfortable tenets of modernist primitivism, Devine's work speaks both to contemporary contestations over land ownership and to a world now facing the ultimate disaster of environmental implosion.

In the remainder of this paper, I want to look at the issues of Indigenous and settler concepts of art and place in terms of an interlocking set of contemporary issues arising from Indigenous decolonization and land claims on the one hand, and the parallel process of a decolonized world art history on the other. I will argue that, in Canada and elsewhere, these issues are currently converging in a shared consciousness of the growing environ-

7 George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

mental crisis. I will also urge that an art history that deals more authentically with place and space by attending to histories in the land can serve as a unifying force. I will attempt this admittedly ambitious task by examining in more detail the chronological spectrum of Anishinaabe visual art: the rock painting tradition that reaches back many centuries before the arrival of Europeans; the traumatic negotiations of new systems of land, spirituality, and visuality imposed by settlers during the nineteenth century; and contemporary art as represented by Bonnie Devine's recent projects. This exploration also has a personal dimension, for Anishinaabe visual culture and arts belong to the place that I, too, call home, and therefore necessitates a reflection on the narrow space between the bedrock of the Western art historical tradition and the hard place of accepting different Indigenous epistemologies with which many art historians in settler societies are now grappling.

Canadian Shield Rock Art

Rock paintings communicated not only through the power of images but also through the power of place. The sheer cliff faces on which rock paintings are found command attention in part because they contrast with the ubiquitous rounded contours of the rocky outcrops left behind by the retreat of the glaciers. Those who have studied rock paintings closely speak eloquently of the relationship between the paintings and their sites on the margins of land and water. In their book on the Agawa site, Thor and Julie Conway write:

> Forget the pictographs for a moment and let your senses take over. Lake Superior has moods, feelings, and subtle influences on those who can stand still and let emotional forces take over. The pictograph site location can energize or calm us. The setting certainly leads us away from the 20th century into a more natural world. In some ways, a poet can get closer to the site than a scientist.[8]

They further explain that "great vertical cliffs were believed to be 'cut rock'—powerful places where the earth's energies

8 Thor Conway and Julie Conway, *Spirits on Stone: The Agawa Pictographs* (San Luis Obispo, CA: Heritage Discoveries, 1990) 11.

were exposed."[9] Along the same lines, Rajnovich observes that rock-painting sites are "places where sky, earth, water, underground, and underwater meet.... They allowed the manitous and medicine people to pass into each other's worlds."[10]

We also need to attend to Ansihinaabe understandings of the materialities of rock art, for both stone and red ochre carry connotations of power. For millennia, Indigenous people across North America have regarded red ochre as a sacred material emblematic of blood and the life force, and have valued its protective and healing powers. They have painted their bodies and their clothing with red ochre and placed it in burials to protect the dead.[11] On some rock faces, washes of red ochre occur rather than paintings. Anishinaabe researcher Grace Seymour has explained that "the 'wash' denotes the special spirituality of the site."[12] In English and other Western languages, however, stone carries connotations of impenetrability, inanimacy, and obduracy—qualities diametrically opposed to animacy and personhood. Talking to an unresponsive person is like "speaking to a stone." To be lacking in empathy is to have a "heart of stone"; to try something impossible is liking trying to squeeze "water from a rock." In the traditional Anishinaabe world, in contrast, stone can be permeable and resonant of power. A. Irving Hallowell, one of the most perceptive students of Anishinaabe worldview, conducted fieldwork in Northern Ontario during the 1930s. In his classic essay on Ojibwe ontology, he reported an exchange he had with an elder who had pointed out a stone animated by thunderbird power: "I once asked an old man: Are *all* the stones we see about us here alive? He reflected a long while and then replied, 'No! But *some* are."[13] As Hallowell commented, "The Ojibwa do not perceive stones, in general, as animate, any more than we do. The crucial test is experience. Is there any personal testimony available?"[14]

9 Ibid.

10 Grace Rajnovich, *Reading Rock Art: Interpreting the Indian Rock Paintings of the Canadian Shield* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1994), 159.

11 Rajnovich, *Reading the Rocks*, 13

12 Quoted in Rajnovich, *Reading the Rocks*, 66.

13 A. Irving Hallowell, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View" in *Contributions to Anthropology: Selected Papers of A. Irving Hallowell*, ed. Raymond Fogelson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 361.

14 Hallowell, "Ojibwe Ontology," 363.

Such experience—knowledge of the presence of power and spirit in particular places—is acquired through observations of the special features of land and then detailed in dreams. Shamans—people with exceptional powers to dream in this way—are able to establish particularly effective communication with the other-than-human beings and gain from them knowledge of medicines. As Rajnovich explains:

> "Medicine" had a great depth of meaning in traditional Indian usage. It meant something like "mystery" and "power" and included not only the activities of curing with tonics from plants and minerals, but also the receipt of powers from the manitous for healing, hunting, and battle. The most important step in the practice of medicine was communication between the practitioners and the *manitous*.[15]

Paintings on rocks, then, are representations of the experiences to which Hallowell refers, and they testify to the presence of other-than-human beings in those particular places.

A story told to a researcher in northern Manitoba in 1973 illustrates the relationship between shamanistic dreaming, the acquisition and use of power, and the making of rock paintings that must lie behind the many undocumented sites:

> Years previously a woman was very sick. Her family asked an old man named Mistoos Muskego to cure her, upon which he tried many cures but they would not heal her. Finally the old man said the only hope was to go and ask "the men who lived in the rock" for more powerful medicines. He canoed to a cliff face and used his power to enter the rock, the home of the medicine *manitous*. They talked for a long time and the old healer was then given a medicine which eventually cured the woman. He said that everyone must remember the men in the rock, and the aid they offered to the people, so he took the people of his band back to the rock face and

15 Rajnovich, *Reading Rock Art*, 10–11

drew a stick figure with line running from the head, giving a rabbit-eared appearance.[16]

The image, Rajnovich argues, must have resembled the rabbit-eared men found at other sites.

The individual nature of the experiences that led to the making of paintings on rock explains the highly varied repertoire of the rock art lexicon. We can sample this repertoire by looking in more detail at the famous paintings at Agawa Bay on the northern shore of Lake Superior. The nineteen panels of images that have been identified at Agawa include some of the most visually compelling and best-documented paintings in the Canadian Shield. Travelers in the Great Lakes from the mid-seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries mention seeing or hearing about rock paintings, but the most detailed account was given in the 1840s to Henry Schoolcraft, the Indian agent at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, by the prominent Anishinaabe chief Shingwauk (Shingwaukonce), whose community was located near Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, 130 kilometers east of Agawa Bay. Schoolcraft was a keen amateur ethnographer and included Shingwauk's account in his pioneering compilation of ethnographic and archaeological information about Great Lakes peoples.[17] It describes both the images that had been painted on the rock by an Anishinaabe shaman and warrior named Myeengun (The Wolf) and the more recent paintings Shingwauk himself had made. He identified Myeengun as a man "of much skill and secret power," a shaman who "acquired influence, and crossed Lake Superior in canoes…this exploit was considered as a direct evidence of the influence of his gods, and it gave him so much credit that he determined to perpetuate the memory of it by a Muz-sin-a-bik-on. He made two inscriptions, one on the south and the other on the north shore of the lake. Both were on the precipitous faces of rocks."[18]

Schoolcraft never saw the original rock paintings Shingwauk had drawn, and they remained unknown to outsiders until Selwyn Dewdney located the Agawa site in 1958. Through his

16 Ibid., 42.

17 Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, with illustrations by Capt Seth Eastman (published by authority of Congress, 6 vols., 1851–57).

18 Quoted in Conway and Conway, *Spirits in Stone*, 58.

discussions with Shingwauk's grandson, Fred Pine, and other elders, Conway was able to date and establish the historical references and purpose of Myeengun's paintings. The artist was almost certainly the chief recorded as "Mahingan" who signed the 1701 treaty known as the Great Peace of Montreal with the beaver *dodem* of the Amikwa Anishinaabeg who lived at the northeastern end of Lake Huron. Myeengun used his shamanic powers to predict the coming of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) warriors who were waging an aggressive war for dominance of the fur trade in the central Great Lakes during the mid-seventeenth century. Calling on the powers of the great underwater beings, Myeengun caused the invaders to drown in their canoes. As Fred Pine told Conway, "Oh, that Michipeshu, the big lynx with the horns. He's up north here. None of the underwater creatures were dangerous for the medicine men.... But Michipeshu and the giant serpents were here to protect their tribe."[19]

The defeat of the Haudenosaunee would have occurred between 1650 and 1662, enabling the Conways to conclude that "Myeengun was an Amikwa leader from northeastern Lake Huron, who was displaced to the Lake Superior area during the Iroquois wars of the seventeenth century. At that time, he battled the Iroquois on eastern Lake Superior and made a commemorative pictograph panel during a ritual after the event."[20] Myeengun painted not only the other-than-human protector of his war party, but also the party itself, which appears as a group of four vertically stacked canoes led by their *dodemag*. The crane represents Shingwauk's community at Sault Ste Marie; the eagle or thunderbird, the Mississaugas then living on the north shore of Lake Huron; and the beaver Myeengun's own people on the eastern shore of Georgian Bay. In Fred Pine's account, Myeengun was able to rally these distant nations through magical powers of long-distance messaging. Myeengun's rock paintings thus comprise a kind of history painting that commemorates a great victory in war accomplished through a shaman's ability to enlist the aid of the powerful underwater beings at the place where they reside.

The paintings Shingwauk made at Agawa illustrate a third cultural-ritual context that could stimulate the making of a rock painting. The panel consists of a horse and rider and a small

19 Conway and Conway, *Spirits in Stone*, 60.

20 ibid., 61.

insect above a row of four circles and two broad arcs. These motifs record not an historical event, but the great powers possessed by Shingwauk himself. Fred Pine told Conway that the horse and rider are dream images from a vision quest, and the archaeologist has been able to relate the row of circles and the cross to Shingwauk's high rank and powers within the Midewiwin society. The insect, a louse, represents Shingwauk's magical shape-changing abilities. As Pine recounted, "He could transform himself into any animal. One way he travelled and hid from his enemies was by becoming a louse. When he changed into a louse, nobody could recognize him."[21]

Few rock painting panels can be dated so accurately or attributed to particular artists. This is not surprising, for in their own time they were not intended to be read in such specific and literal ways by casual viewers. Because the details of encounters with other-than-human beings had to be kept private in order to retain their power, rock art images are profoundly narrative while at the same time withholding the details of the stories to which they refer. They proclaim the painter's access to power while retaining the mystery of that power, and they affirm a degree of human control and achievement in a universe controlled by beings whose powers are far greater. Fred Pine summarized the interactive nature of rock painting, which links humans to places and places to powers, when he told Thor Conway: "When I see one of these marks, I know what it is right away. But there's more meaning to it. It's like shorthand. You have to dream about it. It's an effort on your soul by the spirits."[22] In the past, members of Anishinaabe communities would have understood many of the general references of this shorthand. Many no longer do, and such understandings are even rarer in settler society. The restoration of the field of common reference is a classic Panofskian project, and a contribution that art historians can make which will be valued if managed with respect for areas of Indigenous knowledge today regarded as private, proprietary or sacred.

21 Ibid., 32.

22 Ibid., 43

Mississauga Topographies and Transformations

The different styles in which rock art thunderbirds, eagle *dodemag*, and contemporary First Nations graphic symbols have been drawn are the visual indicators of centuries of rupture and cultural trauma—and also of the extraordinary efforts of will which have kept the fundamental concepts alive. I have long found haunting a passage in Donald Smith's biography of a prominent Mississauga man of that period, the Reverend Peter Jones, because it suggests how people experienced dislocation from the lands that conferred on them their fundamental identities. Jones was born in 1802 to the daughter of Wabenose, one of the Mississauga chiefs who would sign the Toronto purchase, and Welsh surveyor Augustus Jones, who was engaged in the quintessentially colonial project of dividing land into saleable property. Peter Jones's Anishinaabe name, Kakewaquonaby, or Sacred Feathers, directly referenced the Mississauga eagle *dodem*, and he was given both a traditional Anishinaabe upbringing and an English education. He reached adolescence, the time when young Anishinaabe men first sought the protection of a *manitou*, during the War of 1812. The Mississauga lands at Burlington Bay were at the heart of the conflict, and the Burlington Heights—the cliff-rimmed isthmus that lies between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie—became the site of a military encampment and a major battle. The Mississauga believed that the caves and hollows of Burlington Heights were, as Jones later wrote, "the homes of many manitous."[23] They would have been favored places for the pursuit of the vision quest and the creation of rock paintings. "During these troubled times," Smith writes, "Sacred Feathers went on his first vision quests":

> The arrival of white settlers, then this incredible war, had rendered the Mississaugas' universe unrecognizable. Although the spirit world was real to him, Sacred Feathers never experienced a vision. The Indians believed that after the arrival of the white settlers, many of the spirits had left. The water creature living on the Credit river had taken his leave in a tremendous flood, retreating into Lake Ontario when the white people began taking salmon from the river. Sim-

23 Quoted in Rajnovich, *Reading Rock Art*, 74.

> ilarly, the supernatural beings in the caves at the Head of the Lake, who made noises like the volley of gunfire, had left for the interior when the alien presence approached.[24]

Throughout southern Ontario, and, in due course, in other areas, similar failures of belief and practice occurred when the relationships to space and place to which they were integral failed. Within a few years, Kakewaquonaby converted to Methodism and devoted his life both to converting his fellow Mississaugas to Christianity and to securing their remaining land rights.

Two well-known portraits of Jones evidence the conceptual shift entailed by the new concepts of land imposed by the settler world to which Indigenous peoples had to adjust during the first half of the nineteenth century. In both, land is represented as landscape, a transformation that was paralleled by the legal-political transfers accomplished by the land surrenders being signed in rapid succession across southern Ontario during those years. In the earlier portrait, a miniature painted in England in 1832, Jones is shown in front of two contrasting landscape vignettes: the old world of the wigwam, nomadic hunting, and the untamed forest on the right, and the new world of the frame house, land ownership, and cleared fields on the left. In a photographic portrait made in Edinburgh a decade later, Jones poses in front of a painted forest backdrop supplied by the photographer's studio. In both cases, the British portraitists stereotype, sentimentalize, and exoticize their subject to varying degrees. In both, the land becomes a background, a backdrop, a painted screen spatially separated from the human presence. Thus objectified, the land becomes controllable, subject to dominant human agency.

The psychic toll taken by the rapidity of change during the first half of the nineteenth century can only be imagined, but portraits such as these provide clues. We know from letters Jones wrote during his later Edinburgh sojourn that he hated having to act the savage Indian by wearing what he called the "odious Indian costume" his audiences expected to see.[25] Yet at the same

24 Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 35.

25 Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 204.

time, he wears his identity on his body in proud and deliberate ways—in his inclusion of the woven sash and chief's medal in the miniature, and in the images embroidered in prominent positions on his fringed hide coat: eagles and serpents are locked in their cosmic battle on the lapels, while the cuffs display the classic meander lines that form the tail of the underwater panther. Despite the sincerity of Jones's Methodist beliefs, the beings who had fled the cliffs and caves of the Mississauga homelands remain present in such visual reifications.

Bonnie Devine's "Battle for the Woodlands"

The Canadian Shield is rich in minerals, resources that continue to be a mainstay of the Canadian economy. Rather than finding medicine power in the rock through mystical transformations, settlers found ores and extracted them through physical and chemical transformations that are often irreversible. Bonnie Devine is a member of the Serpent River First Nation on the north shore of Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, and shares its crane *dodem*. Over the past century and a half, Serpent River has felt the impact of natural resource industries and the changes they bring, from commercial fishing to the railroad, logging, roadways, and mining. The discovery of uranium at nearby Elliot Lake in the 1950s threatened the community's survival in unprecedented ways. Health problems began when a sulfuric acid plant was built on the reserve to supply the mine and became worse when the plant closed a decade later; the setting of an explosion intended to dismantle it spread toxic waste throughout the reserve. The explosion made the land radioactive while the waste from the mine's tailings ponds poisoned the river and made the fish inedible.

Devine retains vivid childhood memories of the mounds of glowing yellow sulfur that stood on the reserve. They struck her as beautiful and, she says with a dead-serious irony, "I think this is why I became an artist."[26] Her extensive research into uranium mining for her master's thesis led to a sustained drawing project and to her 2004 exhibition *Stories from the Shield,* in which she exhibited a fragile seventeen-foot-long canoe made out of the handwritten pages of her thesis research alongside seventy-eight of her drawings bound into three books, or codices, entitled *Radiation*, *Radiance*, and *Transformation*. The drawings ex-

26 Personal communication, October 23, 2014, Toronto.

press the terrible beauty of the landscape of her childhood and invite comparison with Edward Burtinsky's photograph of a tailings pond at the Elliott Lake uranium mine. Both wield the attractive power of beauty as an activist strategy and a weapon. Anishinaabe artist and curator Robert Houle drew other comparisons in his catalogue essay for Devine's show, seeing strong parallels to the pictographic traditions of rock painting and the Midewiwin scrolls. He points to the narrative quality and mnemonic intent of her images. "As threatening as those found in the sacred scrolls, in the pictographs and petroglyphs of the Canadian Shield," he wrote, "the Devine scroll sheets are drawn in a cryptic calligraphy illustrating the forewarned disaster dream sequence as a sudden burst of light in the evening sky at Rooster Rock."[27]

Four years later, in her exhibition *Writing Home: The Art of Bonnie Devine*, the artist addressed the rocky terrain of Serpent River with a new literalness, grappling with its materiality and meaning with extraordinary force and focus.[28] The project also called forth innovative techniques for recording the presence and potential of the rock. "It came to me some time ago that the rock up here has something to tell," she wrote, "and so I have come to listen and watch and somehow, if I can devise a way, record what it will say. I have been thinking about wetting down sheets of cotton paper and stretching them over the rock face until they are dry and stiff enough to be peeled away... to record what the river writes. *Letters From Home* is the name I`ve been thinking of calling these papers."[29] She illustrated her process with digital slides and displayed glass castings of the rock whose transparency and luminescence suggested the spiritual essences her ancestors had found within. The centerpieces of the exhibition were four diptychs that juxtaposed photographs of rock with a series of written and stitched letters. While the photographs evoked a sense of the living rock, rich in color and texture and potent with emergent *manitou*-like forms, the letters combined lines of written script with enig-

27 Robert Houle, "Dibaajimowin/Storytelling," in *Stories from the Shield: Bonnie Devine,* by Bonnie Devine, Tom Hill, Robert Houle, and Diane Pugen (Brantford, ON: The Woodland Cultural Centre, 2004), n.p.

28 The exhibition *Bonnie Devine: Writing Home* was curated by Faye Heavyshield for Gallery Connexion Fredericton NB and shown there from February 2 to March 21, 2008, and at Urban Shaman in Winnipeg from February 12 to March 27, 2010.

29 "Bonnie Devine: Àn Artist Statement," in exhibition pamphlet for *Writing Home: The Art of Bonnie Devine*, n.p. Available from http://www.cacnart.com/#!bonnie-devine/ccbe (accessed 22 August 2015.)

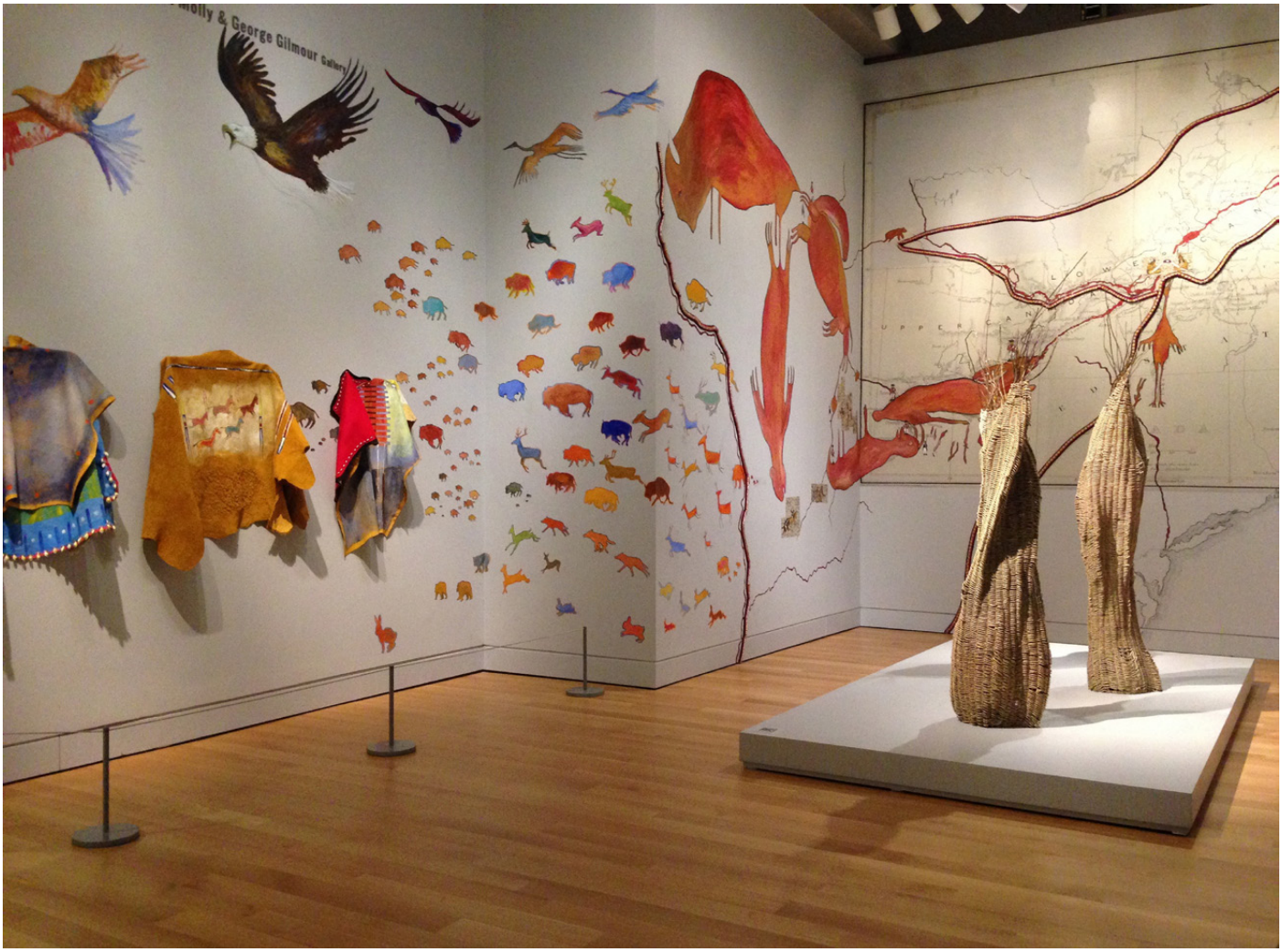
matic, parallel wavy lines of red thread stitched through the paper.[30] These elements came together to suggest the fluidity of text, image, and materiality in the construction of home. As curator Faye Heavyshield wrote in the exhibition brochure, "*Writing Home* merges absence and presence…words become threads and the rock transformed into the lens of glass remains the rock."[31] In some of her letters, Devine incorporated painted images that are recognizably derived from the pictographic vocabulary of *dodemag* and rock paintings—a crane-like bird, a long-tailed being, a man wearing a top hat, a divided circle.

These beings return, greatly enlarged, in "The Battle for the Woodlands," the installation curator Andrew Hunter commissioned Devine to create in 2014 for the Art Gallery of Ontario's Canadian wing. Devine chose an alcove that had been designed for a previous exhibition of nineteenth-century art entitled *Constructing Canada* and retained its mural-sized enlargement of a nineteenth-century map of Ontario. In overpainting it with Bison, Otter, Turtle, Mishipishu, and the great trickster Nanabush to figure the five Great Lakes, she reclaims the land as an Anishinaabe place from its European cartographic rendering. Yet these images do not seem firmly fixed in the space of the map; they appear, rather, to fall, hang, and slide off it, and to be constrained by the beaded bands that run across its surface, representing treaty belts that mark off ceded territories. On the wall to the "east" of the map, Devine depicts ships bringing soldiers and settlers. To the "west," battles rage between Indian warriors and European soldiers. Painted in a naive style on pages torn from historical novels, they recall both nineteenth-century Plains ledger-book paintings and the illustrations in children's books. In the first phase of the installation, Devine paired her wall paintings with a sculptural floor piece entitled "Treaty Robe for Tecumseh." Wrapped in his Union Jack robe, the great Shawnee leader who rallied the First Nations to hold the line against further white encroachment during the War of 1812, dragged behind him the heavy train of treaty belts that had already been exchanged.

In 2015, Devine completed the second iteration of her installation (Fig. 2). She added a new group of spirit animals representing the Anishinaabe who moved west under pressure from eastern settlers, and she replaced "Treaty Robe for Tecumseh" with

30 Ibid.

31 Faye Heavyshield, in *Writing Home: The Art of Bonnie Devine.*



2. Bonnie Devine, *The Battle for the Woodlands, Anishinaabitude*, and *Objects to Clothe the Warriors*, Art Gallery of Ontario, 2015. Photo: Ruth Phillips

two further additions. The new floor piece, entitled "Anishinaabitude," consists of three figures woven with traditional basketry techniques out of commercial fibers and twigs collected from her own Serpent River First Nation, the Walpole Island First Nation (said to be the burial place of Tecumseh), and the Don River, which flows through traditional Mississauga lands in the heart of Toronto. These figures introduce a living presence into the gallery while also suggesting a quality of timelessness. The second addition, "Objects to Clothe the Warriors" are garments made in honor of three great Indigenous leaders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Tecumseh, the Odawa chief Pontiac, and the Oglala/Lakota warrior Crazy Horse. As Devine has explained, "They have been positioned to be easily at hand should these warriors return to continue their resistance, their spirits newly clothed to join the ongoing battle for the Woodlands."[32]

Devine's development of "The Battle for the Woodlands" traces a movement from histories that highlight the active resistance

32 Quoted from Devine's original text. Edited to read: "They are hung to be easily accessible should these warriors return to join in the ongoing battle for the Woodlands"

to land loss of past generations to a future she makes present only as a potentiality. The battle for the Woodlands is not in the past, she tells us, but "ongoing"; the great leaders may yet return. Her points of departure, which have informed the work throughout, are the dual images of Indigenous and Western concepts of land glued to and painted on the wall. Her wall paintings, she says, are a "symbolic gesture of acknowledgement...I wanted to talk about the land...as a being with whom we are in a reciprocal relationship...and also...to allude to the pictorial tradition, the pictographs on the cliff."[33] She also articulates the essential difference that keeps separate the underlying and over-painted images: "We've made marks not on canvas but on the rocks themselves, as marks of presences, not of ownership."[34] In insisting that there is an alternative to "ownership" and the uncontrolled and destructive exploitation of land, Devine's work—like Peter Jones's coat—instantiates the quality Anishinaabe literary scholar Gerald Vizenor has called "survivance," a quality of resistance and active presence which Indigenous peoples have maintained for four centuries against the heaviest of odds.[35]

Settler-Colonial Art History

When art historians come together today, anywhere in the Americas, to discuss "concepts of space and place and the political meanings associated with such ideas," we inevitably engage with the new iteration of our discipline that is beginning to respond to Indigenous "survivance." New Zealand art historian Damian Skinner has termed this approach "settler-colonial art history," and defined it in ethical and epistemological terms "as an explanation and primary dynamic shaping art, but also as a possible method for breaking down the unholy alliance of art history and the nation state."[36] Settler art history, he argues, is a subset of postcolonial studies that is distinctive in a number of important ways. Unlike external colonies which expelled their former colonizers and are now self-governing—such as

33 Personal communication, interview with the artist, 23 October 2014, Toronto.

34 Ibid.

35 Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 15.

36 Damian Skinner, "Settler-Colonial Art History: A Proposition in Two Parts," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 35, no. 1 (2014): 132.

India, Indonesia, or Senegal—settler societies must confront the failure of centuries-old policies designed to absorb, assimilate, or destroy their internally colonized Indigenous minorities. In Canada, New Zealand, and elsewhere, there is a growing consciousness that the places settlers call home were taken from their original inhabitants by theft, deception, and violence. Visitors to the *Nation to Nation* exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, for example, are told a history of progressive betrayal of land surrender treaties negotiated in good faith during the early years of contact and, in later years, under duress.[37] As they leave the exhibition, they are reminded that all non-Indigenous Americans are "treaty people"—whether they arrived on an airplane a year ago or are descended from ancestors who spent weeks and months crossing oceans in ships. In the same vein, visitors to *Picturing the Americas* at the Art Gallery of Ontario encountered, on exiting the exhibition, an enlarged reproduction of the Toronto purchase of 1805 and video interviews in which Indigenous historians and artists discuss identity, land, and relationships to place.

Theorists of indigeneity have demonstrated the dialectical relationship between the constructs of indigene and settler—one, obviously, cannot exist without the other. But both Indigenous and settler identities are also the products of deep processes of cultural exchange and intermixture consisting of appropriations, adoptions, resistances, and mimicries, all informed by radical imbalances of power. In the course of their different but intertwined anti-colonial struggles, settler artists have often sought to indigenize themselves through appropriations of Aboriginal art forms, while Indigenous artists have accepted the universalist promises of artistic modernism and deployed Western art practices as powerful weapons of decolonization and reclamation. "Making settler colonialism visible," writes Skinner, "necessitates an awareness of the conflicting tendencies that fracture the settler collective: the desire for indigenization and national autonomy sits uneasily with the desire to replicate a European, civilized lifestyle."[38]

37 The exhibition runs from September 2014 to Fall 2018. See Suzan Shown Harjo ed., *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2014)

38 Skinner, "Settler-Colonial Art History," 140.

The reverse action of "to colonize" is "to decolonize," a term often heard these days in Indigenous North American political and art worlds. Bonnie Devine's artist's statements express the tension entailed in decolonization which arises from the need to use Western disciplines, epistemologies, and techniques of historical and art-historical research in order to recover Indigenous philosophies, epistemologies, and traditions of visualization. "As a First Nations woman," she has written, "I am interested in the oppositions inherent in the terms history and memory, science and mythology, art and artifact, and these oppositions and their cultural antecedents form the basis of much of my work."[39] She also makes clear that erasing the erasures of the colonial past is at the heart of her decolonizing project: "My work attempts to trace the absence of the Anishnaabek in these territories using the colonial mapping and claiming techniques that have strategically served to erase their history and the Indigenous methods of mark-making and mapping that reassert it."[40] Her strategies use the familiar in order to defamiliarize—re-forming the written pages of her thesis research into a canoe, re-rendering written letters as lines of stitches. Such acts are both cancellations and retrievals; they explore processes of visualization that turn words into images and images into words.

The eminent Anishinaabe writer Louise Erdrich has also meditated on the bicultural conundrum in a small and lovely memoir entitled *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country: Traveling in the Lands of my Ancestors*. She recounts a summer canoe trip among the 14,000 islands of the Lake of the Woods. "Some of them are painted islands," she writes, "the rocks bearing signs ranging from a few hundred to more than a thousand years old. So these islands, which I'm longing to read, are books in themselves." Erdrich sees offerings left on rock ledges beneath the paintings and thinks about the beliefs in spirit presences that inspired them in relation to her own Western cultural and academic formation. She writes:

> There was a time when I wondered: do I really believe all of this? I'm half-German. Rational! Does this make any sense? After a while, such ques-

39 Bonnie Devine, "Artist Statement" for *Writing Home.*

40 Ibid.

> tions stopped mattering. Believing or not believing, it was all the same. I found myself compelled to behave toward the world as if it contained sentient spiritual beings. The question of whether or not they *actually* existed became irrelevant. After I'd stopped thinking about it for a while, the ritual of offering tobacco became comforting and then necessary. Whenever I offered tobacco, I was for that moment fully here, fully thinking, willing to address the mystery.[41]

Erdrich's response to the dilemma of the rock and the hard place—the challenge of reconciling Western and Indigenous epistemologies—is, then, a kind of suspension of disbelief achieved by opening herself to the possibility of a radically other worldview. She also thinks through the difference between her ability to grasp this worldview and that of her partner, a fluent speaker of Anishinaabemowin brought up on the lake in the traditions of Anishinaabe civilization: "He knows the lake in a way that only Indigenous people can truly know anywhere. His people were the lake; the lake was them. At one time, everyone who lived near the lake was essentially made of the lake. As the people lived off fish, animals, the lake's water, and water plants for medicine, they were literally cell by cell composed of the lake and the lake's islands." She seeks knowledge of Anishinaabemowin in order to gain access to this worldview:

> The word for stone, *asin*, is animate. After all, the preexistence of the world according to Ojibwe religion consisted of a conversation between stones. People speak to and thank the stones in the sweat lodge, where the *asiniig* are superheated and used for healing. They are addressed as grandmothers and grandfathers. Once I began to think of stones as animate, I started to wonder whether I was picking up a stone or it was putting itself into my hand. Stones are no longer the same as they were to me in English.[42]

41 Louise Erdrich, *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country: Traveling in the Land of My Ancestors* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2003), 16.

42 Erdrich, *Books and Islands*, 86.

Erdrich's journey is a reclaiming of Indigenous worldview, but one she consciously keeps in tension with a Western worldview acquired both through enforced acculturation and by right of blood.

The settler's claims, however, are differently grounded, for the silences of colonial history mystify the question of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the settler's tenure. Is a similar dual consciousness possible or desirable for the settler? The settler art historian, as Carla Taunton and Leah Decter argue, must begin by decolonizing herself, by realizing that we are all "beneficiaries of colonialism who continue to be part of settling, and thereby occupying, Indigenous territories."[43] The second task is to become conscious of the ways in which art historical discourses have supported colonial dispossession and violence in critically important ways—how, through colonialism, Western visualizations of space and place have replaced those of Indigenous people through acts of silencing, decontextualization, and marginalization. As Skinner writes, "It was not enough to assert legal processes that transferred ownership from Indigenous peoples to settler populations, or to create and manage social processes of dispossession. The land itself also had to be reimagined and remade, and in this process, the ideologies of race and the organization of space became intertwined, based on the remarkable commonality that both are conceived of as natural, given, and elemental."[44]

The recognition of such processes is a notable achievement of poststructuralist and postcolonial art historical work, as exemplified in Canada by the extensive critique of the iconic status of the landscapes of the Group of Seven.[45] We have come to understand how the Western genre of landscape served as a primary site for this reimagining and remaking of land by rendering it objectifiable, and therefore divisible, commodifiable, and possessable. Deconstruction, however, cannot be an end in itself. It is, rather, a stage in the development of a new construct that better fits current needs. I pointed to the problematic nature of the characterization of rock painting as "art" at

43 Carla Taunton and Leah Decter, "Addressing the Settler Problem," *Fuse Magazine,* November 1, 2013, accessed August 10, 2015. http://fusemagazine.org/2013/11/36-4_decter-taunton.

44 Skinner, "Settler-Colonial Art History," 136.

45 See, for example, John O'Brian and Peter White eds., *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity and Contemporary Art* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

the beginning of this paper, and similar problems have emerged in relation to Western constructs of "history" and "land," as well as to standard Western genres of the portrait, the still life, and the history painting. If we cannot expect Indigenous thought-worlds to be conformable to and containable within Western understandings of these genres and terms—if we cannot produce inclusivity merely by extending the mantle of the Western genres over things that seem to resemble them from other parts of the world—what kind of common conceptual vocabulary can serve the needs of a world art history?[46]

The further challenge that confronts us involves not merely the reconstruction of art histories that have been unwritten or marginalized, but, rather, the taking on of their epistemological and ontological differences, their radically different understandings of space, place, and the ways human beings are positioned in relation to them. This task cannot be accomplished by well-intentioned settler art historians on their own. If the Indigenous and the settler-colonial summon each other dialectically, then a settler-colonial art history requires the complement of an Indigenous art history. A rising generation of Indigenous art historians trained in Western conventions but committed to survivance and the reclamation of Indigenous worldviews has begun to enter the academy. And although their work is necessarily complicated by the dual traditions to which they are heir, a distinct Indigenous art historical discourse is nascent. Fluid and difficult to characterize at present, it is taking shape as part of a larger political and cultural project of decolonization.

In twenty-first-century Canada, settlers and Indigenous peoples are not only divided, but also united—profoundly, indivisibly, fatally, hopefully—by their shared sense of space and place. The threat of global environmental disaster is proving to be a meeting ground, engendering new kinds of political alliances. An art history informed by Indigenous understandings of land and the powers integral to place can support this urgent project and, at the same time, move toward its own decolonization.

46 On landscape as a genre, see my essay "Indigenous Lands/Settler Landscapes: Art Histories Out of Joint," in *Picturing the Americas. Landscape Painting from Tierra Del Fuego to the Arctic,* ed. Peter John Brownlee, Valéria Piccoli, and Georgiana Uhlyarik (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press and co-publishers, 2015), 92–98; and on portraiture, "From Harmony to Antiphony: The Indigenous Presence in a (Future) Portrait Gallery of Canada," in Ruth B. Phillips, *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2011) , 231–251.

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