

UC Irvine

UC Irvine Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Perceiving Extraction: Landscape, Use, and the Conditions of Visuality

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3wd7w3r8>

Author

Malcolm, Chris

Publication Date

2017

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Perceiving Extraction:
Landscape, Use, and the Conditions of Visuality

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Comparative Literature

by

Chris Malcolm

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Rei Terada, Chair
Professor Anne-Lise François
Professor Eyal Amiran
Professor Herschel Farbman
Professor Ackbar Abbas

2017

© 2017 Chris Malcolm

DEDICATION

*Für Darrow,
als Dank und Versprechen*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
CURRICULUM VITAE	vii
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	viii
INTRODUCTION: Perceiving Extraction	1
CHAPTER 1: Tar Sands and the Management of Dispossession	49
CHAPTER 2: Acceptance in the Anthropocene: On Complicity	95
CHAPTER 3: Land Art and the Discovery of Landscape	132
CHAPTER 4: Chantal Akerman and the Closeness of the World	171
POSTSCRIPT: Standing Rock	212
WORKS CITED	228

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1	Northern Gateway Route	1
Figure 2	Douglas Channel	2
Figure 3	Syncrude Falcon	5
Figure 4	Tar Sands Falcon	6
Figure 5	Suncor's Wasipiw Lookout	9
Figure 6	Tailings Ponds	20
Figure 7	Chuquicamata Copper Mine	34
Figure 8	Air Quality RSA	36
Figure 9	Farmed Field	38
Figure 10	Landscape With a Cat	43
Figure 11	Where You Go to Eat a Sandwich	45
Figure 12	Thomas Disappearing	48
Figure 13	MLX Closure Topography	89
Figure 14	MLX Landscape Units	90
Figure 15	Burtynsky In the Ship	116
Figure 16	Hand-held image	116
Figure 17	Hand held image 2	117
Figure 18	<i>Third Place</i>	133
Figure 19	<i>Cancelled Crop</i>	137
Figure 20	Smithson's Monuments	145
Figure 21	Conifers Cover PBW	151

Figure 22	Buried Poem No. 4	158
Figure 23	Walter De Maria	162
Figure 24	Spiral Jetty	165
Figure 25	Kids Playing	176
Figure 26	Main Drag	177
Figure 27	Looking Away From the Crossing	185
Figure 28	Waiting Hall	192
Figure 29	Snow Bank	195
Figure 30	Street at Night	196
Figure 31	Tracking	202
Figure 32	Two trees	205
Figure 33	Even the Potholes	207
Figure 34	Landscape Shot	225
Figure 35	Intratemporal Trees	226

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation rushed to a conclusion, but in a way that was long in the making. My parents, Gisela and Blair, have borne with little complaint my not being around for the past years. As have my brother Tim and my sister Emily, and my nephews Orin and Iver—I look forward to more time with them all. My Dad has always been encouraging, and has always wanted to hear what I have to say about things. My Mum, the most emotionally intelligent person I know, is the intellectual one in our family.

I've been fortunate to be in contexts at Sussex, York, and UCI where critical work is always political work. Without Darrow Schecter, whom I met at Sussex, I would never have considered a great many things possible. I was lucky to work with Asher Horowitz at York, as I was to meet Karl Dahlquist and Eric George both of whom have proved soft inspirations through the distance. Time spent reading with Jonathan Adjemian and Alex Wolfson, then getting to hear Ian Balfour tell us about it all, still seems like a dream.

I am grateful to Ackbar Abbas for help, especially in my first years at UCI. As I am to Susan Jarrett and Jane O Newman. I was lucky to get to know Simon Leung through my exam period and I am grateful for his participation in that process. Bindya Baliga is warm and responsive in really helpful ways. Jennie Jackson and Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan have been supportive presences as well. I am grateful to all the students I've worked with, especially those in my "Extraction" and "Landscape Images" classes. Participants in the 2017 Undergraduate Conference in Critical Theory, which I was fortunate to organize, also helped at a crucial moment.

It's hard for me to say how significant the community within UCI Comp-Lit (and its fellow-travelers) has been to me. Here, emotional support is intellectual support, and vice-versa. Jamie Rogers provided solidarity and market companionship; "dance magic dance" has been my comfort song in dark hours. Parisa Vaziri's presence and intuition have been a great assistance. Ameeth Vijay downplayed every hurdle in the most useful of ways. A summer and a winter with Cameron Hu, Marissa Lee Benedict, and David Reuter helped index the worlds outside. Willie Chase's energy and silliness helped remind me of my own, on both counts. Alex Wolfson was so essential at so many moments that I don't know how to say thank you. I hope he pulps all future work. Under-remarked affinity with Liz Kinnamon, for deserts and much else, have kept me company when in hers and when not. Anne-Lise François would enter and recede like an autumn wind, at times silent, at others loud, providing much needed air in both modes. Totally uneventful correspondence and time spent with Lenora Hanson helped me to see the passing of things. Erin Trapp, of whom I "knew" for a long time before actually knowing as such, returned feedback and feelings that attested to this sentiment and to where I was. Correspondence with her has made almost everything better. Herschel Farbman gave indispensable encouragement and acute criticism on the model of the supportive sports coach I never had. I hope to long remain attached to Kirsty Singer, her grace, and our Joshua tree friends. Thanks in general to JTNP. Eyal Amiran's generosity, in thought and feeling, and in many different contexts, has been like that of a perfect editor, there at every slip. I can't believe I get to say that Morgan Slade is my best friend—she has taught me new ways to think and new ways to be. Rei Terada's work, thinking, and friendship have made such a difference to me, and to my capacity to conceive of this project, in ways I don't know quite how to say. Time spent in her seminars (which drift far beyond the seminar room) and with many of those mentioned here, were some of my most happy. There

would be no Comp-Lit at UCI without her. It is difficult to state how much Ana Baginski makes seem worthwhile and how she makes it seem all worth still doing. She shows everything is as hard as it needs to be, and so as easy as it one day might. I feel lucky to so often be beside her. Barely a word of this was written in which Cheez-It and her singular affection was not in view. She is right now—I would have given up without her. I'm glad I knew Joe Krall, I miss him all the time.

June 5, 2017. Joshua Tree, California.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Chris Malcolm

- 2005 B.A. First-Class Honors in Contemporary History and Politics, University of Sussex
- 2011 M.A. with Distinction in Social & Political Thought, York University
- 2013 M.A. in Comparative Literature, University of California, Irvine
- 2017 Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, with Emphases in Critical Theory and Visual Studies, University of California, Irvine

FIELD OF STUDY

Environmental Humanities, Visual Studies, Environmental Studies, Film Studies, Critical Theory

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Perceiving Extraction:
Landscape, Use, and the Conditions of Visuality

By

Chris Malcolm

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Irvine, 2017

Professor Rei Terada, Chair

This dissertation argues that environmental work, from resource extraction projects to environmental assessment, and from Land Art to eco-criticism, privileges harm rhetorically. This means, among other things, that such work carries along with it a sense of past, present, and future destruction. As a result, resource extraction companies, and the settler-colonial State, have a conception of the violence that they create and that they participate in. I show that the conception they have requires an infrastructural framework, one which I read out of environmental assessment and land-management documents. These documents set the visual conditions not just for extraction projects, but for environmental objects in general. The Environmental Humanities have rarely treated the rhetoric of management. But I argue that it not only materially produces their object of study, but also produces the field of visibility in which that object appears and others don't—establishing the criteria for what counts as a claim and what registers as an effect. I suggest that this creates a visual regime which finds a parallel in, for instance, the work of

Edward Burtynsky and Timothy Morton. However, while these discourses try to manage the appearance of violence, suggesting that ongoing destruction can't be seen, they can't control it. Via a reading of the Land Art movement, I show how landscape is one place where these conflicts appear. And through Chantal Akerman's documentary film, among others, and an analysis of the colonial dispute at Standing Rock, I construct a contrary visual regime one which recognizes ongoing non-fungible destruction.

Introduction

Perceiving Extraction

An advertisement for Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline, a pipeline which would have transported bitumen from the tar sands in Northern Alberta, simulated a journey from its start to the West coast town of Kitimat where tankers were to transport the unrefined product to refineries in China. The video is animated, it looks like a flight simulation video game or the intro one sees of a race-course before a round of Mario Kart. The landscape is smooth, the pipeline a yellow line that runs across it. Presumably the pipeline is a line because it hasn't been built yet, however, when the pipeline breaks the earth, the line moves freely through pre-formed tunnels which are already in place. There are little tree icons for trees, mountains are differentiated from hills by an even frosting of white, and although there are lakes shown, only towns are named. Watching it, the viewer swoops through, invited not to resist, as if on a roller-coaster ride. Upon reaching the ocean, the eye of the simulation turns back around keeping the port in view while reversing out through the Douglas channel where we are shown a tanker

happily making its way.

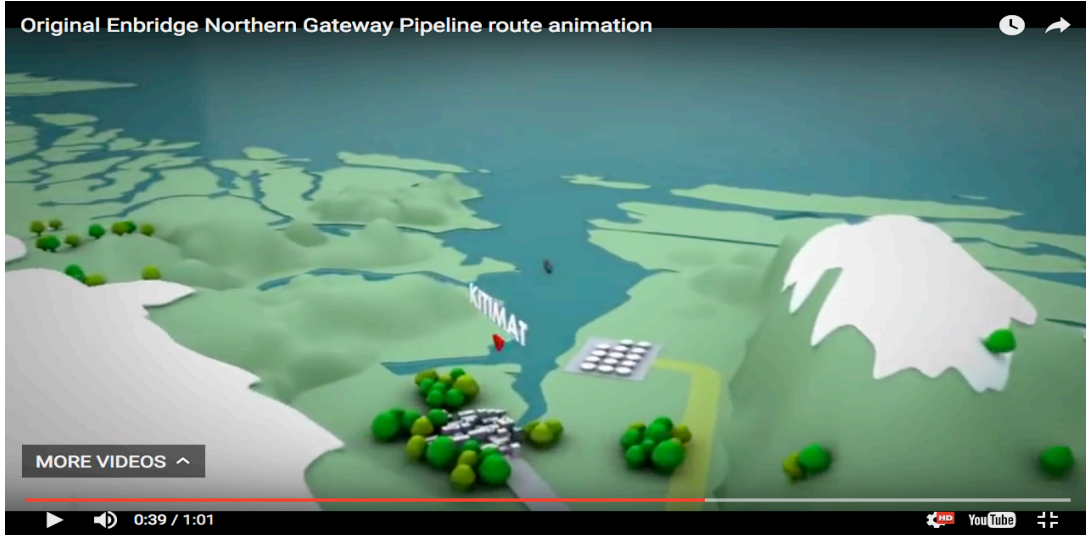


Figure 1: Northern Gateway Route (Mair)

The video was widely criticized as when the tanker sails through the channel in the video's final moments, it does so seemingly without much obstruction. Fig. 2 shows the tanker route to be much more risky than originally shown; populated with islands it appears difficult and dangerous to navigate. A blatant case of "greenwashing," Enbridge was called-out for obfuscating the dangers of the project and for representing the landscape as easily conforming to the pipeline's construction, when in reality it did not (Tencer).



Figure 2: Douglas Channel (Mair)

Enbridge's website, like every other resource extraction or resource infrastructure company, from Energy Transfers to Syncrude Canada, is populated by images of flowers, bucolic landscapes, and Indigenous engagement. These images, like the ad in miniature, appear to represent extraction in different but similar ways: as non-disruptive, as complementary, or as continuous with pre-existing development. Such representations appear as prior to anything else, first showing that the landscape is receptive to extraction and its movements. However, while these are representations of the landscape, I want to suggest that they conceive of landscape as depicted land. It is important to note here that I will also be writing about landscape as a genre of the image, and that there is an important difference between the two. I am suggesting that when conceiving of landscape as depicted land that representation is often positioned as prior. I am noting the temporal order of representation in order to stress that these representations suggest that extraction depends upon securing a certain imagination—resource extraction companies try and secure that imagination by showing that projects are not destructive, that even if they are the landscape is receptive to them in any case, or that these projects are continuous with the current conditions of development. Critics who show that this is not the case, such as in fig. 2, are taking the contrary position: the landscape is not receptive, the extraction project will be disruptive, and the erasures misrepresent what will be harmed. However, such a position remains within the same order of representation.

This example introduces a much broader and more complex discussion, one which is reproduced by critics and filmmakers and one which bears on the genre of landscape. The theory of representation at work here is that extraction depends on, and is legitimated by, a visual representation of its effects on the landscape (here as depicted land). Securing the imagination, helps the project move forward; showing the representation to be ideological, obfuscatory, or

misleading, shows that the project shouldn't happen. More often than not the visual divide is organized by visible effects which can be critiqued by pointing to invisible ones that are left out. In both cases, appearance is conceived of as a relation between the visible which one can see and the invisible which is hidden from view, but which could be visible if represented in a different way or for different reasons. Throughout this dissertation I argue that there is also something else going on. Indeed, the visibility/invisibility model is one provoked by how resource extraction companies, and their representations, often indirectly frame the visual field. I show the negative effects of operating within this frame throughout this Introduction.

Conceiving of landscape as only the depiction of what is visible or invisible on it, leaves out what I refer to as the conditions of visibility. Resource extraction companies are doing more than representing, in ideological ways, what is occurring. A central question in this dissertation is, how do resource extraction companies conceive of the violence they are doing? And a central assumption is that they do have a conception of the destruction they are causing, as well as the ongoing history of violence in which they stand. In other words, resource extraction companies, along with the State and the infrastructure of environmental assessment, are active participants in not only causing violence but managing its appearance and working-through its effects. Landscape, as a genre, is one place where these conflicts appear. While it is important to say that at a basic level landscape is always a representation, mediated by ideology, landscape is also in WJT Mitchell's phrase, "an instrument of cultural power... perhaps even an agent of power that is independent of human intentions."¹ In my argument, thinking of landscape in this way helps to clarify that the violence which resource extraction companies cause and are in relation to—a violence which they have a sense of—produces effects which nevertheless cannot simply be absorbed by the agents that cause them, however powerful they may be.

¹ I will come back to my differences with Mitchell, but it is necessary to state some straightforward alignments. Mitchell, WJT. *Landscape and Power: Second Edition*. Chicago, IL: U Chicago UP. 2002. p.1.

Let's take a second example, similar but slightly different. A plastic bird sits atop a short pole connected to a floating pad in what appears to be a lake.



Figure 3: Syncrude Falcon ("Waterfowl and Bird Protection")

The floating pad is quite substantial, has a solar panel and has a propane cylinder on it too. It seems like a kind of recording or monitoring device. The photo is shot from a low position, beneath the fake bird, and one can see banks of the lake in background with what appears to be mist rising from the lake to the left. A power line runs in the distance through the shot. The photo is from Syncrude's website in its section on how it protects waterfowl from landing on tailings ponds. The by-product of tar sands extraction is toxified water, held in large waste-water pits known as tailings ponds. From the air the ponds look like lakes, and migratory birds often take to them to rest, dying in the thousands. Such a potential scenario is much clearer however, in fig. 4, taken by Greenpeace, who try to show the lake as the tailings pond it is.



Figure 4: Tar Sands Falcon (Greenpeace)

The bird is a falcon effigy and the propane cylinder fires a cannon (the horizontally protruding piece) which sets off blasts whenever birds come near. Airport standard radar monitoring systems are in place to detect birds, giving information to machines which emit sonic frequencies that disrupt the birds so that they don't want to land. The sonic emitters can also project precise directional sounds towards areas of bird activity. Failing those deterrents, and depending on the birds in the area, a distress call of the bird's species is emitted, warning the birds of danger. At night, the ponds are bathed in a wash of green-lazer light. "Monitoring," says Syncrude, "occurs on a full-time basis throughout the migration period and, if necessary, pyrotechnic flare guns, air-horns and boat movement are deployed" ("Waterfowl and Bird Protection"). However, as studies have suggested and as experts have warned, birds, having long been in areas of development, are quite good at adjusting to sound and have continued to regularly land on the ponds nonetheless.

In some way an inverse example of the Enbridge video, here the extraction company must invest in the bird's belief: *that the tailings ponds really are lakes*. Scarecrows, or "bitumen", populate the tar sands landscape often dressed in the high-visibility clothes of the

construction workers who are all-around. And like other images of tailings ponds sometimes the distinction between extraction pond and natural lake is lost. The confusion may be further justified as recent Federal acts have made it legal to dump toxic-waste into waterways in instances associated with resource extraction, thereby turning rivers and lakes into potential tailings ponds (Milewski). The simple doubt of whether what one sees is a lake or a tailings pond, is part of the problem of perceiving extraction. Such a doubt, not restricted to literal sight, as in the feeling that this or that lake could be made into a tailings pond and is thereby fungible too, affects all images of lakes with this possibility, and everyday perception too.

One way of thinking about landscape would be to conceive of it as a representation of a particular strip of land, one which could be shown as vacant or receptive and thereby developable. In such a scenario, the ideological nature of the image is to manage what it seems possible to do there, and in a certain way, the extraction itself depends on the reproduction of the relations of production. While it seems like the representation needs to be prior, i.e. needs to be there first as if extraction depends upon it, it may be more helpful to think about the representations that come figuratively after. This is not to say that debates about how something visibly appears are not important, it is just to say that they are doing something else than securing the conditions for extraction. I am not saying that other reasons, such as economic ones, override visual ones. I am saying that thought of like this, representational arguments conceive of appearance as only a relation between the visible and the invisible, on the model of visibility. This makes it very hard to understand the underlying conditions of visuality for extraction and what is happening at this site.

If, as in my argument, resource extraction companies have a conception of the violence they cause, even and especially when they don't admit that violence—deny it, but also don't let it

in—then there are also defensive movements and protections that are created around the management of that violence. I am figuring this temporally—the coming after, as opposed to the representation which appears as prior—to stage that the management of violence can't be controlled and is therefore readable. I am using the prior/after construction as a way to stress that there is something excessive in the violence, and that it needs a place to be. The difference between fig. 1 and fig. 2, or fig. 3 and fig. 4, concern different attempts to show how disruptive these projects may or may not be. But if, in the last instance, landscape is something other than the depiction of land, and critical work is something other than pointing out what the discourse or the imagery of the extraction companies is misrepresenting, then what are these representations doing?

To answer these questions we will need one more image. Fig. 5 shows what appears to be a meadow at around sunset. The light of the sun fades into the cloud formation to the right and shrouds the tree-line in the distance. The image is framed by three tree-trunks which, although bare, do not seem out of place. Indeed, the trees make the site seem less like a meadow and more like a wetland or marshland.



Figure 5: Suncor's Wasipiw Lookout ("Wapisiw Lookout")

The site is known as Wapisiw Lookout, and is one of many reclamation projects in the region. Standing on the area of Suncor's first mine, Wapisiw used to be, from 1967 to 1997, a tailings pond. The tailings pond grew to 3km wide as Suncor enlarged operations, until it wasn't needed anymore, given that Suncor had added more and larger tailings ponds throughout its leases.

In contrast to the two previous images, this is generally what, from certain angles, the landscape here looks like. There is no particular obfuscation or misrepresentation. "If not for the refinery flares in the distance and the checkpoint that screens visitors to Wapisiw," suggests an article in the New York Times, "one might forget that the grassy 550-acre landscape spent the past four decades as a waste pond for Canada's largest energy company" (Schor). One might forget, but they would be hard pressed to. Extraction here isn't invisible, it's all around. It's in the

drive to the site, the smell in the air, the refineries on adjacent lots—it's literally in the landscape too. And in any case, forgetting is not quite the point; even from Suncor's point of view, you're not meant to not-know where you are (you are supposed to go through the checkpoint). It would be better for Syncrude, in fact, if you had an idea that you were on a site only made possible by their reclamation efforts. But where are you?

You are no longer on an a site from which a natural resource can be extracted, nor are you on, or in, capital's waste-product—that would be for the birds. You are beyond the presence or absence of capital, and you are also somewhere else than the visibility of extraction just as you are somewhere else than the invisibility of it. While the reclamation landscape is remade—"large engineered landforms can be designed with topographic features to form undulations, mounds and slightly rolling surfaces for the creation of a more natural looking landscape"(Cumulative Environmental Management Association 54)—it is constrained by its previous use. Because it is engineered on top of what used to be a tailings pond, Wapisiw Lookout is demarcated by extraction and can only take certain forms. Toxic silt which sank to the bottom of the pond can never be de-toxified and so is capped by sand and clay. This means that the landscape can only retain basic grassland and shrubs. Furthermore, only shrubland and upland forests are capable of tolerating the salts, metals, and acids that are present in the soil and the groundwater flowing through them. These are the landforms that make up the majority of reclamation sites. You are walking in grass not because that's what seems best, but because that's all that can be there. The trees pictured are placed there for birds to nest in, because actual trees can't be sustained.

The interest and concern for the landscape in reclamation might be thought of within the context of settler-colonial activity. Writing in their essay, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," K. Wayne Yang and Unangax scholar Eve Tuck suggest that, "within settler colonialism, the

most important concern is land/water/air/subterranean earth (land, for shorthand.) Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence" (Tuck 5). It makes sense then that Suncor's interest in the landscape extends past what can be extracted from it. Just as settler-colonialism must be, "reasserted each day of occupation" (5), so resource extraction continues past a pond's closure. Thought of like this, settler-colonial thinking doesn't end at the attempted removal of Indigenous people from the land, but continues its claim long after, either by suggesting there is nothing left, or, as in reclamation projects, saying that what is there is only there because of resource extraction's management. This particular site has not only been brought under a capitalist mode of development but has been stripped of all vegetation, cleared for extraction. It is then, finally, so diminished that it can't be returned to the lifeworld it previously sustained. If, as Dene scholar Glenn Coulthard has argued, "settler-colonialism is territorially acquisitive *in perpetuity*,"² then such a result follows. And likewise, reclamation projects like Wapisiw Lookout are the suggestion that the process of dispossession is complete.

On the Wapisiw Lookout site, you are, then, in a certain relation to violence. Perhaps your feeling of this would be more acute if you were standing in tar, or carcinogenic waste-material rather than on a grassy mound. Indeed, one Syncrude reclamation site, Gateway Hill, has 4 kilometers of recreational trails. Or perhaps the perceptual and experiential feeling of following the limited undulation of a hillside, does something else. At the very least, Wapisiw Lookout shows that extraction companies have ideas about what they are doing.

² In Chapter 1 I follow Coulthard's framing of the shift in the Canadian State's relation to Indigenous folks in Canada, as moving from one of violent dispossession to dispossession by other means. Both show how settler-colonialism, as here, is ongoing. see, Coulthard, Glenn. *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minnesota, MI: Minnesota UP. 2014. p.5

The tar sands extraction project covers an area the size of Florida, all of which has been leased for mining—it is thought to be the largest industrial project in the world. Prior to extraction, two-thirds of the region's boreal forest landscape was peatland fens. No one has worked out how to reclaim the landscape as peatland which supported a wide range of plants, including many of Western Canada's wild and rarest orchids, hundreds of species of birds and insects, as well as a range of large mammals, including woodland caribou, moose, wolves, and grizzly bears (Struzik). The restoration is thought to be impossible because it would require water and soil chemistries that develop only when groundwater flows through nutrient-rich layers of sphagnum and other mosses that have decomposed over millennia (Struzik). If settler-colonial thinking invests in its own permanence, a quality of lasting forever, it is also the case that it has the effect of reversing processes, such as groundwater flows, which are on a similar timescale. In a final irony, not only do peatland fens filter water, as opposed to the grasslands and swamps of the reclamation landscapes, but they efficiently sequester enormous amounts of carbon (as much, in the area, as 7.2 million metric tons annually) (Struzik).

Like Enbridge's video or Syncrude's bird on the lake, extraction companies attempt to conceal the degraded status of the extracted landscape. However, if we think transverse to what is left out of certain representations we can think about what is in the imagination of what happens at these sites. Wapisiw Lookout is an expression of a conflict, regardless of how the land there is depicted or not. The landscape then is one place where the management of violence is readable, that is, a place where the unconscious acknowledgement of destruction appears—coming through in the imagination of what happens at the site, such as in Syncrude's bird-deterrence system, and Suncor's Wapisiw Lookout. The work that is occurring in these examples is something other than the work of representing the landscape as conducive to extraction;

because there is something excessive in the violence, it—and here I mean from the extraction companies' perspective—needs somewhere to spill out onto.

As I will argue throughout this dissertation, landscape is called upon to mediate feelings of guilt, settler-colonial history, and political possibility. The different images of the sites are necessary, not only for the purposes of assuring the reproduction of the relations that make extraction possible, but also for how violence is seen and how it is managed. As I look at in Chapter 3, the Land Art movement shows that representational work requires the landscape—it's a place for activity. As such, ways of thinking about landscape are also ways of thinking about political antagonism and violence. The genre of landscape is useful, not as a legitimization of activity to come—as in the trajectory that the landscape must first be depicted as land which can bear extraction—but as showing that which has already happened and continues to. Coming after, but appearing as prior, the way the landscape is imagined helps further secure what has long been secured. I use imagination here in relation to landscape because, as in the Wapisiw Lookout site, it is necessary to talk about landscape as not only an image-genre but as holding certain projections.

What is striking then about Enbridge's ad, is not that it leaves out islands in the Douglas channel, but that the landscape can be imagined as being navigable almost without contact. Similarly, Syncrude's bird deterrence system and the appearance of it in the image of a lake, is evidence of how much work goes into maintaining a landscape of extraction. Constructions of landscape dramatize what it seems possible to do, so that the activity there must be read via the conditions of possibility of that activity. This function is ideological, and is necessary for extraction, but reframes the nature of the ideological image as something other than on the model of invisibility/visibility. The deterrence system is one example then not only of how

uninhabitable the tar sands is, but *of how uninhabitable the tar sands imagines itself to be*.³ That this happens unprovoked, so to speak, is evidence that there are conflicts being managed all the time and that resource extraction companies participate in such activity. Even according to their own self-conception, resource extraction companies conceive of the tar sands as the kind of place where you might hear a constant hum of species calling out in distress.

Lastly then, the reclaimed tailings pond contains an idea about how landscape is subject to manipulation; made and re-made resource extraction companies consider it possible to saturate the landscape always another time. Once a boreal forest, then strip-mined, filled with toxic water (some of which can never be detoxified), capped with sand and clay, and finally engineered as a grassy swamp, even the acknowledgement that there was extraction is no longer available. This is part of the imagination and desire present in extraction—that it is just one way of using the landscape. Like proposing that Indigenous claims to land and water could be substituted by employment in a resource extraction project that attempts to destroy those very rights—"just one choice among others"—extraction relies upon the force of access. Wapisiw Lookout not only wants to reclaim an extracted landscape then, but wants to reclaim your thoughts about that extraction too.

That what happens on the landscape fits into a history of violence, such that even perceptions of loss need managing, is evidence to resource extraction companies that landscape and the relations it holds requires constant monitoring on the model of the falcon effigy. In need of such management, resource extraction companies and the State wonder whether this doesn't show such a need was always there, thereby constructing the justification for settler-colonial activity after the fact. Rather than merely being a comment on the visual status of the landscape

³ I am suggesting here that the tar sands is a self-representing non-human subject so as to convey that there are effects that exceed all intentions and escape the reach of even resource-extraction companies.

itself, these representations are evidence of the working-through of conflicts, as well as the kinds of conflicts that are there (or not there) to be had. On this view, it makes no sense to say that there were parts of the landscape that were left out, misrepresented, or concealed. Just as it makes no sense to say that at Wapisiw you are looking at a grassy landscape that used to be an extraction site. Although omission, misrepresentation, and concealment work in various ways to reproduce the relations of production in which only certain images are possible, the point is that, in this visual regime, there aren't better images. Within it, how would one, for instance, go about perceiving settler-colonial violence? Or how would one go about perceiving extraction as anything other than its presence or absence?

In Chapter 1, I consider the genre of environmental assessment and land-management as setting the visual and experiential conditions for reading environmental objects. The least read of all environmental representations, I suggest that this is in fact where a lot of the terms for other genres are set. Far from being technical documents which only concern individual projects, environmental assessment establishes the scope of what it seems conceivable to do with environmental harm. In so doing, it shows that all environmental rhetoric is, in one way or another, the rhetoric of harm. Conceding that resource extraction and related projects have "effects," these documents imagine problems as resolvable, manageable, or reclaimable. In order to do so, they construct an infrastructure that is spatio-temporal in character, establishing the criteria for what counts as a claim and what registers as an effect. This involves, among other things, demarcating when a problem begins and when it finishes, how far it extends, and how significant its impact is. At the same time, on a macro scale, environmental assessment brackets past activity in its entirety, installing existing conditions as the only conditions that are viewable

and contestable. It thereby makes a perceptual and historical argument about ongoing destruction, treating it as fungible. Conceiving already damaged things as so damaged that further destruction is negligible, it constructs an experiential and political argument about justice claims. Holding a strong notion of irredeemability, environmental assessment inserts notions of useability into perception itself.

While some problems are thought of as irredeemable and not politically useful, others, as I have already suggested, don't come up at all—already integrated, they can't come up. The rhetoric of management, as the second half of Chapter 1 shows, makes it seem like there are only competing interests, in which each party has a similar claim, which requires managing. Management, a homogenizing technique, thereby looks at different things in the same way, putting into combination irreconcilable differences. On the one hand, this represents a systematization of access to land and resources. On the other, it is symptomatic of a vulnerability in the approach. Unable to admit diminished experience, such as the lifeforms that degraded landscapes can no longer support, management extends to the sight of loss itself. The inadmissibility of loss, and the need to manage its appearance, is a defensive reaction intrinsic to a settler-colonial logic.

In Chapter 2, I consider how activists, documentary filmmakers, and critics respond to the problem of environmental damage being hard to see. I show that writing and filmmaking concerned with the effects of climate change mobilize the rhetoric of complicity not only to compel responsibility but to uphold norms of action and political possibility. I argue that complicity is often invoked to move past the irredeemable character of environmental damage—demarcating where it is permissible to look and where it is not. Following the infrastructural framework established by environmental assessment, these works can't see environmental

damage—"damage" is my term for what the visibility/invisibility regime that covers extraction can't include. Chapter 2 shows how critics often have recourse to a notion of complicity to deal with damage, managing its negativity. If Chapter 1 wonders whether violence is not conceivable because it can't be seen within the operating visual regime or whether it is there but held away from view, Chapter 2 clarifies the problem by arguing that the dominant ways of accounting for violence are about preserving a subject position that can move through loss. Proponents of complicity think damage can be sublimated by treating it as resolved through the admission of guilt, turning it into a kind of use. Sometimes because damage is related to landscapes and situations that are past saving, it can be seen but is decided against—there is "nothing" to see. On the other hand, falling out of a certain visual regime, it is not representable and registers an incapacity. Already integrated, damage is no longer there to be seen. Hopeless, scenes of damage are considered by critics, such as Timothy Morton, to be not worth looking at because they have been deemed imperceptible—evidence of a verdict on what it is socially acceptable to perceive. Finally, what I show is that complicity divides upon whether the experience of negativity is simply a part of belonging to the social—a way of accepting and bearing its cost—or is a limit to it. Chapter 4 investigates the perceptual quality of the latter.

In Chapter 3, I show the implications of the idea that land-management helps produce: that the entire landscape appears as managed. This recalls Land Art's interest in the notion that everything which happens on the landscape is readable. Treating nothing as more important than anything else, Robert Smithson's practice, for instance, is quasi-psychoanalytic. Playing out most famously in the American West, Land Art is in a continuous, if mostly silent, battle with the frontierism that underlies it. Preoccupied with the unearthing of the settler-colonial text, the images that Land Art produces aim, like dreams, at linguistic material. Land Art shows that

representational work is psychic work, and conceives landscape as a *site* for this working-through. One lesson of Land Art is a straightforward one, that site-specificity helps dramatize the kinds of ideas that are attached to a particular site. From a site-specific point of view, the first question must be, why does it seem possible to do that here? What is it about the site that allows for the imagination that the activity coheres? Aided by an ideology already attached to landscape—that it's persistence after extraction shows it can't be destroyed—it seems each site retains all—everything that has happened to it. In Chapter 3 I suggest that to conceive of landscape in this way comes dangerously close to settler-colonial thinking which asserts, similarly, that Indigenous people have all been destroyed but that the landscape persists nevertheless. Developing a theory of landscape as the sedimentation of material, including the residues and marks of destruction, in Smithson, Michael Heizer and others, reading the landscape is like reading history or reading one's mind. Actions that happen on the landscape are also then actions which perform a working through of problems in history, such as settler-colonialism. Land Art's interest in inscription and excavation, I show, are also interests in memory and repression.

In Chapter 4, I articulate an alternative to the perceptual regime established in Chapter 1, then extended in Chapter 2. If Chapter 2 shows that complicity-thinkers defensively resolve problems which are without solution by mobilizing one's *part* in a bad world to get through potential experiences of damage, Chapter 4 takes up this idea's neglected thread: that damage is actually a limit-experience, that one couldn't be more proximate to. I follow this idea by suggesting that the coercion of the world is perceptible in its "closeness". If badness can at all times be felt, Akerman shows that this means that there can be no displacement of lesser perceptions to more significant ones. These include, as I show, perceptions of past destruction. In

so doing, she suggests that making distinctions, perceptually or otherwise, is always political and reality-producing especially when those distinctions concern what has disappeared or is unavailable to visible sight. Akerman films in such a way as to let the confluence of determinations in.

While in her version of landscape it can appear as if "nothing" is happening, landscape scenes take this form because there are multiple things going on. On my reading it would wrong to mistake confusion for a lack a clarity, rather than as a result of diffuse determinations, including ones that are long past and not literally visible. Thought of in this way, Akerman's documentary film allows for the return of past and non-fungible damage, in feelings of reminiscence of the system in which destruction was possible. By showing how the return of problems that remain unsolved happens perceptually, this chapter argues that conflicts over damage are productive of images.

i

Within a 25-mile radius of Fort McKay First Nation (FMFN) twenty-one tar sands projects have been approved or are in production. Oil exploration began in Fort McKay in the 1960s, and in the decades since has poisoned the water-supply, affected animal populations, and vastly decreased the growth of edible plants. "We can't go back to the land. That's a given. We will never be able to live off the land," community member Cece Fitzpatrick said recently.⁴ Viewable on the surface of the landscape are access roads and lines which cut through the forest for seismic testing. These marks are blamed for disrupting migration patterns of the endangered woodland caribou, who won't go near them. The Athabasca River is so polluted, the fish from it

⁴ see, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2015/may/28/carbon-bomb-canada-tar-sands-fort-mckay-town-sold-itself>

can no longer be consumed. Cancers so rare they usually manifest at a ratio of 1:100,000, have shown up three times in an Indigenous population that is under 1100. Affected like this, the river is reminiscent of the other bodies of water in the landscape: tailings ponds.



Figure 6: Tailings Ponds (Lenz)

Whether one particular lake is or is not a tailings pond, is a doubt that can likely be solved. Arguments about facticity will continue to be had and are important, but they are not what I am concerned about here. Rather, I am interested in what happens to problems that seem unsolvable, where one finds questions about distinctions, limits and transitions. Climate change helps make these questions legible because it brings into view a problematic which is always there in any problem: when, if at all, does something stop? And when, if at all, can we say that something is done with? As I argue throughout this dissertation, these thoughts concern the conditions of visibility of any particular thing—its spatial and temporal determinations. And as I will show, regimes of visibility differ depending on their take on these questions and the subject positions that their answers to them suggest.

Extraction projects, such as the Alberta Tar Sands or the Dakota Access Pipeline, are difficult to comprehend. At times thought of as a colonial dispute, a definite mark on the

landscape, or a major contributor to long-term climate change, they inhabit disparate registers of temporality and visibility. As problems with an *unclear* boundary in time (like an endpoint or a date), or in space (like a border), extraction projects in the era of climate change implicitly force us to consider destruction that is ongoing and without end. At time of writing, the tar sands produce 2.6 million barrels of oil per day (bpd) with proposed projects, including the Keystone XL pipeline, bringing that to 3.3 million bpd by 2020. As oil declines and when global prices go up, tar sands operations increase. Only profitable in a market in which a barrel of oil is at least \$32, the tar sands are, in many ways, a fuel of the future. The life-span of most current operations project activity past 2070. Like deep-water drilling or fracking, tar sands only become possible after certain limits—including climate limits—have been passed.

Tar sands development has contributed to house-price booms which have hit most major urban centers in Canada, and have made Vancouver the most expensive city in North America, pressuring homeless populations who are often Indigenous. The rise of murdered and missing Indigenous women in Canada has reached a national crisis-level, with best available Government statistics suggesting that the homicide rate for Indigenous women and girls in Canada is at least six times higher than the national average homicide rate for non-Indigenous women. A problem which is exacerbated in remote places associated with resource extraction—17% of murders of Indigenous women took place on a street, a road, or a highway, compared to 1% of murders of non-Indigenous women (Amnesty International). Just as uranium mining, nuclear testing, and the new solar fields populate South-Western states, often near reservations and on unceded Indigenous territory, so the pipeline corridor that carries tar sands bitumen dissects the land of Indigenous populations in the Dakota's. Pipelines associated with the tar sands traverse almost

every province in Canada and a third of US states. Not just the effects of environmental harm—pollution, water quality—but the infrastructural cost is born by these populations too.

These are clear instances of what scholars have termed "environmental racism," the notion that communities of color bear the cost of resource extraction as they do the weight of the infrastructure of petro-modernity. As the tar sands show, this is no doubt the case. However, critics make two broad assumptions following this idea which carry their own theory of perception, one which I'll argue is itself infrastructural in nature. First, that environmental racism requires the landscape to be represented as worthless. As Traci Voyles argues, "patterns of environmental racism tell us that race has become a primary way by which these landscapes of extraction and pollution are marked as racialized space, *excluded from or ignored by the regulatory protections of the state*"⁵[my italics]. Second, that environmental racism is often best thought of as a form of slow violence. As Rob Nixon argues, "by slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all (Nixon 2)." Like Voyles, I am interested in how landscape gets mobilized; and like Nixon, I am interested in less clear instances of violence.

However, underlying these two ideas is a notion of exclusion. Put like this, inclusion into the visual or representational regime goes some way to addressing the problem. If, as according to Nixon, "the insidious workings of slow violence derive largely from the unequal attention given to spectacular and unspectacular time," (Nixon 6), then it follows that, "the

⁵ Voyles, Traci. *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*. Minnesota, MI: Minnesota UP. 2015. p.9. She says, "Wastelanding takes two primary forms: the assumption that nonwhite lands are valueless, or valuable only for what can be mined beneath them, and the subsequent devastation of those very environs by polluting industries." p.10. I agree, that these assumptions are operating, but in my argument they come figuratively after. I disagree then that the assumption secures anything, as in the idea here that the first form precedes the second form. The consequence of this is assume a certain visual field which relies on visibility both for its operation and for its critique.

representational [challenge requires] creative ways of drawing public attention to catastrophic acts that are low in instant spectacle but high in long-term effects. To intervene representationally entails devising iconic symbols that embody amorphous calamities as well as narrative forms that infuse those symbols with dramatic urgency" (10). While Nixon shows that we understand that there can be types of violence other than immediate manifestations, he still assumes that we know how they will come to be seen. Who or what establishes the field of visibility into which environmental violence appears? If it is already established, how does it work? And what, if anything, is lost to the process of making visible?

What I am staging here is a tension in how perceptible one thinks environmental damage is. Symptomatic of this tension is the overlapping visual problems in Nixon's notion of slow violence. "By slow violence," writes Nixon, "I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence" (2). Nixon's violence is at times hard to see, at others invisible altogether. Sometimes its effects remain, "outside our flickering attention spans" (6), at others they reside more simply in the space of the "unequal attention... given to unspectacular time" (9). The equivocality at work here is indicative of leaving unaddressed differences in visual conditions. It might otherwise seem important to know if there is a difference between "casualties" that "readily fade from view," or those that pass as "untallied" or "unremembered."

In these two positions—that extraction works by rhetorically marking landscapes as pollutable and that environmental violence exists on the periphery of the visible—are three assumptions. First, the modality of making visible is inclusion into a field we know. Second, political action depends upon making something representable. And third, there are spaces which exist in which something can be represented and could be fully visible, "drawing," in Nixon's

phrase, "public attention." In other words, there are transcendental spaces in which legibility is assured and very little, if anything, is lost.

As I will argue in Chapter 1 these three assumptions are also the assumptions of environmental assessment and land-management which set the visual conditions not just for extraction projects, but for environmental objects in general. The Environmental Humanities have rarely treated the rhetoric of assessment and management. But I argue that they not only materially produce their object of study, but also produce the field of visibility in which that object appears and others don't.

Relatedly, contrary to the idea that environmental harm functions by way of representational and visual exclusion, according to the contemporary settler-state *there are only different kinds of inclusion*. In other words, it is not a question of an image that could be shown but isn't. Because contemporary settler-thinking doesn't think it excludes anything, I argue that notions of violence need to be redrawn away from those which underlie dominant ways of thinking about environmental harm, such as a relation between inclusion and exclusion or visibility and invisibility. One can't assume the visual field, anymore than one can assume that the threshold to visibility is everywhere the same. We need to interrogate why then the rhetoric of environmental harm continues to assume both of these elements, and to wonder whether this is not symptomatic of a problem at the heart of thinking climate change. That is, of how much has been taken and how much has still yet to.

The EPA, for instance, includes definitions of "environmental justice" in its requirements for assessment: "no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and

tribal programs and policies.”⁶ Applicants preparing Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are asked to consider, "whether there are any significant adverse impacts to minority and low income populations that would appreciably exceed impacts to the general population" ("Recommendations for the Preparation of Environmental Assessments" 29). Furthermore, they must, "consider whether minority and low-income populations would have different ways than the general population of being affected by an alternative. Examples include unique exposure pathways or rates of exposure (e.g., from subsistence fishing), special sensitivities (e.g., to air pollution because of less access to health care and poorer control of asthma), or different uses of natural resources (e.g., for cultural, religious, or economic practices)" (29). I am not arguing that just because these things are included it means that these problems don't arise or they are alleviated, but I am suggesting that violence occurs by way of inclusion.

What I am suggesting is that processes of primitive accumulation—the subsumption of non-capitalist spheres under capitalists ones—are accompanied by an administrative integration. As Rosa Luxemburg outlines in *The Accumulation of Capital*, "capital, impelled to appropriate productive forces for purposes of exploitation, ransacks the whole world, it procures its means of production from all corners of the earth, seizing them, if necessary by force, from all levels of civilisation and from all forms of society" (Luxemburg 338). As I noted above, Indigenous scholars detail how settler-colonialism is in part a process of primitive accumulation, serving to "violently strip noncapitalist producers, communities, and societies from their means of production and subsistence" (Coulthard 7). "In *Capital*," writes Coulthard, "these formative acts of violent dispossession set the stage for the emergence of capitalist accumulation and the

⁶ The EPA are analagous to Canada's National Energy Board, in the sense that they both set specific guidelines for how to prepare environmental assessments. See, U.S. Department of Energy. *Recommendations for the Preparation of Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements: Second Edition*. December 2004. p.29

reproduction of capitalist relations of production by tearing Indigenous societies, peasants, and other small-scale, self-sufficient agricultural producers from the source of their livelihood—the land" (7). However, as Coulthard and Luxemburg argue in different ways, this process never completes itself. Luxemburg's inversion on Marx's thesis is that, "capitalist accumulation depends upon means of production which are not produced by capitalist methods," long past its initial phase (Luxemburg 337). While Coulthard suggests that, "Canadian state-formation and colonial-capitalist development required first and foremost land, and only secondarily the surplus value afforded by cheap, Indigenous labor" (Coulthard 12). And as I have been suggesting this dispossession and requirement for "land" is ongoing.

I note this to suggest two things. First, that administrative integration or inclusion, such as in the EPA's "environmental justice" requirements, might be thought of as a similar kind of subsumption (with similar kinds of motives) to primitive accumulation. Second, that these forms of inclusion are also perceptual, such that the perception of the land and problems on it are integrated into the perceptual system and don't appear. The latter functions in two ways, one positive and one negative. On the one hand, negatively, so to speak, this perceptual system, what I will refer to as visual regime 1, can't see the effects of primitive accumulation. That is, the undermining of conditions such that Indigenous groups have difficulty being able to live off the land, don't arise as a perceptual problem. On the other hand, positively, as it were, and as I will show in Chapter 1, because administration is based on inclusion it thinks it can see negative effects, and differential effects, such as those outlined in the EPA definitions.

As I argue throughout this dissertation, discourses of inclusion are a comment on how much has already been integrated. "Integration" is one word in the discourse I establish here for the ongoing nature of dispossession and destruction. The idea that resource extraction projects

can amend for "environmental justice" is evidence of what the State and resource extraction companies have already taken, and consider no longer in dispute. This includes, as I will show, Indigenous claims to self-determination and relations to the land, including treaty rights. As Chapter 1 makes clear, from the perspective of the State, resource extraction companies, and the regulatory infrastructure, certain things don't come up as problems because so much has been already been assumed as having fallen out of the political and visual field. This includes, for instance, previous and persisting harm—the history of violence which settler-colonialism is. The point is not that a socially progressive state and environmentally conscious extraction companies, can attend to these problems—they can't. Rather, it shows that the State and resource extraction companies understand these impacts are possible; they concede themselves that they are things they do and participate in. However, that they feel able to bring them under their jurisdiction *shows that they think there is nowhere else for them to be*. Furthermore, that they think this is possible for them, indicates that they believe the antagonism between their activity and claims for environmental justice is no longer there. Although at times it seems like they really can't see the issue, at others, as I will indicate below, they do but must manage its appearance.

Almost all environmental rhetoric, including that of extraction companies, is concerned with environmental harm. How a visual regime comes to terms with it falls, I argue, on two major differences and articulates two different visual regimes. First, how one perceives extraction depends upon whether one conceives of a problem as manageable or not. Second, how one perceives extraction depends upon how one perceives landscapes that are "past-saving" or damaged. I will briefly outline the differing perspectives on these points.

Visual regime 1 treats environmental harm as a series of adverse environmental effects. It seems like these effects can be seen, and then those effects that are structured as seeable are

managed. However, as environmental assessment shows by calling forth spatial and temporal determinations that are infrastructural in character, only what is manageable can be seen. Things that happen on the landscape fall into a system that is already there. Attention to land-use and land-management rhetoric shows that rather than being bounded by what is necessary for the extraction project itself, extraction requires the entire landscape to be managed. The consequence of which, as Land Art shows and takes an interest in, is that focus on the landscape renders it all as designated. As I suggested above, by imagining the entire landscape as in need of management, extraction posits that this need has always been there. A way of legitimating colonial activity in the present, this discovery extends back to cover all settler-colonial activity. "Mining," says Teck CEO, "is an interim land-use." While the comment seems to respond to the idea that resource extraction is not a permanent activity, *that* the landscape could be used for other things, now or previously, is exactly the point. *Instrumentality is produced in the thought of extraction, it doesn't proceed it.* This inversion—from being seen and then managed to being managed and then seen—implicitly accepts that certain problems are irresolvable, unmanageable and therefore are gone—integrated into the perceptual system. To write "past-saving" or "damaged" already feels pejorative because, as I show in Chapter 4, of how invested certain theories of perception are in use, intervention, and temporal trajectories of resolution. Visual regime 1, sees these problems but decides against them.

Visual regime 2 treats environmental harm as environmental damage. Questioning whether it is possible to contain perceptual problems in temporal and spatial categories that are definitively bounded, it considers damage as ongoing, without end, and unfinished. Showing that regime 1's temporal organization orders space so as to curtail intra-temporal claims of justice, regime 2 highlights how the construction of distinction and transition carry with them political

force. Opposed to regime 1's sense that if something is already degraded its further degradation is withdrawn from being claimable, regime 2 suggests that perceptual problems persist precisely when there is not any clear orientation to how one might position themselves to it.⁷

Chantal Akerman seems to suggest that questions about perspectival positioning occurs most acutely in political situations where the kind of available action is ambiguous, when what is confronted seems non-negotiable. Regime 2 is informed by Indigenous scholarship which argues that settler-colonialism is ongoing in the US and Canada, and which implicitly suggests that aspects of history which *appear as irrevocable* only add to the determinations. On the one hand, insisting by being in every thing, and, on the other, desisting by constantly fading from view, conflicts over damage are productive of images.

As the image of the tailings pond shows, and as Akerman makes clear, concerns about distinction are also concerns about what counts as reality; they are socially negotiated understandings about what one is seeing and what is conceivable to see. As I argue throughout, this problem is a problem of perceiving extraction because of the way in which the kinds of damage associated with climate change, and thereby environmental justice claims, are also perceptual problems. I use the term "damage", rather than "harm" or "effect," to indicate a difference in how various forms of destruction register. For instance, sometimes damage can concern an incapacity, such as when one is incapable of seeing; sometimes an inability, such as when that which is looked for has disappeared; and sometimes, damage inhabits an agnostic register, when a problem is in some way imperceptible. In a different way than harm, effect, or

⁷ This marks a distinct difference between my argument and WJT Mitchell's. In the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power*, Mitchell suggests that it would be better to think of landscape and power as a dialectic between place, space, and landscape. He suggests that this need arises because we need to orient ourselves better: "This gesture [triangulating space, place, and landscape] may actually be a reflex of some fundamental process in cognitive mapping as such, a way of orienting ourselves in any perceptual or conceptual field whatsoever" (xi). I think that Mitchell's distinctions between the three don't hold, and I think that what happens in the scene where orientation is in question is *the* problem of landscape. see, Mitchell, WJT. *Landscape and Power: Second Edition*. Chicago, IL: U Chicago UP. 2002

slow violence, damage indexes notions of capacity, access, and threshold. In Chapter 1 and 2, I show the defensive constructions against these problems. While one defence against environmental justice claims is climate denial, those who might deny the facts of climate science, as everyone else accepts them, this is only one part what happens. It would be more accurate to say that the problem isn't only a denial of facts, but is also a discomfort over the insecurity about where or when destruction stops. Wanting to do without, for instance, the anxiety of not knowing whether what one sees is a lake or a tailings pond, or whether this or that logic of extraction is settler-colonial, are two such discomforts. It feels safer to stick to historic and racial naturalizations. The problematic I am investigating then does not divide upon whether one accepts the facts of reality or not. Often, as the performance of acknowledging ones complicity, that is, their culpability, can show, accepting that something is happening, especially via your concession of your own involvement in it, is just another way of managing a visual insecurity about what is affected and what is (still) perceivable.

That climate change and the effects of extraction projects are anxiety-inducing because they concern the political motives for making distinctions, can be found in the recent wildfire which affected Fort McMurray, the 21st Century boomtown just south of the tar sands. Fort McMurray, which has doubled in size in the last decade, had to be evacuated in May 2016 because of a wildfire that swept the area. A sudden shift in wind conditions brought the fire into the city causing a run on gas stations which left many residents without fuel to escape. Unseasonably hot conditions, mixed with wind patterns, causing fires throughout the Boreal forest, the ecosystem of Northern Alberta in which the tar sands operate. From certain angles, especially those taken overhead, one couldn't tell if the plumes of smoke were from fire patches or from tar sands operations. At the very least, they were indissociable from them. Others noted

the irony of Fort McMurray being on the other end of a climate-related disaster, leading to another indissociability: the tar sands and the fire. That the relation of the tar sands to the Fort McMurray fire was confusing and such an immediate question, indicates two things.

Writing about whether the Fort McMurray wildfire could be linked to the tar sands, and thereby to climate change, Elizabeth Kolbert concedes that "to raise environmental concerns in the midst of human tragedy is to risk the charge of insensitivity" (Kolbert). "Certainly," she says, "it would be wrong to blame the residents of Fort McMurray for the disaster that has befallen them" (Kolbert). It would be wrong to make the connection because, "we are all consumers of products that come from oil" (Kolbert). First then, the attempt to work out whether the fire is distinct from climate change or not produces blame that needs apportioning—that comes along with the facts of the situation. Indeed, while it seems less important to actually work out the reality, apportioning blame—e.g. clearing up what one is actually seeing—*is reality-producing*. But, she goes on to say, "to acknowledge the connection is to risk another kind of offence. We *are* all consumers of oil, not to mention coal and natural gas, which means that we've all contributed to the latest inferno"(Kolbert). What Kolbert shows is that perceptual distinctions—whether or not the fire can be seen as distinct from tar sands activity—are always also normative. In this example, she side-steps the implication, e.g. that Fort McMurray residents are not distinct from tar sands production, by suggesting we are all to blame. She says, rather, that Fort McMurray residents are distinct from the tar sands and that the fire is distinct from the tar sands too. As she shows, the acknowledgement of complicity is one way of managing damage because it solves the perceptual problem. Accountability—here, as the naming of distinctions—seems preferable to dealing with the impasse of not knowing. As this example indicates, questions about distinctions put pressure on solving the situation. I will be interested when this kind of

solving happens, just as I will be interested in what happens when solving doesn't seem possible or required.

What climate change helps make perceptible is that even the area we didn't think were altered, actually are—showing that the work of making distinctions is political. Like anyone who has wondered whether a heat-wave is only just that, or a dead tree just a dead tree, what climate change dramatizes is that such limits are being worked out all the time. In making clear the political stakes in that working out, my argument is that to perceive extraction is to return to perception its lesser or aberrant modes. Indeed, who can now really wonder whether a heat-wave is just that and not wonder at the same time if it isn't also an indication of a warming climate? And who can say that something isn't worth looking at or staying with because its bounds are known? Politicians and scientists like to say that individual events, like the Fort McMurray wildfire, can't themselves be thought of as caused by climate change. But, at the same time, that they concede that such incidents are *not-unrelated*, indicates a certain confusion. To visual regime 1, such a space, absent of clear demarcation, will feel intolerable and potentially impossible; to visual regime 2, it is a privileged perceptual experience. Visual regime 2 is the one I am arguing for, and the one I am trying to establish the terms for.

ii

As I have suggested so far, visual regime 1 is a complex formation and I show how it works in Chapter 1. In this section, as a prelude to that detailed study, I show briefly how visual regime 1 persists even in critical work like Eyal Weizman's. Forensic Architecture shares in visual regime 1's method for looking at extraction sites, suggesting what you are supposed to look at or not

look at. I start with an example from Forensic Architecture and their case study of the Chuquicamata copper mine located in the Atacama Desert.⁸ As with all the Forensic Architecture endeavours, the project intends to visualize and understand an area via close empirical study with accompanying visual representation. In the process they, "provide material and spatial evidence in support of Indigenous communities of the Loa basin whose means of subsistence has been destroyed by copper mining" ("Atacama File"). The project, or "file," relies upon two major ideas that are different than my project. First, it relies upon an epistemology of mapping, that is, the idea that situations can be known by way of an orientation made possible by a spatial coordination of a particular site. Second, it relies upon a theorization of landscape as inseparable from a certain notion of legibility.

In *The Conflict Shoreline*, Eyal Weizman argues that, "the surface of the earth appears as if it was itself a photograph, exposed to direct and indirect contact, physical use, and climatic conditions in a similar way in which a film is exposed to sun's rays" (*Conflict Shoreline* 12). This is important because not only does that text use photographs—Fazal Sheikh's of Bedouin encampments—but given the empirical nature of the work in general, its political import requires evidentiary records that can be shown, for instance, in criminal courts. It follows then that the operative notion of criminality is one which *has* a record. In other words, it leaves traces that are directly and distinctly visible. Similarly then in the Atacama project, the effect of the method of the project is detailed as follows: "utilizing a range of remote sensing technologies has turned the surface of the desert *into a register* of past and present forms of violence" ("Atacama File"). As I will look at in Chapter 3, the desert is privileged as a site of inscription as due to climatic conditions it is thought to hold its traces for longer. Here, however, I am interested in the proposed idea that the desert surface holds or registers the violence that has happened to it.

⁸ The images, text, and video are viewable here, <http://www.forensic-architecture.org/file/atacama/>

A video for the "file" using visualizing technology and coloration effects shows the growth of a tailings pond used by the mine for holding liquid waste from copper processing, including lead and arsenic. The video shows its growth from its inception in 1972 to 2013. The differentiation in color highlights a difference in liquidity: darker denotes more liquid, lighter denotes older deposits which are drier, and therefore potentially dispersed by wind. The following image, again using color effects, attempts to show the impact on vegetation as the copper mine appropriates increasing amounts of water in the area. Because healthy vegetation is said to reflect radiation differently the image, "visualize[s] the state of vegetation in Chui Chui," where green in the image is healthy, and red unhealthy. These different images show that, "registered on the desert surface are the traces of multiple cycles of organization," evidence of, the site being "at the center of multiple political disputes" ("Atacama File").

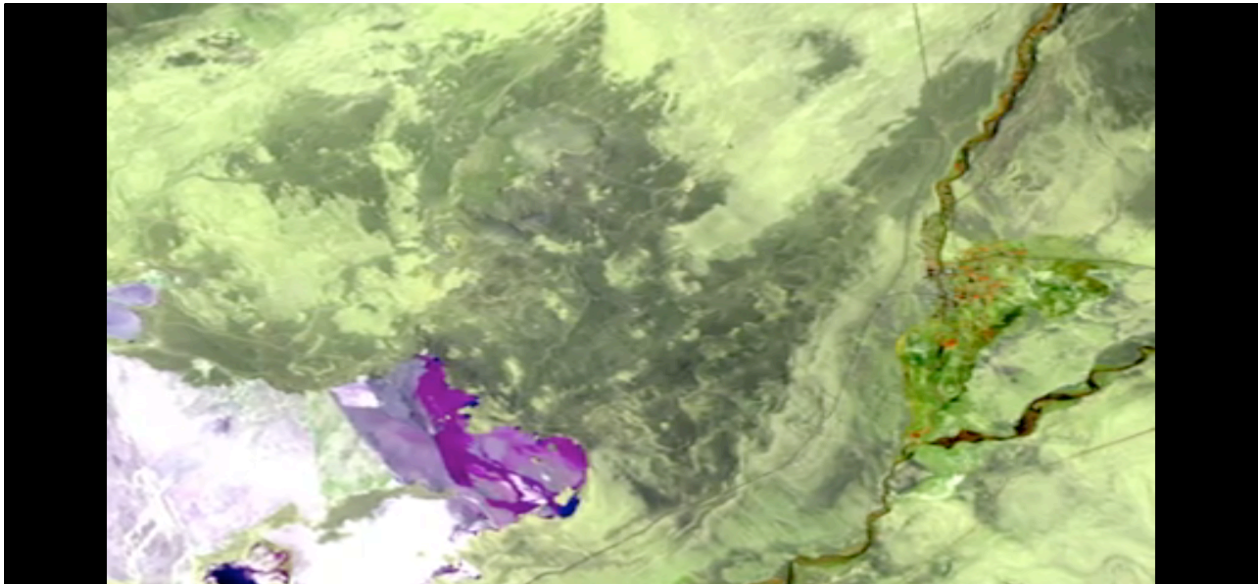


Figure 7: Chuquicamata Copper Mine ("Atacama File")

I am not opposed to such work, but, rather, I am interested in its assumptions. Equally, as fig. below shows, I am interested in how some of the same assumptions of this kind of work show up in projects undertaken by extraction companies themselves (similarities that persist beyond the effectivity of each study for their particular purpose). Fig. 8 is from an environmental

assessment prepared by Syncrude and is an attempt to measure air quality in the region of Syncrude's Upgrader Project in the tar sands. The image details the highest measurements for the concentration of sulphur dioxide over a 30-day period (there are numerous other studies for each potentially poisonous gas associated with tar sands activity). To do this modelling, Syncrude uses scientific technology that proposes to understand how topographic features interact with the dispersion of dangerous material by wind. The difference in the concentric circles is not only concentration but also the evidence of the interaction between the dispersal of sulphur dioxide and the topography of the landscape.

Both studies assume that potential problems can be mapped, and that mapping is what scales culpability. Legibility thought of like this supposes that something *is* there to be read and its being there makes it valuable for that reason. Another central assumption seems unavoidable: some images are more useful than others. What are, for instance, the implications that empirical forensics carries within its method a notion of use? One problem when working with extraction sites is that extraction is irreducibly interested in use. A landscape is useful to the extent that it contains, for example, tar sands or copper deposits. The transference of use is not surprising but becomes a problem when critical projects re-inscribe a hierarchy of use, such as when particular images better show past violence because of their empirical efficacy, making it seem like instrumentality is intrinsic to landscape rather than produced.

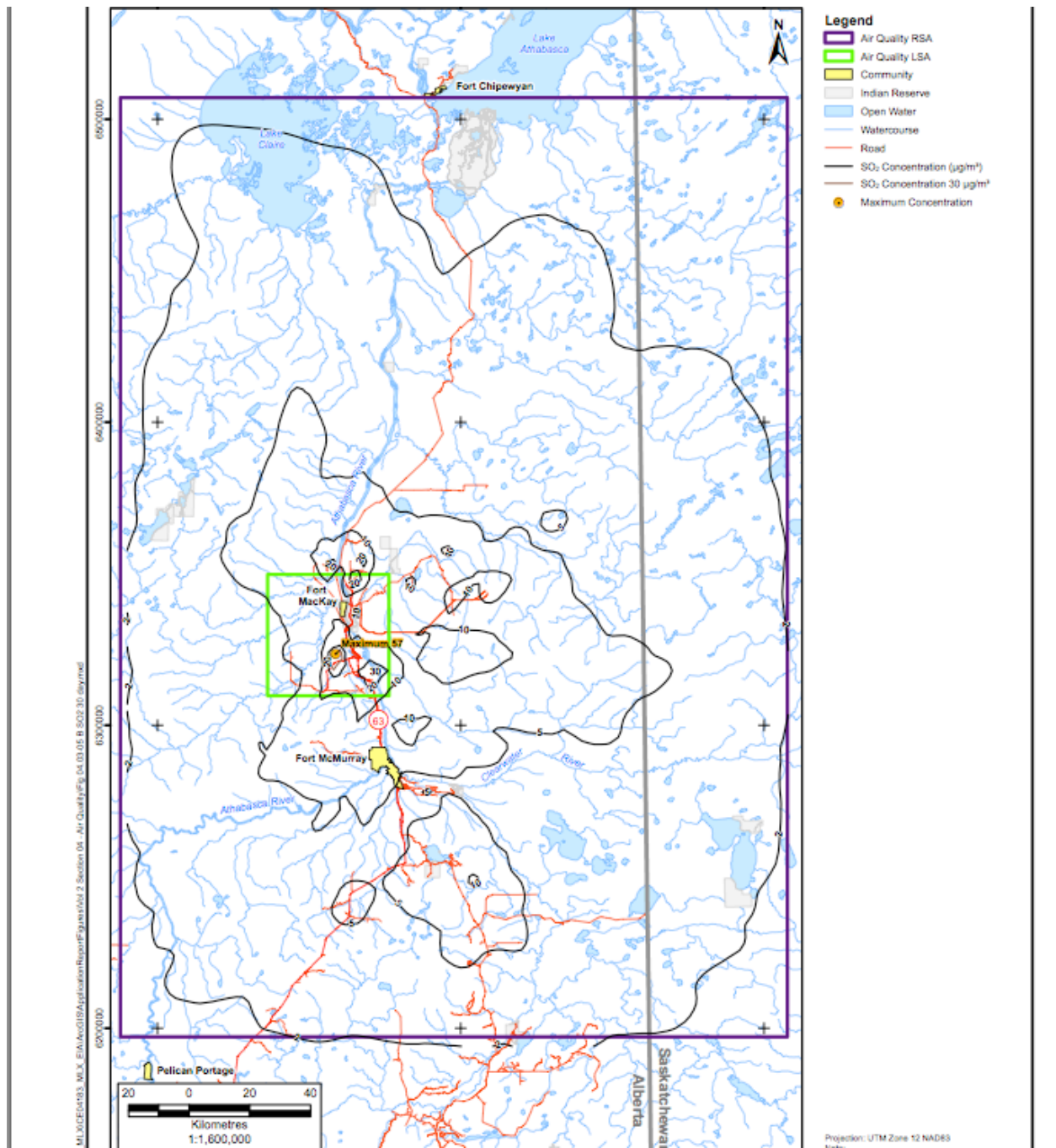


Figure 8: Air Quality ("MLU Environmental Assessment")

A final problem concerns the notion from the Atacama file that the surface of the earth is a "register." Weizman's analogy between the "surface of the earth" and a photograph, brings into relief a problem with empirical forensics, one that is part of the visuality of climate change in

general. By making such an analogy, a surface which is, "exposed to direct and indirect contact, physical use, and climatic conditions," i.e., *every surface*, Weizman must actually have to argue for this to apply to all surfaces of the earth—every surface is potentially affected. As I have said, Weizman needs to analogize the "surface of the earth" as a photographic surface because the photograph is an evidentiary record, but, if we take this analogy to its conclusion, we find that every image is such a record—including ones that, in these terms, may not be useful at all.

To conclude this Introduction I take up the visual problem of what happens when use, and especially the useability of an image, is in question. When, in other words, one may be left with images that don't seem useful at all and situations which can't seem to corral use—or associated forms of value—for themselves. I take up some of this problematic in Chapter 4, when I turn to situations where "nothing" seems to happen. However, here, I attempt to highlight that landscape as a genre of the image appears precisely when orientation is in question. By orientation I also mean the demand that a situation be resolvable, have answers, and be able to be moved through (so I mean for all these to be in question too). What I am attempting to hold apart here is the difference between landscape as an image-genre, and perception. In Chapter 4, I go into how perception is epistemological and political. And as I have suggested so far, cohering a certain orientation that would subtend perception often requires the invocation of the normative force of transitions, and resolving questions about distinction—siphoning off what seems most difficult or anxiety-inducing. Such issues are only partly about the image. Finally then, I am not arguing that an absence of these things results in disorientation, rather, I think that it is interpretation which is returned in moments of aberrant perception. I turn to four films, Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog*, and *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Red Desert*, and *Blow-Up*.

Alain Renais' *Night and Fog* begins with a typical landscape shot, a shot of a farmed

field. The paradox of the shot, is the paradox of Resnais' version of landscape: in being selected



Figure 9: Farmed field (*Night and Fog*)

for its generic quality, it is in fact exemplary. "*Even [même] a peaceful landscape,*" "even" a meadow in harvest, one in which crows circle overhead, "even" a road, "even" a resort village, can lead to a camp. Ubiquity, familiarity, the seen-before, the reproducible, are the first categories of landscape. Yet, the early work of the camera, with its slow withdrawals into or behind an obstruction (barbed wire; a camp fence), seems to suggest that these landscapes are significant *only because* they were the ones that actually did lead to the camps. The camera withdraws to a position behind a real obstacle. Initially, the exemplarity of these specific landscapes appears to be given by their association to the camps variously marked, "Struthof, Oranenburg, Auschwitz, Neuengamme, Belsen, Ravensbruck, and Dachau." Yet, these names, "names like any others," show that the point is a stronger one: just as it could have been any name, it could have been any landscape. Because they did, they always could have. Which is not to say they always will. If we are dispossessed of a future *determination*, we are endowed with a

future *possibility*. "A crematorium from the outside *can* look like a picture postcard"; any name, any landscape, any image.

Resnais marks the opening with perspectives and movements; the crow's bird's-eye view, the road's passage through the town. The initial reflection is one figured by seeing all, by routes without obstacle—it is in this sense that a country fair could "lead" to a camp. However, by the time of the filming, the obstacles are many—the camera, it is clear, cannot lead to the camp. Without a present location, the film shuttles between the before and after—Resnais' footage and archival footage. That no movement can get there, no perspective can view it, is an entry point into the problematic of landscape. Resnais has recourse to landscape when it is unclear what could be shown, when there is otherwise "not enough" for a different image.

Night and fog, *Nacht und Nebel*, hides that which has taken place. But more than that, it shrouds even the place before: "[death's] second [cut] is made on the arrival, in the night and the fog." Contending with the agnosticism of arrival, that nothing is known or can be known, every arrival takes place in the night and fog. In these senses, night and fog, a concealment of a disappearance, but one which was never present to show itself in the first place, is paradigmatic for Resnais' notion of landscape. Without a pathway through or back, the film performs its loss of location, returning to the most symbolic one, the pathway that is the Auschwitz train track: "today, on the same tracks, the sun shines. We go slowly along them, *looking for what?*" The ubiquitous landscape is not literally unchanged, the grass, "which covers the paths once trod by inmates," is rendered as "strange," and now, "no current runs through the wires." But still, the buildings that remain, "could pass for stables, garages or workshops," and the Fall sky is "indifferent."

The landscape scenes bookend the film, as the film's pretext and postscript. By doing so they indicate a way of reading the film. The images of the pretext's "even," are, by the final scenes, transformed into images of the postscript's "as if." Where in the beginning, the image *insisted*—"even the steeple"—by the end the image *desists*, "the image recedes into the past, *as if [comme si]* we were cured." And, "with our sincere gaze we survey these ruins, *as if* the old monster lay crushed forever beneath the rubble." Insistence by ubiquity, desistance by duration. At the same time, the camera-pan of the pond, which marks the transition from the final instance of the archival footage, followed by a series of slow-pans provide familiar tropes of persistence: "a frigid and muddy water, as murky as our memory"; "an abandoned village, still *heavy* with peril"; nine million dead, *haunt* this countryside." Looking out "from this strange watchtower," is the perspective of landscape, at once insisting, persisting, and desisting. In the final narrative point, "we pretend it all happened only once, at a given time and place," the film returns to the difficult realization from within which landscape appears: that there is a question as to whether it is possible to move on from it.

In Resnais' rendition, landscape is an image that helps to show that even the areas we didn't think were implicated, are. Landscape as an image-genre helps register that change, by extending the potential implication to many different kinds of image—and this is one instance when landscape is (also) perspectival. The logic of "even that," of "even the," or "even here, even there," is a logic about the frame of landscape. In *Night and Fog*, the frame of the "even that," is augmented by the frame of the "as if"; the something that remains in the thought of its having passed. What the "as if" names is the difficulty in persisting beyond the realization of the first discovery of landscape: that you can't know the bounds of what might be affected. Landscape as an image-genre appears when one must contend with what above I called the desistance of the

image: the lightness that may exist to start with, or may come about after the realization. In those instances, a landscape image appears to index a perceptual problem. In the film, what comes to resolve the difficulty of desistance is accountability: someone must take responsibility before we forget—before the Kapos or Officers die, or we die, or before the next executioner comes. The narrative desire for accountability seems preferable to dealing with the difficulty of persistence; accountability is like the easy way-out of the impasse of landscape, of the anxious doubt that underlies the "as if."⁹

Here then, the discovery of an apparent aporia—that no one has yet taken accountability, and that someone must—marks the place of a decision; a decision is needed so that the situation can begin to resolve itself. Rather than as a point of visualization, the narrative gives over to the cost of acceptance so as to get beyond a situation without apparent solution. By taking aporia as something to move on from, the narrative avoids the anxiety of the "as if," and in so doing curtails the question—the "even" gives way to a nomination, "someone."

In Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, and in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Red Desert*, the approach to landscape is to register its frame—"even the"; "as if"—as the paradoxical pressure of "everything," and, "nothing." As with *Night and Fog*, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* mixes reconstructed and archival footage with landscape shots. In *Night and Fog*, when not at the beginning or end, landscape appears at the point of transition. These images are where the

⁹ In *The Neutral* Roland Barthes explains this kind of situation, where the expectation is that you move through the intermediary point, and where experiences of minimal status are too insignificant to be considered, through the figure of weariness. As that which is not coded and therefore is not received, weariness is, "unclassified, therefore unclassifiable: without premises, without place, socially untenable" (*The Neutral*, 17). Barthes finds figures that are *interior to* normative social demands, demands that would otherwise leave those figures behind, temporarily stay with them, or leave them out entirely. Instead to Barthes, they appear not as ameliorative of the demands of sociality as such, but as deserving of a space of consideration in-themselves. Thus, quoting Blanchot, "I don't ask that weariness be done away with. I ask to be led back to a region where it might be possible to be weary" (17). Here what might be considered as a space or time of "relief," is not actually separate from the relation that would have done away with that relief, rather Barthes indexes something that is already there. "That sociality in me rest a moment = topical theme of the Neutral" (18), says Barthes. Barthes, Roland. *The Neutral. Lecture Course at the College de France (1977-1978)*. Krauss, R. trans. New York, NY: Columbia UP. 2005.

archival footage spills out onto. They are the ones that are turned to for help, like so many buckets that try and catch ever-more leaks. As if querying this necessity themselves, when turning to these images in the transitions the narration asks, "looking for what?", "who does know anything?" If the landscape image is where to look, or if it knows something, it's not clear what it offers. Maybe it just buys some time, and sometimes landscape can feel like that—"for lack of anything else," is a repeated trope in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. In Resnais then, landscape is invoked at the point of a question, yet seems to solve little. Landscape seems useless to a cumulative register, working against a working-out that might move-on from it, appearing to add only more of the same.

In *Hiroshima Mon Amour* a close-up on a charred body, then a burned scalp, is followed by a typical landscape shot: a slow, downward-looking pan of a contemporary Peace Square. A car is stationary in the foreground and two figures in the distance walk through the middle of the shot. "I was hot in Peace Square. 10,000 degrees in Peace Square. I know it," affirms the woman's narration. By pressing on their own aspect of inescapability these shots provoke a rhetoric of self-evidence: "How could you not know it?", she continues. Here, landscape is what appears in the confusion over what has already been seen: "I saw the hospital, I am sure of it. The hospital in Hiroshima exists. How could I not have seen it?" Interior to the landscape images are such questions: "How could you *not* know it?"; "How could I *not* have seen it?" The "not" works to include and to saturate. It eases the anxiety of forgetting, of reification in general. Unmissable and unmistakable, everywhere and in everything—especially when you look again.

Yet, alongside her affirming, is her partner's persistent objection: "You didn't see the hospital in Hiroshima. You saw nothing in Hiroshima." In *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, the anxiety of

landscape's extension—its frame that seems to affect most things in some way—is registered as either nothing or everything: "You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing." "I saw everything." That images of landscape appear here, shows that landscape comes in to help with a situation which is not between everything and nothing, but indexes a perceptual situation where both pressures are present.

Yet, sometimes a landscape image is chosen as a stand-in, as if to mark the place where a pause, a silence, or a blank screen may just as well be. The place, in other words, of loss.



Figure 10: Landscape with a cat (*Hiroshima Mon Amour*)

When a cat walks in front of a still mid-range shot of a building, "Like you, I forgot," is the narration that accompanies it. "Like you, I am endowed with memory. I know what it is to forget." "No, you don't know what it is to forget"; "No, you are not endowed with memory." Knowing what it is to forget, is paradoxical, and yet, it seems like it's enough for an image. If landscape appears in the confusion of what has already been seen, it is also a problematic of memory. And like a memory or a dream, "enough" is often what we are left with or all we come

back to find. The landscape with the cat seems to be the imaging of the absence of a lost memory. The absence of loss, rather than as a deferral of the loss of an original moment, cannot connect to a circuit of re-appropriation, and it is in this space, staying with that which can't be sublated, that landscape appears.

The deficiency of the landscape image is that it is not strong enough: it can't take one back, it can't bring forth. The landscape image wonders whether everything is affected, then answers rhetorically: "how could it not be?" Like his response to her noticing his twitching hand while he sleeps, it seems to be what happens when, "you don't realize you're dreaming." And like the dream, it shares a spectral insistence. Following a landscape sequence, the woman says, "Listen to me. I know something else. It will begin again... An entire city will be lifted off the ground, then fall to earth in ashes." Here, the desistance of the images are paired with a narrative insistence. In so doing, landscape goes as far as everything, but is as little as nothing. And as we are told, what Hiroshima shares with love, is this illusion: not everything, but the illusion of everything; not nothing, but the illusion of nothing.

Such an illusion is the starting point of Michelangelo Antonioni's, *Red Desert* which begins in blurriness. The establishing shot, a slow pan that starts by moving on from a short hold of a cluster of trees ending eventually with factory towers, never achieves focus. Nor is the blurring in the service of a sharp focus on something else. Antonioni positions the landscape as a saturated figure: if it is a background, it is one without a foreground. The long opening sequence of factory scenes desists; they are there, but not really noticeable. Or they are spread out, smudged onto the screen. In so doing, Antonioni approaches landscape as if it were an atmosphere. Shots are taken from a low camera position, stretching the space above and below the human figure, engulfing them. But in general, shots are given a kind of pre- and post-

existence. When not the subject of the shot, figures are often positioned to the side, either entering a shot that pre-exists or trailing out of shot that exists after them. In Antonioni, landscape is another name for pre-existence in general, and just like Vittoria, half-collapsed on the sofa at the beginning of *The Eclipse*, one wakes up already exhausted from it.

Pre-existence—of shot, of conditions—thought of in this way is one version of approaching the obscurity surrounding arrival. Arrival into the shot, yes, but also arrival in a more general sense. In other words, the question of *Red Desert* would be how can one arrive into a perspective which is already there? Guiliana and Valerio emerge, in one of the early scenes, like the boat from the dream sequence which leaves "silently, just as it had come." The question of "where from," is much less important than "where is here?" Thus, the clearest landscape-images in Antonioni are not the realization of a new industrial scene, but those that capture the persistence of it—what you see in the space you escape to in order to devour a half-eaten sandwich.



Figure 11: Where you go to eat a sandwich (*Red Desert*)

The importance of the observer-observed shot, adds to the invocation of landscape for Antonioni. When Guiliana runs back toward the cottage and as the others run after her she stops, looking

back. Stationary, the four figures are looking at her, observing her, and the camera focusses a shot on her face observing them. This is a landscape shot for Antonioni, where exterior space is both observed and observing at the same time. Endowing the landscape with a persecutory feeling, is like the other side of the question, "how could it not be?".

Guiliana's confusion and anxiety, is the result of arriving into a perspective already-there. Neither her own, nor not her own; observed and observing. Responding to Corrado's question of what she would take with her were she to leave, she says, "If I were to leave, I'd take everything. All I see and have, at hand every day. Even ashtrays." Like an atmosphere, Guiliana's character dramatizes that there is no exit out. To Corrado's question, "what are you scared of?", Guiliana answers: "of the streets, of factories, of colours, of people, of everything." My suggestion here is that the film mobilizes landscape so as to manifest a feeling like being scared of "everything." As I show in the following chapters it is also part of the ideology of landscape that it holds "everything," such as when artists and critics think that nothing is lost to landscape. What these films additionally show, is that because landscape is considered quotidian, ubiquitous, and apparently non-threatening, it is also potentially pervasive, like anxiety. Such that when Corrado exclaims, "Guiliana, tell me what happened!", she can answer, "Nothing. Just think, nothing."

I introduce these examples to show that film peculiarly takes up the problem of a situation which may be insoluble. "Looking for what?" is landscape's rhetorical question. As such, there is no contradiction between the lightness of a desisting image or feeling, and the pressure which makes that situation seem overwhelming, even as, or when, those experiences seem intermediary or transitional. As I show in Chapter 3, this bears some relation to psychoanalytic procedure. That film has a close relationship with psychoanalysis was something that Walter Benjamin pointed out in the 1930s.

Antonioni shows the proximity of film perception, psychoanalysis, and landscape in *Blow-Up*. Following Thomas's attempt to buy a landscape from the antique shop, "nope no landscape's here," says the shop-owner, Thomas begins to shoot, seemingly at random, the streets and the adjacent park. These will be the images he later blows-up and they provoke his return to the park in the final moments of the film when he picks up a ball which isn't there, and hears the sounds of the game being played from which the ball came, before disappearing. What is important is that his random shots yield the murder scene that he didn't know he was capturing. There is then already a problem of legibility here. At the same time, as he tries to make the shots clearer—blowing them up—the scene itself becomes increasingly diffuse. Like psychoanalysis, enlargement does not only enlarge, but gives access to another—heterogenous—scene.

As Jacques Derrida argues in *Writing and Difference* this scene could be thought of as the scene of writing. In his early essay on Freud, Derrida ties such a scene to the problem of perception. For Derrida, Freud shows that the assumption that inscription means that appearance has simply followed from perception is not the right one. In fact, as Derrida shows, writing helps disabuse us of such an idea by showing that, "the perceived may be read only in the past, before perception and after it" (*Writing and Difference* 224). In Derrida's terms, "writing supplements perception before perception even appears to itself [or is conscious of itself]. "Memory," or writing, is the opening of that process of appearance itself" (224). On this view, *Blow-Up's* final scene concerns both legibility—Thomas not only returning to the park, his looking for something, but also his picking up something ostensibly not there—and illegibility—his eventual disappearance.



Figure 12: Thomas disappearing (*Blow-Up*)

Finally, it is worth noting that landscape is the occasion for these problematics. Where what is in play is how perception is informed not simply by the registration of what has happened, but its erasure too.¹⁰ Because of this, and as *Blow-Up* shows, perception is entangled in something other than presence or absence. By having Thomas return to the scene he didn't know he captured, but the second time not finding that which he seeks, *Blow-Up* shows something paradigmatic: that non-instrumentality underlies instrumentality. It is necessary not to act in the service of a goal, or to look for a particular image. As I show in Chapter 2, it is almost always thought necessary to give up non-instrumentality in order to adjust to the demand of reality. And in Chapter 4, I show what happens when that is returned, in other words, what it was thought necessary to give up in order to perceive at all.

¹⁰ "Traces," argues Derrida, "produce the space of their inscription only by acceding to the period of their erasure. From the beginning, in the "presence" of their first impression, they are constituted by the double force of repetition and erasure, legibility and illegibility." *ibid.* p.226.

Chapter 1

Tar Sands and The Management of Dispossession

There are many environmental assessments and like documents for projects linked to the tar sands, with most numbering over 5,000 pages. Their goal is to be exhaustive: to track all the effects that any particular project has on the environment that it interacts with. Almost every section of each application is committed to tracing, in different ways, not one uniform effect but how different types work in different instances. Applicants attempt to show, not that their project has no effects, but that any effects their project might produce are nevertheless not significant. When effects appear, they do so not to be contested as such but as to be minimized, managed or mitigated. In this chapter I draw from three projects in detail. Syncrude's 1998 application for their Mildred Lake Upgrader Project, Syncrude's 2014 application for their Mildred Lake Expansion Project, and Kinder Morgan's application for their Trans-Mountain pipeline. The first two projects are in the tar sands, on one of the original leases. The third project transports bitumen from the tar sands to Burnaby, BC, on the West Coast of Canada. I look at how they develop a theory of relation and manage the violence of settler-colonialism. In the second section, I look at land-use documents and land-management frameworks associated with the region, and how they the imagine the landscape and what can be seen in it.

As Indigenous studies scholars and others have long pointed out, settler-colonialism remains ongoing in Canada and the US. "Colonial domination," argues Dene scholar Glenn Coulthard, "continues to be structurally committed to maintain—through force, fraud, and more recently, so-called “negotiations”—ongoing state access to the land and resources" (Coulthard 7). While the State, and the institutions it supports celebrate and promote the proliferation of

relations with Indigenous people, by way of consultation, assessments, commissions, inquiries, and so on, "a termination policy," in the words of the National Treaty Alliance (NTA), a grouping of Indigenous Nations across Canada, continues. If resource extraction remains within a settler-colonial logic, how does it proceed? And what happens, in the imagination of resource extraction, to its casualties? How does, for instance, environmental assessment conceive of the violence of resource extraction? And if it doesn't, does it not do so because it can't see violence or because it holds the sight of it away?

In a recent speech, Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, approved two new pipelines, Line 3 and Trans-Mountain, while rejecting one, Enbridge's Northern Gateway.¹¹ All three had been recommended by the Federal regulator, the National Energy Board (NEB), despite the pipelines committing Canada to the continued extraction of the Alberta Tar Sands, known as the world's largest industrial project and one of the dirtiest. In the speech, Trudeau ties the State's continuing legitimacy to "building an economy" and "protect[ing] the environment." "Voters rejected the old thinking," Trudeau said, "that what is good for the economy is bad for the environment. They embraced the idea that we need strong environmental policies if we expect to develop our natural resources and get them to international markets" (Trudeau). Trudeau invokes the common liberal administrative logic of the need for admission, that what used to happen was wrong, to stake out a difference. From there, he goes on to an awareness, "climate change is real, it is here... it cannot be wished away," in order to mobilize it for a forward movement, "Canadians know this, and they know we need to transition to a clean energy economy... we also know that this transition will take investment, and it won't happen in a day" (Trudeau).

¹¹ Trudeau's speech can be accessed here: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/11/30/prime-minister-justin-trudeaus-pipeline-announcement>

The deceit is common enough, awareness and admission propel one to a place that is different from where one had been before so that one has time and room to defer claims to, for example, climate or Indigenous justice.¹² Although Trudeau also invokes necessity, "it will be mined and transported, it's just a question of by train or by pipeline," and a certain realism, "there is not a country in the world that would find billions of barrels of oil and leave it in the ground," the fundamental point is positional. "Canada is a country rich in energy of all kinds. Conventional and renewable. The energy of today and tomorrow. That is a unique and tremendously positive place to be" (Trudeau). What kind of a place is that? The position is transitional, at a distance from the ills of the past (here named as "today") but, at the same time, in sight of a positive future. The inversion is perhaps even more fundamental, however, because the position of present activity, i.e. the extraction, marketing and use of fossil fuels and the ongoing destruction of Indigenous treaty-rights, doesn't exist as such. Or, to the extent it does, it can't register as what it is because if it were what it is it would be discontinuous with itself. The logical gambit goes something like, when we burn fossil fuels we are no longer burning them because we no longer inhabit the position in which they could be burned.

I'm starting here to note not simply that the State engages in ideological activity to secure what it is otherwise taking by force or fraud, but that it does so by way of spatial and temporal constructions that not only confine something to a particular place but that establish the way that something can register or not.¹³ Environmental assessment is one place where the criteria for what registers and what counts as a claim or what is claimable, become legible.

¹² In *After Evil*, Bob Meister argues that "[in] societies, which seem in many ways unchanged, the sins that come after sinning often take the form of returning to (dredging up) the past and violating the faith that things are already different—or will be once everyone accepts the change that has occurred" (11). I also draw from his argument for ideas about transitional positionality. see, Meister, Robert. *After Evil*. New York, NY: Columbia UP. 2011.

¹³ on the political and racial character of the act of positioning, see, Rei Terada, "Historical Transitions and Transitions as Such," (unpublished). On the construction of criteria for conceptuality which holds the political

If *Perceiving Extraction* is about the conditions of visibility of any particular thing, than this chapter establishes the dominant framework for how environmental objects are read. Much more complex than a question of how ideology works to obscure, disavow, or conceal the visible effects of extraction, environmental assessment and land-management work within an infrastructural framework that is concerned with the management and appearance of violence and destruction. First, environmental assessment and land-management make clear that there are temporal and spatial determinations that are constantly operative, and that these condition the field of visibility. Second, they show that environmental work privileges harm rhetorically. This help us to see the parameters of what is thought possible to do with that harm. That is seems possible to manage it, return it to an original state, compensate for it, or have it reclaimed, shows ways of working-through conflicts. Accompanying this working-through are ideas about how far back that harm is allowed to reach, as well as when it can be said to be done with. What these different approaches reveal is that environmental assessment is interested in setting thresholds for environmental objects. As a result, it thereby constructs different notions of thresholds, like those between harm and damage, or between redeemability and irredeemability. Finally then, and helpful for the chapters that follow, this chapter establishes the boundary between past destruction and existing harm, suggesting that only harm that is ongoing and fungible is conceivable and perceivable.

priority of the "non-racial" over the racialized, see also Rei Terada, "Hegel and the History of The Postracial," Hegel and the Prehistory of the Postracial, *European Romantic Review*, 26:3, 289-299.

First, I want to establish the field onto which resource extraction looks. The recommendation of a project is usually put in the language of interest. This, for example, from the NEB's *Filing Manual*¹⁴ and repeated in the NEB decision on Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline: "The public interest is inclusive of all Canadians and refers to a balance of economic, environmental and social interests that change as society's values and preferences evolve over time. As a regulator, the Board must estimate the overall public good a project may create and its potential negative aspects, weigh its various impacts, and make an informed decision that balances, among other things, the economic, environmental and social interests at that point in time" ("Decision on Trans Mountain" 13). At first sight, the language of weighing and balancing seems to connote compromise, or, at the very least, an understanding that a preference for one thing will mean that another thing will lose out.

Yet, the cost-benefit framework that regulatory bodies establish, generate two much more fundamental general structures than a privileging of certain interests over others. Of course, the State and the resource extraction companies it supports and work with are likely to structurally benefit from processes such as these. But, the crucial point is that this isn't as a result of a general distribution, in which some concerns do better than others.

Paradoxically, environmental assessment works *by way of* admission, by trying to admit as much into its scope as possible, and by trying to be as transparent as possible. In their adjudication of Trans Mountain's pipeline the NEB describe the purpose of an environmental assessment as follows, "The basic concepts behind environmental assessment are simply stated: (1) early identification and evaluation of all potential environmental consequences of a proposed undertaking; (2) decision making that both guarantees the adequacy of this process and

¹⁴ The National Energy Board's *Filing Manual* (2016) outlines the procedure for writing environmental assessment

reconciles, to the greatest extent possible, the proponent's development desires with environmental protection and preservation... In short, environmental impact assessment is simply descriptive of a process of decision-making" ("Final Argument of Trans Mountain"). The first point, concerning admission, accounts for the expansiveness of the assessment process. The second one, the formal one, is almost tautological: environmental assessment is the process of adequate decision-making; the decision-making is adequate if it, as a process, can be described and shown.

The first main structure that the cost-benefit framework establishes creates the sense that there is indeed a cost to development and that that cost may be too high. In other words, it appears to place a burden on the applicant, and this is why consultation must play such a major role. The frame of the assessment presents itself as exhaustive; everything is posed as if under decision and this makes it seem as though analytically everything is to be decided. Every obstacle to development arises as just that, something that could potentially derail the process entirely. Retaining the feeling of contingency is crucial because it shows that the idea of development itself is in question. Further, because all applications (and decisions on them) are written from the perspective of their having come to pass—i.e. showing what impact x will have—each object passes through different stages of impact and each object of consideration performs this movement. The whole process appears as progressive, establishing not only the virtue or necessity of a particular project, but establishing the process itself as it goes along. Thus, "although cost-benefit analysis could be used to justify proceeding with a project that is likely to cause significance adverse environmental effects, this justification can take place *only after* the likelihood of the significant adverse environmental effects has been determined" (Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office 192). The modality is one of discovery,

where at least part of the discovery is the process itself appearing to work. What the regulatory body comes in to confirm, once the application is complete, are projects *like* this, and thereby, previous ones *and* ones to come.

The second structure is related to the idea that a project produces effects and that these effects could be negative. The first listed purpose of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA, 2012) is, "to protect the components of the environment that are within the legislative authority of Parliament from *significant adverse environmental effects* caused by a designated project" (CEAA 3). This has established, in Canada at least, although similar categories exist in the U.S., that environmental assessment generally concerns "effects" to the environment. This promotes a general cause and effect structure that underlies the findings and analysis of assessment.

For the purpose of assessment, the act defines environment as, "the components of the Earth, and includes (a) land, water and air, including all layers of the atmosphere; (b) all organic and inorganic matter and living organisms; and (c) the interacting natural systems that include components referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b)." An "environmental effect" is defined as "a change that may be caused" to any component of the environment as just defined. In addition, an effect could be, "c) with respect to aboriginal peoples, an effect occurring in Canada of any change that may be caused to the environment on (i) health and socio-economic conditions, (ii) physical and cultural heritage, (iii) the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes, or (iv) any structure, site or thing that is of historical, archaeological, paleontological or architectural significance" (CEAA 6). I will come back to the implications of the breadth of these definitions in a moment.

In the "Project Description" section of its Environmental Impact Assessment, Syncrude's 2014 Mildred Lake Expansion Project sets itself the task of, "[providing] a sufficient base for the prediction of positive and negative effects and the extent to which negative effects may be mitigated by planning, design, construction techniques, operational practices, and reclamation techniques" ("MLX Environmental Assessment Vol.2" 1.2) To say that a project produces effects—negative, positive, or neutral—is another way of saying it has relations. The job of environmental assessment is to imagine and manage these relations.

"Components," sometimes called "key indicators," cover the range of the definitions in the act. From the section, "Scope," in Syncrude's Expansion Project: "Impact assessments are based upon measured, estimated, or reasonably expected changes (effects) in some attributes of a selected environmental or socio-economic component (i.e., an effect receptor)" ("MLX Environmental Assessment Vol.2" 3.16). While the act seems incredibly broad in its definition of environment, the delimitation work comes through in the implications of the socio-historical term "effect." For the moment, it is enough to have a sense that a component counts at all to the extent that it can be visibly changed or affected, that is, understood as affectable, and to the extent that it can, or could, receive that effect. Focusing on the selection process for key indicators starts to delineate the nature of the term "effect."

At the same time, there are some things that aren't considered, or can't be. For instance, for Syncrude's Mildred Lake Upgrader project: "Key Indicators (KIs) were selected as representatives of potential change in the environment, since the myriad of elements composing the environment can not all be studied individually" ("MLU Environmental Assessment" 227). Or the following, from Trans-Mountain's final argument, "For example, in the Joint Review Panel's Report for the Enbridge Northern Gateway Project, the Panel stated that "[t]he purpose

of valued ecosystem components and key indicator species in environmental assessment is not to be all inclusive, recognizing the practical impossibility of analyzing everything, but to look at potential project effects on representative components” (“Final Argument of Trans Mountain” 17). While the apparent limitation is obvious enough—that it would take too long to carry out such a study—there is an extra step: given the elements are too numerous, a representative can come in to make up for it. That it wouldn't be possible to consider "the myriad of elements", is what kind of restriction? And how is this readable in the methodology for a project's impact analysis?

In the section of Syncrude's Upgrader application, "Selecting Key Indicators" (those things that will be assessed), the following parameters are composed:

"1) Key Indicator (KI) must interact with some project activity or structure; 2) KI must be an indicator of change to ecological function or structure (e.g., indicator species, or air and water quality parameters); 3) KI should be common enough to enable study; 4) adequate baseline information for the KI must exist or be reasonably attainable; 5) KI was used in past EIAs for similar developments in the same area; 6) KI is used or could be used for environmental management planning and monitoring programs in the region (e.g., Terrestrial Environmental Effects Monitoring program); 7) and KIs that duplicate a role in the assessment process are avoided (e.g., species or parameters that are affected in the same way by the same project activities)" ("MLU Environmental Assessment" 427).

There is a lot going on here. On the one hand, KI's must be accessible, and, on the other, what is to be managed must have in some way been managed already or could be used for the purposes

of management in the future. To say that "adequate baseline information" must exist, is to invert the process from one of apparent discovery, to one of knowability. Here then, the empirical method determines what counts prior to investigation. In this way, we can assume that the method is from the start doing protective work. Given this, the "myriad of elements" that "can not all be studied individually" must also be understood as a protection against letting certain things in. And yet, to get as far as being used for future study, all KI's must be imaginable as being able to be managed *in the first place*. This means that the more apparently fluid or contingent elements—interaction with the project and being an "indicator of change"—are also already carrying assumptions. And to say that something must be "common enough" to enable study, is not just to say that only common things can be studied, thus leaving out those that are uncommon, but that an effect is only an effect *if it is common*.

The delimitation of what counts as affectable and in what way, comes through in almost every individual impact analysis. In one volume of Kinder Morgan's application for its Trans-Mountain pipeline, the "Biophysical Environmental Assessment," numerous indicators are proposed as interacting with the project and are then analyzed. Take, for instance, the "Marine Birds" section that analyzes the potential impact to six bird species. To be selected as an "Indicator Species" the bird species needed to seasonally utilize the affected habitat; "have life requisites shared by a broad group of other marine bird species"; be a species of conservation concern; be a species on whom there is sufficient existing information; have been documented as a species susceptible to anthropogenic disturbances; exist within an ecosystem, whereby their absence would have knock-on effects; be important to coastal aboriginal communities; and have been "previously used as indicators in regional effects-based assessments and, therefore, have

been the focus of academic and regulatory studies within the Marine RSA" ("Trans Mountain Biophysical" 472-3).

The demand that the species be calculable and register already as manageable (or be in need of it), is similar to the criteria for key indicators above. As is the demand that the species be affectable and be representative. Additionally, the species ought to be clearly affected by human activity and cause effects themselves. Repeated here, similar to above, are the pre-requisites that each be of "conservation concern," "have existing information related to them," and "have been documented as susceptible." In other words, be objects of representation already. The condition that they utilize the habitat, or have been previously used as indicators, is another way of saying that they are representable. Finally, because they are representable as such—coming into identity, or commonality, as above, with others—they are able to effectively stand in the place of others, and this is why they must have shared life requisites and why they can have knock-on effects or exist within an ecosystem. These movements of representation resolve into the work of the assessment itself which by way of these characteristics is able to represent them, that is, show they can be represented, acted on behalf of, assessed, and so on.

In producing objects for assessment, the assessment also produces the work it does, and thereby its capacity to represent. The assessment's "coup," in David Lloyd's phrase, would be to assume a position which regulates representation.¹⁵ The operative theory of perception at work, that only those things that are visibly affected count, makes what may otherwise be a contingent into a universal—demarkating in one move that what can be seen is what can be represented. Universalism is here analogous to exchangeability, and this universalizing move—"the very

¹⁵ I follow his tripartite distinction for representation throughout this section, see Lloyd, David. "Representation's Coup," *Interventions*, 16:1, 1-29. (2014).

passage from presence to representation"—displaces the violence of the state, which is nevertheless always there.¹⁶

Structure 1, then, contains the idea that everything that happens must be an effect—proposed projects impact an environment, change it, and thereby affect it. While it seems like such effects can be seen, and that their being seen is a condition for management, it is in fact the other way around—and this inversion, that only what is manageable can be seen, is a quasi-permanent characteristic of analysis. Structure 2, supplements this by both delimiting what counts as being affected and by showing that this delimitation is in fact consistent with an idea of relation that is held in common and can be managed. Another way of putting this would be to say that an effect is a change which replaces something that was thought to be previously there. The consequence being that if something can't be seen, or if it doesn't manifest change as defined, it is not an effect at all.

In environmental assessment, all effects are seen within spatial and temporal boundaries, and as criteria for selection, commonality, representability and manageability call forth spatial and temporal terminations. A "temporal boundary" is in part, defined as, "the time required for an effect to become evident," or "the time required for a population or socio-economic indicator to recover from an effect and return to a natural condition" ("Trans Mountain Socio-Economic"). A "spatial boundary" would represent a decision on "the area in which a population or socio-economic indicator functions and within which a Project effect may be experienced" ("Socio-Economic" 3). What I am arguing here is that if an effect is only an effect if it visibly manifests

¹⁶ The phrase is Jacques Derrida's see, Derrida, Jacques. "Force of law: the 'mystical foundation of authority'", in Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld, and David Grey Carlson (eds) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, London: Routledge, pp. 1-67. For a variation of this argument see also, Benjamin, Walter (1978) "Critique of violence", in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott, New York: Schocken, pp. 277-300.

or deviates from an equilibrium point, and can only be "experienced" within a certain area, then it carries with it very particular assumptions.

Once indicators or "effect receptors" are selected they are then analyzed in the following way: "For each identified receptor, an assessment of the potential effect is made using the attributes of direction, geographic extent, magnitude, duration, frequency, and confidence in the relationships between cause and effect. An overall effect assessment rating for each receptor is derived based upon the individual attributes" ("MLX Environmental Assessment Vol.2" 3.16). The process is slightly different for the Federal regulator. Potential effects are outlined, the spatial boundary is defined, then mitigation measures are applied, and potential residual effects are outlined. Potential residual effects, those that persist through mitigation, are subject to an assessment as follows: impact balance; spatial boundary; [temporal context:] duration, frequency, reversibility; magnitude; probability; confidence; significance. In a fairly comprehensive way, then, the infrastructure of assessment establishes and revises the visual and experiential field. In so doing, experiences are reduced to an identity that is manageable and therefore seeable.

I will briefly go through a few of the terms which are used to analyze effects. "Duration," for example, refers to the period of the event which is thought to cause the effect, such as particular aspects of construction activity. Duration is considered to be either immediate, short-term, medium-term or long-term. Short-term, for instance, would mean that the event, "occurs during the construction phase or is completed within any 1 year during the operations phase" and goes on no longer. "Reversibility," refers to the period of time over which the residual effect extends, like a decrease in wildlife inhabiting a particular area. It is considered as either short-term, medium-term, long-term or permanent. "Medium-term reversibility," then, refers to the

"residual effect extend[ing] more than 1 year but less than or equal to 10 years into the operations phase" "Trans Mountain Socio-Economic" 7). "Magnitude," refers to the extent of change in the indicator, such as change in water quality. It is classed as negligible, low, medium or high. Low magnitude, for instance, is thought to be when "change is detectable, but has no effect on the socio-economic environment beyond that of an inconvenience or nuisance value." Just in these three terms are assumptions about thresholds of when something begins or ceases, the ability of something to return to a previous condition, and how something can or does manifest.¹⁷

To say an effect is already all of these things, is to say that to even think of an effect is to conceive of ideas about spatial and temporal termination. Furthermore, only some of the effects that can be imagined are considered "significant" and only in certain circumstances. A residual socio-economic effect is only considered significant if the effect is predicted to be: "1) high magnitude, high probability, short to medium-term reversibility and regional, provincial or national in extent that cannot be technically or economically mitigated; or 2) high magnitude, high probability, long-term or permanent reversibility and any spatial boundary that cannot be technically or economically mitigated" ("Decision on Trans Mountain" 12). All other kinds of effects are considered as "not significant," thereby warranting no further assessment. These include, in the Trans Mountain application, all effects on indigenous groups.

In deciding on whether the effect on indigenous communities was positive or negative, Trans Mountain detailed their engagement and consultation with First Nations. Remarking on the potential positive effect of the project overall, the application states, "it was also noted during

¹⁷ Sometimes, as in Syncrude's 1998 Upgrader application, the use of a concept to analyze how something is affected is expressed in relative terms. Magnitude, in this example, is analyzed in reference to three factors. First, "predicted chemical or physical quality, or quantity, relative to established guideline limits, criteria or thresholds"; second, "amount of a resource affected, relative to the amount of the resource that exists within a regional or ecological boundary"; or, third, "amount of a resource affected, relative to the amount of the resource in use or potentially used within a regional or ecological boundary" (431).

engagement activities that gear required for hunting in particular is expensive (e.g., quads, snowmobiles, trucks, guns, ammunition) and hunting may be positively affected by an increase in Project-related wage employment opportunities for Aboriginal communities" ("Trans Mountain Socio-Economic" 57). The application goes on to suggest that "project-related employment" could have a positive impact on traditional land use such as harvesting as, "those who spend some of their earnings on harvesting equipment will likely be eager to use their equipment" (57). Here we can start to understand how an effect is conceived. The impact is potentially positive because the project may provide the opportunity of earning money, and that money can be turned into goods which can then be used to pursue an end whose increase is itself positive. The almost frighteningly limited perspective continues,

Another factor that may affect Aboriginal culture is the potential for the Project to support the generation of cultural information and provide resources that can indirectly support Aboriginal cultural objectives. During engagement activities, many Aboriginal communities noted they have, or wish to develop, programs that facilitate educating youth about cultural practices and traditional languages. Traditional Land Use (TLU) studies completed for or supported by the Project may support the documentation of traditional cultural information that can facilitate cultural transmission to future generations. It was noted during biophysical field study participation and through the collection of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) for the Project that these activities themselves provided Aboriginal communities the opportunity to come together to contribute their TEK to the biophysical and heritage resources studies... Generally, participation in biophysical field studies and conducting the TLU studies supported by the Project may facilitate

the generation of culturally important information that can be used for broader community purposes (58).

The suggestion here is that TLU studies which are required by the NEB and CEAA for projects related to resource extraction are in-themselves potentially beneficial to Indigenous communities. Not to mention that these are studies which detail the potential disruption of traditional practices in the wider context of the degradation of the conditions for even the ability to engage in treaty rights, what is interesting in the approach is the extent to which it is unable to conceive of the violence in which it is participating. The way in which environmental assessment cleaves to the force of how things are is evident in their conclusion for this section, "[in any case] given the existing levels of social and economic integration between," suggests Kinder Morgan, "Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities along the proposed pipeline corridor and the broader context of other regional urban and industrial development the probability of any detectable Project effects on culture, positive or negative, at a community level is low" (58). The vast array of what can't be thought of here is evidence of what has been already integrated.

If the very constitution of what an effect is carries with it spatio-temporal assumptions, which themselves contain political motive and force, then one place where environmental assessment makes the case that this is how to think about relation is when it talks about mitigation. Mitigation measures, as defined under the CEA Act, 2012, are "measures for the elimination, reduction or control of a project's adverse environmental effects, including restitution for any damage to the environment caused by such effects through replacement, restoration, compensation or any other means" ("Trans Mountain Biophysical" 563). While, "[some] effects on wildlife and habitat cannot be completely avoided or alleviated with

mitigation," it is important that others are thought as being able to be mitigated entirely and that replacement or restoration counts as succeeding. In the document, *Terms of Reference For Proponent's Proposed Oil Sands Mine Project*, applicants are encouraged to, "discuss mitigation measures planned to avoid, minimize or eliminate the potential impacts for all stages of the Project" (Alberta Energy Regulator 23). If something can be mitigated it is thought of as a relation that can be sustained through management.

As with assessments in general, an impact is considered less of an impact if it affects an area that has already been developed. Advice for general avoidance—a kind of pre-mitigation—include, "where practical, follow existing linear disturbances (i.e., pipeline, utility, seismic and road rights-of-way) to avoid or minimize fragmentation of habitat; avoid, to the extent practical, areas of undisturbed native vegetation by maximizing the use of previously cleared lands or lands currently under industrial land use; make use of existing access, to the extent feasible" ("Trans Mountain Biophysical" 795). By cleaving to the already disturbed, disrupted or damaged, the assumption is two-fold. First, existing pathways are naturalized and reinforced. Second, already damaged things are seen as losing any notion of threshold—as long as their being damaged is continuous, any new damage is not in question.

In a general way, mitigation is used to expiate or relieve the feeling that something may be damaged and may persist as just that. As such, it is also imagined as able to repair certain relations. For instance, for the potential effect, "Loss of Marine Riparian Habitat," mitigation measures were given as, "Limit[ing] shoreline clearing to what is absolutely necessary for Project construction," and, "Implement[ing] a marine fish habitat compensation/offset program to ensure there is no net loss of the productive capacity of marine fish habitats" (1001). In this instance, the initial habitat is lost entirely. Although the potential residual effect is given as "loss

of marine riparian habitat," i.e. the same as the potential effect, a loss which will be "permanent," "the associated loss of productive capacity will be offset through the construction of compensation/offset habitat" (1005). Not only will the initial loss be fully compensated, but the offset habitat replaces, "the existing riparian vegetation, which has a limited value to marine fish." The replacement habitat—the sub-tidal rock reef—"will provide direct benefits to a variety of harvested species, including rockfish, salmon and Dungeness crab," in excess of what was there prior to development. Moreover, "the temporary decrease in productive capacity that occurs during the time it takes for the rock reef to become fully functional habitat (anticipated 2 to 3 years) will be completely offset by the creation of high value habitat that will persist in perpetuity. As a result, the effect of loss of marine riparian habitat is considered to be of low magnitude" (1005). Of course, as soon as you restrict existence to "productive capacity," you will be able to think about fungibility in a particular way. However, I am interested too in the implicit visuality of mitigation when it is thought like this. A conception where a permanent change in the visual field can be offset "through the construction of compensation," suggests that, although the visual field is effectively rearranged, it is thought of as staying the same. And here too, the marine life can't be seen.

In a different instance, the same project was said to potentially affect marine birds through direct change in habitat availability or quality, sensory disturbance, and risk of injury or mortality from Project-related activities ("Trans Mountain Socio-Economic" 475). Mitigation measures for these three potential effects varied from discouraging nesting—"the Environmental Inspector will ensure the brushing Contractor clears shrubby vegetation from the Westridge Marine Terminal prior to the onset of the bird nesting season"—to recommendations for road maintenance, "ensure that watering of roads and work surfaces does not generate excessive

formation of surface water accumulation (i.e. puddles or excessive mud generation)." Other measures encouraged, "where feasible, using low level and low intensity lighting, using no lighting in areas where no work is planned, and using downturned shaded fixtures." It was further promised, "vessel operators will avoid rapid acceleration to control noise" (481). The minutiae of the detail are not really responding to an existing demand, nor is it detailed as enforceable, but rather is evidence of a theory of management which relies on total access—all vessel operators could plausibly avoid rapid acceleration and they are imagined as being able to carry this out. The logic is regressive; something else could always be thought up to be managed if need be. Environmental assessment works on this speculation, on the normative force of manageability.

Environmental assessment appears as a working-through of the potential impact of a project on an environment, constructing its justification as it goes along. The logic is that the process couldn't recommend a project that shouldn't proceed; if it shouldn't be approved, it wouldn't have been recommended. Rhetorically, this would mean the assessment's purpose is not a way of giving sufficient reason for what is about to occur or what has. And yet, environmental assessment really needs a theory of how to account for the *fact of development*—that this has happened before. From an assessment handbook, "The most common way of determining whether a project's environmental effects are adverse is to compare the quality of the existing environment with the predicted quality of the environment once the project is in place" (Federal Assessment Review Office 187). In the literature this is known as the "baseline": "Baseline environmental and socio-economic conditions are an expression of effects from past and present development within the study area. Baseline conditions are used as a benchmark from which to measure the incremental effects from a proposed project" ("MLU Environmental Assessment"

428). The baseline, an already "surveyed condition," relativizes all affects any individual project may have, by resolving it into a general context of development to which it is "coordinated and correlated" (370). In other words, *baseline is a way of giving value to existing conditions*.

In Trans-Mountain's "Final Argument" the baseline is used to determine the temporal boundaries of the environmental study area (ESA). "This approach," they suggest, "is consistent with generally accepted ESA practice in Canada" ("Final Argument of Trans Mountain" 426).

For example, in the Final Report for the Cheviot Coal Project, the Panel stated:

"In this case, the Panel notes that [the Proponent] used present conditions to describe the environmental "baseline" associated with the region. The Panel believes that this is an appropriate starting point for the Cheviot Project and notes that the baseline includes current mining, logging, and oil and gas activities in the region. Since these activities have already received approval, the Panel believes that their inclusion as baseline conditions (as opposed to more pristine predevelopment conditions) is appropriate" (426).

There are two implications for using existing conditions in this way. First, the baseline brackets past and present activity from being put in question, by way of the weight of what exists—its "already received approval." Second, use of the baseline implies that there is no way to account for what was there or what could be there—their "inclusion" covers what is relatable, and "pre-development conditions" are bracketed from the visual field. This is significant because the "identification and characterization of the physical, biological and social conditions at the time a project," are organized by the baseline (226) (if change is considered as manifesting itself as seen, as a visible difference from it was before, the imagination and visual construction of the "before" is acutely significant.) In attempting to account for the effect on human health due to a

change in air quality that Syncrude's Mildred Lake Upgrader Project will produce, it is concluded that, "relative to the Baseline Case, the magnitude of the predicted increase in health risk from chronic exposures is minimal" ("MLU Environmental Assessment" 406). The accretive logic, that a single project can only negligibly add to what is already there, helps show that the worse the condition of the environment, the less impact any new project would have. In other words, degradation is actually a condition for development.

In addition to mitigation and the baseline, the last major category in which effects are thought in relation is to the *activity* of the surrounding environment. In an attempt to account for the intensity of development, environmental assessment and land-management frameworks need to have a way of assessing multiple impacts at once. At the same time, they also need a category for effects that began in the past but are considered to still continue to have an impact in the present. Effects which persist beyond mitigation, thereby remaining residual, and which have impacts in excess of the baseline conditions, reach the status of a continuing or ongoing effect. By virtue of their continuation, such effects are eligible to be analyzed in combination with past and concurrent activity. The category for this in environmental assessment is a cumulative effect. "Cumulative effects are changes to the environment that are caused by an action in combination with other past, present and future human actions" ("Trans Mountain Socio-Economic" 22). Analysis of cumulative effects of a particular project attempt to put those effects in relation to effects that arise from other projects: "in order for there to be cumulative effects, there must be overlap between the effects of the proposed project and other activities. If there is no overlap, there is no cumulative effect" ("Trans Mountain Final Argument" 349). While it is hard to think

of *anything* that doesn't overlap with something else from past or current activity, that this distinction can be asserted at all says something about the approach.¹⁸

In their Upgrader Project, Syncrude suggest that cumulative effects may occur in a number of ways. The main types of cumulative effects included in the assessment are, "Additive (e.g., total land area disturbed); Magnification (e.g., acidic inputs and metal deposition); and Masking (e.g., disturbance and reclamation of soils affected by mining would mask the effects to those soils from air emissions)" ("MLU Environmental Assessment" 431). And yet, there are no significant cumulative effects in the entire assessment. How is that the case?

In submissions to the NEB hearing on Trans Mountain, members of the public requested that consideration was expanded to "include environmental and socio-economic effects associated with upstream activities, including development of the oil sands (upstream effects) and the downstream use of the oil intended to be shipped on the pipeline (downstream effects)" ("Trans Mountain Final Argument" 247). Indeed, greenhouse gas emissions seem one of the most obvious cumulative effects. In response to the request, Trans Mountain cited the NEB's decisions regarding the List of Issues for both the Enbridge Line 9B Reversal and the Line 9 Reversal Phase I Project in which the Board held that it was "outside of the appropriate scope of the present review," thereby taking it out of claimable circulation.¹⁹

First Nations in the tar sands region note consistently that the effects of multiple resource extraction projects on their treaty rights and traditional territory are cumulative and negative. In

¹⁸ "The key difference between determining the significance of project-specific effects versus cumulative effects is the consideration of other physical facilities and activities. The evaluation of significance must focus on the total cumulative effect that may be created from all physical facilities and activities considered in combination with the proposed project" (*Filing Manual*, 4—43).

¹⁹ "[T]he Board confirms that its assessment will include consideration only of the environmental effects of GHG emissions associated with the Project, as outlined by Table A-2 in the NEB's *Filing Manual*. Some submissions requested that the Board consider federal and provincial GHG policy and legislation, and international commitments. Any detailed consideration of such policies, legislation, and commitments, beyond their direct impact on the Project and its environmental effects, is outside the appropriate scope of the present review" (TMA, 432).

an application against the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP)²⁰, Fort Mackay First Nation showed that 98% of its trapping areas and about 70% of its Traditional Territory have been leased to tar sands developers. And of the more than 2,600 traditional use sites that Fort McKay has documented to date, less than 20 per cent of these are within existing parks and conservation areas (LARP 146). It argued that because conservation areas (which in the LARP are "for multiple uses" and not specifically for indigenous use) often border development sites, the conservation area is often unable to support biodiversity, including wildlife (146). In any case, while all tar sands development areas were already designated and in-use, conservation areas were only provisional. They concluded the LARP privileged tar sands development, harmed First Nations, and had, given past land-use in the region, already done irreversible harm.

Onion Lake Cree Nation (OLCN) argued, among other things, that "the LARP does not address the management of ongoing Traditional Land Use (TLU) by Onion Lake Cree Nation members."²¹ OLCN maintained that, "TLU activities depend upon a number of factors [that] are not accounted for in the LARP, which includes: location and availability of traditional ecological resources; quantity of traditional ecological resources; confidence in the quality and safety of ecological resources; access to ecological resources; and more complex cultural and spiritual factors" (LARR 46). In response the Government of Alberta contended that first, "The Panel has jurisdiction only with respect to harms alleged to be caused by the content of the LARP. Harms which are alleged to have occurred due to activities which were carried on or approved prior to the LARP cannot be caused by the LARP and are therefore outside of the Panel's jurisdiction." And second, "much of what OLCN considers its Traditional Territory has been taken up for

²⁰ this is one of many documents produced by the Province. see, Alberta Government. *Lower Athabasca Regional Plan*. 2012

²¹ All land-management frameworks undergo review, in the years after their publication. This document came out the consultation surrounding problems with the LARP. See, Alberta Government. *Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Review*. 2015. p.6

various purposes, including military, agriculture, municipal settlement, provincial parks and industrial oil and gas land uses” (46). On the one hand, in arguing against diminished access and quality, the logic here is procedural: the LARP does not itself produce the harm that is in part being claimed, because the LARP was not established when that took place. The effect, however, is simply that there is no recourse for past harm. On the other hand, the claim for the continuing degradation is more complex. Because—for whatever reason and however this occurred—traditional territory has "been taken up," its potential to meet indigenous needs has changed. By virtue of that fact, the continuation of the denial of the claim is justified. Its already degraded status means that its further degradation is withdrawn from being claimable.

The only significant cumulative effect that was conceded across all the three projects was the affect to the southern resident killer whale, in the Trans Mountain application.²² The argumentation for why the application should be approved nevertheless, is revealing:

It is important to note that such justification will have to reflect the fact that (i) neither Trans Mountain nor the NEB has direct control over marine vessel activity within the southern resident killer whale critical habitat; (ii) the Project will only slightly increase existing levels of marine shipping in this area; (iii) the shipping lanes that will be used by Project-related vessels already exist, are well utilized and are subject to strict regulation by federal authorities; (iv) the shipping lanes will continue to host marine vessel traffic with or without the Project; (v) the impact will continue to be significant

²² "The ESA concluded that, given the small size, unstable population trends, Endangered status and relative importance of this area (i.e., critical habitat) to the southern resident killer whale population, residual effects associated with increased Project-related marine vessel traffic—while small on their own—on southern resident killer whales as well as associated traditional use of the population are considered to be significant... Since the existing cumulative effects on these indicators are already significant and any further residual effect will also be significant, Project approval for these two residual effects will require justification under CEAA 2012" (TM5, 307-8).

with or without the project; and (vi) there is no clear solution that has been identified to alleviate the residual adverse effects mentioned above ("Trans Mountain Biophysical" 309-310).

The case for approval is a comment on how resource extraction proceeds. It is worth noting, however, that all these excuses suggest that there is something to excuse, even as each suggests otherwise. A feeling which increases with each additional point; the one that was just given requires another as there is still impact to account for. Point (i), for instance, suggests that development can't be controlled, while (iv) suggests that development can't be stopped. And where (ii) shows the accretive logic with which development already works, (iii) shows that development's infrastructure already exists, is useable, and regulated (even though, in this case, the regulation isn't working). Lastly, (v) and (vi) argue that if other development will make sure the negative impacts happen anyway, and, in any case, the issue can't be solved. These series of points underlie the movement of resource extraction and its assumptions.

Opposing the idea that the Canadian Government's duty to consult can occur after a project is approved, Indigenous groups who gave evidence at NEB hearings implicitly argued against the temporal character underlying development: "Consultation that occurs after the Board issues its report cannot be meaningful as the conditions of approval will have already been set" ("Decision on Trans Mountain" 44). This is difficult for regulatory bodies and for extraction companies because it goes against the operative conceit: that all problems are potentially manageable. For instance, "in Trans Mountain's view, given the evidence on the Board's record that the Crown consultation process with Aboriginal groups is not over... Phase III and IV of the Crown's consultation will occur after the close of the public record. Therefore, according to Trans

Mountain, it would be premature for the NEB to assess the adequacy of Crown consultation prior to issuing this report" (45). The response of Trans Mountain and the NEB approval of the project is that like development, the management of potential issues will be ongoing. However, it is important to note that what is being managed or what is promised here to continue to be managed are not the resolution of problems that may arise. Rather, the promise is to manage ongoing-ness itself. In other words, the constant deferral of justice claims.

In the report, when objections by indigenous groups are given, they are followed by intricate details about the structure of consultation. What does it mean that these concerns were given room to be aired, or that many of those, such as "disruption of subsistence activities," underwent assessment, including mitigation measures which included a note to, "install signage notifying of construction activities in the area"? ("Trans Mountain Socio-Economic" 45). And what does it mean that assessment for "traditional land use" was followed by one for "cultural land use," in which disruption to a local golf course was assessed?

I think his means two things. First, as Coulthard suggests in *Red Skin White Masks*, the state cannot recognize certain claims and cannot thereby contain them by a relation of recognition. This is certainly because, as he also implies, the relation is constitutively antagonistic—or founded on violence. Such that its attempts at representation—any attempt—necessarily repeat such violence, that is, the violence will be there in that activity. Which is to say, on the near side, so to speak, its processes of inclusion will always leave some exclusion still there.²³ However, and second, this is also because, on the far side, it thinks there is nothing outside of it. The problem here is not simply of inclusion into a system of annihilation, of which

²³ The argument against thinking exclusion appears in Denise da Silva, see Silva, Denise F. da. *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007. Rei Terada's take on da Silva is, in part, here, Terada, Rei, "Hegel and the History of The Postracial," *Hegel and the Prehistory of the Postracial*, *European Romantic Review*, 26:3, 289-299.

there are exclusions. Rather if, as David Lloyd argues, "settler colonialism seeks to render the outside inside," the practice of the settler-state doing so, not only does not leave what is external to it untouched, i.e. constantly rendering it potentially inside, but changes what is inside also ("Settler Colonial Logics" 9).

What I mean here is that there is something in the fact that from the perspective of environmental assessment a golf-course counts the same as a First Nation's sacred site. Something different would be happening if one or the other were left out. That assessments don't think they leave anything out, and that in these documents there is an imagination that there's only non-split space, that is, that there are only different kinds of inclusion, means that it's not a question of inclusion or exclusion in the same way. What the contemporary settler-colonial state wants you to know is that a sacred-site is no more deserving of violence than a golf-course (and this, in its own terms, is new). But, because the first implication—necessary antagonism—is still there in the second—that a lot of things are included—we are confronted with kinds of violence that don't operate through splitting and othering, as such.²⁴ One might then read management or administration as a feature of writing that reflects a cultural idea about inclusiveness; a place that is more ambivalent than violent—a form of power that doesn't need something to be distinct for it to be annihilated. In which it makes no sense to say that something has been missed, or left out, but in which that thing is destroyed nonetheless.

²⁴ for her implicit argument against splitting objects into a "loving attitude" and a "hating attitude" see Melanie Klein, where she argues, "this division between love and hate towards people not too close to oneself also serves the purpose of keeping loved people more secure, both actually and in one's mind. They are not only remote from one physically and thus inaccessible, but the division between the loving and hating attitude fosters the feeling that one can keep love unspoiled. The feeling of security that comes from being able to love is, in the unconscious mind, closely linked up with keeping loved people safe and undamaged. The unconscious belief seems to run: I am able to keep some loved people intact, then I have really not damaged any of my loved people and I keep them forever in my mind" (330). Klein, Melanie. *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945*. New York, NY: Free Press. 1984.

What the case of the tar sands shows is that development cannot proceed without regulation or without management.²⁵ However, while one might imagine these measures are bounded by the extraction project itself, that is, what is necessary for the operation of development, something different occurs. During the period in which resource extraction companies oversaw a massive increase in tar sands development, estimating the doubling of barrels of crude bitumen from 1.7 million a day in 2011 to 3.5 million by 2020, the wider landscape itself was subject to planning. The Alberta Government's 2008 *Land-Use Framework* (LUF) was the first of its kind since 1977. And although the Fort-McMurray Subregional Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) was produced in 2002, the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP), the area that covers 82% of the mineable tar sands area, was published in 2012. This was followed by a *Tailings Management Framework for the Mineable Athabasca Oil Sands*, for the same region in 2015. The

²⁵ Studies of the enclosure period in Britain detail that precisely when the landscape was disappearing, what appeared in the aesthetic work of the time was an opposite process. As the landscape became otherwise unrecognizable, under pressures of a growing urban market, it itself became a cultural and aesthetic object that looked nothing like the landscape of enclosure. Although this often occurred as a way of obscuring class and social antagonism, that is, concealing from view the interests of exploitation, this was also a way of handling loss. By concealing what was happening, aesthetic representation was also doing something with the loss it disavowed. While one may see this as staging a dialectic between the cultural and the natural, in which the natural bears the mark of what the cultural is doing to it, one may be better served by understanding it already as a collapse of the nature / culture distinction. "As the real landscape," argues Ann Bermingham, "began to look increasingly artificial, like a garden, the garden began to look increasingly natural, like the pre-enclosed landscape." "With the erosion of the conditions of the pre-enclosed landscape, its appearance in art or in the landscape was, like the landscape garden, a design-effect.

From the perspective of the "improvement" of the landscape, its parceling into more uniform pieces of economically efficient property, the introduction of a perspectival project which saw the land to be used changed, at the same time, what had not previously registered as a use-value. In other words, the pre-enclosed landscape was not possible as an idea before the enclosed one—the latter introduces the former. It was in the picturesque that this tension was represented. While the aesthetic effect of the picturesque seemed to be "calculated on poverty and misery," it had a double implication. On the one hand, it celebrated a way of life that had been, or was being, lost, and, on the other, "the manifest desolation of the landscape could work as a justification for its transformation into a more efficient, useful one" (LI, 69). "The pathos of the landscape," begins in destruction and ends in justification for it. The minimal gesture of landscape painting, even and especially when this process was disavowed, was to hold in view what was otherwise disappearing. Bermingham, Ann. *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740–1860* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. p.13-14 (LI).

proliferation of environmental assessment from the late 1990s on and land management, follows not only Federal and Provincial Acts, most notably the CEEA in 2012, and the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA), but also a perspectival inversion in approaching the landscape itself. The landscape was to be managed.

The idiosyncrasy of the form of management that accompanies development is that it is one which needs not merely the immediate landscape in question to be managed and regulated, but requires the entire landscape to be managed too. In this sense, there is no tension or even relation between the natural and the non-natural, there is only space that has been explored and space that is yet to be explored ("unexplored," in the terms of the IRP). In other words, there is no space which has not been thought about. Areas where the intention is "conservation" (parks, wilderness areas, ecological reserves, etc.) have to be named as such. And although new and existing conservation area designations comprise 22.41% of the Region (LARR 144), in which, "land disturbance associated with exploration, development and extraction of in situ and mineable oil sands, metallic and industrial minerals and coal are not considered compatible with the management intent of conservation areas" (LARP 30), the total area in which oil sands and resource extraction is permitted is 65.31%. The parceling out of the landscape serves to render it all as designated. And in any case, some of the conservation area is permitted for use by existing oil and gas tenure holders, and future multi-use infrastructure corridors (LARR 144).²⁶

The landscape of the tar sands region, known in the IRP as "the Fort McMurray-Athabasca Oil Sands planning area," is split into five separate "Resource Management Areas"

²⁶ The landscape is described in the regional plan as follows: "Shaped by glacial and post-glacial activity, this landscape comprises several undulating plains with some upland areas, the highest being the Stony Mountain Upland south of Gregoire Lake. Significant natural features in the area include the Athabasca and Clearwater river systems. Slumping commonly occurs along the banks of these rivers. In higher, well drained upland areas, tree cover consists of white spruce, aspen and jack pine. Muskeg and wetlands contain black spruce, willow, birch and sphagnum moss" (2). This description is followed, in next paragraph, by the following: "Forty-five percent of the planning area is underlain by surface mineable oil sands. Forty seven separate leases have been issued, and three of these are currently being developed commercially by the Syncrude and Suncor mining operations" (IRP, 2).

(RMA), with each RMA, "identified on the basis of a common landscape, its current land use, and resource capability" (IRP 7). The different areas are valued, not simply for whether they can be mined or not, but for their specific use. All RMAs are evaluated on the basis of their resources, where resources refer equally to wildlife, forest habitat, or tar sands deposits. "Fish and wildlife resources," are said to "benefit trappers, aboriginal peoples and other local residents seeking opportunities for hunting, fishing, photography and viewing" (4). The existence and identification of resources not only calls forth users of them, but also "economic benefits to guides, outfitters, charter companies and tourist operators" (4).

Once resources are identified, or an area is associated with a resource, it is then detailed how resources are to be managed and used. Although each RMA has slightly different objectives and desired outcomes, some promoting resource extraction others tourism, there is no active tension between either the different RMAs nor between development and pre-development. The Alberta Government refers to this as, "the philosophy of integrated resource management," which "brings about wise use and management of public land and natural resources. This philosophy recognizes that the management and use of one resource may affect the management and use of another resource" (7). All elements of the landscape are in relation, subject not to whether they will be developed or not, but to how they may be used.

The precondition for use, however, is not development as such, given that some resources can only be used in "undeveloped" conditions, but access. Thus, what inhibits back-country hiking as much as mining, is a lack of access to the resource and the job of managing the land is to provide opportunities for its use. Where use can't occur yet, because the infrastructure isn't in place, opportunities "should be provided for exploration." Areas which have yet to be assigned a use, are simply known as, "previously unexplored areas or formations" (11).

Resource development is desirable not merely in-itself but also to the extent that, "its associated economic benefits will have spin-off effects" (5). If the working principle of resource extraction—the process of making available something that was previously not—is accessibility, then it follows that it makes the whole planning area "increasingly accessible" (5). For instance, "to facilitate exploration and potential development of oil sands east of the Athabasca River, a bridge was constructed south of Fort MacKay. Access across the river provided new recreation opportunities (e.g. canoeing on the Muskeg River) and a new starting point for a winter road to Fort Chipewyan" (28). To the extent an area can be approached and crossed, resource development makes known other areas that can be visited and used.

The logic is settler-colonial not simply because it is based on encroachment but because that encroachment is already imagined as filling up what is there and thereby requiring more. First, it is suggested that, "largely because of resource extraction activities, increased and improved industrial access will result in increased recreation access." However, second, there is an extra step, "as existing recreational facilities become congested, recreationists will seek new locations for backcountry hiking, fishing, hunting, camping and day-use activities" (6). Included in the idea that resource development will help make previously inaccessible areas accessible, is already the need for additional space.

As I have suggested, one effect of placing together objectives for mineable resources with objectives for ecological resources is that they are viewed in the same way. From the perspective of management documents, there is no contradiction between objectives associated with one and objectives associated with the other. Indeed, "management" is what dissolves the contradiction. This is not to say, however, that their being held together which accompanies the transformation of the landscape, does not change, in qualitative ways, what is held in view. Although there

remains a necessarily active distinction between "non-renewable resources" and "ecological resources," the latter persists as changed by the fact of being held in relation. In the IRP, listed under "Broad Objectives (ecological resources)," is the intent "to protect representative, significant and unique examples of the natural features, landscapes and ecosystems of the Boreal Mixedwood Ecoregion" (21). Once these resources are identified and assessed, "[they] will be established and maintained in public land reservations" (21). By being seen as manageable, what can count as "ecological" shifts to a representative sample, where retaining "unique examples" fulfill their condition of use.

The intention of the IRP, LARP, and LUF, is not to turn all the land over to resource extraction. It is, rather, to make it seem like there are competing interests—some for extraction, some for "nature"—*which require managing*. "Most of the First Nation Applicants, in their written arguments," explains the 2015 LARP Review, "maintained that although the LARP proposed a "balancing of interests" through the cumulative effects management model set out in the document, their interests were not incorporated in the LARP in any meaningful way... Specific provisions in the LARP and other government documents nonetheless make reference to Alberta's commitment "to engage with and consult Aboriginal Peoples" (LARR 5). Although, the LARP itself concedes that the notion of "interests" is "unreviewable," its persistence as a metric points to a principle in the logic. In the rhetoric of management, "interests" stand in for a taking of position. Different groups can hold different positions, but holding a position is non-ideological to the extent that it is considered as not being able to be in conflict. From the perspective of the Provincial and Federal Governments the resolution is procedural, such that consultation, in any form, would relieve the tension.

Detailed in the IRP are instructions for dealing with the possible tension of the proximity of resource extraction to so-called natural "values." "Impacts of mineral developments on aesthetic and wildlife values will be minimized by: limiting the line-of-sight on access trails to 200m; retaining a vegetation buffer between the development site and public roads; and clearing the site in an irregular shape" (IRP 25). While here it seems straightforward that, to the limited extent possible, development should be concealed, there is something else going on. While development of the landscape both disturbs and makes regular what was there previously, such that irregularity and undisturbed views would be its obvious counter, no one could possibly be in that space undisturbed—the point is not really to obscure it. So, what does it mean that, "Resource development facilities and structures that must be located in the RMA (e.g., pumping stations, pipelines, tunnel entrances) should be screened from the river, using natural features and architecturally designed and landscaped to complement the natural surroundings" (32)? The view that is produced here is not *not* of development, even if the sight of it has been removed. Instead, just as the view of a development site would appear as the production of extraction, so is the view of a landscaped area that hides a pipeline. Without management, one would have to walk in an area in which they would see a pipeline, where they hoped not to have to. While there is something equivocal about the kind of work that's happening here, nevertheless, that work serves to make the whole appear as the production of management.

Throughout the planning documents one is confronted by the intentional holding together of apparently contradictory impulses. The question is, why does it seem absolutely necessary to suggest that everything can be included? And what does that disallow? The watchword for The LUF and LARP is "vision." The LARP Review describes the LARP as trying "to paint a picture of how a region should look over several decades. At the broadest level, each regional plan will

consider a planning horizon of at least 50 years." From The LARP, "the vision describes a desired future state for the Lower Athabasca in which the region's diverse economic opportunities are balanced with social and environmental considerations" (LARP 23). And from the LUF,

A. Our vision

Albertans work together to respect and care for the land as the foundation of our economic, environmental and social well-being. We are grateful for the natural wealth and beauty that we have inherited and acknowledge our collective duty to pass this natural bounty on to the next generation—as good as, or better than, we received it. Our vision statement confirms that Albertans' well-being is more than just jobs and economic development. Our quality of life includes significant environmental, social and cultural dimensions. The vision also confirms the principles of sustainability and inter-generational responsibilities. The vision makes it clear that managing our land is a shared responsibility that involves all Albertans—including industry, landowners, aboriginal peoples, individual Albertans and governments (LUF, 6).

The vision goes on to outline three "outcomes," which "translate the vision into reality." They are the same across the LUF and the LARP: "Healthy economy supported by our land and natural resources; Healthy ecosystems and environment; People-friendly communities with ample recreational and cultural opportunities" (LUF 15). Like the "Vision" these are hard to read because they say so little. Attempts at description come across as incoherent, "Alberta's natural resources are developed in a way that optimizes value for the broadest number of Albertans and

reduces waste," or not even really possible, "the life-supporting capacity of air, water, land and biodiversity are maintained or enhanced, and the natural resources that form part of the environment are sustained" (23). I'm less interested here in showing whether or not there are contradictions between the different things that are hoped for, and more so in why they exist in combination at all.

As previously outlined, a restriction exists already because each element is from the start imagined within a manageable framework. "Landscapes are," for instance, "managed to maintain ecosystem function and biodiversity" (LARP 23). It is further clear that the assessment of a particular landscape is productive of values of use, "Designating new recreation and tourism areas to provide diverse recreation opportunities to local residents and tourism products for visitors to the region" (24). Moving forward, The LARP promises to "develop an integrated, watershed-based landscape management plan for public land in the Green Area" (45). The landscape is assessed and encompasses, "detailed information on land-use impact types and trends, as well as ecosystem service values within the LARP area. Total landscape values will also include known economic reserves of surface and sub-surface resources" (45). The attachment to a notion of use-ability, means that at some point biodiversity can only be imagined in the language of management. Where, for instance, "Creating new conservation areas that are large, interconnected and maintain intact habitat to support biodiversity," counts as sufficient.

What is striking about the language of these planning documents written in the climate, as the LUF suggests, of growth—"the purpose of the Land-use Framework is to manage growth, not stop it" (LUF 6)—is their insistence on the improvement of the every aspect of the landscape. Air, water, land and biodiversity are to be "maintained or enhanced" and are to be passed on "to the next generation in as good or better condition as we received them" (23). Why is it not

possible to admit, for instance, a range of diminished experiences? And is this not because part of what is being managed is loss and dispossession itself, which can't be named or even appear?

In 1973, Syncrude published the first EIA associated with the tar sands, for their lease at the Mildred Lake site.²⁷ It was to be only the second approved project in the region and is the same site that the two Syncrude projects referred to earlier. The document is long but unstructured, as there was no regulatory framework into which the application was to be written. Unlike the documents I have focused on so far, the language of Syncrude's proposal is not uniform, because a uniform language was yet to be established (the terms of reference page for the 1973 application is a page and a half and includes no definitions). It is, however, revealing because basic tensions are on display in a way they are not in more recent documents. Even the following admission would be out of place in a contemporary EIA, "we are now becoming aware that exploitation of our resources has been taking place at the expense of the quality of the environment" ("Mildred Lake Environmental Assessment" 14). In a section focusing on the "weakness" of an ecosystem, the 1973 EIA describes what might happen if something were to go "wrong": "1. Depletion may be so severe that the time required to rebuild becomes infinitely long. 2. The depletion process recurs before adequate time for rebuilding has been allowed" (6). These examples are not brought up to then be solved, rather, they persist as likelihoods and their appearance seems non-threatening.²⁸

In a different way than in contemporary documents, the EIA establishes that pursuing development necessarily produces conflict. "If our need for a particular resource or for access to a resource, will result in depleting the resource or another renewable resource, how much will it

²⁷ This was an EIA for one of the original leases, and this site was where large-scale operations began. see, Syncrude Canada Ltd. Mildred Lake Environmental Impact Assessment - Volume 1, Overview. September, 1973

²⁸ In *Red Skin White Masks*, Coulthard argues that "in the Canadian context, colonial relations of power are no longer reproduced primarily through overtly coercive means, but rather through the asymmetrical exchange of mediated forms of state recognition and accommodation" (Coulthard 15). The "no longer" here, may necessitate an inversion in notions of loss as I am suggesting is evident in the difference between Syncrude applications.

cost us to provide an acceptable alternative in time to maintain integrity of the ecosystem concerned? If this cost is too high, can we go part way at reasonable cost, to leave an ecosystem which is less attractive than the original, but still acceptable? Would the loss be too great if a portion of that particular ecosystem were to cease to exist or be radically changed?" (7-8). The logic here is instrumental, that there is a cost to resource extraction and that its benefit is, in the end, justified. The instrumentality on display allows for the circulation of a certain loss, even as it decides each time against it. In so doing, it brings into relief the total absence of such a logic in contemporary documents.

Analyzing the project's impact on Beaver Creek, the following conclusion is drawn: "Based upon the above information we conclude that the disruption of Beaver Creek as an entity will be total; that is, the creek will be eliminated as the result of the project" (139). The habitat that the creek sustained is not offset, nor is its impact mitigated, it is just suggested that as, "the impact on fisheries is minimal as studies show that Beaver Creek is not a significant habitat for game fish and supports spawning of some rough fish in the lower reaches only at certain times of the year" (139). The "total" elimination, even the conception of it as a possibility is absent from contemporary studies.

I am not making a judgment on development which proceeds in this way. This was the application for the project that created a tailings pond 10 square miles in size, which still requires the world's second largest dam to keep it in check. I am only suggesting it brings into relief development which proceeds along with a theory of management. That, in the 1973 EIA, there is a notion of something being unresolvable or a sense that something can be completely destroyed marks a difference. What that difference might tell us is not only that something other than an instrumental logic operates in contemporary resource extraction, although it does, but that

management extends to the sight of loss itself. What is being managed then is also ongoing loss, dispossession, such that it cannot be kept in view.

iii

Such a difference is perhaps most visible in the recent discourse of reclamation. Reclamation is the point where land management and resource extraction most clearly meet. In 1993 the Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA) was passed, giving language to the notion of reclamation: "the objective of conservation and reclamation of specified land is to return the specified land to an equivalent land capability" (EPEA 5). Land reclaimed from tar sands projects are said to, in The LARP, "be used to help achieve the region's desired economic, environmental and social outcomes based on the region's evolving needs. As oil sands resources are recovered and the lands are reclaimed over time, opportunities will arise to reconnect lands to help achieve regional objectives relating to biodiversity, recreation and forestry" (LARP, 26). Syncrude's Mildred Lake Expansion application includes the "integrated Mildred Lake tailings plan," which supports the "attainment of a self-sustaining landscape at closure" ("MLX Environmental Assessment Vol.1" 6.1). Landscape is the name that is given when a mine site has finally stopped being an extraction site. In these terms, a landscape wouldn't be possible without reclamation.

Reclamation is interesting to environmental assessment and to land-management frameworks, because it figures damage as something that could be overturned, not yet, or gotten back. Reclamation exists as a way of imagining resource extraction from within a non-destructive relation; if the mine had really destroyed the landscape it couldn't be reclaimed. As such, the extraction site, "must be reclaimed to enable a range of future land use options. It is

recognized that the use of the land may be different from the pre-development use. Nonetheless, the land must be reclaimed to a resilient and functional boreal forest ecosystem that supports the needs of and expectations of current and future Albertans, including First Nations and Métis. Decisions that we make today should not limit the land use decisions of future generations (*Tailings Management Framework* 7). What is revealing here is the relation of reclamation to use. The tailings must be "reclaimed" so that they can "enable... future use." While the intent is clear enough, that if it weren't reclaimed it couldn't be used, the point also extends to the sense that if a landscape can't be used, no matter its condition, it is not a landscape.

The phrase that frameworks invoke for the expected condition of the landscape is "equivalent capability": "The objective of the MLX–W and MLX–E closure plan is to provide a closure landscape of equivalent capability to that which existed before disturbance" ("MLX Environmental Assessment Vol.1" 9.4). The Mildred Lake site is integrated into management documents, taking them as its guide. The IRP is said to "provide the guiding principles used in reclamation and closure planning, including: landform design; integration of the closure plan with the surrounding environment; and assignment of end land uses" (9.1). For Mildred Lake, the "performance objectives" are, "1. areas of land capability considered suitable for commercial timber production; 2. areas considered suitable for traditional land uses such as hunting, trapping, fishing, and harvesting; 3. wildlife habitat within the range of natural variability in the region" (9.4). In the literature, reclamation takes three broad forms. The first, as in a project for the Coal Valley mine (not in the oil sands region), is to change (and thereby "improve") what was there previously: "innovative reclamation at the site saw the creation of sport fishing lakes from mined-out pits in areas where such fishing opportunities did not exist previously... The area is now a valued recreational destination for the people living near the Coal Valley mine" (*Caring*

for the Land 17). The second form, is the attempt to return the landscape to its pre-disturbance condition. Shell's Jackpine Mine, in the tar sands, attempted to replicate the prior habitat by "directly [placing] the surface layer of roots, soil and seeds that had been preserved during construction of the lake, as well as additional reclamation soils removed and stockpiled from salvage activities on the Jackpine Mine, resulting in one of the largest direct placements of reclamation material in the oil sands region to date" (20). And third, the original site is considered lost but is reconstructed elsewhere. Canadian Natural commissioned a compensation lake as part of its Horizon Oil Sands project. To begin "returning the social values of the land" they invited Aboriginal Elders from the two closest First Nations to participate in the planting of medicinal plants (21).

Reclamation depends upon the conceit that whatever is there is different from a mine site. "We are working toward reclamation success. What does success mean? It will mean something different from a personal point of view and perhaps from an employment point of view. Is it acceptable? Is it sustainable? There again, you have very qualitative terms."²⁹ This kind of equivocation allows for the range of actions that can count as reclamation. Whereas the malleability of what does count, shows that extraction itself was just one thing that can happen in a landscape. "Mining is an interim land-use," says Marc Symbaluk, Superintendent of Environment at Teck's Cardinal River Operations (*Caring for the Land* 17). His remark indulges the fantasy not only that nothing can be destroyed or lost, but that the memory of that loss is just as fleeting. At the very least, reclamation supposes that knowing about the activity of extraction need not be retained. Where, as in Syncrude's recently certified Gateway Hill site, one can experience a reclaimed mine as "a forested hill with public walking trails" (50).

²⁹ These remarks are from a recorded conversation on the future of reclamation. See, Proceedings from CEMA 2003 Creating Wetlands in the Oil Sands Workshop quoted in *Fact or Fiction? Oil Sands Reclamation*, p.15. Grant, Jennifer. *Fact or Fiction? Oil Sands Reclamation*. Pembina Institute, 2008.

While the rhetoric of reclamation supposes that the extraction site effectively disappears into the reclaimed landscape, it is not quite so straightforward. As the figure of MLX's "Closure Topography" shows, there are three major types of surface upon which reclamation projects can be based: Centrifuge Cake, Overburden and End Pit Lake.

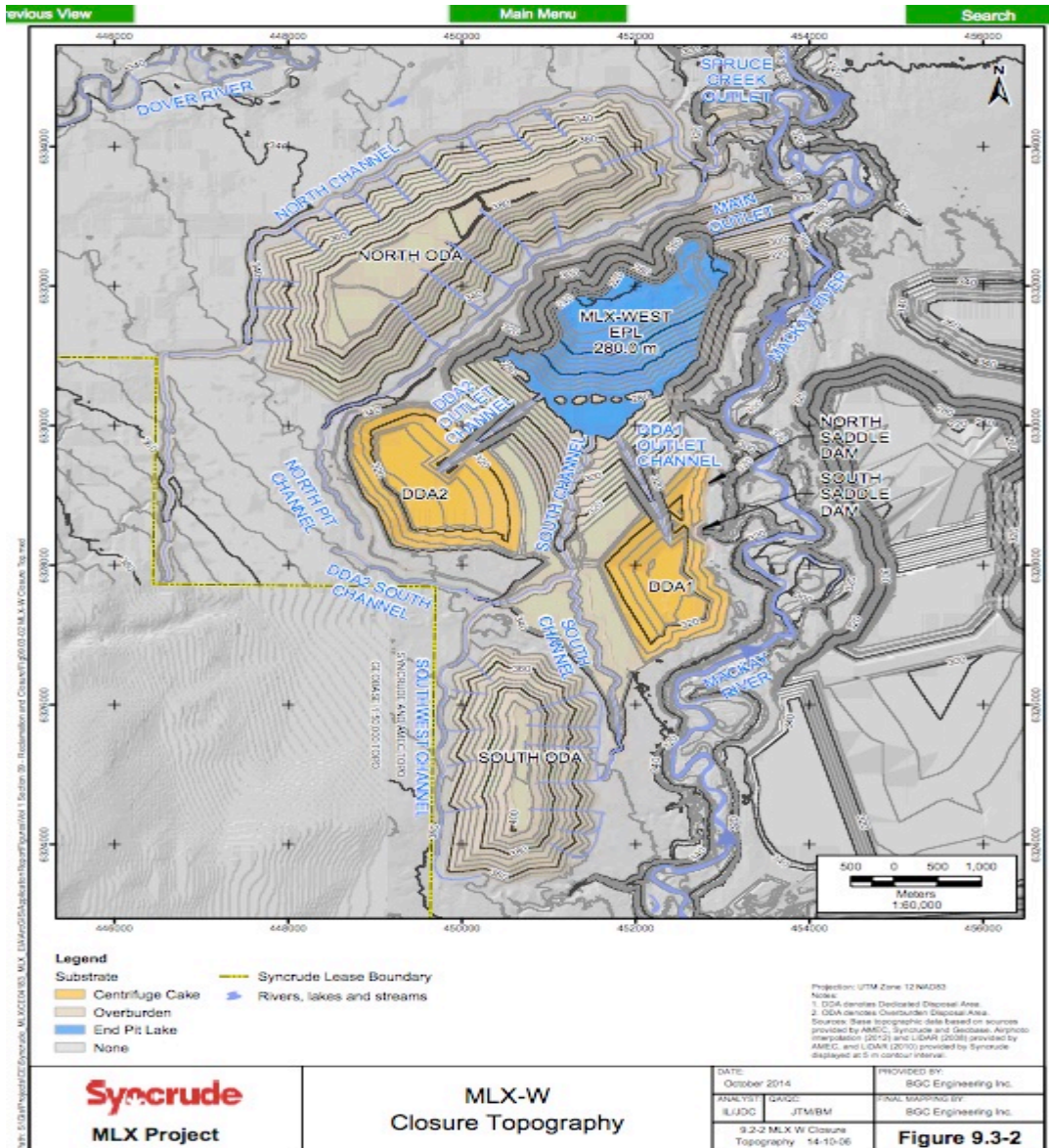


Figure 13: MLX Closure Topography (9.8)

Known as "Substrate" in the Legend for figure 13, these become "Landscape" in figure 14.

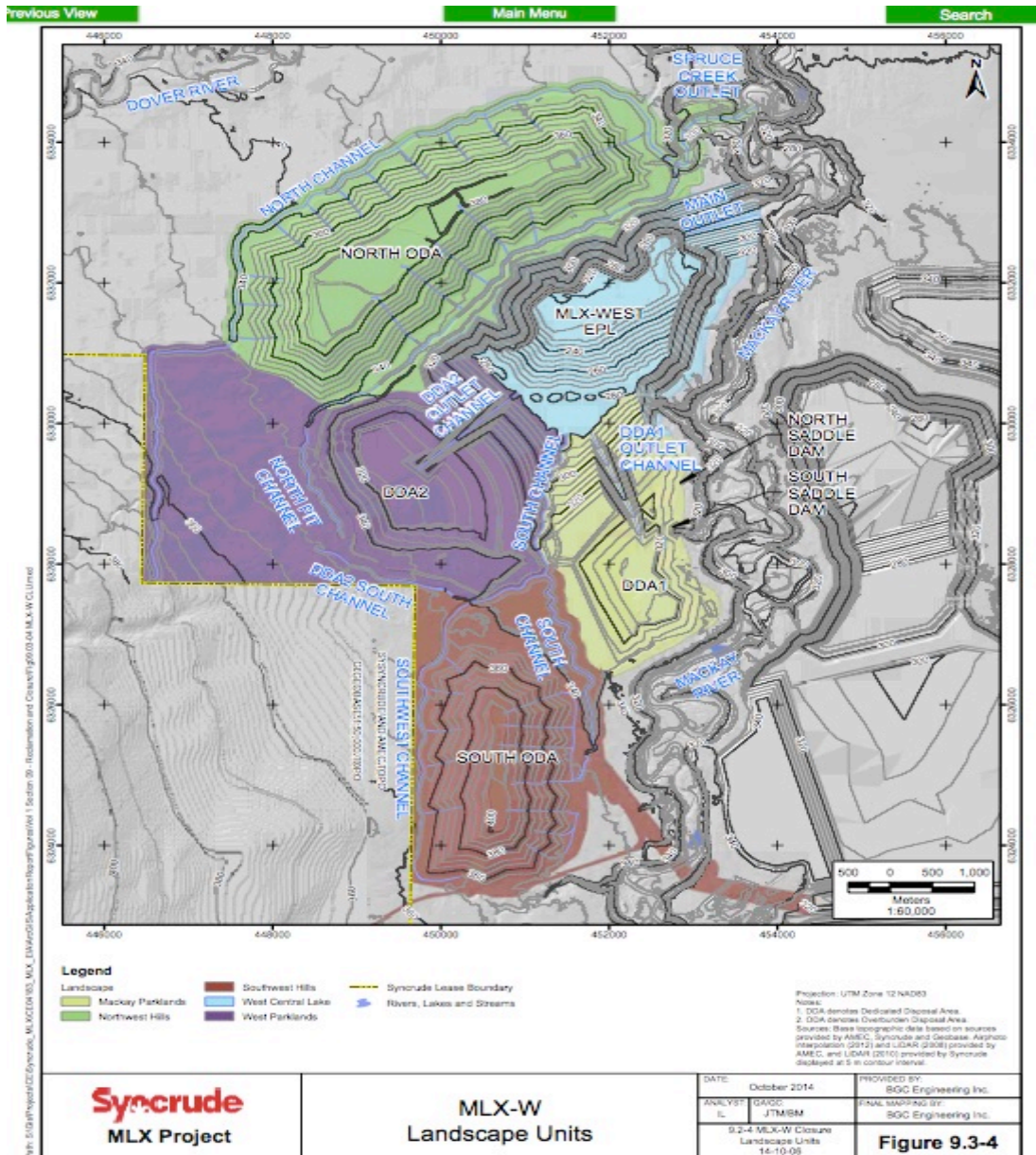


Figure 14: MLX Landscape Units (9.10)

The "End Pit Lake", in the former is renamed the "West Central Lake" in the latter. In different ways, the pre-reclamation forms determine what the reclamation site can look like. As the "Design Approach" section of MLX application outlines,

The mine and tailings plans define the size and location of design constraints such as the extent of disturbance, location of pit wall, and the volumes and types of mine and tailings by-products that are expected in the closure landscape.

Operational plans and reclamation plans are linked in space and time by the sequence of completed landform construction. The closure topography and drainage plans must reflect geotechnical, topographic (maximum fluid elevation, dyke crest, channel invert) and drainage constraints. The closure area is delineated into landscape units, with consideration for topography, landform types, substrates, reclamation timing and end land uses. Closure and reclamation plans for each landscape unit allow for individual landforms to be designed, constructed and reclaimed within a landscape context to meet one or more target end land uses ("MLX Environmental Assessment Vol.1" 9.5).

For instance, "overburden" is a mixture of sand, silt, clay and shale that lies on top of tar sands deposit before it is mined. After mining it fills in the mine, covering over the remnants of bitumen rich deposits. As it can be shaped relatively easily, it is often used as a building material. Because overburden is the most malleable of "closure" materials and can be formed into slopes, the areas noted as "Overburden" in fig. 13, are by fig. 14, the Northwest and Southwest Hills. "Centrifuge Cake" on the other hand is the material of clay and sand that is produced from the attempt to separate toxic tailings. Tailings ponds hold the by-product produced from bitumen extraction, a mixture of water, clay, sand and residual bitumen. These materials are held in tailings ponds which, over years, separate into water that can be recycled, sand that fall to the bottom and fluid fine tailings (FTT). Centrifuge is the process of further separation of FTT,

separating out the "fluid" part and leaving a clay/mud material known as "centrifuge cake". The cake is then deposited and left to settle further, before being covered with sand and soil. As a result, reclamation on centrifuge cake is only suitable for parklands. Lastly, "End Pit Lake", is what becomes of tailings ponds at the end of the mine. As some of the tailings cannot be detoxified, the pond is "capped" and water is layered over it. Although extraction companies suppose that these lakes will "evolve into natural ecosystems and, over time, support healthy communities of aquatic plants, animals and fish," this has yet to be proven (9.19).³⁰

In general, reclamation aims at making it appear like development hasn't occurred. The reclaimed landscape is said to include, a "mosaic of landforms and landscapes with boreal vegetation and aquatic communities" so that it might look like what was there previously (9.6). Whereas, "reclaimed landforms" are "designed with consideration to natural appearance and integration with adjacent areas (disturbed and undisturbed)." "Natural appearance," is said to "operate primarily at the landform scale (micro, meso and macro)," whereas "integration occurs at a landscape scale" (9.7). If, as in literature on how to design a landscape for reclamation, a landscape is, "all that one can see from a particular vantage point, typically thought of as oil sand leases and adjacent areas consisting of ten to twenty landforms," what can be seen in them and what can't? Whereas the toxicity of the tar sands, affects what the landscape can look like, determining its shape, the landscape is still imagined as something that could be reclaimed. What is attempted to be reclaimed, however, is not just the land-uses that existed prior to development. Rather, what reclamation attempts is to retrieve even the acknowledgement that there was extraction.

³⁰ Because tar sands reclamation is constrained in these ways, it is almost impossible to reclaim a mine as a wetland. With no known means to re-establish peatlands, their loss may be irreversible. At the MLX site, for example, following reclamation Syncrude predict the area of wetland to go from 46% to 7%, while the upland ecosystem goes from 24% to 84%.

If environmental assessment seems to establish the criteria for what counts as an effect, it thereby also constructs what can count as a political claim. Its various methods of creating kinds of relation in the space where that claim could be (mitigation, baseline conditions, cumulative effects, reclamation) indicates that there is indeed something being managed—those relations stand in for forms of life and claims for justice. Management, then, is what appears when the expression or manifestation of antagonism cannot be born. Relatedly, that which could be said to carry that antagonism, such as the entire landscape itself, appear, and is imagined, as in need of management. This occurs in such a way, as to suggest, that the myriad of varied things were always in need of management, constructing the justification for colonial activity after the fact. What else are the land-use and management documents than the systematization of access to land and resources, and the delimitation of how they are to be properly used and thereby imagined?

At the same time, sometimes environmental assessment makes it seem like everything can be brought up. The use of the language of significance draws a line between what is claimable and what could be, where the latter's falling out is imagined as being due to time or focus, or a deciding against for whatever reason. The affect is that what falls out seems like it's also there: "While Trans Mountain does not dispute that certain Project effects may be perceived as significant to some interveners, Trans Mountain determined significance on a broader ecosystem or socio- economic level. This is consistent with the conclusion of the JRP for the Mackenzie Gas Project that, "[t]here may well be impacts on individuals that, from an individual perspective, would be significant but which, again, the Panel might conclude would not be significant in the broader context" ("Trans Mountain Final Argument" 229). And yet, even here,

the un-claimable claim circulates. On the one hand, like an effect that seems to be found but must already be so many things—representative, calculable, visible, etc.—what can be claimed must fall already into an infrastructure that can manage it and can thereby see it. This means there are some things it can't see. On the other hand, it may be more helpful to think about the assessment process as a route or a pathway of decision-making that is taken over and over. While it keeps selecting the same things, and while others are not kept in view as such, something of their pressure is still there.³¹ The privilege is that certain claims register as a necessity for some and a choice for others, though an inconvenient one that is never picked or positioned as a possible pick, or even ever really able to be heard.

Environmental assessment regulates from a position of universality, such that the only claims within it are for the whole of it. The inverse side being, that this universality cannot associate itself with loss or dispossession, not because it's not there, but because it's all around. The visual and experiential fields are organized so as to reduce all things to an identity that is manageable. The fantasy of management is the making impossible of anything being even a little bit different.

³¹ A variation of this argument occurs in, David Marriott's "Waiting to Fall." "What is kept in view necessarily bears the trace of what is never simply unseen (but visible as unseen as a condition of what can be seen)" (176). Marriott, David. "Waiting To Fall," *Centennial Review*, 13.3 (2013), 163–240

Chapter 2

Acceptance in the Anthropocene: On Complicity

When critics, artists and filmmakers mobilize the notion of the "Anthropocene" they are quick to mark it as something unavoidable. "The Anthropocene," suggests Nicholas Mirzoeff, "defines the entire planet whether we like it or not" ("Visualizing the Anthropocene" 213). By already precluding one's resistance to it—our "not" liking, it in Mirzoeff's phrase—the Anthropocene is, from the start, afforded the status of something one might want to resist. Because it is already marked by the possibility of disavowal, one needs to posit that there is no denying it. "So *this is* the Anthropocene," says Mackenzie Wark, in another symptomatic rendering ("Anthropo{mise-en-s}cène"). In both cases, and to get around escaping it, the Anthropocene is figured as given. And as a concept which suggests humans are an "agent" of the destruction it distends, that process is given too. That we are part of it, *complicit* in it, is not in doubt.

Because the Anthropocene is an index for what humans have done to the non-human world, it is no surprise that there is a question as to how we come to terms with it. The Anthropocene is difficult to look at and perhaps is as hard to see. As I argued in the Introduction, this is because the kinds of destruction associated with it inhabit disparate registers of visibility. How, for instance, can one see species extinction? Or global increases in temperature? However, in this chapter I will be concerned with the idea that the Anthropocene is difficult to come to terms with primarily because it produces feelings of guilt.

Critics from Lauren Berlant to Rob Nixon argue that our contemporary moment is marked by a problem of visibility, because of the way in which the scene of "death" or "violence" is "slow." Ecological destruction and life in post-Fordist capitalism, they suggest, are difficult to

bring to visibility because they fall out of aesthetic regimes of representation. Mirzoeff suggests that in the Anthropocene the normal schematic of visibility—classification, separation, aestheticization—loses its first two terms. "No location is outside the Anthropocene," he says, "although some are affected far more than others" ("Visualizing the Anthropocene" 215). Without the ability (or need) to classify and separate, all that is left is the notion that everything is within its bounds, suffering negatively from it. Writing in *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno suggests that history is aesthetically compelling at the point at which it can be perceived as being, "etched by the real suffering of the past." That past, he says, is "stored in the cultural landscape" (*Aesthetic Theory* 88). Awareness of this changes perception, like when "the cultural landscape" is said to, "[resemble] a ruin even when the houses still stand" (89). Indeed, it seems obvious to note that interest in the Anthropocene as a discourse is inseparable from the feelings of guilt it provokes. Figured as such, at the very least, to perceive the Anthropocene presupposes an attachment to environmental harm.

Thought of like this, Dipesh Chakrabarty's reading of the Anthropocene is right to point out that such a position would represent, "a universal that arises from a shared sense of a catastrophe" ("The Climate of History: Four Theses" 222). For Chakrabarty, that the universal is experienced negatively means that particularities persist in their singularity, held together only by their common destruction. Following Adorno's own inversion of Hegel and Marx in *Negative Dialectics*, Chakrabarty suggests that this process could be called, "a negative universal history" (222). In this way, Chakrabarty, like other readers of the Anthropocene, reproduces the double-bind of the dialectic of enlightenment: the idea that humans inflict destruction on nature and come to both bear, and receive, that destruction in turn. "We can never *understand* this

universal," says Chakrabarty; but, he implies, it nevertheless coheres an "us" in our subjection to it.

While critics who use the notion of the Anthropocene have expressed discomfort with Chakrabarty's universalism, few have questioned the Anthropocene's status as producing a relation of inextricability, like that of culture and barbarism, or civilization and its discontents. Everyone agrees that the Anthropocene presents a visual problem, and everyone agrees that it has something to do with our involvement in it. Yet, even if it is the case that we all share in a "sense of catastrophe," by which Chakrabarty refers to the complex of our collective existence being a geological force, there remains a question of how we come to know this givenness, which also concerns how it is experienced. Because the Anthropocene is conceived as incorporative and unavoidable, these questions revolve around our relation *as part of* the process. As such, it is also a question of how we come to know our complicity with it, which is also a matter of how the guilt that underlies complicity is figured and experienced. I am interested in how this occurs, but I am also interested when this doesn't—when one might experience complicity as a limit-experience.³²

In "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," K. Wayne Yang and Uganax scholar Eve Tuck argue, that one might understand our present moment within a "backdrop of national guilt" (Tuck 1). They suggest that in order to deal with such guilt, settler-thinking constructs ways of avoiding that guilt's implications. These attempts, they argue, "problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity" (3). Critiquing the rhetoric of reconciliation, they write that, "the desire to reconcile is just as relentless as the desire to disappear the Native; it

³² I am indebted to Erin Trapp's work and for correspondence with her during the writing of this chapter. See also , Trapp, Erin. "Arendt, Preference, and the Revolutionary Spectator." *Cultural Critique*, Number 86, Winter 2014, pp. 31-64, where she argues, "behind every form of "immediate action" there is also a moment in which spectating and acting take place ambiguously."

is a desire to not have to deal with this (Indian) problem anymore" (9). As a result, the settler, "disturbed by [their] own settler status, tries to escape or contain" the problem (9). Containment and resolution are direct responses to, in Tuck and Wayne's terms, "the unbearable searchlight of complicity" (9). Conceiving of the existence of guilt as a conflict over resolution—solving or not dealing with problems—is a way of highlighting that resolution is potentially normative and often motivated by an attempt to protect more unsettling experiences of guilt. "Decolonization," they write, "unsettles everyone" (9).

It is helpful to understand these two modalities of complicity. First, (complicity 1) the one that tries to resolve guilt—the one which, I am suggesting, conceives complicit selves as part. And second, (complicity 2)—the one that doesn't try and resolve it. The latter acknowledges what Tuck and Yang call "incommensurability," not only an acknowledgement of the difference between subject positions, but one which acknowledges that certain questions "need not, and perhaps cannot, be answered in order for decolonization to exist as a framework" (35). Resolution then, we can say, is normative and motivated by an attempt to protect against unsettling, implicitly protecting settler-colonial thinking.

As I investigate below, complicity is often mobilized by writers and filmmakers as they try and come to terms with the problem of environmental destruction. Showing one's complicity in a process of destruction is thought of as positive because it concedes a certain amount of resistance and because its other side is often figured as ignorance—the least you can do is admit your own complicity. At the same time, and as I will argue, complicity is thought of as one way through a potentially irreparable scene. This is particularly felt in discourses that engage environmental destruction keen to hold away experiences of paralysis or hopelessness that can

characterize the loss of human and non-human worlds. Such protection is political and epistemological, and as I'll argue, perceptual.

In this way, it is helpful to think of complicity as a way of managing feelings of guilt, but also as defending against the threat which the violence that underlies the guilt refers to. Not doing something with this guilt seems impossible, akin to denying reality itself. Complicity 1 then is a way of ceding harm, while maintaining social and subjective coherence.

One way to index this difference is to focus on the way in which complicity arises at a moment of sublimatory dilemma, where there is a question as to whether it is even possible to endure through such a discovery.³³ While complicity 1 compels responsibility, such as when one realizes that they are involved in something they didn't think they were, it also upholds norms of action and political possibility by suggesting that the same actors can resolve something of the situation. Complicity here is figured as sufficient even when the situation is otherwise insufficient, because it admits some feelings of guilt as the cost of being part of, or belonging to, society (as seen in the demand of the Anthropocene). As such it protects against a more unsettling powerlessness, like an irresolvable scene of culpability described by a more emphatic idea of guilt found in complicity 2. In so doing, it defends the coherence of society, including its power relations. Finally, in order to do this, it must treat its problems not only as visualizable, but as solvable too. I argue that this type of complicity is often invoked to move past the irredeemable character of environmental damage – demarcating where it is permissible to look and where it is not.

In this chapter, complicity is not just one thing and I attempt to index the differences throughout. In almost all the examples I look at, however, complicity comes in when a problem

³³ Thanks to Erin Trapp for discussion on this idea. In her unpublished piece, "Children-No-Longer," she suggests that, "the other side of a feeling of complicity that cycles into insight is a feeling of complicity that does not."

seems too hard to bear, helping to manage a perception of what seems either ungraspable or inescapable. It can be thought of as complementary to the idea of the Anthropocene because, as I have suggested, that idea is incorporative—drawing actions into it. Complicity 1 is a tarrying with, but an eventual acceptance of, this inclusiveness, because it seems preferable as a way out of the problem of complicity 2. The charge of complicity is one in which you are named as being inextricably linked to the social. As such, it is evidence of a particular attachment to reality. That this reality is difficult—inherits a history of destruction—puts particular pressure on acceptance or understands this acceptance as a value. Acceptance, as I'll show below, comes in at different times and is differently conceived. For instance, sometimes acceptance is mobilized as the overcoming of a resistance to reality, as in the getting-beyond of objection; sometimes, it is the minimal condition for entry into a discovery. In these senses, because being part of the social is costly, e.g. it is something you can be accused of being complicit with, one who accepts reality expects its reciprocation.

This chapter shows the assumptions of the previous chapter working in different discourses, not associated at all with environmental assessment but still structured by it. While environmental assessment is concerned with the negative effects that particular projects produce, the notion of the Anthropocene generalizes the idea of negative effects, suggesting that they are fundamentally tied to industrial development as such. However, just as Chapter 1 responds to negativity by suggesting it must manage not only loss but its appearance too; the idea that there is culpability in a general way for industrial modernity is potentially destabilizing. Confronting the problem that climate change and the damage it causes is hard to see—difficult to look at, because of feelings of personal guilt; no longer there to be seen, because what is dead has disappeared;

nothing to see, because imperceptible—complicity-thinkers construct defences against these problems. Resolving the anxiety that I will argue is paramount to theories of perception concerned with damage in Chapter 4, critics and filmmakers here want to avoid the question of whether what was lost should have been noticed or whether it was. This problem is unsettling, because it potentially threatens the coherence of subjects and the reality to which they are inextricably tied. The Anthropocene is one form that this inextricability produces, and thinks of itself as positive because it concedes that harm has been caused and apportions responsibility. However, what this shows is that complicity finally divides upon whether the experience of negativity is simply a part of belonging to the social—a way of accepting and bearing its cost—or is a limit to it. The latter is neglected in the most part, but sets the scene for Chapter 4's investigation into what the perception of that limit is like.

i

I want to begin with an example in an increasingly long line of a relatively new phenomenon: the difficulty of confronting environmental destruction as a visual experience. "After a while, I stopped believing," writes Paul Kingsnorth, former editor of *Ecologist* and co-creator of the *Dark Mountain Project*, of his environmental campaigning.³⁴ "I campaigned against climate change, deforestation, overfishing, landscape destruction, extinction and all the rest. I wrote about how the global economic system was trashing the global ecosystem. I did all the things that environmentalists do. But after a while, I stopped believing it" (Kingsnorth). Kingsnorth's objection, "I did all the things that environmentalists do," is implicitly normative—"are supposed

³⁴ The Dark Mountain Project's manifesto can be accessed here: <http://dark-mountain.net/about/manifesto/>.

to do"—and cites a non-correspondence between action and image, that is, he feels like his actions ought to have furnished a better looking outcome. Kingsnorth's frustration, that the outcome his action should have created is not perceptible, leads him to blame a situation which he experiences, *newly*, as radically unchangeable. Implicitly suggesting that action is best thought of as occurring in a situation which it seems possible to change, and whose change you can see, that the scene can't be changed produces a need to leave it altogether. Conceiving such a moment as a blockage to be moved past, his previous attachment to "environmentalism" is now too hard to hold—it "[peddles] false hope"—precisely, he says, because it refuses to "face reality." A "refusal," he goes on, "permeating the world of culture" (Kingsnorth).

The followers and writers of the *Dark Mountain Project*—which has a manifesto, a blog, quarterly meetings—elucidate the normative sense of acceptance: that although it is very hard to look and from a certain perspective easier to refuse to look, at some point it is better for you to accept that things can't be changed as you thought they could. Such an acceptance of reality not only better enables a direct and clear perception of that reality, but also siphons off as unnecessary that which cannot be changed. Complicity is part of this acceptance because it helps ground a relation to reality. Making something which seemed previously not possible, possible, complicity helps make bearable the new situation. Accepting in principle one's attachment to what will have to be accepted in the end anyway, is one way that complicity binds individuals to social reality.

Sometimes it seems like all participants—all viewers—of environmental destruction are at the same time participants in cruel optimism. The world ending may be the most cruelly optimistic thing there could be; what kind of promise is not, in the end, embedded in a habitable world? In thinking about the challenges of attachment and detachment here, I want to turn to

Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* to show how a certain notion of complicity functions, and the kind of therapeutics it opens and forecloses. Berlant's theorization seems to cover the potential bases. "A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (Berlant, 1). To index what will later be significant, the relation exists when, or it is necessary to have, "you" desiring, on the one hand, and it "actually" being an obstacle, on the other. "Actually" is here a tension not only in the horizon of optimism but in the horizon of expectation. The "actually" only functions if you thought something else was going to happen—cruelty is this actually. What is the trajectory of that kind of relation?

Berlant figures cruel optimism as a movement of realization, leading to a moment when you perceive the object you are in a relation with as an obstacle. Because this is a relation between you and your object, you are implicated in the scene in an intentional and agential way. "All attachments are optimistic," says Berlant. At the same time, all can be cruelly optimistic. This feeling permeates Dark Mountain Project's *Uncivilization Manifesto*. Having stated boldly that, "we may well be the first species capable of effectively eliminating life on Earth," they go on to suggest that this is a reality that they have been protected from seeing by the "bubble [that is] civilization" (Uncivilisation). In their terms, the attachment that is an obstacle is civilization itself, and the Manifesto reads like a working-through of what to do with this realization.

As I suggested above, that writers feel like they inherit these kinds of dialectics—like the one between civilization and destruction—may be a product of thinking the social—whether it be in cruel optimism or in discourses surrounding the Anthropocene—through a dialectic of enlightenment, where what to do with the destructiveness is a question and feels threatening to oneself and social reality. Complicity indexes this relation of inextricability, and promises its working-out. In *Living Oil*, for instance, Stephanie LeMenager names the problem as "petro-

melancholia" to highlight that so embedded is Western culture in the infrastructure of petroleum that its "failure [is imagined] as tantamount to human species extinction—as if the species is unthinkable without these increasingly obsolescent objects" (LeMenager 28). Similar to the notion of the Anthropocene, LeMenager's "petro-modernity" is defined by "incorporating practices," which have become "embodied memory and habitus for modern humans," found in "everyday events such as driving or feeling the summer heat of asphalt on the soles of one's feet" (26). That ways of imagining the Anthropocene and its relations often come through small actions that we make all the time, like turning the ignition of a car, showing that complicity is a privileged means for indicating the difficulty. In all cases, however, the problem I am showing may be found in these discourses retaining the frame of the transcendental subject whose actions are constrained by the social world of which they are a part and in which they participate.

Indeed, remaining in the trap by attempting to project beyond it, in *Imagining Extinction*, Ursula Heise asks, "is it possible to acknowledge the realities of large-scale species extinction and yet to move beyond mourning, melancholia, and nostalgia, to a more affirmative vision of our biological future? Is it possible to move beyond the story templates of elegy and tragedy and yet to express continuing concern that nonhuman species not be harmed more than strictly necessary?" (Heise 13). One might suggest that "*no more than strictly necessary*" has been written as the assurance of Western imperialism since its inception, at the same time as pointing out that these movements "beyond" remain within—or *are*—the dialectic of enlightenment.

The problem I am indexing is that when destruction, and complicity with the destruction, is a question critics often have recourse to theories of the subject which are sovereign or transcendental. Writing about an untitled John Ashbery poem, for instance, Berlant says, "it is always a risk to let someone in, to insist on a pacing different from the productivist pacing, say,

of capitalist normativity" (Berlant 35). Whereas, on the other side, not letting someone in would be like having no attachment at all. "Of course 'he' was not *my object*, my cluster of promises: 'he' came up to *me*", Berlant says of Ashberry's line (35). But to be the object, to not be in the active position of relation is to actually forgo what is difficult about attachment, "being the object *is more secure* than having one and risking disappointment", she says (35).³⁵ Here, Berlant figures subjection as agential. It thereby necessitates one's psychic investment in the existence of a horizon of optimism, and the expectation that such a horizon provides.

Part of what scales the cruelty is that it is imagined that some subject positions are better placed to deal with letting go, just as some subject positions are more likely to realize their relations, thereby never having to confront them as cruel or quite so cruel. The cruelty comes not in not being able to choose, but in it being threatening or difficult to the subject's coherence to choose to let go. Berlant's theorization then is of a quasi-sovereign subject, or in Asma Abbas's phrase, a "vestigial sovereign" (Abbas). Cruel optimism depends on your not-letting go; on your acceptance that to let go would be worse than to hold on—cruel optimism is better than whatever it is not.³⁶

Berlant's position is of course different than the relation of those who really think that they can let go, and let go without cost. The Dark Mountain Project suggests that it is only by getting to the place of letting go that you are free to look again. The post-acceptance position in such a version goes like this: "Curiously enough, accepting this reality brings about not despair, as some have suggested, but a great sense of hope. Once we stop pretending that the impossible

³⁵ Italics mine

³⁶ Inherent in this position is a protective gesture. Sometimes in Berlant—not just in *Cruel Optimism*—what is being protected is periodization itself—the frame of post-Fordist affect, which needs to assume a certain perceptual orientation not only to contemporary horizons but to the horizon that came before it. Invocations of frame and horizon demarcate not only what can be said, but always what can be seen as well.

can happen, we are released to think seriously about the future” (“Uncivilisation”). Such a movement of subjective agency—present enough to think "seriously"—is what Berlant is at least partly positioning against, that is, a confidence that a subject can survive the letting-go of attachments—a particular kind of belief in reality. As I will later argue with reference to Timothy Morton, there is something in the rhetoric of relief—which does, at times, move towards the celebratory—which implicitly constructs perceiving destruction as getting to a place where you perceive less of it. For *The Dark Mountain Project*, acceptance is a resource for movement in this.

This is not Berlant's version. From an aesthetic standpoint, what characterizes the *Dark Mountain Project* is the stated intention of looking directly at the scene—both that it is possible and that it is desirable. As such, in order for looking directly to be possible there has to be an implicit theorization that one can survive it. Such a perceptual activity assumes the continuing coherence of not only the subject who survives, but the world which survives it too. This perception, seeing the world as it "really is," protects against loss by already knowing what that reality will look like. The problem which supposedly motivates the looking was never a problem in the first place. What it would be like to perceive complicity without these kinds of protections, unprotected from the experience of guilt, is not thought about.

To look directly, one has to have not only accepted that not looking is only to defer a problem, but also that eventually that deferral will end and you will have to accept all the same. “You will at some point, so you may as well do now”—frames transition as an epistemological demand. "None of us knows where to look, but all of us know not to look down. Our question is: what would happen if we looked down? Would it be as bad as we imagine? What might we see? Could it even be good for us? We believe it is time to look down." The fear of transgressing that

which had seemed unimaginable—from, "all of us know not to," to, "what would happen if"—quickly becomes positive, "could it even be good for us?" What the rhetoric of this question belies, is that this outcome has already been formed as likely. I mark this not to suggest that letting go of attachments like campaigning against extinction is easy, nor easily replaceable, but to suggest that protection is *carried through* the perceptual inversion that is on the surface suggested here, that is, from not looking to looking.

If there is a relation of acceptance in *Cruel Optimism* it is not quite like this. Rather, acceptance is a wager with what Berlant calls the "continuity of form": "What's cruel... is that the subjects who have x in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object/scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being, because whatever the *content* of the attachment is, the continuity of its form provides something of the subject's sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world" (Berlant 24). This follows, of course. The danger would be when investment in the continuity of attachment must also be an investment in the continuity of social reality. If that's the case, then even if cruelty is felt as coercive I must at the same time endorse it—to not do so would be to not endorse my ability to live on. If for the Dark Mountain Project choosing what had seemed unchosen minimizes coercion, for Berlant it doesn't seem possible to exist in the world without the attachment to continuity: "[In any account of realism] what matters is the presence of a relation that invests an object/scene with the prospect of the world's continuity" (52). If continuity is the condition for attachments to individual objects, it is also then the condition for the coherence of the world itself. The stress on the continuity of form turns cruel optimism into a problem of complicity, where complicity is the name for the inextricability of you in the social world and vice versa.

Although it is clear that cruel optimism is coercive, that's what the cruel part shows, it is less clear that it is coercive because it is unchosen.

What happens with a position such as this is a dialectical understanding, and thereby a certain dialectical limiting, as to what can count as a relation. This is no doubt because Berlant is theorizing dependence and doing so as against subordination. Queer theory has long been more inclined to read the former because of the way in which the latter can pass over that which is necessary or sustaining. Theories of subordination tend toward the sense that the disclosing of a problem is at the same time the release from it. But this is not what I am worried about. Berlant would have a strong argument, for instance, against what I analyzed via the Dark Mountain Project as the carrying through of a conformity with reality in order to solve what registered as impossibility. And yet, in cruel optimism, because one is dependant on the form of social reality there is nothing aside from it. That of course is not to say that it is not possible to mediate it— affect is the genre for this very mediation—but one's mediation always begins from the expectations that one's attachment brings with it. What's cruelly optimistic is that my choosing, where I began, leads to my inability not to keep choosing. And it is paradoxically because Berlant never gets to unchosen attachments, that she never gets to noncoercive relation.

What I am suggesting is that the *attachment* to what Berlant calls "the good life", defines being part of the world as more compelling than not being part of it (this is the case even if I am only attaching to its fantasies). It is not that I am querying whether or not I am in the world, I am suggesting that cruel optimism conceives of attachment as unavoidably part of the world—every attachment I have must also be me attaching to the world. Trying to lead a good life in a bad world, is the construction of cruel optimism. The "badness" of the world, like the unavoidability of the Anthropocene, is given. The limitation or frustration I feel in relation to it, is part of its

constraint. What is held away, however, are experiences of not conforming to the world, or not being able to. In cruel optimism I experience the badness of the world as my being part of that world, rather than experiencing the badness of the world as a limit—this is a figuring of the experience of guilt. I am not able to experience this limit—complicity 2—because of the world, because of being caught up in it. As Berlant suggests, at the times when the good life "feels possible" it also "feels already like a confirming reality" (163).

Berlant implicitly outlines the structure of complicity as follows, "as an analytic lever, [cruel optimism] is an incitement to inhabit and to track the affective attachment to what we call "the good life," which is for so many a bad life that wears out the subjects *who nonetheless, and at the same time*, find their conditions of possibility within it" (27)⁶. Here, the dialectical structure—that that which wears out, is also the condition—shows that the social relation remains inextricable. Inextricability can itself be coercive, but if that's the case, then one might want a way of talking about it that doesn't involve affirmation of it. Although she makes clear that the "good life" fantasy is "compromised," as it withdraws the ground to which sustaining fantasies might attach, the "good life" nevertheless is carried along as the horizon of optimism even when that horizon has proved itself to be unreachable. The world maintains its form, and asks you to keep up. And yet, is it only this that it retains, is it just the good life fantasy that provides this horizon? If so, it is unclear why a situation of afterness—the affective situation of post-Fordism—must reattach to normalcy—its promises, expectations, horizons. Unless, that is, continuity is not just a promise of the "good life" but the condition of relation itself. Not just a vestigial-sovereign then, but a vestigial world.

If one is complicit in this way with the world, and experiences its cruelty, they are at the same time due its reciprocity as well—the relation is figured as an oscillation and it looks like

this, "in these zones [of compromised endurance], the hope is that the labor of maintaining optimism will not be negated by the work of world-maintenance as such and will allow the flirtation with some good-life sweetness to continue" (48). The subject's endurance is the other side of the continuity of the form of the world; endurance is what the world demands, cruelty is the scaling of how much that is to ask. It is this bargain—that cruel optimism is better than whatever it is not—that not only underlines cruel optimism, but that also underlines its other side, reciprocity. "Our sense of reciprocity with the world as it appears, our sense of what a person should do and expect, our sense of who we are as a continuous scene of action," writes Berlant, "shape what becomes our visceral intuition about how to manage living" (52). The dialectic between reciprocity and complicity is central then—one could almost call it the post-Fordist social contract.

Arguments about attachment are always also arguments about perception. This is evident, for instance, in Berlant's reading of the end of *Rosetta*, the early 2000s Dardenne brothers film about working-class poverty in the suburbs of Brussels. "At the end," narrates Berlant, "we see her dragging a big canister of gas. It is unclear whether she is about to commit suicide by asphyxiation, or to make a go of things the way she always does, and it doesn't matter: her body collapses in exhaustion as Riquet arrives. Riquet-whom she has previously beaten up, left to drown, turned in as a thief, and had a strange, unsteady, asexual night with, a night that ends with her sleeping, not alone, but whispering intimately with herself. Riquet-who is stalking her in revenge for taking his job" (175). Berlant explains this scene via two perspectival positions. First, Rosetta herself; second, the audience. "As the film closes, Rosetta weeps, looking off-screen toward he who is only a proximate friend, in the hope of stimulating his compassionate impulse to rescue her. And the film cuts to darkness." Berlant has to suggest that this looking is

hopeful, because what has been delimited as perceivable is such a hope. "[Riquet] is the only resource for potential reciprocity she has," Berlant says. Furthermore, whatever Rosetta can't herself see, the spectators can. It is because we have to look upon the scene with "a residue of the optimism" that comes with advocating for Rosetta, that "the spectators become holders of the promise" whenever Rosetta can't hold it herself. What the spectators hold then is the promise, in other words, of complicity. And in so doing they hold its perceptual promises as well.

ii

Edward Burtynsky's photographs have become synonymous with popular representations of the Anthropocene. Large-scale and often horizonless, they project the viewer into a future of extraction without end. At the same time, his style is reminiscent of early North American landscape photographers and sometimes it seems like interest in his work is complementary to an interest in new kinds of destruction associated with climate change. Precisely at the point that the landscape is thought to be otherwise disappearing, Burtynsky's landscapes, predominantly of extraction sites, are he says, "forbidden pleasures"—a perception of a 21st Century death-drive. His subject matter is also reminiscent of the *New Topographics* and a 1970s interest in homogenized urban landscapes. No less about extraction, or no less environmentally disastrous, many of his images are of symbolic figures of North American consumption: containerization, suburbanization, and petro-infrastructure.

Manufactured Landscapes, the first film in Edward Burtynsky and Jennifer Baichwal's trilogy, a film which revolve around Burtynsky's photographs, begins with an 8-minute panning shot of a factory floor (Baichwal). Staying at ground level, and seemingly not distinguishing

between the different production lines, the camera plays for a sense of neutrality. As the pan continues without stopping, however, it is broken by Burtynsky's voiceover. "Is there some way I can actually talk about nature, our appreciation for it, to understand what it is so we don't harm it and harm ourselves?" he wonders. The voiceover initially seems in tension with the camera, which appears as automated as the production line it films. However, at the end of the pan the shot reverts to a point above the factory floor, and the shot of the scene resolves into a photograph. As if guarding against the transience of the panning shot, we are held above what we have just seen, with the photograph marking its permanence. In a further gesture to compensate for the long initial shot, the camera, this time filming, is held, following the photograph shot, in the corner of the factory overlooking the floor as workers leave. Zooming in on the last remaining figure who has fallen asleep at their station, the film performs the exhaustive perspective that it elucidates throughout, right down to the sleeping (exhausted) worker.

The film follows Burtynsky on a series of shoots, and we are accompanied throughout by his narration. At three separate moments in the film he describes different "epiphanies" that he has had. The first, we hear, occurred on a journey in which he was driving through a coal-mining town, one "totally transformed by man." He tells the tale as an origin story for his work, his own sense that "we are disconnected from the extractive." Working with the assumption that what we can't see is simply out of sight, the film performs the revelatory character of this kind of discovery, often blurring the filmic with the photographic. Numerous times throughout the film, the camera—seemingly shooting an active scene—pulls back to reveal that the shot is a shot of a photograph. On two occasions the sentiment is enhanced by pulling back to a gallery space, with gallery-goers intently inspecting Burtynsky's images. The assumption here is two-fold. First, that these scenes of extraction are otherwise out of sight ("my images," Burtynsky says at one point,

"brought those landscapes into our consciousness"). Second, that what we see when we look at them is not simply landscapes of extraction but our complicity with them.

Writing about Burtynsky's photo-project *Oil*, Catherine Zuromskis comments that "the composition fills the viewer's field of vision... the scale of the image is grand and absorbing." She reads Burtynsky as creating a sublime aesthetic, with sublime affects: "the content of these images is startling and disturbing, evidence of the environmental degradation brought on by the petroleum industry on a scale most people have never conceived of, much less witnessed firsthand" (Zuromskis 302). And yet, my sense is that these images wouldn't work on their own terms unless they *were* conceivable; unless they didn't rely on reflecting back the incursion that "we" have made. The perception is *of* complicity and it is exploitable for revelatory gain. As in the idea, for instance, that to show a relation of complicity is to enable reflection on that complicity. The incursion is perceptible primarily because to Burtynsky it is man-made. On this side of complicity there is that which you know you are complicit with, and that which you don't yet. Here, environmental destruction is understood as a problem of self-comprehension—of the working out that you know.

As W.J.T. Mitchell argues in *Landscape and Power*, what that reflection may be is simply the ability to reflect itself: "if a landscape, as we say, "draws us in" with its seductive beauty," Mitchell argues, "this movement is inseparable from a retreat to a broader, safer perspective... a kind of resistance to whatever... moral claim the scene might make on us... The invitation to look at a view is thus a suggestion to look at nothing—or more precisely, to look at looking itself" (289). In a similar sense, as a film *Manufactured Landscapes* coheres as a way of looking at one's own complicity. In the film, the pattern of the narration often mirrors the shots preceding it, like when a discussion of dependence on car-culture occurs over top of a series of

stills of tire dumps and new car lots. Following a photograph of a freeway-cloverleaf in LA the film takes on the view from a helicopter. Overtop of the rotating helicopter shot, Burtynsky narrates another "oil epiphany": "one day I was driving and I started to think about how oil had affected my life. I was holding onto a plastic steering wheel made from oil, in a car with paints that were made from oil, looking through glass heated through oil, and driving on tar." While one might view the film as tracing these kinds of chains, the film in fact reads as a coming to terms with guilt

As such, each interaction with local workers, or executives who don't want him to shoot a coalfield, feels uncomfortable. The film seems to want the same kind of access that capital has had to exploit the places that these images index. In going back to them, it assumes the Western viewer who ought to (again) intervene in these places. While the conceit of the film is that these landscapes, and the relations they contain, are frameable—"in one frame you can show the dimension of our extraction in the landscape"—it is unclear whether such a perspective is possible. The conceit then is the conceit of complicity 1: that what is worth looking at is what we did, and what we can solve. As I have suggested throughout, this is a protective gesture. Assuming from the start that one can survive this kind of knowledge, the violence of the scenes is turned into a relation of one's own admission of guilt. That such an admission is figured as sufficient, turns the violence in the scenes to something that is manageable.

Writing in an Alan Sekula-inspired photo-essay on Fort McMurray, AB, Imre Szeman and Maria Whiteman suggest that when confronting landscapes made possible by global capital, some critics revert to "the comforts of incapacity" (Szeman and Whiteman 53). Such an incapacity, they suggest, is mobilized when global capital is thought of as "unrepresentable" (53). While slightly different than Burtynsky's rhetoric, Szeman and Whiteman suggest that it is

possible to, "map the forces at work in Fort McMurray, Alberta, through the combined use of text and images" (47). What I am staging here is a tension in how perceptible one thinks environmental destruction is. As I suggested in the Introduction, such problems may be an issue with posing the visual problem as one between representability or unrepresentability, or between visibility and invisibility, on the model of visibility. If one really thought that destruction was simply out of sight, or that it was really frameable, or that it was mappable, what would it mean, for instance, to write about something that really has faded from view, or where you can't tell? Is there a way of thinking about the conditions of visibility that has something other than visibility as its primary condition of existence? Maybe, after all, in the focus on scale, in the need to bring whatever to visibility, and in the anxiety that dispenses with perceptions that don't yield anything, something is left behind.

If the assumption of *Manufactured Landscapes* is that all the costs and badness can be seen, then it is important to know if there are perspectives that get left out. In other words, is there anything we can't see? About halfway through the film, we are taken to a ship-breaking beach in Bangladesh, introduced to it by a blurry black and white series of shots of abandoned ships, with people carrying parts away. Standing with a translator, Burtynsky looks upon the scene wondering where to position himself to get a better view. Having just zoomed in on a man standing in oil soaked mud of high-tide the next shot is of Burtynsky walking through an empty ship (fig.15).



Figure 15: Burtynsky in the ship (Baichwal)

We see him positioning the camera and then removing the photo from the camera, analyzing the shot he has just taken (fig. 17). The scenes immediately following are of people carrying parts of the ships away, before we return again to Burtynsky this time out on the beach photographing a ship in the mid-distance.

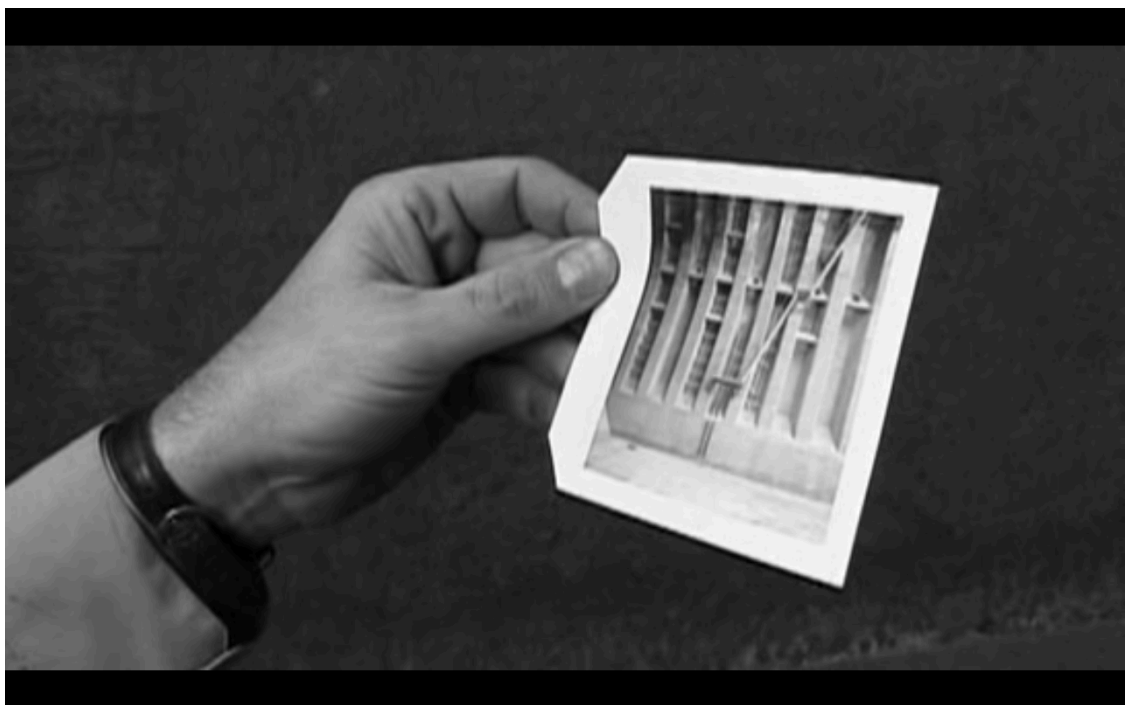


Figure 16: Hand-held image (Baichwal)

This time overlaid with narration, a final "oil epiphany": "at one point I was shooting a mine and it was a silver mine. I arrive in my car made out of iron, filled with gas. I pull out a metal tripod and grab film that is loaded with silver and start taking pictures. So everything I'm doing is in the thing I'm photographing." During this narration Burtynsky again removes the photograph from his camera and inspects it, holding it up to the camera (fig. 17). Before saying, "at some point, I probably filled a tank of gas from the oil that was delivered by one of these tankers."



Figure 17: Hand held image 2 (Baichwal)

That complicity is the overt theme here is not quite what I am interested in. Rather, in these scenes, Burtynsky inserts himself in a way that we haven't quite seen so far. I am interested in the action of this insertion and how that action is on display in the two moments of him holding the photograph. As I have argued so far, according to the ideology of the film

Burtynsky's insertion here concedes overtly his complicity in the scenes he is photographing. The suggestion, tied to his narrative revelation, is that perception of these sites produce the conditions for action. At the same time, the focus on the ships shows that the interest is in a certain kind of action. He can attach his feeling to the ships—"I probably filled a tank of gas from the oil"—but not to the ship-breakers or those collecting crude. His focus on the conditions of consumption, thereby set the parameters for what can be imagined as changeable. That there are no shots from the perspective of the ship-breakers is a verdict on their irredeemability. One would feel a different kind of guilt there, a guilt that perhaps would not cycle through into action. "I want to use my images to persuade millions of people to join in the global conversation on sustainability," he has said.³⁷

These are some of the most disconcerting moments in the film as Burtynsky, dressed in a safari-like outfit, wanders around while some scrape crude from the bottom of the broken ships. The figures in the landscape are framed by the ships, either incidental or aiding the shot. It's not quite that the people working there are ignored, they are on a few occasions subjects of photographs and Burtynsky mentions how dangerous the work is. Rather, it's that they are integrated into the perspective of the film. The effect of Burtynsky holding his own photograph of the ship, the photograph he then narrates as an example of his complicity with what is going on around him, refocuses the sense that this—the photograph, the film itself, the oil we consume—is what we are doing and the cost of our doing it. Holding the photograph in his hand, it is literally man-made or rather, something that he has made. Like a safari-trip for the global consumer, *Manufactured Landscapes* aims at the domestication of what it visualizes—leaving

³⁷ In his TED-talk Burtynsky continues, "I think the environmental movement has failed in that it's used the schtick too much; it's used the apocalyptic tone too much; it hasn't sold the positive aspects of being environmentally concerned and trying to pull us out. Whereas this conversation that is going on in this blog is about positive movements, about how to change our world in a better way, quickly." see, www.ted.com/talks/edward_burtynsky_on_manufactured_landscapes

out that which it can't contain. Each different trip then functions as if to ameliorate guilt or harness it for use. Conceiving of the problem as a problem of complicity in consumption, it is considered as visible and solvable by the same actors who produced it.

iii

Like any demarcation the Anthropocene is motivated by strategic and normative demands—demands that aim to preclude what is perceptible. What Timothy Morton calls "hyperobjects" fulfills the anthropocenic task in two main senses. First, Morton defines them by way of empirical scale—indeed their value to him is that they come close to exceeding human scaling—and, like the example of global warming, are defined by their weight as fact. Second, they have the power to affect transcendental concepts, like time: "These very large finitudes collapse my clichéd ideas of time from within" (H, 136). Of course, Morton has the problem of enunciation—"hyperobjects are profoundly futural"—but even if we accept this collapse, his orientation is speculative, precluding what it would mean to look back, let alone look away (135). Like the concept of the Anthropocene, hyperobjects are inaugural, everything is after them. It is useful to understand an argument like this as formal, the result of a logical transition that is no longer in question. Indeed, and ironically with Morton, one can't access that transition or what preceded it—it is not perceptually open to anyone.

As such, hyperobjects are a strongly coercive concept. Because of this they induce complicity—you can't not be complicit with them. "Each political and ethical decision is made on the inside of a hyperobject, caught in the resonance of the zones that spell doom", says Morton (148). This take on complicity, I want to suggest, disciplines both what can be made

visible, as well as what it should preclude one from seeing. And as I've been arguing, normative theories of perception meet normative theories of reality in such a moment.³⁸

In Morton, complicity is a privileged category. Morton's term for this is "hypocrisy." "The time of hyperobjects," writes Morton, "is a time of hypocrisy" (Morton 6). "Hyperobjects thus present philosophy with a difficult, double task. The first task is to abolish the idea of the possibility of a metalanguage that could account for things while remaining uncontaminated by them" (2). Morton is clearer on what this contamination entails than what this contamination means. On the former, he says, "every decision we make is in some sense related to hyperobjects. These decisions are not limited to sentences in texts about hyperobjects. When I turn the key in the ignition of my car, I am relating to global warming. When a novelist writes about emigration to Mars, he is relating to global warming" (20). This of course is not unfamiliar, but what is its implication? It seems important to critics and filmmakers concerned with complicity to show the ways in which there can be no relation that is not affected in this way. Morton, like others, is worried about leaving "the world just as it is" (156). But, in Morton, *after complicity*, what is perceptible other than complicity itself? If complicity is also another name for what defines contemporary reality—"the age of asymmetry" as he calls it—and "Hyperobjects have dragged humans kicking and screaming (when they feel anything at all, rather than being merely blank with denial) into [the] Age of Asymmetry", then we might want to know what else there could be (160).

³⁸ As I have argued above, often the problem gets posed as one between representability and unrepresentability, or between visibility and invisibility on the model of visibility. For example, Szeman and Whiteman suggest it is possible to "map the forces at work in Fort McMurray, Alberta, through the combined use of text and images" (47). And, "by insisting on the visibility of globalization, Sekula's critical realism challenges us to avoid turning the circuits and spaces of globalization into something that, like Kant's sublime, is 'too big for representation.'"

To find what that might be in Morton one would need to turn to the only other category mentioned, i.e., those who are not complicit, or not sufficiently so: cynics. "The hypocrite understands that she is caught in her own failure. The cynic still hopes that... things will change. The cynic hopes: he is not beyond hope—he is a hypocrite. He is trying to escape doom" (148). Hyperobjects make the cynic hypocritical, because the cynic fails to realize that they are themselves hypocritical too: "Cynicism is the worst hypocrisy: hypocrisy squared, since cynicism is hypocritical about its hypocrisy" (148). In *Ecology Without Nature*, Morton suggests that this discovery, what he calls, the "disconnection between felt life and objective reality," characteristic of environmentalist activity, is Hegel's discovery of the beautiful soul (*Ecology Without Nature*). "Boycotting and protesting are ironical, reflexive forms of consumerism," he says. "By refusing to buy certain products, by questioning oppressive social forms such as corporations or globalization, they point toward possibilities of changing the current state of affairs, without actually changing it" (117). Following Hegel's argument, Morton suggests that "the beautiful soul fuses the aesthetic and the moral" (118). This aesthetic distancing is not only characteristic of the beautiful soul, but of the nature/human opposition that underlies dialectical thinking, he wants to say.

To Morton, this distancing is a self-interested denial: "Beautiful me over here, corrupt world over there," he writes (119). Self-interested because self-protective, whereas to Morton and others what needs protecting is reality itself. Reality to the beautiful soul is "over-yonder," "separated by a thin pane of aestheticizing glass," the glass which perhaps reflects back complicity's demand (119). But, as Morton describes, such a screen is disingenuous. The problem is as follows, "she has no inkling that she herself is formally responsible for the corruption in the world that she sees" (*Hyperobjects* 154). Unable to "see that the evil it

condemns is intrinsic to its existence," beautiful ecological souls, according to Morton, "hope that by circulating ambient rhetoric enough, the olive oil of subjectivity will blend with the vinegar of the objective world. This emulsion is itself a symptom of the ideological division of nature and history" (121). Theories of complicity seem like they cannot abide the beautiful soul, but perhaps what they cannot abide is more than that still. For instance, in his essay, "Adorno and the Weather," Akbar Abbas, suggests that environmental discourse is a "moral critique," whose major failure is to purport to "[stand] apart from what it is critiquing." "Pieties," he goes on, "are a softening of the brain" (Abbas). Both seem to agree, that the problem is a perspectival one; not in the ideas as such but in the relation that are formed to them.

However, what appears here as a perspectival problem may also be a problem with the universal; one might well be kicking and screaming if it was the universal that was doing the dragging. Like the Anthropocene, concepts that are constituted as ascendant because they are prevailing are likely to be valued for exactly that. As a result, it may not be possible to have an idea *not covered over* by the relation that is seen to be formed to it. It is the having of the idea that is actually the problem, because, in such an argument, to have an idea presupposes a relation to it; the relation is "aesthetic," in the pejorative sense, not afterward, but as soon as it is conceived. Here, relation is always already reconciliation. This is because, from a universalist perspective, to have a moral thought is to have a particular one, inviting the contradictory position of being against—standing apart from—a social world that one ought not to be separate from. What is unacceptable then, to those who use complicity to tie people to a world they think is worth resisting, is a certain disavowal of acceptance.

As Rei Terada argues in *Looking Away*, "fact perceptions are normative, not only of actions, but of likes and dislikes, thoughts and feelings. We must not only take fact perceptions

into account when navigating reality, but our feelings about them must stay within acceptance (2-3). What *Looking Away* attests to is that because fact perception is coercive, seeking not only acceptance but endorsement as well, to "flee from it" becomes appealing. What such appealingness shows is that there can be something that is sustaining that need not affirm reality as it is.

However, in Morton as, to a different extent, in Berlant, this is unacceptable. The policing of detachment is the disciplinary procedure of complicity—where complicity demands not just a minimal acceptance but an endorsement of where that acceptance should get you to. In Morton, acceptance is forceful, taking you past your objection: "to get over beautiful soul syndrome is to realize that you are a hypocrite" (*Hyperobjects* 154). What is being is lost in the drag, and what is it that has been gotten over?

In his essay, "Romantic Disaster Ecology," Morton suggests one example, "The trouble," he writes, "is not so much the quite legitimate wish to preserve species from dying out through human misuse," rather, it "is in the attitude engendered in the disaster narratives we keep telling ourselves" ("Romantic Disaster Ecology"). What I want to stage here is to wonder about what happens when the latter, that is, that which should be denied by an understanding of complicity, is privileged perceptually. Could it be that because complicity is both a formal and logical problem—for the argument, and in it—reflection on the transcendental condition seems like it would also allow reflection on "species dying," but actually cannot?

In the essay, Morton shows how Shelley is "trapped in the tropology of disaster." Unable to extricate himself from having to transform himself in a way that "includes transcending prejudices of all kinds," Morton wonders, "how is it possible to think the moment of change?" (*Romantic Disaster Ecology*). Morton's problem here is that Shelley's moral thought is trapped

precisely because it is not transformative enough. If, as he argues in *Hyperobjects*, "no ethical or political decision can be pure and free of compromise in the time of hyperobjects", this also means that no political thought can exist that is not itself compromising (*Hyperobjects* 160). As such, the attitude of objection—here an aesthetic—makes it illegitimate for the idea of objecting to be there at all. In coming over as merely objecting, the limitation is not only of having thoughts and of believing too much in them, but of believing in them despite their futility. That you aren't even allowed that, means what?

Morton worries that not to see one's inextricability in the social world leads eventually to doing "nothing". "Nothing," is difficult for thinkers of complicity because complicity relies upon its own revelatory character. Once I have gotten over whatever objections I had and realized that I am a hypocrite, complicit in the world, there are things that I should see and things I should no longer—"nothing" is one of those things that I should no longer be concerned with. It is better that way, because only in that way can antagonism—also, my complicit self as bearer of that antagonism—be kept in view. But what is lost in the getting over?

Even if it were possible to get-over the things you see but are able to disavow because you understand that your complicity precludes seeing them, it may not be possible to get over those things you cannot see. Or, how would you know? Obstacles such as species extinction are perhaps better understood as a structure of grief: they come and go—they are not for getting over. Whether something is legible at a particular time, whether it is even possible to see something at the moment it is looked for, is one thing. It's legibility, another. When it comes to inscription what is enigmatic is the first time. And getting-over would only be possible if I perceived every time *only* in its first time.

"It is always unfortunate," writes Morton, "when reality coincides with fantasy." For him, "disaster" itself is one such fantasy. "Thinking," he says, "is paralyzed by disaster"—it can't move. Perhaps paralysis is not such an unusual response not only to disaster, but to the guilt which underlies complicity—it may be *the* response to the other side of the sublimatory dilemma, that is, of not being able to endure through the discovery. Wanting complicity to drag one past paralysis, accompanies the anxiety of having something really fade from view—an anxiety of the disappearance of antagonism. It also accompanies an antagonism that you can't resolve. It is easier to rely upon the acceptance of the social world, its perceptual codes and promises, in which perception works to elicit an affirmation of dependency on reality as such, especially for its critique.³⁹

In an aphorism from *Minima Moralia*, titled, "Baby with the bath-water," Theodor Adorno traces the end-point of the position that wants not only for reality to be seen as necessary but for it to be seen as tolerable too. "Inexorably, the thought of money and all its attendant conflicts extends into the most tender, erotic, the most sublime spiritual relationships. With the logic of coherence and the pathos of truth, cultural criticism could therefore demand that relationships be entirely reduced to their material origin, ruthlessly and openly formed according to the interests of the participants... But to act radically in accordance with this principle would be to extirpate, with the false, all that was true also, all that, however impotently, strives to escape the confines of universal practice, every chimerical anticipation of a nobler condition, and so to bring about directly the barbarism that culture is reproached with furthering indirectly"

³⁹ Fredric Jameson worries about a dialectic that is not developmental. Commenting on Adorno's dialectic, a dialectic which he calls "solipsistic," Jameson says, "Adorno undermines one position on the question, only to turn abruptly and undermine its alternative, thereby leaving us with nothing but the impossibility of concluding anything" (*Valences of the Dialectic* 56). The concern with "nothing" would be a concern with a lack of movement, revelatory or otherwise. From the perspective of movement, to stay with nothing would only be to exacerbate the otherwise extant something.

(*Minima Moralia* 43-44). Adorno sees that homogenization is the condition for the breakdown between complicity and reciprocity—that, in the end, is part of complicity. But the other side of complicity is not reciprocity, it is powerlessness—one that threatens the coherence of the self and the coherence of social reality. And if complicity is the subsumption—the collusion—of the social world in you, then it itself is paralyzing—that's part of what makes it hard. In other words, the holding in view of antagonism is *only possible* when one stays with an insoluble situation—when you accept that it really might fade away, that so much of it already has. Such a position, then, may be able to think un-chosen attachments and, by so doing, non-coercive relation.

It is only "in the face of despair," writes Adorno in the final aphorism of *Minima Moralia* that one would be required to attempt to contemplate all things "as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption." Adorno suggests that the discrepancy held in such a position, that the knowledge of despair would seem to preclude redemption, is "the utterly impossible thing." Upon the moment of impossibility, Adorno stakes out a dialectic of destruction: "[such an attempt] presupposes a standpoint removed, even though by a hair's breadth, from the scope of existence, whereas we well know that any possible knowledge must not only be first wrested from what is, if it shall hold good, but is also marked, for this very reason, by the same distortion and indigence which it seeks to escape" (247). The danger, as differing positions on complicity are quick to point out, is that one is caught in a contradiction—wanting to not endorse a world that they are caught in. Except Adorno seems to want to say that this contradiction is the disaster, inescapable itself. "The more passionately thought denies its conditionality for the sake of the unconditional, the more unconsciously, and so calamitously, it is delivered up to the world" (247). What is given up may be the expectation of release from

what seems inescapable, but then if it is really inescapable, futility is as legitimate a claim as anything else.

iv

I have been showing how discourses concerned with the Anthropocene and its effects, often have recourse to a notion of complicity to manage feelings of guilt that environmental destruction produces. However, I have shown that complicity comes in to *solve* potential problems associated with that violence. Treating problems as solvable necessitates a theory of perception that is able to frame, map and make visible these problems. Seeing only the problems that can be managed, complicity-thinkers leave aside that which appears confusing, irredeemable, or unsolvable. The need to do this, I have argued, is because a subject's coherence is seen as inextricable from the coherence of social reality. This is a problematic that the Anthropocene participates in because the Anthropocene imagines everyone as part of it, requiring one's acceptance. Finally, I have shown how this is a protective gesture already anticipating any risk to the subject or to the social that the destruction it names may have caused.

In this final section I turn to a scene slightly different than the ones I have looked at so far. Congregating to Guy McPherson's blog, *Nature Bats Last*, are people who are trying to come to terms with the end of the world, and their complicity in it. Different than the position in Morton, Burtynsky, or DMP, accepting the guilt connected with complicity provides no movement whatsoever. "The answer to every question from now on," writes Daniel Drumright, author of the blog-post, "The Irreconcilable Acceptance of Near Term Extinction (NTE)," is that "it no longer matters" (Drumright). Drumright writes from the other side of a perspectival break,

whose object, from such a perspective, not only seems like it cannot be removed, but the attempt *not* to remove it is its very condition. For him, it is important, above all else, that the disaster has already arrived.

However, far from releasing him into speculation its arrival keeps arriving, holding him down. "This essay is written in acceptance that humanity has now crossed numerous irreversible climatic thresholds. It is also written from the perspective that by so doing, we have ushered in intractable near term extinction of most of life within the next several decades (Drumright). What is difficult for Drumright and the people that congregate to Guy McPherson's blog, is not only that they will really witness the end of "most of life" but that they need to cope with the thought that they will in the meantime. The former is accepted as necessity, the latter is intolerable. This is a case of thought outstripping events. Evidence then, that temporally, teleology falls apart, precisely when it seems to function most purely. In other words, the thought of teleology is always experienced non-teleologically.

In his essay, Drumright goes some way to show what it might be like if complicity didn't, as it does in *Hyperobjects* for example, defend against risk in advance. Sharing in an Anthropocene discourse, Drumright wonders "what doesn't become relative?" "For me," he answers, "nothing anymore." Like complicity-thinkers he suggests that complicity divides upon "acceptance"—"the post aspect of acceptance could be considered THE critical distinction"—and like complicity-thinkers he thinks this is a problem of sublimation, "it's the difference between the sublimation of having come to terms with what we consider to be inevitable, compared to our wavering refutation of such inevitability, which still affords us a great many fantasies" (Drumright). However, Drumright's essay is a remarkable meditation on causal breakdown, that is, on what falls out *not when there is no going back, but when there is no going*

forward. In so doing NTE, goes some way to showing what an experience of the limit of complicity 2 may be like.

If the sublimation is possible, it is experienced as unbearable. "The degree of acceptance, which we are being forced to bear, completely undermines the very act of acceptance itself" (Drumright). Acceptance itself, we find out, is unacceptable, cannot be accepted or be received fully. That is, does not bridge, or give relief. Describing the effects of experiencing this kind of complicity, Drumright suggests that, "it's either just a passing idea that flies through our minds like a frightened bird, or it levels everything like a daisy cutter. There is no in-between, it's either a fleeting thought or it's absolutely devastating." Here, he suggests that one loses transitional spaces. Later he will suggest that one loses the ability to scale as well, as thresholds fall away: "NTE has now become an event unto itself, irrespective of its causation" (Drumright).

Implicitly critiquing the successful sublimation of guilt, he writes, "why initiate such a ruinous acceptance into our existing lives, if we're not going to allow our past lives to actually be ruined?" Arguing against protection and seemingly opening to risk, he suggests, "those who still continue to hold onto their past sense/construct/modality/illusion of morality, again, probably have no business contemplating NTE." I am not endorsing this position, I am only pointing to it as a counter-example in the micro-history of the acceptance of guilt I have traced in this chapter. NTE shows, at the very least, what is otherwise being protected by discourses of complicity. The difference between an NTE perspective and others, Drumright thinks, like a difference between awareness of future disaster and the experience of it, "is the difference between objectively analyzing lab rats as they run through a maze, and running either to or from what remains of our life in an inescapable labyrinth." It is the difference, in other words, between the perception of

something which one experiences as that which they are part and the perception of something which one experiences as a "limit-experience," in Blanchot's phrase.

At the same time, NTE falls into a familiar problem with Anthropocene thinking, that is, that everything is rendered the same. "NTE is an astonishing equalizer. Everything, all of life in existence, just became relative to everything else, including all the life that has already passed into extinction. Our presumed disconnect between life today, and the 98% of life that no longer exists, has ended" (Drumright). That distinctions are registered invalid or questioned, is not what I am concerned with. The inability to make distinctions is an interesting effect of perceiving damage—so is wondering what you would "do" with a distinction that you might claim, in any case. And the idea that all life that has already passed into extinction can be considered as a (present) perceptual problem just like "life today," is also interesting. The problem is when the perspective of where this breakdown is viewed from, is universalizing. Co-present pressures that appear after the troubling of historical boundaries are one thing, but holding them together as a unification of the experience of NTE is another.

Late in the essay, he asks, "is NTE only a tragedy, because we're aware of our culpability... because "we" presume it could have been prevented?" The questions are left unresolved, and it never seems to matter either way. The question of acceptance doesn't fall on its potential prevention, any more than it falls on whether or not it can be used to get through the experience of complicity. What is in question, rather, is action—how free or not it is. Describing the situation the NTE-thinkers find themselves in, Drumright uses a long metaphor of constant, but in the end, unfree activity. "It's as if decades ago we formed an old-fashioned bucket brigade to douse our burning house. However, all the buckets have always had holes in them, and they are empty by the time they reach the end of the line. But, since we've no other recourse other

than continuing to reinvent our past theoretical civic daydreams, we just keep passing the buckets along, while patting ourselves on the back for having done our little part, pretending that it somehow matters because we imagine we couldn't live with ourselves if we didn't act as moral agents in a game we fully know we've no agency (Drumright).

The action is unfree, "we've no agency," but occurs nevertheless. While Drumright seems to say, "We've no other recourse," what else can we do, the action here began "decades ago." The end goal of putting out the fire falls away, as the buckets arrive empty, and activity here is just the "passing [of] buckets along." No one, for instance, throws the bucket knowingly with or without water, aside, nor at the fire. Although this is some kind of minimal activity in diminished circumstances, "pretending," and not being able to live with oneself, if not doing it, it is also occurring. They *can't not act*, in the circumstances. What is interesting here is that there is activity in such a space, and in some way it is experienced as tolerable—especially when all that is noted is incapability, e.g. not being able to put out the fire. And like the blog post itself—it's over 11,000 words— *that* activity occurs here, showing that inevitability or a lack of possibility do not preclude it. Far away then from the kind of inevitability that also wants to suggest that there should be no activity at all, because everything is already gone.

Chapter 3

Land Art and the Discovery of Landscape

The promotional video for *Desert X*, a 2017 "curated exhibition of site-specific work" in the Coachella Valley, "the world's newest must visit art-fair," begins with video from a moving car ("About Us", Gendall). Some of the installations are meant to be seen from a car, and the interactive map on the website links to Google Maps pin-drops for driving directions to each site. Within seconds the narration starts, "the desert is an abstraction," before favorably quoting Balzac, "the desert is God without men" ("About Us"). To be an abstraction, in this sense, is to be an idea, and yet "site-specific" is the most common phrase across the material. The "desert" (or deserts) referenced (although not by name) in the short 2-minute film are at least three: the Mojave, Colorado, and Sonoran. But no matter, "it" is, we are told, "a place of scarcity, stark contrasts, crude survival, mystery and transformation" ("About Us"). The X of the exhibition's title, an obvious play on X marks the spot and "ex" of exhibition, requires the "desert" before it, and if the desert is an abstraction then X marks it too.

One "site-specific" work is Richard Prince's *Third Place* (fig. 18), a "run down" house left vacant in Desert Hot Springs. Filled with miscellaneous clippings of an imaginary family, it was arranged so as to look abandoned—like someone left it and all the things in it. It is, however, no longer open. "Due to theft and removal of artworks Richard Prince's *Third Place* has been closed to the public" (Desertx.org). The closure undermines the conceit of the work, that it appears to the viewer as found, while the theft illuminates the boundaries that were there but not meant to be seen. Is the site that was the house, no longer a site? If I wander into a vacant

house in the desert, strewn with the abandoned materials of someone's life, one that might suggest "a cowboy's retreat," is that a site too or not?



Figure 18: *Third Place* (Richard Prince)

The complex of questions which wonder whether or not a site is a site, or just (and?) the abstraction of a site, and whether it is possible to work in a site without also (only?) working with that site's ideology, are problems that the Land Art movement, which began in the late 1960s, raised. Questions about the site become questions about the difference between art and non-art, and in this context, about the difference between landscape and landscape art. In part, this dissertation asks how does one perceive the tar sands as a site? What the contours of any particular site are, as well how one might approach them are central to Land Art. Finally, the blurred relation between finding something and creating it is also a question about the site. One, I'll argue, that is often resolved in the discovery of landscape (particular ones and the discovery of what landscape can do).

Desert X's X also recalls Dennis Oppenheim's 1978 *Relocated Burial Ground*, an X marked in industrial asphalt primer on a dry lake bed in the Mojave desert, north-west of Victorville, CA. Oppenheim's X was intended to appear only so as to disappear, as the landscape would slowly erase the marking over time. Knowledge that the asphalt X was once there, however, is thought of as being enough to secure the feeling that other markings, including Native American burial grounds, might have once been there too. The use of asphalt primer encourages one to also imagine what lies underneath the industrial in general, both underneath its abstract constructions and its concrete ones. However, one need not go too far to wonder whether Oppenheim knew, or cared to know, anything about the site itself, and surely part of the violence of erasure that *Relocated Burial Ground* indexes, is the erasure that the work (potentially) starts with—both whether activity on that particular site is damaging, as well as the violence of the analogy itself. In terms of the latter, it is an open question whether and in what way Oppenheim's marking is an analogous one, not to mention whether it is even possible to say that a Native American burial ground is, in these terms, a marking to start with.

What to make then of *Desert X* which secures itself by way of the consistency of quasi-permanent tropes—"the desert is a place of extremes," "utopian and dystopian forms can flourish side by side"—tropes which have always been used to also secure the conditions for entry, encroachment and appropriation? ("About Us"). Such an ideology is itself starkly evident in the film's staging of the tension the exhibition seems to have established, that of site-specific works occurring in a place that is otherwise thought of as an abstraction. "Paradoxically it is the very inhospitality [the desert] has to life that has made it receptive to new forms" ("About Us"). Here, in very clear terms, the desert is *discovered* in this paradox, as inhospitable/receptive. It is imagined from the start in such a way as to call forth intervention into it. The common

characterization of the desert as resistant—a signification that is experienced as a surprise, or a challenge—also shows up in the idea here about its lack of resistance, or its weakness in preventing intrusion ("receptive to new forms"). The logic is masculinist and one of domination. Even the briefest foray into art in the landscape of the American West shows that the frontierist rhetoric is hard to dislodge.

Doug Aitken "headlines" *Desert X* (the allusion being to the music festival which occurs in the region at the exhibition's end), with his contribution *Mirage*. *Mirage* is a house in the Chino Hills area of Palm Springs, paneled entirely in mirrors ("Doug Aitken"). It is meant to equally evoke different kinds of Westward expansion, a homestead, a typical suburban home, or an Airstream trailer.⁴⁰ In an exhibition, at least in part about the how art can be integrated with a place, the installation is defensive—it keeps the outside out. It also keeps you in it; as you approach the building you yourself are in view. While *Mirage* is said to present "a continually changing encounter in which subject and object, inside and outside are in constant flux," it rather stabilizes everyone it involves. That the work is motivated by stabilization, rather than flux, even adheres to the installation's opening hours. It is notable that one can only see *Mirage* during the day, unless it is a starry night, in which case it is open.

What is worth noting about *Desert X* is the apparent inescapability, not only of certain tenets of the late 1960s Land Art movement, but also of certain ideas they set out to destroy. "I wanted to be here to see where suburbia ends and the landscape begins," says Aitken. "This location was kind of perfect in a way. You have the seductive beauty, and then you have the wind farm, and suburbia" (Zara). Aitken's comment not only aligns the landscape with (natural) beauty, but reinstates a nature/culture distinction, which the aesthetic then regulates, "[the] house

⁴⁰ Part of Chino Hills will soon become "Desert Palisades," a new community of 110 newly build modernist houses. The exhibition house of the new development is on the market for \$3.5 million. <http://www.theagencyre.com/listing/sl1704386-lot-63-desert-palisades-palm-springs/>

becomes a framing device, a perceptual echo-chamber endlessly bouncing between the dream of nature as pure uninhabited state and the pursuit of its conquest” (Zara). The dream of one, as so much of the critical writing on the history of the concept of nature has pointed out, is the same dream as the other—“nature” needs to be uninhabited for the pursuit of its conquest.

At the very least, one can say that as well as, for instance, particular climatic conditions, ideas of “pure nature” and conquest seem to also be what is site-specific about the desert. One lesson of Land Art is a straightforward one, that site-specificity helps dramatize the kinds of ideas that are attached to a particular site. The minimal gesture of site-specificity is that the site is a necessary condition; this doesn't *have* to only happen here but this is one place where it can (although, as I look at below, the site is often the only place where it can). What I mean can be understood very clearly from Aitken himself. The house that *Mirage* is, is only the form of a house—no one is meant to live in it. It is a mirage of a house. “I wanted to take that form [the form of the house],” says Aitken, “and drain it—drain it of narrative, drain it of history—take all the texture, surface, history” (Zara). From a site-specific point of view, the first question must be, why does it seem possible to do that here? What is it about the site—the desert of the American West—that allows for the imagination of an action such as taking “all the texture, surface [and] history,” away?

One might also wonder how such an activity, circulating the age-old conditions for appropriation and violence, an X of sorts, looks next to Oppenheim's earliest X-form, his 1969 *Canceled Crop*? Oppenheim seeded a Dutch wheat-field, harvesting only the grain of an X shape (fig. 19).



Figure 19: *Cancelled Crop* (MoMA)

In a gesture of negation (which the X also is), Oppenheim did not process the X shape's grain and withheld it from circulation. The crop was never released. Oppenheim suggested that isolating the grain in this way would be analogous to preventing raw pigment from becoming paint. In so doing, the paint, in the analogy, would never "[become] an illusionistic force" (Kastner). There are problems with this negative aesthetic, and such a gesture has its own lineage in art history, but it is somewhat illuminating with regard to Land Art. If Land Art was productive, it was because it helps us to think, among other things, about something besides "art" that could be thought of as "Land Art".

As I will show below, one of Land Art's main ideas was to press the boundary of the art/non-art distinction. A question like, what makes the image I see when I see the reflection of the landscape in *Mirage* much different from the reflection of the landscape I see in the side-mirror of the car I am in, is a Land Art question. When one tries to answer it, they may not be left with too much: because the artist Doug Aitken did it, because it's in this exhibition called *Desert X*, and so on. The feeling that one's perspective may, in the end, be informed by hierarchicalization and naturalization more than anything else, is a feeling that Land Art tried to produce.

As I showed in the Introduction representational work requires the landscape. This idea, one developed in this chapter, helps give clarity to the *work* that extraction is doing. One way of perceiving extraction then is to attend to what kind of work that is. If environmental assessment produces the field of visibility in which some objects appear and others don't, this chapter shows that such a construction is also one which delineates the kinds of conflicts that are there (or not there) to be had. I read Land Art as always already managing these conflicts, including the perception of loss. At the same time, the chapter has an ambiguous relation to extraction and its logics, more or less accepting chapter 1's sense that everything on the landscape is designated. Chapter 1 also showed that extraction projects demand not only the management of particular landscapes for it to occur, but the entire landscape itself. Land Art turns this argument into one against art itself, using it to collapse the art/non-art distinction. To Robert Smithson and others, almost any mark on the landscape counts as art. Land Art's dual interest in total management, on the hand, and the de-hierachicalizing effects this can potentially produce, cohere in the idea of inscription. As I argue here, this interest in inscription is also an interest in memory and

repression, one which bears on the conditions of possibility of not only Land Art but resource extraction too. This chapter then is part of, but serves to complicate, visual regime 1.

i

Before Robert Smithson joined Michael Heizer and Walter De Maria in the landscapes of the American West he was primarily concerned with one particular site: the suburban landscape of New Jersey. To Smithson, as to Tony Smith and others, that particular landscape represented a new visual medium. Smithson thinks he finds, or *founds*, Passaic, an otherwise nondescript city 15 miles from New York. As if inserting Passaic into an American imperial imaginary, he wonders whether, "Passaic [has] replaced Rome as the Eternal city?" (Smithson 74).

Landscape inhabits the rhetoric of discovery because it is often thought to be equally perceptual and representational. "Discovering" a new landscape is sometimes thought of as discovering a way of thinking *and* a way of seeing, thereby inventing the landscape altogether. As Kojin Karatani suggests, "what I have called the "discovery of landscape" was not merely an "internal" event: it was accompanied by the discovery of a landscape that was new in actuality and not enveloped in any way by ancient texts (Karatani 40). The landscape was that of Hokkaido, the northern island which, until the Meiji period, had been inhabited by Japanese only on its southern tip. Hokkaido became a new territory for colonists, created by driving its indigenous people, the Ainu, off their lands and forcibly assimilating them" (40). Karatani not only shows that the "discovery" is always only a discovery for some, but that it is epistemological too. "Modernism discovered Monument Valley," suggests art theorist Joshua Shannon, symptomatically. If thought of in the rhetoric of discovery, landscape can be conceived, in W.J.T. Mitchell's phrase, as a "historical invention," evidence that landscape is

"integrally connected with imperialism" (Mitchell). It is revealing then that Smithson's work, in the period before his own movement West, is so closely connected to a certain idea of American empire at home, of which suburbia is a main form.

In Passaic, Smithson developed the idea that the way the landscape was organized—by its temporality, architecture and attachments—naturalizes social form and cultural ideas. If to Smithson, what appeared on the landscape was thereby always already representational, it could be read against its naturalizations. Smithson puts this simply in his essay, "Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site": "it is mentally important to experience these projects as something distinctive and intelligible [by] extracting from a site certain associations that have remained invisible within the old framework" (RS, 58). Indeed, Smithson's attack on the discipline of art history—"art as a criticism of earlier art"—is an attack on the naturalization, and thus privileging, of disciplinary codes. "Linguistic sense-data, not rational categories, are what we are investigating" (59), he argued in 1966.

The archetype for the discovery of this new landscape was Tony Smith's ride on the unfinished New Jersey turnpike, which Smithson referenced multiple times:

It was a dark night and there were no lights or shoulder markers, lines, railings or anything at all except the dark pavement moving through the landscape, rimmed by hills in the distance, but punctuated by stacks, towers, fumes and colored lights. This drive was a revealing experience. The road and much of the landscape was artificial, and yet it couldn't be called a work of art. On the other hand, it did something for me that art had never done. At first I didn't know what it was, but its effect was to liberate me from many of the views I had had about art. It seemed

that there had been a reality there which had not had any expression in art... The experience on the road was something mapped out but not socially recognized. I thought to myself, it ought to be clear that's the end of art. Most paintings look pretty pictorial after that. There is no way you can frame it (Smith).

Smith's narration seems, on the one hand, to be a claim for an expanded field of art; art is still the frame, even if it is found missing, "it did something for me that art had never done." Most revealing, however, is Smith's assertion that the view from his ride liberates him, "from many of the views I had had about art." What the ride helps to bring into relief is that Smith's views *on art*, his opinions and ideas about art—art's representational quality—are linked to views *of art* or *views of things in general*. This is why the turnpike ride is first figured as a perceptual experience, which seems to overturn a formal one, such that the turnpike registers as a discovery not just of one landscape, but a whole series. As Smith would go on to say, "artificial landscape[s] without cultural precedent began to dawn on me" (Smith). Having had a perceptual experience he can't frame, he then likens the freeway landscape to other "abandoned works" which also "had nothing to do with any function," and which, "created worlds without tradition." To Smith this opens a whole field of things to be represented, and as Smithson would argue in an essay in which he references Smith's ride, "pavements, holes, trenches, mounds, heaps, paths, ditches, roads, terraces, etc., all have esthetic potential" (Smithson 56).

Yet, alongside the opening up of what can be represented, there was something distinctive to Smith about the experience of a loss of function and lack of tradition that he had encountered. Smithson reads Smith's prose textually, "the "dark pavement" could be considered a "vast sentence," and the things perceived along it, "punctuation marks" (59). Flat and

homogenous, the suburban landscape was a model for Smithson because it seemed to have no meaning at all. However, as Land Art showed through its interest in vacancy, voids and holes, "no meaning" is just as much a meaning as anything else. And not only that, landscapes can, like Smithson's "vast sentence," be syntactically rearranged, deconstructing the idea that things with meaning have their proper place. If Smithson was, from the beginning, interested in a general liberation from modernist aesthetics, from the gallery and from perspectival assumptions, the suburban tracts of New Jersey were suitable because they seemed to represent nothing in particular. One perceives it as all the same, a grouping of indifferent material.

In "The Crystal Land," Smithson's synonym for New Jersey suburbia, he describes a trip to an abandoned quarry. Standing at the top of the quarry he can see the New Jersey suburbs framed by the New York skyline. "The terrain," he writes, "is flat and loaded with "middle-income" housing developments with names like Royal Garden Estates... forming boxlike arrangements... The highways that crisscross through the towns become man-made geological networks of concrete. In fact, the entire landscape has a mineral presence. From the shiny chrome diners to glass windows of shopping centers, a sense of the crystalline prevails" (8). It is important to note here that Smithson's trip to the quarry is in relation to his attachment to the suburban landscape. He sees it, "from the top of the quarry cliffs." Something about the extraction site, the quarry, helps him to think about the architecture of the New Jersey suburbs. As I refer to below, the overlap between extraction, architecture, sculpture and landscape—all potentially "earthworks"—is a persistent interest for Smithson and other Land artists. For the time being, it's enough to keep in mind that Smithson thinks about all work as work in and with earth. For Smithson, this frees the geological—its timescales, structures and metaphorical quality—for his use.

In Smithson's work the geological comes in to do three things. First, to stress that forms are culturally, historically, and socially sedimented, that is, made up with layers with meaning accrued over vast stretches of time. Relatedly, and second, to suggest that this means that different processes of sedimentation could occur. For Smithson, the idea of sedimentation could be shown most easily in geological metaphors: "one might object to "hollow" volumes in favor of "solid materials," but no materials are solid, they all contain caverns and fissures" (106-7). By suggesting that all material is made up of fissures, Smithson finds a way of analogizing between seemingly different things, "the names of minerals and the minerals themselves do not differ from each other, because at the bottom of both the material and the print is the beginning of an abysmal number of fissures" (107). Third, the geological helps to indicate that what appears in images on the landscape are condensed, crushed together over 1000s of years. As I will refer to in the final section, images on the surface of the landscape are then products of condensation and over-determination. And these images, as Smithson so often suggests, aim at linguistic material.

It is known that Smithson would take car rides with his parents, providing them with the destinations (Reynolds 6). On such trips, he would collect postcards and show them to school friends through a hole in a little booth that he had made himself. As an adult he would make similar trips, collecting maps, tourist brochures, photographs, and postcards archiving where he went. Smithson's archiving makes a basic point: that any site is already mediated, made up of the representations of it. Such that any representation of it will be a representation of a representation. Furthermore, as his home-made aperture illustrates, the landscape is always seen as though framed. The effect is that the landscape looks like it is a representation already. Smithson's thought about Passaic, "the landscape was no landscape... but a kind of self-destroying postcard world," (Smithson 72) holds for his thought in general.

His photo-essay, "Tour of the New Monuments of Passiac, NJ," had this feeling built-in. Throughout are allusions to the mediated character of the site. When he walks on the bridge he describes it as "though I was walking on an enormous photograph" (70). At another point he describes himself as, "wandering in a movie picture." Early in Smithson's narration of his "tour", he articulates the duality: a site, which is both made up of the representations of it and seen as already framed. "Noon-day sunshine," he writes "cinema-ized the site, turning the river into an over-exposed picture. Photographing it with my Instamatic 400 was like photographing a photograph" (70). On the one hand then, the landscape is already once exposed—the river is already a picture before it is photographed. Infiltrated by its representational quality, looking at the site is like looking at a postcard of the site. On the other hand, the site can bear a second exposure, thought by Smithson as being able to be photographed again, and presumably something still else is produced by this action. As I noted in the Introduction, extraction companies also think it possible to keep saturating the landscape and I mean for the analogy between Smithson's practice and extraction to be present.

Specific to the site "Passaic, NJ," is a dual character of homogenization which suburbanization makes thinkable. On one side, everything is not just the same, but looks the same too. Passaic is a site where "houses" are said to "mirror themselves into colorlessness." Like a photograph of a photograph, this mirroring effects a kind of total materialization. Smithson figures Passaic to be a landscape which is a photographic surface, creating an ideology of the landscape in which everything is receptive. At the same time, it is "a place," he says, "where buildings seem to sink away from one's vision—buildings fall back into sprawling babels or limbos" (91). The effect here is one of dematerialization, where, as Smithson suggests, "every site glides away toward absence" (91). Ann Reynolds has described Smithson's interest in New

Jersey as an interest in why it vanished when he passed through it (Reynolds 100), and Smithson imagines Passaic, his model for landscape, as both hyper-visible and invisible.

This has two major effects. First, it allows him to question what exists. If, at least in some way, the site is affected by a total materialization, it could be said to disappear into legibility.



Figure 20: Smithson's Monuments (Blair)

This idea leads Smithson to think against a certain idea of temporality. So, Smithson, can call the movements of the Passaic bridge, its rotating South from the West end and North from the East end, "the limited movements of an outdated world" (Smithson 71). The monuments of the title are standard components of urban infrastructure like bridges, pump-derricks, concrete abutments, or waste-water pipes. He calls them monuments to dramatize their inherent futurity, the notion that they suggest direction or maintenance of a certain system. Like a map or a "no U-turn" sign, the "monuments" organize the landscape by suggesting the kinds of activities that would be continuous with them or relations one can have with it.

At one moment in his narration Smithson suggests he is "perplexed" until he sees, "a green sign that explained everything: YOUR HIGHWAY TAXES 21 AT WORK—the zero panorama seemed to contain ruins in reverse, that is, all the new construction that would eventually be built" (72). Smithson's famous phrase, "ruins in reverse," is a model for a kind of disappearance into legibility. Like the gentrifying housing development, one knows what it looks like before its built. One knows, not because one has seen the housing development already, even though they have, but rather because they know the system of relations it fits into and produces. In this way, as Smithson says, "this is the opposite of the "romantic ruin" because the buildings don't *fall* into ruin *after* they are built but rather *rise* into ruin before they are built" (72). Slightly different than saying the buildings would be ruins from the start, i.e. at the point of their construction, thereby simply inverting the monument into a ruin, they are ruins still "before" that, figuratively so. They "rise" then, not into the built environment as such but into a complex of relations that are themselves perceptible.

Second, Smithson feels able to re-read the structures so that, for instance, the pipes resemble a "horizontal smoke-stack" which spews "liquid smoke" into the water. This kind of conceptual dematerialization shows that Smithson is interested in uninteresting things. Indeed, Smithson constructs Passaic as indifferent; "the suburbs," he says, "exist without a rational past." Passaic is here figured like the desert, "the desert is less "nature" than a concept, a place that swallows up boundaries" (109). That the suburbs have a past—a function of the history of labor and of production and urbanization—just as the desert has, and that both are of course historical in any case, necessarily underlies Smithson's understanding of them. It is fair to say he is interested in Passaic, but his interest in it is in a performed tension with how unmemorable he finds it. For instance, Smithson suggests that, unlike New York, "Passaic is full of holes," made

up of "monumental vacancies" (71). Such a position may neglect the historical conditions of the site, but these are conditions that Smithson can't avoid, whether he notices them or not. In either case, constantly attentive to non-meaning, Smithson becomes interested in everything (including, intentionally or not, the historical).

At a late point in the "Crystal Land," having been out at the quarry, Smithson returns to the car and enters into a long description: "My eyes glanced over the dashboard, it became a complex of chrome fixed into an embankment of steel. A glass disk covered the clock. The speedometer was broken. Cigarette butts were packed into an ashtray. Faint reflections slid over the windshield. Out of sight in the glove compartment was a silver flashlight and an Esso map of Vermont... The rearview mirror dislocated the road behind us. While listening to the radio, some of us read the Sunday newspapers. The pages made slight noises as they turned; each sheet folded over their laps forming geographies of paper. A valley of print or a ridge of photographs would come and go in an instant" (8-9). Like a description of a dream, to Smithson all details seem worth mentioning. His practice here is quasi-psychoanalytic, treating nothing as more important than anything else. As I will argue below, this inheres in his reliance upon the geological, an understanding of the world as the deposition and sedimentation of material. And as I have shown, that understanding is inseparable from his discovery of Passaic as a homogenized space characteristic of American empire, in which he thinks nothing has a meaning that would bar it from interpretation.

ii

One of Smithson's most famous site-specific pieces, *Partially Buried Woodshed*, composed while in residence at Kent State University, was conceived somewhat by accident.

Smithson had intended to create another of his "pour" series, but the cold weather meant his "mud pour" would freeze. Smithson believed that the pouring of material—asphalt and glue, for example—down the sides of slopes or hills, illustrated his notion of entropy: that all work tends toward decomposition and decay. What to make then of the site's coldness, its frosty reception to a certain idea of movement and decay? The freezing conditions of the site meant at the very least that this was no site for Smithson's "mud pour." However, they also brought into relief two different senses of site-specificity.

As Miwon Kwon has outlined, "site-specific art initially took the "site" as an actual location, a tangible reality, its identity composed of a unique combination of constitutive physical elements" (Kwon 85). However, as she also shows, site-specificity came to mean insertion into a cultural framework in general, to which the work could not but have reference. Guarding against the idealism of the art object and of the viewer, site-specificity was an attack on notions of ahistorical meaning and its accompanying subject-position: a perceiver with a disembodied eye. As Douglas Crimp argued in *On the Museum's Ruins*, site-specificity, by being tied to a particular place and ideally experienced in person, "[refused] circulatory mobility" (Crimp 85). In this way, we can understand how one conception of the idealist subject also shows it as the subject of consumption, able to display, perceive, and thereby appropriate multiple positions from a universal one.

One can read Land Art's interest in site-specificity as a concern with spatial extension and temporal duration, one that shows that how one sees depends on where they stand. On the campus of Kent State, Smithson had found an abandoned woodshed which he would then direct to be buried by cartloads of dirt, until the central beam of the building cracked. In *Partially Buried Woodshed*, Smithson wanted to dramatize accretion and accumulation, analogizing the

initial build-up of dirt with the collection of associations that the site would attract. By eventually imagining the piece's total subsumption, Smithson's idea was that the degradation and eventual disappearance of the piece were perceptual experiences like others. If "Tour of the Monuments," undermined the distinction between architecture and landscape, by reading the industrial as the sculptural, *Partially Buried Woodshed* undermined the distinction between the beginning and the end of something. If the art object could decompose completely, what did this mean for the viewer, who, it was thought, depended upon some kind of perceptual fixity? Land Art deconstructs the transcendental viewing subject, proving it to be an ideologically motivated impossibility, by wondering out-loud what one sees if they can't see what they are looking at.

In either case, the University didn't see it as very much and most believed it would be bulldozed after the Winter. Before Smithson left, however, he gave the woodshed a name and a value of \$10,000. As Brinsley Tyrell, faculty at the time, retells this was because, "I didn't want to argue aesthetics with the University. So Smithson called Dwan (his gallery at the time) and asked Dwan to give him a value... The money thing was a game... to convey its importance to people [the University administration] whom you couldn't talk about aesthetics" (Shinn 3) Six months after Smithson was there on May 4th, 1970, four students were killed by Ohio National Guardsmen during a protest on the campus against the Vietnam war. While the University was in a temporary shutdown following the murders, the *Woodshed* was painted with, "May 4 Kent 70."

After Smithson's death in 1973 his wife, the artist Nancy Holt, inquired into the status of the piece and argued for its protection. Holt was informed that the piece was still intact, as she knew, but that the area where it was had been designated for future landscaping work. The plan called for the elimination of the earthwork. Following opposition, the University Arts Commission (UAC) voted to save the piece. Two years later, however, the piece was

significantly damaged following a suspected arson attack which burnt half the *Woodshed*. University officials wanted to demolish the whole structure both because, "not only was it no longer the original work, [but] it had become unsafe and an eyesore" (Shinn 5). Holt wrote again to the President Glen Olds, suggesting how the damaged side could be reinforced. The UAC voted that the damaged half be removed, but that the rest of it ought to remain. During this discussion on the work's future, health and safety concerns were raised about the debris near the site, and a "policy of labeling whatever fell to the ground 'debris' was established" (6). The apparently long dormant campus committee, known as the Commission on Campus Physical and Natural Environment (CCPNE), was revived and argued that the work be removed on safety grounds.

Without a clear decision either way, "the groundskeepers," says Dorothy Shinn, "did what they were paid to do—cart away debris, including the charred remains of the left half of the *Woodshed*" (7). Faculty from the Art School directed groundskeepers as to what was and what was not debris, and the unburned half was left as it was. The site had been chosen in part because it was in an area of the campus that was largely unused, a place where one might find an abandoned woodshed. But following the development of a new stadium, *Woodshed* and its graffiti were now viewable from a major gateway into the campus. Worrying that alumni and prospective students would see it as they drove in the University decided to landscape the site. The piece was barricaded with a dense cluster of conifers, placed so as to block view of the *Woodshed* from either Summit Street or Rhodes Road. Although still possible to visit, and photographs of it exist from 1982, it was taken down in early 1984. Until that point any debris from the site was to be removed by groundskeepers, as part of routine maintenance (9).



Figure 21: Conifers cover PBW (CLUI)

As Richard Serra argued in relation to *Tilted Arc*, his sculpture that dissected a federal plaza in New York, "to remove the work is to destroy the work" (Serra 174). Like *Tilted Arc*, *Partially Buried Woodshed* exceeded its bounds as merely artistic. What is revealing, however, is the response it called for precisely in the way in which it broke these bounds. By initially intending to landscape the site and remove Smithson's work, the University administration first suggest that the work is not aesthetically pleasing enough. The verb to landscape is here synonymous with the verb to remove, and one may usefully note that the difference between a site and a landscape is that the former can be removed in a way the latter cannot. A site can also be destroyed, just as a landscape can also be, but a landscape remains a landscape after its destruction. This persistence, as I argue below, ties such an understanding of landscape to notions of continued useability which are themselves extractive. So that one might say, *here* is the site where *Partially Buried Woodshed* was, but not quite, *this is* the site of *Partially Buried Woodshed*, if that work has been removed entirely. However, when one considers the verb to

extract, another variation on the verb to remove, one comes into difficulty. As I will look at below, extraction and excavation, various techniques of removal, were important to early Land Art.

To landscape the site then would return it to an idea of aesthetic neutrality, removing the work and thereby removing the obstacle that the work is. In this sense, the work is a resistance that was not there previously and is in need of removal. Smithson's idea that the work continues via its degradation or interactions, is brought into greater relief by the graffiti, "May 4 Kent 70." While it seems obvious to say that the graffiti makes the work overtly political and thus differently unsightly to the University administration, it is also worth saying that the work itself appears as conducive to interaction—and that it is this which is its most political aspect. One might speculate that the act of spray-painting was thought of as more protected by being done on the woodshed—it itself was already a statement of some kind, playful in a way that seems to have encouraged more play—rather than being done somewhere else. Whereas, if the graffiti had been carried out on a building one could face a vandalism or destruction of property charge, the woodshed, instead, doesn't seem to be able to be vandalized in the same way.

When the site is slated to be cleared for a second time, following the burning of half the work, the University starts to need to maintain the site. It is understood that 'debris' from the work was collected continuously, until the work's final removal some ten years after the fire. Here, like the work spilling over its bounds as art, the management of the site again manages its overflow, its literal and metaphorical "break-down." Following the fire the work appears to the University as damaged and therefore in need of removal. Allowing the work to persist as damaged doesn't seem possible because to let that happen the University would have to admit the continuation of what seems obsolete, unnecessary or broken. Finally, however, the site is

managed in a real sense—corralled, hidden from view, and made useable for another purpose (a view of trees from the road). Although one could argue that the reason the site was not simply destroyed was because of the opposition to the idea, thus prompting the negotiation and management of the site, one may still also wonder why it wasn't just destroyed? In wondering one may actually conclude that there are reasons for why it couldn't be. Just like Suncor's bird-deterrence system, and Syncrude's Wapisiw Lookout, the violence indexed in the site—here, made visible in the graffiti—creates a resistance, one which can't simply be erased. Like Suncor and Syncrude, the University must manage the site and the relations it holds.

While Serra's defense of *Tilted Arc* revolved around the legal status of site-specificity, Smithson's transgressed a different kind of law. By burying a woodshed and suggesting that the work is still the work through its decomposition, Smithson created a claim where there usually is not one. This has two effects. First, to do something to the landscape where the *Woodshed* was, would be to affect the work potentially disappearing it completely. This, I am suggesting, is a key argument of Land Art. What it implies is that to do something to the landscape is a transgression that is always operative in any development—any mark on the landscape. Second, as I have been suggesting in my reading of Land Art in general, all work on the landscape is potentially artwork. One could easily suggest that the conifers planted to cover up the *Woodshed* are also part of the work. At the very least, one could say that they are part of the work's reception. That the reception to the work was to *cover-up it up*, rather than remove it completely, says something about the resistance that the work produces.

Famously, Smithson had contact with developers, cities, and in a few cases with mining companies to work with industrial disturbances or to reclaim sites after disturbance. What is worth noting is that in addition to the agreements that Smithson had, he sent numerous

unsolicited ideas to mining companies for works. Unsolicited, because a hole made by an extraction company for a mine site was already an earthwork—*involuntarily* so. Extraction sites helped highlight the idea that every intervention into the landscape, artwork or not, the distinction falls away, could be read as, in Smithson's phrase, "a disruption of the earth's crust" (Smithson 102). This idea helps break the line between art and non-art, or at least the lines surrounding how and where art occurs. "Actually if you think about tracks of any kind," suggested Smithson, "you'll discover that you could use tracks as a medium... You could take a beetle, for example, and clear some sand and let it walk over that and then you would be surprised to see the furrow it leaves" (186).

In a recent retrospective on her 1978 article, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," Rosalind Krauss suggested that she wrote the essay in part, "to combat this notion that anything goes, that everything is possible, that there was no longer any real difference between things" (Papapetros and Rose 65). In the context of Smithson's work as I am reformulating it here, Krauss's article reads as defensive. Prompted in part by Smithson and the regressive impulse of the early Land Art, Krauss is worried. Worried that, for instance, if a partially buried woodshed is a sculpture, a beetle's tracks might be one too. "A crack in the wall," wrote Smithson, "if viewed in terms of scale, not size, could be called the Grand Canyon" (Smithson 33). "The category sculpture could be almost anything," she says at the beginning, before saying, "yet I would submit that we know very well what sculpture is" (Krauss 38). This, "know[ing] very well," of course, carries with it the normative force of expertise. Smithson's counter is the nominalist nature of art; the beetle's tracks, the graffiti, the butterfly which flies past a mirror. The essay, on the other hand, reads like a coming-to-terms. In the first instance, the expanded field is retrospective, accounting for something that has already happened. It is "thus generated by problematizing the set of

oppositions between which the modernist category of *sculpture* is suspended" (38). Following this conceptualization, the rhythm of the piece is progressive, "and once this has happened, once one is able to think one's way into this expansion, there are logically three other categories that one can envision, all of them a condition of the field itself, and none of them assimilable to sculpture" (38). Krauss's attempt to corral the field, is also an attempt to corral the site. In other words, to orient perception so as to know always what one is looking at, if not what one is seeing.

Contrary to this impulse, Smithson was interested not only in marginal architectural forms (the airport, the abandoned mine, different sites of extraction) but marginal perceptual experiences, seeing a link between the two. Although it seems to be the case that Smithson was concerned with a multitude of different sites, rarely, if ever, dismissing one as unsuitable, it might be more helpful to consider this as a concern with how perception, as much as a site, stabilizes and destabilizes relations and forms. Smithson liked mirrors because he thought what they reflected was time and not space, often using them in his work (see *Chalk-Mirror Displacement*, for instance). So that he thought a butterfly flying through a gravel pit full of mirrors (see *3rd Displacement*, part of his "Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan" pieces and photo-essay) didn't take up space, but occupied seconds of color. Like the butterfly, fixed momentarily in the reflection, mirrors and reflective surfaces in general (including, for example, desert grasses) make what is around them shift into a certain form, stabilizing them. However, being non-discerning, such surfaces also destabilize what is there or not there, introducing shadow, illusions, and ghosts.

The twin effect that mirrors have, of mobility and fixity, is one way of approaching the site. The site, as Smithson showed in his notion of the "non-site," cannot actually hold the site.

"By drawing a diagram, a ground plan of a house, a street plan to the location of a site, or a topographical map, one draws a "logical two dimensional picture"... it is a two-dimensional analogy" (Smithson 364). Smithson encouraged one to think of the map already as metaphorical. The "non-site," on the other hand, "an abstract container," often held deposits of the site, displacing them into the gallery space. Just as a site, or a map of a site, are abstract representations, Smithson's non-site didn't return one to the site by bringing it closer or inside, but only added to the metaphorical displacement. "Sediments, displaced from its original site," suggested Smithson, "blur distinctions between outdoors and indoors" (364). Smithson referred to his non-sites as "three dimensional metaphors," not only holding material that couldn't be represented by two-dimensional ones like a map, but enlarging the potential for associations. In this way, "one site can represent another site which does not resemble it—thus The Non-Site" (364).

What I want to stress here is that this is already a perceptual argument, and that Smithson understands the site as peculiarly perceptual. He wants to say that the effect of his non-site is that, "everything between the two sites could become physical metaphorical material devoid of natural meanings and realistic assumptions," such that one can perceive the site far away from it (temporally and spatially) (Smithson 364). This idea comes through in his *Mirror Displacements* when he reflects on covering a mirror with dirt: "dirt hung in the sultry sky. Bits of blazing cloud mixed with the ashy mass. The displacement was *in* the ground, not *on* it" (Smithson 121). His distinction here, "in" not "on" the ground, further reveals that the complex is a perceptual one. Writing of flying through the Yucatan in the context of his mirror displacement series, he remarks, "the perimeter was subject to a double perception by which, on the one hand, all escaped to the outside, and on the other, all collapsed inside" (126). This typical Smithson

rhetoric, produces an awareness that how one sees and how one thinks depends here entirely on where one stands.⁴¹ I am less interested in the endpoint being one of disorientation (as many critics read Smithson) and more that at each moment the construction changes, modifying itself. How one perceives the site, and perceives in general, is bound to these contingencies.

As if to search the limit of contingency by way of what counts as land art, Nancy Holt created a series of "buried poems" for different friends. Choosing sites reminiscent of the receiver Holt would bury the poem at a particular place then provide the recipient with a hand-marked topographic map, geological details, and photographs. "Buried Poem Number 4" (for Michael Heizer), is captured in three photographs, a series of rock formations at Arches National Park in Utah. An upright rock in the distance is named as "Dark Angel" and Holt photographs that rock through two large holes in nearby rocks, calling them "The Double 0" and "Dark Angel through Double 0 Arch" (Kastner 86). What is significant about these photographs is that the landscape appears to Holt as found. She gives the rock formations names and the "dark angel" is arranged in such a way to make one wonder whether she didn't position the rock herself. In a minimal way, Holt positions herself as finding that which she has created.

⁴¹ see, Alteriri, C. and Terada, R. Review of: *Robert Smithson*. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. 12 Sep.-13 Dec. 2005. *Postmodern Culture*. Volume 15: Number 2. January, 2005.

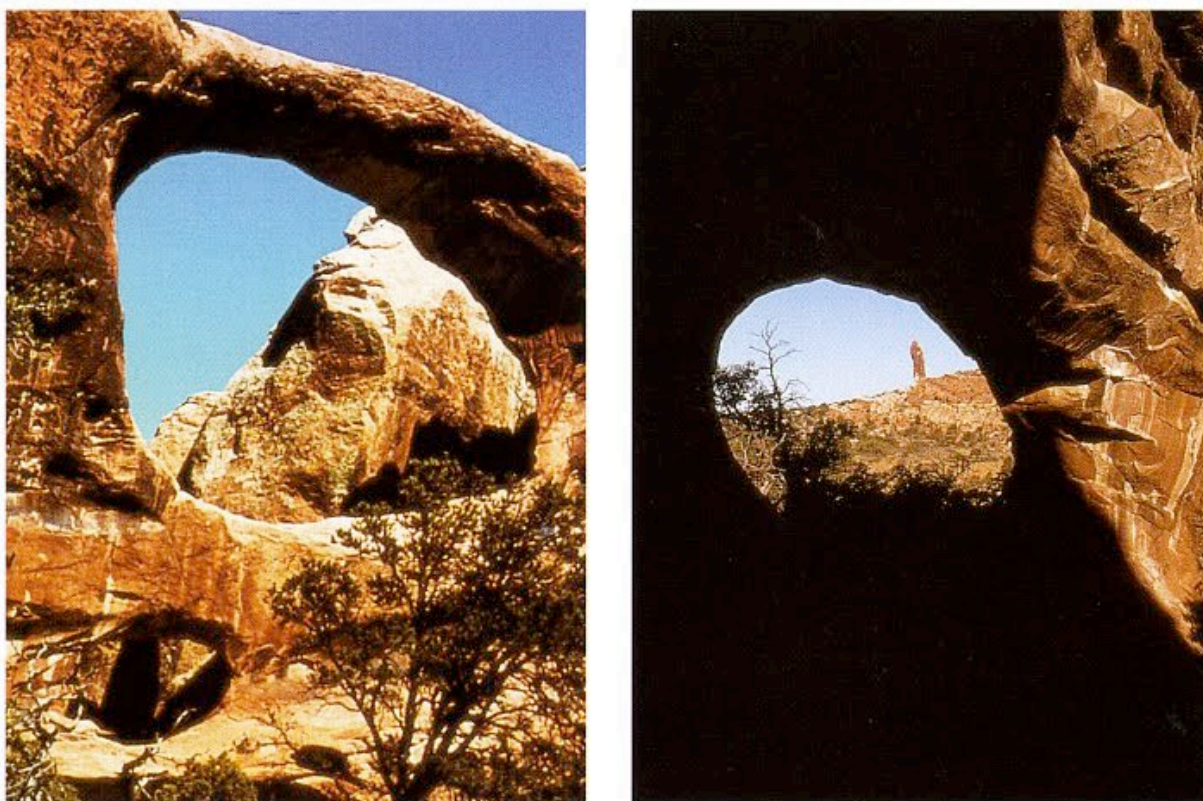


Figure 22: Buried Poem No. 4 ("In Search of the Center")

Holt's gesture looks, from one angle, like a model of appropriation, and from another, like an attempt to reinstall ambiguity. Land Art's interest in rocks (Smithson's library contained volumes on megaliths and the Neolithic period⁴²) can in part be explained by an interest in the meaning of early monumental rock formations, especially whether or not they can be considered natural or cultural at all. As Manuel Calado has argued, "the density of Early Neolithic sites is extremely high in those same areas where standing stones are concentrated, while at the same time they are absent in areas where standing stones are scarce. In the second place, almost all the Early Neolithic settlements are situated in locations where there are notable granitic outcrops" (Scarre 23). In explaining the reason for settlement sites being near rocky outcrops, some scholars have suggested that this is due to the ambiguity that those outcrops enabled. Sometimes

⁴² see his library listed in, Reynolds, Ann. *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere*. 2003.

this would mean that human rock formations would resemble nonhuman ones, often being built with the latter in view. And sometimes the natural outcroppings would be thought of as ruins of previous human made formations. As Calado details, "Bradley [has] proposed not only that the monuments were inspired by natural rock formations, but also that these formations were regarded by Neolithic people as ancestral monuments in ruins" (24).

In arguing against the dominant interpretation, that "the megalithic phenomenon (which was considered only in terms of funerary megaliths) could not have occurred until the development of the agro-pastoral system had reached a mature phase", Scarre suggests that monument building need not be thought of as being aligned with the domestication of the landscape (25). "The first monuments," argues Vicky Cummings, pre-dated the transition to agriculture and "were carefully fitted into a landscape already filled with potent and symbolic places" (107). Cummings shows that not only did topographic features influence monument building in the Mesolithic, but interpretation of what those features meant did too. Indeed, part of this interpretation was the ambiguity of whether the monuments were human or nonhuman. The implication being that there may have been no distinguishing between natural rock outcrops and artificial sculpture. Monuments were, rather, in Cummings terms, evidence of the "negotiation between people and ancestral places" (107). By showing that people believed that "the landscape was already filled with symbolic and constructed places", making one's own did not require a conceptualization of the natural as such (113). While the domination of nature may be thought of as dialectically producing the nature/culture distinction, not all production necessitates it. Instrumentality, we can say, is produced in the thought of extraction, it doesn't precede it—figuratively or otherwise.

Land Art, as evidenced in Holt's "Buried Poems," wants to hold to some of this ambiguity. Like much of postmodernism it can be read as playing on the other side of the nature/culture distinction, i.e., that there is no longer, if there ever was, anything other than cultural production. It is obvious that Land Art is interested in the breakdown of naturalized distinctions that homogenization can produce. As I have argued, Smithson's interest in the geological is a way of equalizing hierarchy and critiquing development—if every intervention in the landscape is a mark, then it can be read in the same way as anything else. At the same time, however, as Oppenheim's work indicates, these marks are violent.

Part of my argument so far has been to show that Land Art needs a notion of landscape to dramatize these relations of deconstruction, appropriation and violence. However, all Land Art treats the landscape as receptive, as holding the marks that occur on it. Smithson's perceptual inversion, that one can think about damage after it is has long passed, is helpful but mournful. The landscape remembers, but it doesn't quite forget. Making marks or reading marks produces relations of permanence that are themselves colonial naturalizations. The imagination of the landscape's persistence, as well as its receptivity to marking, discovers the landscape as continually useable and retains it within a notion of extraction.

One might also note that even when the landscape forgets or when work disappears, it is documented by photographs. Photography is the medium of work on the landscape. The reason for this is that the photograph lasts indefinitely so that certain humans can see what they made, even when they make damaging things. The feeling of complicity is favored over the feeling of ambiguity. The desert is a favored surface because, like Smithson's Passaic, it is always twice-exposed; the exposure of it to the sun, on the one hand, makes reclamation slower and, on the other, imprints it in such a way that makes it seem like a photograph. Indeed, the desert is an

archetypal landscape because it so clearly manifests the quality of receptivity, because it seems like it is an effect of exposure. So marks on the landscape, especially marks that denote the past evidence of extractive value, are re-valored as use-values for critique. Retaining, not only the value of human primacy over nature, but re-inscribing the landscape in an instrumental logic where use is the other-side of exchange. As Jussi Parikka argues symptomatically in *The Geology of Media*, new media culture can be read within a history of making marks, "humans leave their mark, and the earth carries it forward as an archive" (Parikka x).

iii

"Landscape might be seen... as something like the "dreamwork" of imperialism."

W.J.T Mitchell, *Landscape and Power: Second Edition*.

In Robert Smithson's work, words are metaphorized as rocks, ideas are said to decompose into stones, and concepts are thought to break apart into "deposits of gritty reason" (RS, 101). I read Smithson as developing a theory of landscape as the sedimentation of material, so that reading the landscape is like reading history or reading one's mind. Actions that happen on the landscape are also then actions which perform a working through of problems in history or in the mind. The artist who works on the landscape is, as Land Art shows, variously an extractor, a writer, or a depositor. One might call them different kinds of prospectors. In this sense, *Spiral Jetty* is nothing less than the deposition of sediment. Able to hold and accumulate, the landscape is also a place for entropic activity. Sometimes the landscape needs to be dug up, sometimes it needs to be covered, and at others it needs to appear as found. In most cases, it requires constant attention

and heavy-lifting. Playing out most famously in the American West, Land Art is in a continuous, if mostly silent, battle with the frontierism that underlies it. I read Land Art's interest in inscription and excavation as also interests in memory and repression.

There is a photo of Walter De Maria lying face down on the desert floor in between the two chalk lines of his 1968 piece, *Mile Long Drawing*. The piece, two lines ten centimeters wide and 1.1 miles in length, was one of the first "Earthwork" pieces. By lying perpendicular to the chalk, De Maria's body helps frame the piece. Other angles of *Mile Long Drawing* show the two lines receding into the distance seemingly without end. The affect is expansiveness, not exhaustiveness, such that the photo with his body gives off a feeling of relief—it all seems very liberating and very easy. One gets the sense that a discovery has just been made.

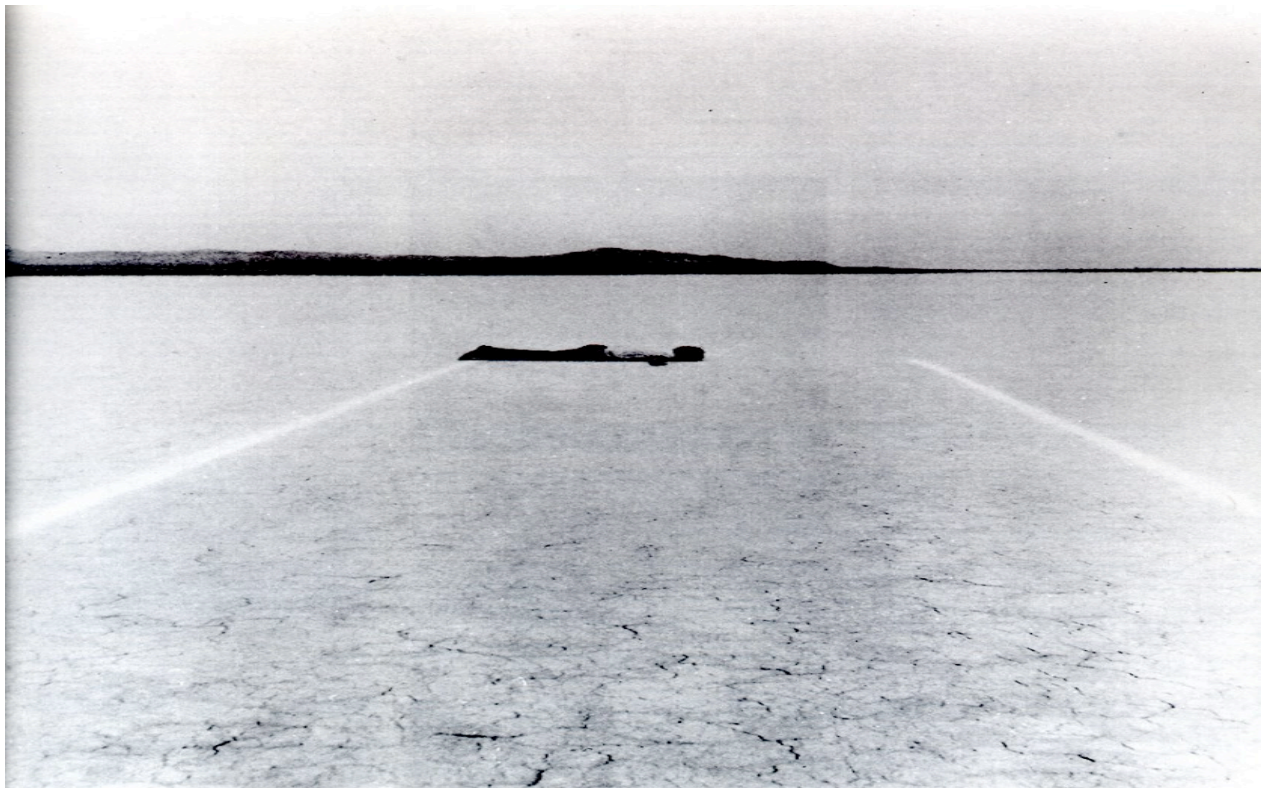


Figure 23: Walter De Maria (*Mile Long Drawing*)

De Maria's work of the following year, *Las Vegas Piece* and *Desert Cross*, were, like *Mile Long Drawing*, simple inscriptions on the landscape. Much of the early Land Art pieces in the desert were done in dry lake beds, which presented dusty but clay-like surfaces suitable for basic inscription (LA, 46-47). As Smithson would later articulate, albeit indirectly, cutting or making incisions into the Mojave desert could be thought of as like painting on a canvas or like writing on a notepad. For *Las Vegas Piece*, De Maria made four cuts: two a mile long and two half a mile long, creating a square. The imposed grid is intersected by naturally formed washes, which, in the photo of the piece taken from above and in black and white, resemble lightening. *Desert Cross*, on the other hand, is a small cross-shape formed by chalk markings. It makes sense that these pieces were some of the first; they were simple, were often made on rented land, and could be destroyed easily. But their gesture was fundamental to the work that would follow: the landscape could be inscribed upon, it could hold that inscription, and that inscription could be thought of as counting as art.

In the same year as De Maria's *Mile Long Drawing*, Michael Heizer, also by now working in the desert of the American West, created his excavation series, *Nine Nevada Depressions* (Kastner 52-53). Rather than De Maria's cuts or inscriptions, Heizer's pieces were made by the excavation and displacement of material. Heizer would dig into the landscape, remove the material he took out, and leave a depression in a variety of shapes. While the majority of the series were shapes leftover after excavation, the depressions for #8 were lined with wood (91). In all cases, the site would "reclaim" the work as the pieces deteriorated—none of these pieces is still viewable as such. But like much of Smithson's work, the process of deterioration back into the landscape was part of the work itself—and in this sense, the work is

still ongoing. "As the physical deteriorates," wrote Heizer, "the abstract proliferates, exchanging points of view" (52).

Important for this series was Heizer's sense that no one was watching. It was if he wanted the feeling that aberrant activity was possible. If you were to make a similar piece in a public park or on a street, some entity or other would come along and fill it back up. To Heizer and others it seemed like there was no such agent here. Because of this absence of management, it seems plausible to Heizer to think that the landscape is, other than him, the only force around. As a result, his work in remote settings can be playful and personal. On early visits to these sites he would ride his motorcycle on the playa, making rings that he would then document and photograph. Yet, Heizer's art, as his method of excavation suggests, is unavoidably defined by struggle and work.

In this final section I consider what kind of work "Earthwork" was. What kind of work, for instance, is inscription and excavation, and why were these the activities thought up to make art? Why do they seem possible, and what are their conditions of possibility? In other words, how was it that the landscape that the early Land artists worked in, presupposed these actions?

In his essay from 1968, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," Smithson lists the means by which Land Art sets to work, "common shovels, awkward looking excavating devices, what Michael Heizer calls "dumb tools," picks, pitchforks, the machine used by suburban contractors" (RS, 101). Why this preoccupation with digging? As we have seen, Smithson thinks this has to do with the geological—the buried and sedimented text. "Embedded in the sediment," writes Smithson, "is a text that contains limits and boundaries that evade the rational order, and social structures which confine art. In order to read the rocks we must become conscious of geologic time, and of the layers of prehistoric material that is entombed in the earth's crust."

(110). The buried text is both evasive and confining, holding back the artist. It also contains "layers" of "material" and is to be "read." As I suggested above, the geological is another way of talking about condensation and over-determination. No wonder then it takes work to get at it.

Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, is located at Rozel Point on the Great Salt Lake in Utah. In his essay "Spiral Jetty" he notes that the site is, "just beyond the Golden Spike Monument, which commemorates the meeting of the rails of the first transcontinental railroad" (*True Fictions* 8). His narration of his car-ride into site details the existence of oil rigs, and, as if seeing his own work, "a series of seeps of heavy black oil more like asphalt occur just south of Rozel Point" (8). Smithson depicts the site as in the process of dematerialization, "roads on the map became a net of dashes," "hills took on the appearance of melting solids," and, "sandy slopes turned into viscous masses of perception" (8).



Figure 24: Spiral Jetty (True Fictions)

Critics have read *Spiral Jetty* in the way Smithson does. "As I looked out at the site," writes Smithson, "it reverberated out to the horizons only to suggest an immobile cyclone... A dormant earthquake spread into the fluttering stillness, into a spinning sensation without movement" (8). Smithson, writes Lynn Cooke, "is suspended in the eternal present" (65). The "gaps" that Smithson speaks of, suggests Cooke, "are passageways akin to Alice's Looking Glass or the Bellman's blank map, in that they are thresholds to an elsewhere" (67). "Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*," writes Reynolds, "needs to refer to nothing outside itself" (75). The Jetty, she says, has "become a monument to instability" (75).

As I have been noting throughout, Land Art retains a disinterested interest in every surface. The spiral, in Smithson's thinking, turns everything into material. Mitchell's suggestion that landscape is the "dreamwork" of imperialism, is also a suggestion about how landscape makes use of material. The "dream-work" writes Freud, "is under some kind of necessity to combine all the sources which have acted as stimuli for the dream into a single unity of the dream itself" (Freud 202). As Sam Weber argues, the manifest and latent content, particular to each dream, are not the essence of the dream, "but only its material" (Weber 3). The work of displacement in the unconscious, replaces psychically important material with indifferent material. And as Eyal Amiran argues, "in Freud, indifferent matter is a colonial construct whose "sickrit" is the naked ideology of empire" (Amiran 113) The work of the "dreamwork" is to transform the latent content into manifest content. The work of analysis, on the other hand, is to the reverse, to translate manifest content into latent dream-thoughts.

In Land Art the colonial text is buried—both inaccessible and with psychic effects. Smithson's writing and his work, like other Land Art, aim unconsciously at the unearthing of this text—preoccupied with it. "Instead of using a paintbrush to make his work, Robert Morris would

like to use a bulldozer," writes Smithson. In *Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva*, Freud says, "there is no better analogy for repression, which at the same time makes inaccessible and conserves something psychic, than the burial which was the fate of Pompeii, and from which the city was able to rise again through the work of the spade."⁴³ How can we think about the work of Earthwork as this kind of work?

Perhaps the best known "earthworks" are Michael Heizer's. Stories of Heizer's reclusivity are infamous, and hardly anyone has ever seen *City*, his work in progress for the last 45 years. If you fly a drone near it, Heizer will shoot it down. Approaching the site one must drive on a dirt road for over an hour and the nearest phone-line is 30-miles away. Heizer's work is economic; the concrete for *City* is mixed on-site and he says he designed *City* to disappear into the landscape, using the soil and rocks already there to build it and blend it into the landscape of Garden Valley. In earlier work, Heizer would cut a hole in the landscape then fill it back up. Like a zero-sum system, each negative is balanced by a positive. In *Displaced, Replaced Mass* (1969), giant boulders sit in already excavated depressions. To get the rock for the replacement Heizer had the side of mountains in the Sierra Nevada dynamited. He described the piece as "creat[ing] an absence and then refill[ing] the same void" (Kastner 121). Like the conscious text, however, they are imperfect translations, ill-fitted attempts at recovery.

⁴³ Freud, S. *Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva*. Green Integer. 2003. p.194 (thanks to Alex Wolfson for this).

Heizer, purchased the land for *City* back in the early 1970s and his work there since has



Figure 25: *City* (Kastner)

been continuous, on the model of therapeutic time. *City* is a complex of "abstract mounds, prismoids, arenas, ramps and pits, partly derived from ancient Mesoamerica, which his father, an anthropologist and archaeologist, excavated" (Goodyear). When he was young Heizer accompanied his father on digs, and cites this as when his interest in "earthwork" began. Descriptions of *City* describe it as a kind of mine, made up of pits and mounds with ramps connecting them.

City, which is almost complete, was recently acquired by LACMA, and will admit its first visitors in 2020. Michael Govan, the director of LACMA, has been raising money for *City* for twenty years. In a recent interview he suggested the work was, "one of our civilization's greatest achievements." "Mike started the idea that you can go out in this landscape and make work that is sublime," he says. "There is nothing more powerful, romantic, and American than these gestures that in Mike's case have taken his whole life" (Kimmelman). Govan's fronteirism is

shared in Heizer's apparent intent to make *City* permanent. "It's part of nature, here for the millennia," he has said. "When they come out here to fuck my *City* sculpture up, they'll realize it takes more energy to wreck it than it's worth" (Kimmelman). What kind of work is the work that happens at *City*?

Some years ago, Federal lawmakers floated a plan to collect all the nation's nuclear waste at nearby Yucca Mountain, via a rail line that would have been constructed through Garden Valley, right next to *City* (Goodyear). It is understood that Heizer, distraught at the idea of a train he didn't want, threatened to destroy the site altogether. The plan was since dropped and Garden Valley is now within the Federally protected as the Gold Butte National Monument. For Freud, "there is a train of thought linking the experience of the dream day (the "recent impression") with the earlier ones" (Freud 646). It is on a train that Freud has the confrontation with the uncanny, in the event of seeing himself in a mirror. Not all trains reach their destination, and in *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud says there can be trains that are "neglected," "suppressed," or "repudiated." Heizer, fearful of a train he is not ready to admit, threatens psychic annihilation.

Like the road to Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, on which you must pass the "Golden Spike," the imperial imaginary of the American West is hard to shake. I haven't been suggesting that Land Art is trying to come to terms with this imaginary by digging into the landscape. This wouldn't be quite possible. Because, as Freud suggests in the Ratman case, the process of excavating begins the process of decay, "Pompeii has only started to decay once it has been unearthed" ("Three Case Histories 45). Rather, my argument has been that interest in the landscape of the American West and what is thought possible to do there, is inseparable from the frontierism which underlies that landscape. The repressed unconscious of American settler-colonialism is both reproduced in the extractive activity of the work here, activity that continues and is

analogous to resource extraction, and is found in the psychic struggle that happens internal to such work.

Finally, Land Art clarifies the work of extraction. What the administration at Kent State, Suncor, and Syncrude have in common is an unspoken recognition that perception of the landscape is always also perception of violence. At the same time, they concede that such is the psychic weight at these sites they can't simply be ignored, erased, or forgotten. They require, like Land Art in the American West, work. The conditions that Land Art shares with resource extraction is that the entire landscape be designated. In some instances agents see this effect as a need for management, in others, like Land Art, agents see this as a way of nominating all marks on the landscape as art. These, of course, describe different resistances. What both share is an understanding that relations of violence require management, and that landscape is one place where this occurs. The infrastructure of this management, what, in other words, determine its conditions of visibility, attempt to control not only what appears but also conceives and delimits justice claims.

Chapter 4

Chantal Akerman and the Closeness of the World

Chantal Akerman's film *De l'autre côté*, her documentary about the Mexican-American border, set in Agua Prieta, Sonora, and in Douglas, Arizona, is about different experiences of the border. There are shots of the border from either side, and interviews with people on either side too. The premise of the film is that the border is constantly in view, even when it is not in shot. Although it is also in shot a lot; one 10-minute long sequence pans the border fence at night as cars queue for the border-crossing. A question for the viewer in this scene and throughout is not how do you view the border but as what kind of border-crosser do you view it? Akerman and her crew, as is obvious, cross without issue, and so already, from the film's inception, one is thrown into this problematic.

The film starts in Agua Prieta, and a series of interviews are interspersed with landscape shots and shots of the border fence. In these early interviews, Akerman comes across as somewhat pointed, pressing the interviewees into stories of family members dying or almost dying trying to cross. "He wanted to go North," she insists in a leading question during an interview with Delfina Maruri Miranda whose son and grandson died in an attempt to cross. Miranda resists the invitation preferring to continue her story of how her son had been keen on making a life in the town, recalling that he had helped rebuild the local school. Rather than talk about her son's death she prefers instead to talk about the wind, how it unsettles the roofs, and how her son had mentioned reinforcing them. "What happened to your brother?" Akerman asks Francisco Santillan Garcia, with a similar sentiment. Akerman seems to want a proximity to the border—here, in stories of the deaths it causes—one that is occasionally not forthcoming. Not

because, I want to suggest, the interviewees aren't thinking about it, but because there is no way for them to be more or less proximate to it. That there is a way for her to be, and potentially for the viewer, is part of the problem of the film.

This difference, between a capacity to move closer, on the one hand, and that not being a question, on the other, is how one might think about the group who, having travelled from Southern Mexico, Akerman films at a restaurant in the town. Reading a prepared statement, they indicate that the thought of the border is incorporative not oppositional. Although they are still in Mexico, they sign their names to what they have written with, "of people who decided to cross over to the other side" (*From The Other Side*, is the film's english title). A signification which, they suggest, carries whether, "on the Mexican side or the American side." The difference between a capacity to move closer or further away, or for those for whom there is no such choice, is also present in the original French title of the film, *De l'autre côté*—translatable either as "of" or "from" "the other side." While the "of" denotes a moveable position, giving form to the spatial notion of sides, "from" is instead the name not for a demarcation as such, but for a perceptual position produced as a relation to the border. However, as its incorporative character makes clear, this relation is a non-relation: unilateral, the border is non-negotiable—there is no way to move "from" it to "of" one side or another. This is why Akerman's initial feeling of proximity is revealing, because it seems negotiable to her.

Another way of saying this would be to say that the difference could be read as a difference in the type of complicity, depending on the viewer. As I suggested in Chapter 2, one's feeling of complicity can lead to a whole series of defensive measures, which can also be perceptual in nature. This defence seems necessary because, as I argued, not only do complicity-thinkers think subjective coherence—for example, as in, the ability to move through loss—is at

stake, but also, and relatedly, so is the coherence of social reality, which requires protection against the violence that underlies it. Thought of like this, these are different *solutions* to problems and conflicts. However, what complicity helps to show, and what it shows here too, is that actually resolving the problem may not be possible. Instead, as Miranda's husband Randolph suggests, the complex is one of grief: "It comes and goes," he says of his son's death, "I haven't gotten over it." This sense of non-resolution, or there being a question as to what resolution would even be, comes across in Akerman's use of landscape. As I showed in the Introduction, landscape in film often appears when there is a question over what is being perceived, and when there is no clear orientation. Again, not because what is perceived is experienced as new, but, rather, because it has been seen before.

Writing in the Introduction to his edited collection, *Landscape and Film*, and about "the difficulty in pinning down the entity that we call "landscape," Martin Lefebvre analogizes the camera's viewfinder to something "that happens when, say, hiking in some wildlife reserve or looking down from the window of a airplane or even driving on some stretch of highway, we look at the natural environment *as if* it were framed" (Lefebvre xv). The already framed character of landscape is interesting to critics because it positions landscape as a representation of a representation. What is revealing in the analogy however is that such a feeling is one that accompanies perception that's not mediated by a camera's lens. While two of Lefebvre's examples (the window of a plane; the windshield of the car) suggest a mediating material, the other (hiking) does not. One could say that by hiking in a "wildlife reserve" they are hiking in a representation, e.g. an already designated space with particular assumptions attached to it, and that this is what is framing, but in saying that, such a quality would have to extend to every perceptual experience.

Yet, Lefebvre doesn't quite seem to intend for the analogy to extend in this way, preferring instead to show that landscape is what appears under certain conditions of constructedness. "What happens in such circumstances can be understood as the construction (or replication) of a form: suddenly the view becomes organized, it "holds" together as a whole, there is either balance or imbalance in the composition, etc. It can now become a landscape." The temporal trajectories here—"suddenly the view becomes"; "it can now become a landscape"—is symptomatic of the problem of wanting to be oriented to such a perception, and to be oriented in general. By suggesting the view is organized, holding together as a whole, Lefebvre shows that he can control the slippage that landscape might otherwise suggest.

Reflecting on the way in which his experience, and thereby representation, of Monument Valley is affected by its character as already-framed, he says: "my own "framing" of the land, the photos I take, are all "contaminated" by my experience and memory of these films, of what that stretch of land [Monument Valley] has come to stand for symbolically" (xvi). While this is no doubt the case, as the previous chapter showed, one can not pick and choose which places are already-framed and which are not, anymore than one can say that something—here, John Ford's film—is exclusively doing the work of framing. Presumably, two things are also going on. First, Monument Valley is being framed by other things, even if they are not intended, or noticed. Second, the way in which Monument Valley is experienced as framed is also occurring in every other landscape. The problem with putting landscape into a trajectory of coming to form as constructed, is that it posits the idea that there is space free from representation. In commenting on the becoming, or having-become, of landscape, Lefebvre says, "form now reigns where previously there stood only the "formlessness" of pure (spatial) continuity." When, or how, was that? It's availability, even as something which is no longer possible, or was never actually

experienced, indicates that it is conceivable that there are only some spaces that are framed. Such a notion loses those for whom the framing is not in question, such as those to whom the proximity of the border is non-negotiable.

In any case, Lefebvre's contention that landscape exists as already-framed appears to be in contradiction to a later essay, "Between Setting and Landscape in the Cinema," where he suggests that, "landscape, at least in the visual arts, is space freed from eventhood" (22) and in which he describes landscape as an "autonomous" aesthetic object. Suggesting that narrative film conceives of setting and not landscape, Lefebvre argues that, "the interruption of narrative by contemplation has the effect of isolating the object of the gaze" (29). And further, "[the] emancipation of landscape from its supporting role as background or setting, "establishes the condition of its emergence as a completely distinct aesthetic object" (23). Again, such a movement of alienation assumes that it is possible to move further away.

As I suggested in the Introduction, landscape is often what appears at the point of a question. In-between the early interviews, Akerman has recourse to landscape shots, where, for instance, what is being looked at is hard to establish, and where intervention in it would make no sense (fig. 25).



Figure 25: Kids playing (*From the Other Side*)

These long still shots, dramatize what orientation one could have to them and one struggles to do anything with them (fig. 26). What is the demand, if any, placed on perception here? Coming just after Francisco's telling us that his brother never came back, one could read them as an intermediary point. But, as a static or melancholic response to that news, I think there is more going on.



Figure 26: Main drag (*From the Other Side*)

Later in the film a low-level pan stays close to the ground. The shot is at night and it is difficult to know what is happening. This feeling is broken slightly as the sound from border patrol agents communicating comes into the background of the shot. In this sequence, as in the static shots, what is in question is not whether or not the border is crossable, any more than it is a question of finally being done with it. What these different landscape shots show—the static long stills of the town; the slow pans of the landscape—is that what comes and goes, like Randolph's grief, counts as not getting over, just as, in a different way, when something is static counts as not getting over it too. These perceptual experiences, I want to suggest, occur precisely because there is no negotiation to be had. That said, they are still here—enough, in other words, for an image. Different ways of not getting over it are then more meaningful than getting over it versus not getting over it, and there is no overlap with this latter demand.

How might such a reading of these scenes fit next to contemporary ideas of visuality and theories of perception? I am thinking of theories of perception, which see the visual field as a

territory, map, or cartographic space in which the viewing subject intervenes. Alexander Galloway, borrowing from Fredric Jameson, suggests such an orientation—"a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole"—becomes necessary at the point at which history, "[engulfs] the subject" (Galloway viii). "[The cognitive map], writes Galloway, "is subject formation plain and simple, as the individual negotiates his or her own orientation within the world system" (viii). Nicholas Mirzoeff suggests, complementarily, that "visualizing," or "visuality," comes from the 18th Century military general Thomas Carlyle, who required a theory of perception, "as the battlefield became too extensive and complex for any one person to physically see" (*The Right to Look*). For Mirzoeff, visuality is composed of a series of operations which serve to classify, separate, and aestheticize. Motivated by an attempt to naturalize ("aestheticize" in Mirzoeff's phrase) power relations, visuality functions by imposing a division of labor and social hierarchy on the visual field. Disciplining and ordering vision, it culminates in Guy Debord's "spectacle," "capital accumulated to the point where it becomes an image" (22).

The dynamic between a system which visualizes and subjects who are visualized, is played out perceptually in the film. At one moment, there is a shot of the border fence where part of the fence is open—there are poles, but nothing between them. The shot is split by a tree in the foreground and border agents stand on one side while local residents stand on the other. In the film, all shots of the border from the Mexican side look West, so the border is on the right, to the North. When the film crosses over, the only shot of the border looks East, and the border is on the right, to the South. Behind the border agents in this shot are two patrol cars and a further fence behind that. The fixity here, and that designated by always looking in certain directions, is

further established by the difference Akerman performs between the perceptual practices of the border agents and those who are not them. During the film, as if to index this difference, Akerman returns to the scene which the tree splits, albeit from an increasing distance, and at different times of the day, four more times.

A series of moments throughout the film highlights the perspective of the field the border agents see. In one scene at night, the camera follows a patrol helicopter as it searches for border-crosses, eventually fixing on its searchlight and following it as it holds over a group of two. At another, the camera crew trails a border agent who is searching the desert with his flashlight and being given directions via walkie-talkie. And in the penultimate scene of the film, surveillance footage is used and the bodies of border-crosses are found, illuminated on the desert floor through a night-vision camera. Throughout, there are also shots of patrol cars sitting under towering searchlights, run by generator. These techniques of illumination, are a theory for how to intervene in the landscape perceptually. Rhetorically, they scan looking for the bodies of migrants.

Extending Mirzoeff's argument (influenced by Michel Foucault's "panopticism"), Jonathan Beller suggests that not only is the visual field organized in certain ways that are conducive to capture and intervention, such as that performed by the border agents, but that perception itself is (Beller). For Beller, *perception as such* is inseparable from value-production. Jonathan Crary has written also extensively on how subject constitution is visually organized. Arguing against the template of a self-present contemplative subject, Crary has shown how technological change always aims at making the subject visually productive. "What is important to institutional power, since the late nineteenth century, is simply that perception function in a way that insures a subject is productive, manageable, and predictable, and is able to be socially

integrated and adaptive” (*Suspensions of Perception* 4). This adaptiveness, as Crary also points out, relies not on fixity but on mobility, "the mobile glancing eye is what preserves the preconstructed character of the world" (300). Similar to Crary then, for Beller, not only is the cinema a place where "we perform value-productive labor," but, "we confront the logistics of the image wherever we turn—imaginal functions are today imbricated in perception itself" (CP, 1). On this view, such is the saturation of capital's accumulative processes, we internalize them, creating value for capital every time we see. In Crary's terms, this fits with a remaking of the visual field, "not into a tabula rasa on which orderly representations could be arrayed, but into a surface of inscription on which a promiscuous range of effects could be produced. The visual culture of modernity would coincide with such techniques of the observer” (*Techniques of the Observer* 90).

However, as I have suggested, there are more positions than those who surveil the border and those who don't. More positions too, than the internalization of this demand or its expressed rejection, as in the position formed in Mirzoeff's countervisuality, or "right to look." For Beller, and at times Crary, perception overlaps completely with the demands placed on it. What I am staging then, is to ask what is happening, in these terms, in *From the Other Side* when the demand, such as with the border, is not in question, but where perceptual experiences transverse to it happen nonetheless?

One is left to wonder whether Beller's expanded sense of "cinema," that which, "refers not only to what one sees on the screen or even to the institutions and apparatuses that generate film but to that totality of relations that generates the myriad appearances of the world on the six billion screens of “con-sciousness” (Beller 14), could admit such perceptions. Indeed, in *De l'autre côté* landscape seems to be a perception of this limit, the limit of the totalization that

Beller proposes. In my terms, even if one wants to accept ideas or notions of totalization, if everything were already subsumed it wouldn't be possible to speak of it rather than something else. Deconstructing itself, totalization, at the very least, yields a perception of this inability, that is, the limit to totalization. And as I showed in Chapter 2, as soon as complicity is registered as a limit to intervention, rather than a resource for movement, as *part* or in service of reality's demand, it has certain effects.⁴⁴ While Beller's theory, and to a different extent Crary's, assume constant participation in productive activity, a constancy of effectivity and realization, on my reading in Akerman such a realization is itself in question.

⁴⁴ Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle, return both to Jameson's "cognitive mapping" from *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* and to landscape in their 2015 *Cartographies of the Absolute*. For example a saturated image, or a banal image, are undesirable because neither easily provides resources for this form of movement.

Accordingly, landscape for Kinkle and Toscano, implicitly working as an aesthetic category of representation, is right to the extent that it grasps the importance of spaces of abstraction; those less visible spaces such as subdivisions, ports, shipping containers, and so on. By doing so landscape thereby images a contemporary antagonism: a certain operation of capital in its logistical form. However, it is wrong to the extent that it dwells there, and does not move on. Although what appears may be "less visible," its lack of vibrant visibility is due to the way in which logistics, as the organization of contemporary capital, creates spaces that "are not there to be seen" (235). It follows then that the symptoms are merely harder to find, and the task still must be to move from their "less visible" appearance to their underlying cause. As such landscape is either "scoured for traces," or "when it is not," "[its] indeterminacy is most often coded as indifference: the indifference of modularity and iteration across social spaces" (227). In the first sense, landscape indicates traces, here as symptoms; in the second, the appearance of indifference at the heart of landscape is another name for concrete abstraction. Landscape is then taken as an attempt "to diagrammatically map—and make visible—the invisible yet ubiquitous relations of power" (294), even, and especially when, those are harder to find.

But isn't this the outcome only if all landscape is, is a perspective of concrete abstraction? A perspective, in other words, that must provide enough for dialectical movement to move-on? For Toscano, Kinkle, and Jameson the relation must be explainable, and so suffers when it is blurred in a fundamental way. Toscano and Kinkle are right to see that landscape is in relation to totality—it may have something to say about abstraction. They are right too to note the danger of the collapse between artistic and social abstraction as a real one. But beyond that it may have something else to say also, even if that is about saturation or impasse. The anxiety that Toscano and Kinkle experience when considering the import of these visual texts, is the anxiety of landscape: that it is not clear what it gives, and as a result it may not do enough. Not doing enough, is to them, the mediated affect of totality: ""Landscape" [to the fukieron theorists] is the closure of the space of politics and experience by capital, nation, state. Hence the relentless face-off between its imperviousness (232) and the violence or sexuality of individuals who, in the end, leave no trace" (233). Leave no trace. Or no dialectizable one—same difference. For landscape the barrier is real, not a failing of form.

Oshima's *The Man Who Left His Will on Film*, a film they refer to, helps clarify my position. Rather than inducing action, the "actuality" or landscape shots are shown to be not re-createable. They are not unlocatable, or indiscernible, they are unmappable. They thereby question the epistemology of cartography itself. They require a "Unilateral Withdrawal," says Takaaki Yoshimoto. But to where? That they or such a place cannot be found, Yatsuko suggests, means she has "won": "I didn't see his landscapes." That they weren't evident to her indexes both a failure of externalization in their production—a success means she could have seen them—and at the same time, a problematizing of her paradigm of perception—that there is something to find. Landscape is an epistemology of perception, just one that doesn't move in a progressive way. They fail, in other words, to themselves be "landscape-altered." See, Kinkle, Jeff and Toscano, Alberto. *Cartographies of the Absolute*. London, UK: Zone Books, 2015.

Chantal Akerman's documentary film is a special case in investigating this problem because so much of it is so uneventful that it can only be read as having already dropped solvability a norm. Her performative refrains, "I hope people can stand it!" (A 260), come across like a nervous compensation on behalf of others for this realization. So it makes sense that the films in Akerman's retroactively named "trilogy," of which *From The Other Side* is the third (preceded by *South* (1998) and *From The East* (1993)), focus on political situations where the kind of available action is ambiguous.

This chapter attempts to begin to articulate a contrary visual regime to the one formed by Chapters 1 and 2 and the one complicated by Chapter 3. To do so it challenges that regime's dominant assumptions. First, that debates about distinction cling, in the last instance, to the form of what exists. In fact, distinction requires protection so that normative activity can continue. Second, that transitions are self-evident. It is important, as Chapter 2 showed, not only to leave some conflicts in the past, but to *have an idea of the past as a place where something can be left at all*. And third, that it is possible to construct a limit to something. Again, as Chapter 2 indicated, leaving aside such a limit as unthinkable is an essential component of understanding oneself as part of one's coherent self and the social reality to which that self is inextricably linked. These assumptions make a perceptual and historical argument about ongoing destruction, treating it as fungible.

This chapter attempts to give language to a positive notion of non-fungible ongoing destruction, by challenging these three assumptions. As I have argued throughout, constructions of transitions aim to say when something stops—demarcating temporal distinctions attached to destruction. Constructions of limits, on the other hand, indicate when something is irresolvable

and should be moved on from. Visual regime 1 operates then with a strong notion of irredeemability, with which one cannot stay, suggesting that already damaged things are so damaged further destruction is negligible. Past saving, there is nothing to see. In this chapter, I show how by putting into question the possibility of always making perceptual distinctions, that which was previously withdrawn from being claimable is claimable in a new way. Turning to scenes of damage which suggest intra-temporal effects, Akerman implicitly suggests that aspects of that history which *appear as irrevocable or past* only add to the determinations. Finally, when limits are put in question and one stays in situations which are otherwise futile, and perhaps previously intolerable, Akerman shows that perceptual problems persist precisely when there is not any clear orientation to how one might position themselves to it. By showing how the return of problems that remain unsolved happens perceptually, this chapter argues that conflicts over damage are productive of images.

i

While remarking upon the film in an interview, Akerman stumbles upon an admission: "And, you know, that's why I did *From The Other Side* in Mexico [rather than in Europe]. When something is too close, you just can't *see* it; and I thought that at the Mexican-American border I would be able to have a better look at the whole European situation, the whole world situation" (MacDonald 272). It would perhaps be too straightforward to interpret Akerman here as saying she needs to find a place to film far away from Europe so that she may film Europe. Instead, if we take the slippage in her admission seriously, "the whole European situation, the whole world situation," we are left, following the logic, with the paradox of needing to find a place to film that would not be *too close to the world*. Akerman is in the difficulty of a cinema after

globalization—a cinema of the "world situation." The problematic root of which here, "Europe," is relativized so it is only another name, or root, for the inability to be able to see the world. The ostensible necessity for remove, "so as to have a better look" so that one can "*see*," as Akerman puts it, soon proves to be symptomatic of a problem of film itself.

In the film one could be forgiven for reading the many shots of the border, as a performance of this closeness. The border is returned to so many times in the film, and at such a close distance, that the viewer starts to see how it catches the light at different times of day. However, early in the film a shot that pans perpendicular to the border seems to turn 180 degrees away from it, panning slowly along a row of houses, which presumably face the fence. We are led to assume that the border is now behind where we are looking but is, as a result, not directly in view. The longest shot of the film rolls past the border fence for minutes on end, before retracting slightly to show three rows of cars that wait in a queue to go through. An archetypal Akerman shot, the duration means we comprehend the border in waves—the shot's quality is one of desistance. Not merely a fluctuation in comprehension, however, she is waiting for the things we comprehend to wash away. Eventually, the camera turns from the border crossing. Leaving the station gate and heading back through town at night we see the side of a parked truck so closely you can make out the nails on its exterior. A man stands in front of a restaurant facade with his hands in his pockets. By staying so long with the border and the turning away from it, it is carried into the shots where it is not.

As these shots suggest, even when the border isn't in shot it always feels in view (fig. 27).



Figure 27: Looking away from the crossing (*From the Other Side*)

The feeling of the presence of that which is structuring, even if it is not perceptible as such, like the border in *From The Other Side*, is a feeling of what I am referring to as the closeness of the world. By insisting when it is looked at *and* desisting when it is not, the border is self-evident on the one hand, and spectral on the other. In fact, it is this very self-evidence that is its most spectral quality—the sense that one knows something is there. And in the film, the dispersal of its pressure always seems to be apparent.

However, like the barber in *From The Other Side*, who, after cutting the hair of a man while he is being interviewed, sits in the chair and looks at the camera silently, *doing* nothing, the world here is in repose. Although, as above, the border is carried into the shots where it is not, equally, the inverse is true. And as our comprehension washes away, we return to something

else. Repose is the figure for something which is there but often only spectrally, like an atmosphere or a pressure. At the same time, repose is this limit. Thought of like this, repose is the idea of the duality of pressure and relief—the continuation of the coercion of the world but in a less dynamic way. It is less dynamic because it is not question, e.g. can desist into a background or get close to disappearing altogether. The perception of a paused but intensive force is what Akerman captures in figures 26 & 27 above.

By filming like this Akerman registers political situations, like the context of the border town, not because she resists normativity, but because she doesn't—because she does *nothing* with them. Such a technique allows her to register non-oppositional forms of violence; those that are pervasive or those that don't have to show to have an effect. She thereby does something with what we don't, or can't, see. What I want to highlight is that there are two experiences here, related to, as I noted above, the relation to the border being one of non-relation. The first, as I have been suggesting is that the border is also in the spaces where it is not. The second, is that this pervasiveness, its quality of non-relation, e.g. that one can't position themselves to it, allows for a perception that need not engage it. While the former is oppressive, insisting in every space, the latter, is not.

Describing a situation which is both simultaneously oppressive and potentially not, Theodor Adorno, writing about Beckett's *Endgame*, suggests that at such a moment, "the distinction between absolute domination—the hell in which time is completely confined within space, in which nothing changes anymore—and the messianic state in which everything would be in its right place, disappears" (*Notes to Literature* 274). Such a breakdown prompts Adorno to endorse Hamm's consolation: "Clow: There are so many terrible things now. Hamm: No, no, there are not so many now" (274). In such a situation, it would be a relief just to see less of the

destruction. But if relief might seem like an occasion to stop looking, Akerman shows that it, where "nothing happens," is in fact a place to start. Whereas Adorno's association of "absolute domination" with "the messianic state," at first comes across as an acknowledgement that "nothing changes anymore" *and* that everything could, Akerman's films lose even that simultaneity. If for Adorno, the "hell" of complete confinement, that which encloses everything, paradoxically releases that which was thought to be otherwise futile, for Akerman, "futility is no longer a reason for not looking."⁴⁵

Once again, this contrasts with, for instance, the dialectics—a dialectic of enlightenment or that between civilization and barbarism—at work in Chapter 2, such as in Lauren Berlant's attachment to the horizon of optimism that is the "good life." Similarly, as Adorno's *endorsement* of Hamm's comment shows, *there is still something to endorse*. In other words, there is a way to orient oneself to the destruction. Akerman, on the other hand, declines to endorse what is otherwise occurring. By not making demands that are to be met, such a perspective seeks a registration of non-affirmation—even if that claim is futile.⁴⁶ Paradoxically then, to acknowledge a relation as *un-chosen*—to the border, to the destruction all around—can produce a position that thereby does something other than merely accept it. The pressure of a such situation, one which is perceptible at but looked at in a way that is unattached from an idea of intervention or resolution, *comes back precisely as the closeness of the world*.

Steven Shaviro, writing in *The Cinematic Body*, argues that film is, "inescapably literal. Images confront the viewer directly, without mediation. What we see is what we see" (Shaviro 25). Shaviro suggests this is the dangerous or "masochistic" kernel of film—"affect as immanent evaluation," suggest Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze). Film, in other words, is potentially the medium

⁴⁵ This phrase is Rei Terada's, see "The Image Beyond Futility," at <http://workwithoutdread.blogspot.co.uk/>

⁴⁶ This idea, like much of this chapter, is influenced by Francois, Anne-Lise, "Toward a Theory of Recessive Action," in *The Literature of Uncounted Experience*. Stanford, CA: SUP, 2008.

for what I am referring to as the unchosen aspect here. In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze suggests that the cinema of the movement-image has protected against perceptual experiences like these, "we have schemata for turning away when it is too unpleasant, for prompting resignation when it is terrible and for assimilating when it is too beautiful. It should be pointed out here that even metaphors are sensory-motor evasions, and furnish us with something to say when we no longer know what to do" (Deleuze 20). Such evasions block what we don't want to see. For Deleuze, motivated by defending against a point when "we no longer know," the movement-image is formed by an infrastructure of protection. "But if our sensory motor schemata jam or break," he says, "then a different type of image can appear: a *pure* optical sound image, *the whole* image without metaphor, brings out the thing in itself, *literally*, in its *excess* of horror or beauty, in its radical or unjustifiable character... the factory is a prison, school is a prison, *literally*, not metaphorically" (20).⁴⁷

I stage this to suggest that one way of thinking about what am I calling closeness or what I have previously referred to as the insistence or desistance of the image is potentially proximate to what Deleuze and Shaviro suggest is the nature of film itself. Deleuze, for instance, argues that, "a purely optical and sound situation," what for Deleuze is characteristic of the time-image, "does not extend into action, nor is it induced by an action it makes us grasp... something intolerable and unbearable... something has become too strong in the image" (18). Shaviro, like Deleuze, suggests that what film does is remove the border of relation, where relation means mediation whatsoever. "I am violently, viscerally affected by *this* image and *this* sound, without being able to have recourse to any frame of reference, any form of transcendental reflection, or any Symbolic order" (Shaviro 31). Film, writes Shaviro, produces "a new *automatism* of perception" (34).

⁴⁷ Italics mine

However, in my discussion of the border, which I said is in view even when it is not, I also suggested that a simultaneous perception becomes available. Shaviro and Deleuze seem mostly interested in the former, that which insists. Endorsing Blanchot's idea that "vision is no longer the possibility of seeing, but the impossibility of not seeing" (47), Shaviro suggests that, "I am powerless not to see" (47). While I am interested in what is also seen when something is not seen directly, Shaviro follows the Deleuzian line to suggest that this also means one is without interpretation during such moments. As he suggests, "my responses... are forced upon me from beyond" (48), and, "images literally assault the spectator, leaving him or her no space for reflection" (49). What gets constructed here is not simply a theory of perception that lets in things that don't appear as such, but a subject who must be able to bear it all too. As in Deleuze, the subject is constituted by these movements through them.

One way to think about the type of perception in Akerman's "trilogy" is to think of it as a perception that stays—a cinema of staying rather than "a cinema of seeing."⁴⁸ The concern in her films is then not only time when it is not covered over by movement in space, as in Deleuze, but also, time when "nothing happens." Like the coercive world in repose, "nothing happens" is a way of thinking about a situation which seems to be without change. While the insistence of such a problem is itself a feature of film, as in Deleuze and Shaviro, one might also wonder about its limit. In Deleuze this limit goes by the name "indiscernibility," but I am interested here in what happens after that—what does solutionlessness look like? A complementary feature of film then, is *what images appear* at this limit—in the continuation, however light, of the world. The kinds of passivity and immediacy that Deleuze and Shaviro propose seem insufficient to the perceptual experiences that *return*, already with the weight of having happened before and thereby eminently interpretable.

⁴⁸ "A cinema of seeing replaces action," says Deleuze in *Cinema II*.

My suggestion is that this becomes available *only when* that which is felt as coercive is felt as something that is unavoidable because one can't oppose it or negotiate with it. In Roland Barthes' phrase such relation may represent a "hyperdemand," "defined by the point where more energy is required to say *no* than to do the thing requested," and, defined by the "hallucination of being targeted" (Barthes 205). To think that one could respond freely to such a pressure would require the dream that not only is there no cost to speaking, but that there is no discursive violence in the first place. Rather, the energy to say no, would need what activists refer to as a "safe space," room enough for the registration of otherwise overwhelming perceptions—a place, in other words, to stay. These shots are readable in scenes of "closeness," but only if that closeness is shown as a proximity that one cannot even get closer to, nor solve. In *De l'autre côté*, landscape is the repository for otherwise overwhelming perceptions. The practice is double: shots as places to stay, and the practice of finding places to stay however temporarily. Engaging with what cannot be changed, or with what would require total overhaul, is costly. As such, the capacity *not* to move-along can be the most difficult and require the most effort. It shouldn't be surprising then that very little happens there, it's enough for it to happen at all.

If "nothing happens" comes to be associated with Akerman—as it is in the title of Ivone Marguiles' book-length study on her—then we would need to also have a way of asking what it is *doing*. After all, that nothing happens *itself happens*. And as soon as we self-represent the confusion over whether anything is happening or not, we are already after it. Confusion would be the quality of a representation that we make to ourselves, allowing for a consciousness of our self-difference to what we see. The moment of return that allows for self-difference here, recalls Jacques Derrida's *revenant*—both "a ghost," and, "that which comes back"—undermining the supposition of a realist subject to which an everydayness would refer (*Specters of Marx 2*).

Consciousness of reality—especially when the reality is meant to appear as most "real"—shows itself as a perception that is simultaneous with representation. That there can be no perception that is not mediated in such a way, shows that mediation is therefore unavoidable without from perception, allowing for return.

Often slow, weak, or momentarily forgettable, Akerman's film is one of expansion and contraction, of ever-present duress and of transience. The effect, on the one hand, is to group images together in an almost incessant activity, like collecting ever-more keys to an unknown lock, and on the other, to not bother with the lock at all, to turn around and see the closed room before you.⁴⁹ The films in her "trilogy" that I discuss here all attend to the stretching, spreading out, or atmospheric quality that a situation without apparent change produces. It is a situation whose pressure Akerman shows is not negatable in any normal way. As such, without a punctual moment, nor an oppositional position, this pressure distends—a swelling caused by the pressure of being inside—temporally, allowing for a perspective. Often what appears to happen is nothing, but rather than reading such a scene pejoratively, I read "nothing happens" as an indication of an epistemological position. In Akerman, image formation is an epistemology and "nothing happens" is its opening gambit.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ This duality, of activity and stasis, inheres in Akerman's "trilogy," but also quite clearly in two of her more recent installation works, *Maniac Summer* (2009) and *Maniac Shadows* (2013). "Maniac" is the term for the former piece's restlessness—a four channel video projection encompassing 96 images of the street, the beach, the home, the hotel, and so on—, but also the term for the former piece, shot only from the vantage point of her Paris apartment. Here, "Shadows" and "Summer" are what is seen; "maniac" is the quality that the world gives them.

⁵⁰ Critics have tended not to pick up on this, preferring to read Akerman as privileging genericness and everydayness in a realist, or hyperrealist style. This latter term is Ivone Maguiles'. Writing in her book, (Maguiles, Ivone. *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996) Maguiles describes hyperrealism as a supplement to mere realist representation. "The oscillation between (or rather coexistence of) representational and literal registers can be further proposed as the hyperrealist factor intrinsic to Akerman's cinema" (45). For Marguiles, hyperrealism reaches the cliché, "the notion of the cliché is helpful in understanding the subversive powers of cinematic hyperrealism, its peculiar sandwiching of literalness and representation" (84). Marguiles suggests that Akerman's hyperrealism thereby reinvests, repeats, and changes the "original" literal representation. In my reading, what Marguiles refers to as a "textual" understanding cannot simply be additional to a "realist" one, it must question the possibility of a realist representation altogether. The way Marguiles reads the former is as an addition, that is, as still delimited and included by it. For instance, in her reading

D'est/From The East, Akerman's film about Eastern Europe at the end of the Soviet Union, perhaps more than any other of her films confronts the difficulty of thinking about perception in this way. In Akerman's recording of her journey from East Germany to Moscow, it is the figure of waiting that dominates. In bus queues, ration lines, and in train station halls, Akerman shows that waiting too is a retroactive experience. Challenging the notion that waiting is intermediary or transitional it is, as *From The East* shows, also a quasi-permanent condition—a space of self-address.



Figure 28: Waiting hall (*D'est*)

In *24/7*, Jonathan Crary suggests that *From The East* represents a memory of a period when, "the underlying rhythms of social time [had been allowed] to persist unchanged" (*Late Capitalism* 124). For Crary, conversely, "24/7" is "the delusion of a time without waiting," and *From The East* is helpful in his reading because of its refutation of that mode—it represents a

of *From The East*, Marguiles suggests that the hyperealist effect, "reverberates against the limits of the contemporary myth of Eastern Europe" (202). If action itself has become an ambiguous aim in contemporary film this is also because of doubts over what the political field is to which such things may be included. And in fact, as I argue here, that something other than "reality" is being registered is essential to understanding Akerman's work.

moment before "change". To stage this argument using *From The East*, Crary, contrary to my reading of Akerman, needs then to equate waiting with subjective contemplation, and time with persistence. "*From The East*," he argues, "is the testament of a social world, however damaged, prior to the imposition of neoliberal financialization, privatization, and social atomization" (123). This somewhat straightforward opposition, of "24/7's" acceleration with *From The East's* slowing, in fact belies the important discovery of contemporary time which 24/7 actually helps to articulate. Crary makes the argument throughout that in many ways "24/7" is not an overwhelming and persistent phenomenon—not all neon lights and overstimulation. It is often, in fact, "neither irritating nor invigorating" (56). Indeed, that is part of why it is so difficult.

What Crary shows in *24/7*, and what his reading of *From The East* absolves, is to think about the consequence of perception really being organized in such a way as to overlap *totally* with the demands placed upon it (as I noted above in regard to Beller). The far end of this type of reshaping would be to align the tasks posed by contemporary capitalism with all perceptive tasks, so that nothing could be seen outside it—no remainder and no reminder. However, rather than memorializing a time before "neoliberal financialization" and its attendant perceptual frame, what Crary reads in Akerman as a certain rhythm of slowness, is in fact better conceived of not as the calmness of not much happening, but because there are *multiple things going on*. In her essay accompaniment to the installation piece based on the film she elucidates such a perspectival position.

Writing about the changing difficulties of communicating via telephone to the East as it became easier to do so, Akerman explains how the new technological ease created other resistances elsewhere: "Of course, [now] you can say anything you want, it seems, but what you have to say—or rather what they have to say, they don't feel like saying" (*Bordering on Fiction*

33). Instead, they default, she explains, to stories of hardship, like waiting hours for bread. As they do, she continues, "often they are laughing, but not always. In their laughter there is much that draws me to these people. And yet, beneath this laughter you get a sense of impending disaster. It is impending from week to week but never comes—quite simply, perhaps, *because it is already there*. But since you're always waiting for it, and you've lived through worse, you don't realize what's happening. That is probably why I said earlier that it is not too late [to film], even if one day they officially announce the disaster" (34). What Akerman suggests here is that their laughter, like what they don't feel like saying, is full of awareness. This awareness, an already-there-ness, however, does not produce a clear perception but produces a kind of confusion about what's happening. A confusion formed because there are multiple points of origination: you've always been waiting; you've lived through worse; laughing, but not always. In other words, there is too much going on.

The difficulty of comprehending in general might be one reason why *From The East* can feel so demanding. The film is anxiety-inducing not because it necessarily reveals troubling instances, but precisely because it doesn't expose anything—because there is no displacement of lesser perceptions to more significant ones. Such a position is completely contrary to the visual regime outlined in Chapter 1, where perception was inseparable from use. If, as in Chapter 1 and 2, damage falls out of visual regimes, by extending potential significance to every image, *D'est* returns to damage a condition of visibility not previously seen so far. In the film, the feeling this produces is at times light, at others exhausting; some images stick, some you forget. In this way, *From The East* is a film about the cost of a situation in which even the most straightforward psychic registration is counted (fig. 29).



Figure 29: Snow bank (*D'est*)

In light of this, *From The East* quickly becomes difficult to talk about because it no longer makes sense to say some images are meaningful, meaningless, or less meaningful for appearing more meaningless than others. This is one effect of staying with problems that are don't necessarily bear solving. As above, the situation is like this because there is so much potentially happening. In *D'est* landscape primarily appears in intermediary or transitional spaces. However, rather than merely appearing as just that, e.g. transitional or intermediary, on the way to something else, we can understand these situations are potentially born of conflicting relations. While in *D'est* a lot of images may appear the "same", we can instead say that the sameness looks different each time if we think of those images as not coming from a particular place or for a particular reason. This is another way of saying, as I indexed in the Introduction that questions about distinction return, and return each time (fig. 29).



Figure 30: Street at night (*D'est*)

In *D'Est* Akerman suggests that she wanted to film Eastern Europe, "while there's still time" (B 17). Later in the same essay she extends her meaning, "I was saying: while there's still time." Time for what, and why? Time before the Western "invasion" becomes too blatant? As if there had been a before and after, before and after the Ice age or the cold war" (22). Akerman's own interrogation of her phrase, a reason for filming, exposes "while there's still time" as a non-temporally delimited expression of time to see. Or, in other words, a non-teleological expression of time.⁵¹ That is, one without end or without beginning. "Of course," she adds a page later, "there is no pure "before" that would now be perverted or contaminated" (23). *In From The*

⁵¹ Indeed, for Walter Benjamin, only images *not* in a historicist frame can in fact be called images (*Bilden*) at all. The association of images not in a teleological continuity, recalls Benjamin's notion of *Erkennbarkeit*, or recognizability. Images, "become legible only at a particular time," says Benjamin, which, "entails a particular critical point of movement within them." Benjamin calls this movement "standstill," a particular form of "nothing happens." see, Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Eiland and McLaughlin trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. p.463.

East, Akerman's consistent interest in moments of suspension⁵²—that which could be held "while there's still time"—is too a realization of such moments' impermanence.

What I have been calling "the closeness of the world," threatens, in the way that Crary worries about above, to overdetermine the act of perception such that you almost can't remember what was there before it—disappearance is in danger of no longer being memorable. However, that something can be seen here, or that there is a perception attached to this feeling, is the minimal condition of looking at all:

... and it is white winter and the vast sky, and a few sillouhettes... hint at something of this world in disarray, as if after a war, where getting through each day seems a victory. This may seem terrifying and insignificant, but in the midst of all this I will show faces which as soon as their eyes are isolated from the masses, express something still untouched, and often the opposite of this uniformity which strikes you sometimes... They are still faces that offer themselves, occasionally effacing the feeling of loss of a world poised on the edge of the abyss, which sometimes takes hold of you when you cross the East as I have just done it ("Narration").

By returning significance to every least perception, and by showing that feelings of disappearance have perceptual qualities too, she raises the stakes of making distinctions between useful and not-useful, or present and not-present. In "These on the Philosophy of History," Walter Benjamin suggests that, "the chronicler who narrates events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever

⁵² In naming suspension as an undecidable moment and privileging experience, I follow Derrida's distinctions, "the antinomy here better deserves the name of aporia insofar as it is neither an "apparent or illusory" antinomy, nor a dialectizable contradiction in the Hegelian or Marxist sense, nor even a "transcendental illusion in a dialectic of the Kantian type," but instead an interminable experience" (A 16).

happened should be regarded as lost to history” (*Selected Writings* 390). It is worth dwelling on the potential similarity here. The way I am reading Akerman would seem to agree that nothing should be regarded as lost, *and*, that nothing has been. *"Nothing" happens, and happens all the time*. However, while Benjamin wants to withhold judgement—the task being not to discern which moment is significant, only instead to leave open that determination—arguing against a certain historicism, on my reading Akerman instead wants to complicate the distinction between dead and not-dead. What is more available to perception in this visual regime are things that are damaged, not lost—that something can be dead but still be here.

In *From The East*, this practice, a certain kind of filming "without distinguishing," can within the space of a single tracking-shot, call forth both the difficulty of insistence—a certain weight to the point of being overwhelming—and the difficulty of desistance—a certain lightness to the point of passing (as if) without notice (fig. 31).



Figure 31: Tracking (*D'est*)

Who could really cope with this kind of pressure is one of Nietzsche's questions in his *Untimely Meditations*: "imagine the most extreme example, a human being who does not possess the power to forget, who is damned to see becoming everywhere; such a human being would hardly even dare lift a finger. All action requires forgetting" (Virno 29). One thing that Akerman shows in *From The East* is that although it may be possible for something to pass without our taking notice of it, the desire to know whether it did or not may be something that one cannot do without. *From The East* retains the anxiety of whether we should have noticed it, or whether we did. Indeed, the difficulty of this type of looking may be the result of non-teleological perception. It may be that, as Rei Terada argues, "when we contemplate psychic action as registration, anxiety about the unpredictability and ephemerality of action returns" ("Frailty of the Ontic" 51). To want to forgo that anxiety—the closure of whether we should have noticed it, whether we did—is a *movement* of teleological perception (and all in its service). Such a desire, as evidenced here by Nietzsche, is symptomatic not only of wanting to do without the anxiety of not knowing, but of *being reminded in general*. And along with the inability to say whether we really have forgotten something, we also must admit that there can be no way to say that something has gone un-displaced.

Nietzsche's anxiety is an anxiety of progress: that that which has happened may be used or cited against that which continues to happen. Or in other words, that justice claims, that is, those not organized to be recognized as universal, have a claim at all. While it may be possible to forget a particular occurrence, it would be impossible to forget the structure of memory. Akerman films as if that would make a difference. And in doing so, she shows that to want to be done with this kind of work, is to be want to be done with history.

What is worth pointing out in Nietzsche's example is that the position of not-forgetting is not actually the more vulnerable one—forgetting is here protective: it means not to admit that which can be claimed against it. Indeed, because of this vulnerability it is more often than not vindictive toward that which might provoke it. That which promotes forgetting seeks not only to escape its own vulnerability but also seeks to punish that which made it feel vulnerable too. It is perhaps this scene to which "nothing happens," with its twin poles of insistence and desistance, refers. A position that would forgo the psychic costs of reification, would also do without the desistance—that which has a claim so weak as to withdraw to the point of a not-knowing—and the insistence—that which could be seen everywhere, and reminds without rest—of the image. Repose is then an extreme figure of this situation, of protection on the near-side and of availability on the far. As I have been arguing, the ability to form an image of the world in repose, or the availability of such an image at all, represents an epistemological formation supplementary to the demand to leave that which is without value.

The experience of the proliferation of images that one sees in *From The East* is a way of staying-with, not exorcising, this anxiety. The anxiety is not in the image, but emerges from the complex of relations that the image sits within. Imposing a border between virtuality and effectivity, may release the anxiety of that which comes back, but by wanting to forget it thereby retreats into the kind of protection that only those who were always already protected can feel. *From The East* is haunted by the question of what it is doing. And yet, even as we ask that to ourselves, addressing ourselves at once to its lightness and weight, confusion indicates a return.⁵³ This type of return always threatens the exorcism of "nothing happens," while naming a

⁵³ cf. Derrida's question, "could one address oneself in general if already some ghost did not come back?" (*Specters* 221).

place of "refuge" of that which is seen there. In other words, what we see when we see the closeness of the world.

If *From The East* itself seems like an attempt to shoot psychic registration then those in the film are mute before it, speaking only to protest that it is occurring. Akerman leaves her itinerary notably silent, nor does she ever disclose why people are waiting. Whether inside the train station or outside in bus queues, the people waiting voice their dissatisfaction with the camera's intrusion. Yet, the resistance, which appears in the film so often and so obviously, is helpful in showing that what is at stake is worthy of resistance. And by staying so long with her shots Akerman indicates that there *is* something difficult to comprehend in even the most straightforward of phenomena.

However, that Akerman interviews no one tells us what? And what does this tell us in light of *De l'autre côté* and *Sud*, in which she uses interviews extensively? It seems undeniable that Akerman feels more comfortable filming here (as I refer to below, she analogizes the people waiting to Jews awaiting trains to the camps), and that she doesn't use interviews because she feels more comfortable speaking for those she films. Writing about the tracking-shot of the border wall in *De l'autre côté*, she says, "[it] becomes concrete, and abstract, and again concrete," and it is worth wondering what if this process were the other way around? Or, what might allow it to be inverted? A film which I do not discuss here, but bears on this discussion, is Akerman's *Là-bas* (*Down There*). "When Jews in France," she explains, "say to each other "Tu vas là-bas" they usually mean: "are you going to Israel?" We have the place where we live and we have 'là-bas'" (Nigianni). The resistance I noted earlier, her needing to go to the Mexican-American border, perhaps manifests even more clearly in her refusal to film in Israel. In an interview she says, "When X.C. [producer Xavier Carniaux] proposed that I make a film on

Israel, I immediately had the impression that it was a bad idea. An impossible idea even. Almost paralyzing. Almost nauseating” (Nigianni). *Là-bas* is that film, but it is notable she films it with a handheld video camera.

iii.

I want to shift now to a seemingly innocuous shot partway through *Sud* (1999), Akerman's documentary about the 1998 white supremacist murder of James Byrd Jr. in Jasper, Texas. The shot, which immediately follows the long memorial-service-sequence for Byrd Jr. in which children playfully interact with the camera and with each other, begins with five children playing on a swing set. Thirty seconds later the kids have left, leaving the yellow plastic seats and long chains swaying in the wind.

By this point, the film has already made reference to lynching and heard an elderly woman



Figure 32: Swing set (*Sud*)

recount her memory of her family's experiences of it. The question in *Sud* then is not only what the memory of the murder is, but also, what is the memory of the system in which it can happen?

The interviews function to at least in part meet this former question. One interviewee describes the racial context of the town, another recounts the murder itself. The interviews speak too of a broader history of white oppression even as they narrate a distance from that history in the present. Byrd's murder haunts those testimonies, as it does the memorial service itself when the pastor says to apparent agreement that, "the overall racial climate in Jasper is not conducive to the type of brutality displayed by the murderers of the Byrd family." An interview with the sheriff's office, is followed by one with a member of the Fruits of Islam. Three long stills of trees follow these interviews, before a four-minute tracking shot passes through the outskirts of town. These landscape shots are of nothing at the same time as they are reminiscent of the James Byrd Jr.'s murder, and the system in which it was possible. Reminiscences are always remembered. But what is it here that is coming back?

On first view, what seems to come back is both a memory of the history of the South—as if it were forgotten—and the convergence of this most recent lynching with the ones retold—as if it had all happened before. Perhaps, as in the title of Paolo Virno's recently translated book *Déjà Vu and The End of History*, this latter could be thought of as a form of déjà vu: the illusion that what is happening right now has happened before. At first, this appears as stupefying, like in Akerman's long still of an empty field. In the landscape shots, with their indifference to content, the tension of the film subsides. For Virno, déjà vu, like an Akerman landscape shot, "is seemingly provoked when the tension of life unexpectedly goes away" (Virno 13). This allows for two possibilities. First, if read instrumentally, as what perception can make use of, then déjà vu is read as re-evocation of what has happened or what could be useful under the paradigm of

action. Second, read non-instrumentally, it appears as the "memory of the present," which is for Virno a way of thinking memory as contemporaneous with perception, rather than coming after it. He calls the notion that we remember the present moment as it is happening, "the condition of the possibility of memory in general" (13). To a certain register then the landscape shots in *South* can be read as unchanging. They would appear, in this way, superfluous, additional, or not necessary. On my reading this would be to mistake confusion for a lack a clarity, rather than as a result of diffuse determinations, including ones that are long past and not literally visible. It is rather the ambiguity of why they appear at all that marks the difficulty of reading *South's* valence of "nothing happens," because of the way in which it can be mistaken for "nothing changes." Always, already seen, the experience of them is figurative.

My suggestion is that in *Sud*, as in *From The Other Side* and *From The East*, the always, already seen is in fact experienced as a perception which calls forth reminiscence. Because it is historicizing, the faculty of memory is necessarily reflexive, returning the memory itself to its scene of possibility. If at such points the moment of perception seems to begin with the figuring out of what is being seen at present—what we are conscious of—it may also be the case that this moment is at the same time a return. The quality of this return is figurative, and marks the quality of experience in general.

So when in *Sud* a typical tracking-shot taken from a car of the single-dwelling houses in Jasper continues on and lingers in wind and leaves, or when another, on the outskirts of town, spends three minutes capturing fields, or when a bear swims across a lake, or when a dead tree stands on its own, and so on, this experience is figurative too. Experience is figurative because it includes something more than the occurrence of the perception of what is being seen. What Akerman shows is that the formation of memory—of the Byrd murder, of the history of the

South, of the system in which it is possible—is contemporaneous with the formation of perception. Perception then includes what comes back, for instance, as seen in fig.32:



Figure 32: Two trees (*Sud*)

Consciousness comes first only rhetorically, subject as it is to representation which comes "after." Seen here in the two trees, there is always another one coming "after." The paradox is that the illusiveness of reality is experienced at the start, not retrospectively. The distinction between illusion and reality falls apart, not because the illusion is experienced as real (even though it is), but because reality must also be experienced as illusive. Because a tree in *Sud* sits in a complex of relations that are productive of images, one tree can then be reminiscent of a tree once used for lynching, it need not actually have been used—the thought that it could have been is enough. Similarly, as soon as lynching is available as a thought all trees are affected. Such an affective response, would be only one of the consequences of the system itself in its reminiscence. What makes Akerman so effective is the extension of this problematic to all that she films and this idea is a principle in her work.

Writing about the minutes captured as CCTV images before Damiola Taylor's death in Peckham, South-East London in 1997, David Marriott suggests that they are affected by a gap not closeable by sight. "Haunted by this symbolic distance between what appears and what remains ungraspable as resemblance: the death of a boy that cannot be seen and which, because of that, appears everywhere in these images, but without which these images remain an empty sign of that event, a semblance in which his death has vanished" (Marriott xiii). The final sequence of *South* illustrates the peculiar temporality produced by that which remains unseen, but appears everywhere. During the final sequence, as a long reverse-tracking shot traces the route of the murder—James Byrd Jr. was chained to the back of a pick-up truck and dismembered over 3 miles—the camera passes over a number of spray-painted circles on the surface of the road that police made at sites where his personal effects, limbs, and pieces of flesh were recovered. Throughout the sequence it is difficult to tell whether we are seeing another of those markers or the outlines of covered-up potholes. But it barely matters; in Akerman even the potholes are affected (fig. 33).



Figure 33: Even the potholes (*Sud*)

Inside the structure of the film, this is the second time that we have seen this stretch of road; first without us knowing, second after we know. The camera is positioned on the back of a car as it retraces the route of the murder. What is disturbing, a sense increased with every car that passes by the shot, is that this re-telling is experienced as anticipatory. The images are framed by the death, which has already happened, and by the events which have been already retold. But, perhaps in excess of that, they are framed too by reminiscence. Marriott describes this latter temporality as follows: "the occult presence of racial slavery, nowhere but nevertheless everywhere, a dead time which never arrives and does not stop arriving, as though by arriving it never happened until it happens again, then it never happens" (Marriott xxi). What *Sud* illustrates is the, "but nevertheless everywhere"; that which exceeds what is "actually" available to sight as

such.⁵⁴ The thought of what has yet, in some way, to happen, but could happen—*will keep could-happening*—because of what has happened, is one way to think about how perception works in *Sud*. While we might assume that context inflects images and scenes in an artwork once we know the context, what is notable here is how *little* the film gives us the context and how *much* context we get from that. This minimal relation, which actually provides a lot, is an effect of how perception works here. As Marriott says of his work, "my *entire* text is spooked by what remains but is *nowhere* to be seen" (Marriott 1)⁵⁵.

Such moments are readable because they persist aside from their realization, because they are neither present nor absent as such. As I showed in Chapter 1, realization—so that something can be managed, or so that it can be used—is the *condition of visibility* for theories of perception that try and scale environmental harm. There are then things, such as past damage, that can't be seen. As I showed in the Introduction and in Chapter 2, this is also the case for theories of perception that privilege visibility. Unable to conceive of something that is neither present nor absent, visible or invisible, these visual regimes must conceive of accompanying spatial and temporal determinations which delimit the perception of damage, that is, ongoing nonfungible destruction. Contrary to those conceptions, here, that which fails to be present with itself—that which "remains but is nowhere to be seen"—that is, that which has an affect but can't be seen, is in Marriott's words evidence of, "spectrality and the visible and what links them: a failed mourning" (4).

In these terms complicity, and as I showed in Chapter 2, when it is thought of as resolving feelings of guilt through concession or admission, would be a successful mourning.

⁵⁴ "They are always there specters," says Derrida, "even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet. They give us to rethink the "there". Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, The Work of Mourning, And The New International*. Peggy Kamuf, trans. New York: Routledge, 1994. p.221.

⁵⁵ Italics mine

"Mourning always consists in attempting to ontologize remains, to make them present" (*Specters* 9), suggests Derrida. Here, however, failure would mark the absence of a border between what is past and what is present, or what is actual and what is non-actual. Visual regime 2, takes seriously the link that Marriott suggests, theorizing a form of perception that has a way of receiving that which does not appear as such. Again, as I have argued throughout, reading something that is no longer there falls on whether or not damage is thinkable. The inadmissibility of loss, characteristic of complicity-thinkers and environmental assessment, forecloses this possibility. On the contrary, and as I showed in different ways in my readings of *D'est* and *De l'autre côté*, visual regime 2, addresses damage. It does so, in other words, by making everything potentially reminiscent.

If, as in Freud's phrase, "hysterics suffer from reminiscences," it is because the memory that is being recalled seems to be exterior, or not always interior—something returns as if from elsewhere (Laplanche). Just as Virno's *déjà vu* marks the illusion of re-evocation—*as if* it has happened before—or Derrida's specter that accompanies every presence—*as if* it could be exorcised—"as if" is the affective response to what is recalled in reminiscence. In this way, we can say that non-fungible destruction, as never quite present, is potentially memorable and demands return.

iv.

... and slowly you realize it is always the same thing that is revealed. A little like the primal scene. And the primal scene for me, although I fight against it and end up in a rage, I have to face the facts that it is far behind, or always in front, of all images barely covered by others... all images of evacuation, of walking in the snow with

packages... a non-place of faces and bodies placed one next to the other... the possibility of a death that would strike them down without their having asked for anything. And it is always like that. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow; there were, there will be, there are at this very moment people whom history, which no longer even has a capital H, whom history has struck down. People who were waiting, backs together to be killed, beaten, or starved, or who walk without knowing where they are going, in groups or alone. There is nothing to do, it is obsessive, and I am obsessed. Despite the cello, despite cinema. Once the film is finished I said to myself, so, that's what it was, that again ("Narration").

"Reminiscence," says Virno, "is the mnestic process by which we remember something that we did not know that we knew, since it was initially masked by our forgetting even the fact that we forgot it" (Virno 75). Here, Virno confronts the possibility of the loss of antagonism: that perceptive realignment will make disappearance itself no longer memorable, so that what is forgotten could never be remembered. In other words, there will no longer be anything that is reminiscent. In my reading, Akerman starts from the sense that there are processes of forgetting, and discourses, that in Derrida's terms, "finally cancel historicity"—"*it was always like that.*" Akerman's awareness of this informs the films in her trilogy. The feeling of the changes that she films begins to try and confront—to yearn for—a kind of memory of what it is to have forgotten.

This oblique form of utopianism, that we could remember what we have forgotten we forgot, is that which is mourned in Benjamin's phrase, "that things just go on, *is the catastrophe*" (*Selected Writings* 341). Benjamin laments movement itself, that which masks forgetfulness, that which crosses over, that which accrues cost. We could add: *as if* there were no cost, things just

go on. Lamenting movement is like lamenting reification, or that some things are lost—*as if* they were not—and yet, as Derrida implicitly argues, movement is one of the most coercive disciplinary modes: "When someone suggests to you a solution for escaping an impasse, you can be almost sure that they are ceasing to understand" (*Specters* 32). It is the difficulty of staying in these smallest of spaces that Akerman films. I return again to Nietzsche's example, "a human being who does not possess the power to forget, who is damned to see becoming everywhere; such a human being would hardly even dare lift a finger..." Such a human being would *hardly even* dare, but they would. All action requires forgetting, until you *hardly even* remember anything. Supplementary to all action, to all forgetting, is the ability to recall the memory of having forgotten. In other words, you can forget everything except the ability to forget; you can remember nothing except the ability to remember. What returns in that recollection are forms of historicity: that which made what has happened possible.

It is no surprise then that for Akerman, as she remarks above in the monologue that is the final part of her three-part installation *From The East: Bordering on Fiction*, "that it is always the same thing that is revealed." And yet, what Akerman shows is that the feeling that it is always like that—"there were, there will be, there are"—is the only place from which to engage it. The persistence that she names seems in fact to require a non-movement, one which is otherwise repressed, because it is only by staying there that some images are readable at all. And this, as she says, "despite cinema"—despite, perhaps, the relief that it promises: that what is looked at may be transformed, disclosed, or exorcised, in that looking. In such a place, both perspectival and epistemological, comes images in which, in the end, "nothing happens" as such: "so that's what it was, that *again*."

Postscript

Standing Rock

Despite multiple outstanding land claims by Native tribes and First Nations, and large areas of unceded territory, and despite the discourse of conciliation attempts on behalf of the Federal governments in Canada and the US, the contemporary settler-state claims legal possession and ownership of natural resources. This claim, couched in the rhetoric of interest, public convenience, and necessity culminates in the unfettered right to access—the movement which underlies extraction. In this context, opposing Indigenous claims to land are seen by the State as contrary positions but ones which in the end are internal to the State itself, resolvable as a matter of policy. Such a position, as I have argued, cannot not only concede climate and Indigenous justice claims, but requires a vast political and perceptual infrastructure to keep it in check. In this conclusion, I will turn to the colonial and territorial dispute at Standing Rock. Indigenous resistance provoked a response that was rhetorical, administrative, violent, juridical, and perceptual in all the ways I have looked at so far.

Following the September 8 resistance action at Standing Rock, when Energy Transfer Partners began to disturb sacred sites, it was reported that Indigenous activists who were arrested during the action were made to sit facing the burial sites as diggers desecrated them, before law enforcement took water protectors away (Democracy Now). What such a scene conceded on behalf of the extraction company and law enforcement which propped up its activity throughout the struggle, was that Indigenous claims to justice had already spread beyond the juridical borders of the state. Evident in this moment of extra-judicial violence, forcing Indigenous

activists to watch the scene was a moment of clarity in the violence of the state itself and the kinds of actions that are necessary to maintain it.

One could also not help but see a similar moment about 6 weeks later, in which, trying to proceed over the bridge, water protectors were confronted by State troops. Mni wiconi, "water is life", had become an organizing statement of the resistance and yet here, in temperatures below freezing, water protectors were sprayed with water cannons. An almost symptomatic concession to the power of what Standing Rock was trying to protect, the state troopers attempted to turn the water in those cannons into a kind of death. By that point, around Thanksgiving, Dakota Access had dug right to the base of the river awaiting the easement to cross under it from the Army Corps of Engineers, who have jurisdiction over the crossing of all waterways in the US. The Sacred Stone resistance camp, was established there too, having been set up in April 2016, where the Cannonball River joins the Missouri River. It was named as such because the site was historically associated with a whirlpool that created large, spherical sandstone formations. "We are the river, and the river is us," said LaDonna Bravebull Allard, founder of the camp and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's Section 106 Historic Preservation Officer (Allard).

As many quickly pointed out the route of the pipeline had been altered to avoid Bismark, ND, a predominantly white town some miles east, a decision which had been made because Bismark was thought to be a "high consequence area" in a way that Standing Rock, ND, was not ("Mind Your Own"). The notion of "environmental racism," however, may be insufficient to explain the complex of relations that the presence of the water protectors seemingly called into being. One example of which, long after the pipeline had been rerouted away from majority-white towns, was the appearance of amber alerts on residents cell phones in nearby Cannonball, ND. Those alerts, usually reserved for kidnappings or gunmen on the loose, came through

whenever Native water protectors held protests, even when those protests were silent (Democracy Now). Stories and videos of increased racially motivated attacks in nearby towns, proliferated during the struggle. One consequence of which can be seen in a North Dakota state bill that attempts to make it legal for drivers to run over protesters who are standing in a roadway, clearing drivers of any liability, as long as their action was “unintentional” (Agrawal).

This *sense* of emergency was even more apparent in North Dakota's Governor Jack Dalrymple's declaration of a state of emergency on August 19. The purpose of which was to trigger the ability of other states to offer law enforcement help. As Wadonna LaDuke has pointed out, those states who responded, particularly Wisconsin, did so as a prelude to their own imminent struggles over pipelines. In Wisconsin's case, Line 3—a pipeline which will carry tar sands bitumen, approved by Justin Trudeau at the same time as Trans Mountain. Dalrymple would again intervene in late November, declaring that the area had to be evacuated. Citing concerns about “harsh winter conditions” and using the North Dakota Disaster Act of 1985, Dalrymple said that all persons at the camp are “ordered to leave the evacuation area immediately, and are further ordered not to return to the evacuation area” (Levin). What kind of emergency and disasters were these, and for whom?

Almost immediately then, the water protectors at Standing Rock presented a problem on multiple scales and registers. By challenging the rhetoric of the State and the colonial claim to use through blockade and disruption, they provoked *simultaneously* the violence of the state. Why is this the case? As Indigenous communities have long experienced, especially on reservations which are often in remote regions associated with resource extraction, the presence of the State is most obvious when the State feels required to preserve the law. In contexts like these, the State operates at the extremes: either withdrawing totally (often intentionally, so as to

force Indigenous communities into relations with resource extraction companies when State resources are absent); or, inserting themselves fully (such as at Standing Rock last Fall). These two different approaches are of the same logic: containment. The boundary of the reservation then, here policed in two different ways, is what was breached so as to produce the amber alerts on the cell-phones of majority-white towns.

As Denise da Silva has argued, black and brown bodies and the territories they inhabit always-already signify violence, such that the State's self-preservation immediately justifies the violence of the State when it intervenes in those places ("No Bodies"). The occupation of territories—such as at sites of resource extraction—can be "framed as necessary" then, because these territories need to be reappropriated back under the law. Their reappropriation is not just necessary so whatever use can occur there—resource extraction in my example; the appearance of order in da Silva's—but is necessary for the coherence of the State itself. As Sherene Razack argues, "it is not only that Aboriginal peoples must be confined to reserves, but their own incursions into settler spaces... must also be policed and constrained if the line is to hold" (Razack 55):

One can clearly see in the detailed maps of the conflict, that the incursion into "settler space" which needs "confining", was dramatized at Standing Rock as the pipeline construction took place barely north of the boundary with the reservation. With Razack's comment in mind, one might think of law enforcement activity at Standing Rock not as merely protecting the construction of the pipeline but as protecting the settler-state itself.

Furthermore, what da Silva's reading makes possible is to show that the needs of the State coincide with the needs of resource extraction companies. While the latter could be thought as a jurisdiction of the State, as in, for example, helping to determine this or that land-use, what da

Silva shows is that administrative functions of the State and law enforcement are one in the same. While one could say then that the violence of the water cannons is excessive, or at least gratuitous, that is, in excess of what seems necessary, it is rather precisely congruent with the functioning of the State. The raciality of the violence, "unravels," in da Silva's phrase, "the limits of the regulating administration of the nation-state" ("No Bodies" 121). Such that, administration of justice and law enforcement fuse together, "[resolving] in/to the state's self-preserving force" (122).

Indigenous water protectors at Standing Rock could be thought of, in da Silva's phrase, as "signifiers of the horizon of death," because they are both subject to the violence of the State, that is, marking the limit of the State's activity in a positive sense, but also, in the negative, deconstructing the binaries on which the settler-state conceives itself (such as the ideological division people justice and law). The activity of the State at Standing Rock is, in this sense, "a moment of the political marked by the dis/appearance of the distinction between the law (as legality) and the state (as authority) that sustains the nation-state's claims to legitimacy" (121). Indigenous water-protectors mark a limit to the State's functioning, in the face of which, "the separation of the state's protective and punitive mandates crumbles" (122). If, as in this example, the appearance of the State in fact *disappears* the State, deconstructing the dialectic on which the State is based, this is also, more obviously, the breakdown of any logic of recognition or representation on which justice claims might be heard. As such, by their very presence, as Razack suggests, "aboriginality "unsettles," challenging the settler's claim to legitimacy by calling into question the colonial state's most enduring fiction: that Aboriginal people are a dying race" (Razack 53).

The administrative techniques of the state (seen above in Dalrymple's actions) are, as I have argued in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, both spatial and perceptual, as in the notion that only what is manageable can be seen. Thinking still with da Silva, she figures "total violence" ("No Bodies" 121) as a loss of distinction, indexed by her in the "/" that marks the identity and difference of site and sight, as in the notion to "kill on site/sight." Total violence is the "/", or the absent distinction line, which collapses territories and bodies. Such that, the total violence that loses the distinction site/sight, is also one that is marked by the conflation of legality/authority. That's why law-preserving violence is both a necessary force and a constitutive one for the State—its justification *precedes* deployment. The State's self-preservation is then its already articulated sovereignty (154).

I want to make a final recourse to Standing Rock to articulate further how the notion that justification may precede deployment is also part of a theory of perception, one that concerns the site and sight of Standing Rock. In early September a Federal judge returned a negative ruling on submissions to a US Court of Appeals in which the judge was asked by the Standing Sioux tribe to grant an injunction against Dakota Access. The submission from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe concerned how it was that the Army Corp of Engineers had granted permits for DAPL, in the first place.⁵⁶ Relating to the effect that the entire pipeline had, the effect of a potential spill, and, especially, previous and potential disturbance of sacred sites, the submission puts into question the project in its entirety. What occurs in the injunction decision is an almost complete incompatibility, one born of the territorial and temporal dispute that Standing Rock is, and one, in the end, based on two different visual regimes.

⁵⁶ The submission to the Court, was in lieu of an Environmental Impact Assessment, which never took place. The Obama administration had called for one, thereby deferring the granting of the easement in December 2016. The EIA was meant to be carried out in late February, but drilling went ahead under Federal approval in late January. On the submission see, United District Court For the District of Columbia. *Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, et al. v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, et. al.* September, 2016.

In response to the Tribe's submission, the Court argued that when asked by Dakota Access to identify sites of cultural or historical importance (those necessary under the National Historic Preservation Act), Standing Rock Sioux Tribe had not sent representatives. Their submission had detailed that the Tribe declined because the surveys were "too limited in scope," instead, "[urging] the Corps to redefine the area of potential effect to include the entire pipeline, [asserting] that it would send no experts to help identify cultural resources until this occurred" (United District Court 23). The Court, answering on behalf of the Corps, reply that only 3% of the pipeline route is subject to Federal permitting, and that the other areas of land mentioned by the Tribe are not subject to protection. Instead, the Corps argue that, "entire pipelines need not be considered part of the analyzed areas. Rather, only construction activity in the federally regulated waterways—the direct effect of the undertaking—and in uplands around the federally regulated waterways —the indirect effect of the undertaking—requires analysis" (26). By querying the spatial determinations of the Corps, Standing Rock suggest the dispute is territorial and perceptual.

In its submission the Tribe asked for historic surveys (those surveys under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps, and those legally necessary prior to resource extraction) to be carried out on the entire route of the pipeline and claimed that because this had not happened sacred sites had been lost already. The response of the Corps is revealing. They argue that because they lack jurisdiction over areas where negative effects have occurred, their actions "cannot be considered a legally relevant 'cause' of the effect." The Tribe suggest that in fact because Federal permits are necessary to cross waterways, and because the pipeline cannot but cross them, including under the Canonball river, the pipeline must be an indirect effect of permits granted by the Corp. In response, however, the Court suggests that the harms associated with the pipeline being built

in areas other than the 3% cannot be of concern. "Put simply," the Court argues, "any such harms are destined to ensue whether or not the Court grants the injunction the Tribe desires. As Standing Rock acknowledges, Dakota Access has demonstrated that it is determined to build its pipeline right up to the water's edge regardless of whether it has secured a permit to then build across. Like the Corps, this Court is unable to stop it from doing so." In other words, as we saw in Chapter 1, that it is going to happen in any case paradoxically closes off the question of destruction. Furthermore, the Court concedes—"destined to ensue"—that the pipeline is harmful. The Court's response however shows not merely that harm is not in question here, but that harm is there already in any development.

As if enacting da Silva's notion that justification precedes deployment, toward the end the Court concedes, "the risk that construction may damage or destroy cultural resources is now moot for the 48% of the pipeline that has already been completed... the damage has already occurred for the vast majority of the pipeline"(52). Suggesting that heterogenous temporal events must be held apart, and that the damage which has already occurred means it falls out of concern and thereby fades from (the Court's) view, the Court reproduces the main assumptions of what I have referred to as visual regime 1. That is, that destruction which is ongoing can't be seen, that past claims are withdrawn from being claimable because of their nature as past, and that damage, understood here as existing harm, can't be seen at all.

Leaving aside the moments when the Court suggested it had no jurisdiction, at least part of the question in the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's submission was what claim to destruction Standing Rock had. Articulating the ancestral and thereby spatial claim of the Tribe, in a declaration, Jon Eagle, Sr., outlined the following: "A successor to the Great Sioux Nation, the Tribe's ancestors once lived, loved, worshipped, and mourned "wherever the buffalo roamed."

These people created stone alignments, burial cairns, and other rock features throughout the area to conduct important spiritual rituals related to the rhythms of their daily life" (6). In response, and much later on, the Court says, "the plaintiff never defined the boundaries of its ancestral lands *vis-à-vis* DAPL. Instead, Standing Rock asserts that these lands extend "wherever the buffalo roamed"... this Court must ultimately decide where those culturally significant lands lie" (53). Of course, the "instead" here discloses a deep divide, one not closeable by sight. The fixation of the Court throughout, however, on only being able to judge harm once it is attached to where "lands lie," that is, where land is held or owned, discloses an imagination framed by a certain social relations which not only protect the Court and its interests politically, but are perceptual protections too.

What I want to stage here is a double-protection. In this example, so that the land can be thought of as being harmed it must be thought of within a relation of private property. Falling outside of that means it cannot be thought about. While it is obvious that the social relations that come in to understand the relation to land here are settler-colonial, and thereby destructive themselves, reminiscent of those used in a history of dispossession, it is also the case that they preclude other relations from being thought. On the near side, so to speak, what is protected against in this local example is the destruction that DAPL caused in unceded territory—the Court does not want to concede it. On the far side, however, this also means that there are social relations that can't be thought about—ones the Court also doesn't want to concede. Such as, for instance, Indigenous relationships to Land. "Land," argues Coulthard, "ought to be understood as a field of "relationships of things to each other."... In the Weledeh dialect of Dogrib (which is my community's language), for example, "land" (or *dè*) is translated in relational terms as that which encompasses not only the land (understood here as material), but also people and animals, rocks

and trees, lakes and rivers, and so on" (Coulthard 61). Traditional Indigenous understandings of the Land, as Coulthard writes, and Jon Eagle Sr.'s declaration makes clear, involve a series of relations bounded temporally and spatially in a fundamentally different way than those imagined and codified by private property.

To clarify this second sense of protection, I want to return to the kind of violence involved in forcing Indigenous water-protectors to watch the desecration of sacred sites. Here, rather than protecting against the threat of the social relations that the sites signified, for example an intertemporal relation that troubles distinctions between dead and not-dead, the violence concedes the possibility of the existence of those relations. DAPL, like Syncrude and their Wasipiw Lookout site, show that there is something more to be extracted; you can still go back and take something else, you can exploit still more than you did. However, *because that could be done* it shows that *something still remains there*. This is one reason why, as Razack suggests, settler-colonial thinking must always strive to posit that there is nothing left. The scene of violence, however, concedes implicitly that this is not the case, showing what extraction didn't take and what it couldn't. The duality here takes a positive and negative form: both, there are things that have been destroyed that the settler-state and resource extraction can't perceive, *and*, there are things which they have not been, including the possibility of thinking non-fungible relations. There are, in other words, two incommensurable kinds of permanence at stake. First, the one that suggests the process of dispossession is complete. And second, the one that Indigenous water-protectors state in their claim "we are still here"(Allard).

This latter permanence, the one that I have suggested provoked the water cannon attack and the desecration scene, was peculiarly present at the recent occupation at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. As Anthony McCann writes, the white occupiers there were

afflicted by the "nightmare of the settler."⁵⁷ At one moment in the piece McCann turns to a youtube video of LaVoy Finnicum trawling through artifacts in the basement of the Refuge. Disturbed by the latent significance of the artifacts all around him, McCann describes the scene in which Finnicum—"surrounded by so many ghosts he can't see them"—attempts by video link to show the different Native artifacts which are gathered there (McCann). "It's like he's in the middle of a ghost dance," writes McCann, "but he can't hear or feel or see a thing as it slowly turns around him, like he can't see the images that already now are purring through his flesh" (McCann). The "nightmare" continues as "the attention of the gang turned, morbidly and forensically, to the containment of the physical evidence—the artifacts stored on the refuge—of this return. This kind of containment is impossible in the end—as we all know from dreams—because the return of the past is continuous; it's an endless arrival" (McCann). Processes of "containment," in McCann's phrase, were the ones that came into conflict with the persistent return of relations at Standing Rock, ones that kept returning and called forth the violence of the state and DAPL.

i

As I have argued throughout, constructions of transitions aim to say when something stops—demarcating the temporal distinctions attached to destruction. Leaving destruction in the past, or saying that it is past, *is a way of treating it as fungible*. That the artifacts at the Refuge, evidence of dispossession, and actually dispossessed objects—held in a Federal building—are able to refer to their destruction and break temporal bounds, indicates some fragility in trying to hold a distinction between past destruction and ongoing destruction. Similarly, just as the State

⁵⁷ The article in two parts. I quote from the second part here. Both are available here: <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/malheur-part-ii-not/>. 2016.

could not visibly perceive the relations in the water protectors' phrase, "we are water/water is life," the use of water cannons against the water protectors still held those relations in view. As resource extraction companies and the activity of the State implicitly argue, it is important to leave some conflicts—such as those over Indigenous claims to Land—in the past. But as I argued in Chapter 2, to do so, one must construct an idea of the past as a place *where something can be left at all*. In these three instances, that temporal and perceptual construction fails. This failure is a breakdown of visual regime 1 and shows the possibility of visual regime 2.

Finally, and all too briefly, I want to turn to a film that approaches some articulations of the theory of perception present in this latter regime. Victor Masayevsa's 1984 documentary *Itam Hakim Hopiit* begins with Hopi storyteller Ross Macaya collecting water. Throughout the film, everyday practices are intertwined with histories that refer not only to those particular practices but also to the complex of relations they operate in. That such a complex of relations has a perceptual quality already, is part of the point of the film. Take for instance, the figure of water in the film. Water is present the first time the Hopi find "new lands", is indexed in destructive flooding, and is there too in the drought and famine brought on by Christianity. Various destructive and not, In the film, *all the conflicts are there*. The collecting of the water then, indexes an intimate relation not only to the water, but to all the spaces through which it has moved. In the film, landscape images come in at different points to index this affect. As I have suggested throughout this dissertation, landscape appears so as to index a perceptual problem.

Landscape here, holding ever-shifting relations is, however, not quite as a palimpsest. In Chapter 3, a palimpsestic relation is what those involved in Land Art try and make. The idea implicit there was that marking on the surface of the land is art, but art that is also subject to transience as the artwork decomposes into the landscape, or disappears into it. Land Art

practitioners wanted the sense that what happened on the landscape was retained by it, even if it were no longer visible. That relation, however, necessitated a certain marking into the landscape and like extraction (with which Robert Smithson analogized his work), incursion and access is its premise. In *Itam Hakim Hopiit*, Masayevsa doesn't conceive of presence on the landscape as incursion in this way. Indeed, he analogizes such a marked incursion with the activity of settlers as such.

Mid-way through, the film turns to when the Spanish settlers came. In establishing their village the Spanish settlers, Macaya says, "dragged logs for 80 miles." Dissatisfied with the materials near their encampment they needed to find logs outside it. The process of dragging these logs, left ruts. "The ruts left can be seen today," says Macaya. And some many minutes later, "the ruts left by the logs can be seen today." What is interesting is that this is the most emphatic way in which settler-presence is referred to in the film. Leaving an indelible mark on the landscape *is settler-colonialism*. As I have argued throughout the dissertation (especially in relation to Forensic Architecture and ideas of cartography), the practice of desiring traces to be left so that they can be read, is extractive in the way Macaya indicates.

Early on in the film, Macaya tells the story of the Hopi emergence. At the point when the hole between the worlds was closed Macaya says that, "the earth began to tremble," and so they "left for new lands." Just as the landscape prompts them to leave, as cliff edges crumble under the weight of water, so the "new lands" that are sought are created by the landscape. As the film shows waves, Macaya says, the "land from the ocean [creates] new lands." Only upon the decision to live there, is it said that the Hopi, "have come through." However, they discover that someone else already lives there. "There is no village anywhere," the someone-who-lives-there says. At this point the film slowly zooms in on a landscape shot (fig. 34).



Figure 34: There is no village anywhere (Masayevsa)

"My home is all this land... all this land is my home," they say, as the camera films a POV shot of someone walking through the landscape. The Hopi are told to, "stop and establish a village and when you have established a village stay for a while, rest then move on again. This is how you will travel over this land and claim it." The effect of the landscape shots, like the effect of the landscape prompting departure and arrival, as well as the someone-they-meet's insistence that there is "no village anywhere," is to indicate that the land is unclaimable as such. Claimable only in an inter-relation, the passing-through of the landscape is like the corn that passes through the basket in an early scene.

Later on, while travelling through the landscape, Macaya says, "I guess we had followed other Hopi." The camera, tracking the journey, blurs into the forest that they are passing through. Noting the Hopi they had followed, and within a landscape which they can't possess, the blurriness of the scene denotes an intratemporal inhabitation (fig. 35).



Figure 35: Intratemporal trees (Masayevsa)

The confluence of relations—the storytelling; the contemporary filming; the presence of relations—here seen in the blurring, implicitly suggests that aspects of that history which might otherwise be thought of as irrevocable, or past, are here, and only add to the determinations.

Like many examples in this dissertation, and following the argument in this Postscript, this final image lets in the utopian and the dystopian. Precluding neither from being thought, and suggesting that perception admits them both all the time, this landscape implicitly argues that to perceive extraction is to work against perceptual protections. Extraction companies, similarly to the State, are doubly constrained; always operating within a visual field which not only can't quite concede destruction but can't quite concede relations that are not it too. Extraction takes a lot, but there are things it can't take. In not being able to perceive what it has taken—what I have referred to as "damage"—this visual regime likewise cannot perceive what still remains. The infrastructural framework that conditions the visibility of violence in making everything fungible, makes that framework fungible too. The possibility of non-fungible perception then is both on

the near-side of totalization—what escapes it in resistance—and on the far side as well—what escapes the logic of subsumption *by being subsumed*. That there is something here, and that it can be perceived, has been the suggestion of this dissertation.

Works Cited

- Abbas, Ackbar. "Adorno and the Weather." Kingston University London. 22-23 March 2012. <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2012/03/ackbar-abbas-adorno-and-the-weather-critical-theory-in-an-era-of-climate-change/>.
- Abbas, Asma. Seminar presentation, UC Irvine. April, 2015.
- "About Us: Desert Exhibition of Art". *Desert X*. Desert Biennial LLC 2015. <https://www.desertx.org/about-us/>. Accessed 04 June 2017.
- Adorno, Theodor. *Lectures in History and Freedom*. Tiederman, R. trans. London: Polity (2002).
- Adorno, Theodor. *Minima Moralia: Reflections From Damaged Life*. Jephcott, E. trans. London: NLB (1967).
- Adorno, TW. *Notes to Literature: Vol. 1.* Weber trans., Rolf Tiederman eds. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.
- Adorno, Theodor. *Aesthetic Theory*. Hullot-Kentor, trans. London: Bloomsbury. 1997.
- Agrawal, Nina. "In North Dakota, it Could Become Legal to Hit a Protester with Your Car." *LA Times*. February, 2017. <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-bills-protest-criminal-20170201-story.html> . Accessed 4 June 2017.
- Akerman, Chantal. *The Meetings of Anna* (1978). 35mm, color, 127 minutes.
- Akerman, Chantal. *From D'est/The East*(1993). 35mm, color, 107 minutes.
- Akerman, Chantal. *From The East: Bordering on Fiction* (1995). *Chantal Akerman: NOW* (2015). P3, London, Dec. 2015.
- Akerman, Chantal, et. al. *Bordering on Fiction: Chantal Akerman's D'Est*. Walker Art Center: Minneapolis, MN, 1995. print.
- Akerman, Chantal. Narration accompanying installation piece, *From the East: Bordering on Fiction* (1995). *Chantal Akerman: NOW*. P3, London. December, 2015. Recorded by the author.
- Akerman, Chantal. *Sud/South* (1998). Video, color, 71 minutes.
- Akerman, Chantal. *De l'autre côté/From The Other Side*. AMIP, Arte France Cinéma. 2002. Video, color, 103 minutes.
- Akerman, Chantal. *Maniac Summer* (2009). *Chantal Akerman: NOW* (2015). P3, London, Dec. 2015.

Akerman, Chantal. *A Voice In The Desert* (2002). *Chantal Akerman: NOW (2015)*. P3, London, Dec. 2015.

Akerman, Chantal. *Maniac Shadows* (2013). *Chantal Akerman: NOW (2015)*. P3, London, Dec. 2015.

Alberta Chamber of Commerce. *Caring for the Land: Reclamation Brochure*. 2014.

Alberta Energy Regulator. "Terms of Reference For Proponent's Proposed Oil Sands Mine Project." 2012.

Alberta Government. *Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*. 1993.

Alberta Government. *Lower Athabasca Regional Plan*. 2012

Alberta Government. *Land-Use Framework*. 2008.
https://www.landuse.alberta.ca/Documents/LUF_Land-use_Framework_Report-2008-12.pdf .
Accessed June 4, 2017.

Alberta Government. *Fort McMurray-Athabasca Oil Sands: Subregional Integrated Resource Plan*. 2002.

Alberta Government. *Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Review*. 2015

Alberta Government. *Tailings Management Framework for the Mineable Athabasca Oil Sands*. 2015.

Allard, LaDonna Bravebull. "Why the Founder of Standing Rock Sioux Camp Can't Forget the Whitestone Massacre." *Yes! Magazine*. September, 2016.
<http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/why-the-founder-of-standing-rock-sioux-camp-cant-forget-the-whitestone-massacre-20160903> . Accessed 4 June 2017.

Amiran, Eyal. *Modernisms and the Materiality of Texts*. Cambridge, UK: CUP. 2016.

Amnesty International. *Out of Sight, Out of Mind. Gender, Indigenous Rights, and Energy Development on Northeast British Columbia, Canada*. 2016. amnesty.org

Antonioni, Michelangelo. dir. *Blow-Up*. 1964.

Antonioni, Michelangelo. dir. *Red Desert*. 1966.

Baichwal, Jennifer. *Manufactured Landscapes*. 2007. film. 96 minutes.

Barthes, Roland. *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the College De France (1977-78)*. Krauss and Hollins trans. New York: Columbia UP, 2005.

Beller, Jonathan. *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle*. Lebanon, NH: New England UP. 2006.

Benjamin, Walter (1978) 'Critique of violence', in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott, New York: Schocken, pp. 277-.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Eiland and McLaughlin trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999

Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings Vol. 1, 1913-1926*. Bullock and Jennings, ed. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006

Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings Vol. 2, part 2, 1931-1934*. Bullock and Jennings, ed. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006.

Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings Vol. 3, 1935-1938*. Bullock and Jennings, ed. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006.

Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings Vol. 4, 1938-1940*. Bullock and Jennings, ed. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006.

Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. trans. Paul, NM, and Palmer, W.B. New York, NY: Zone Books, 1994.

Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011.

Bermingham, Ann. *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740–1860* : University of California Press, 1986.

Blair, Michael. *Amarillo Ramp: Minimalism and Country Music on the American Highway*. *Los Angeles Review of Books*. December, 2015. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/amarillo-ramp-minimalism-and-country-music-on-the-american-highway/> . Accessed 4 June 2017.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of Disaster*. Ann Smock, trans. Lincoln, NB. U Nebraska Press. 1995.

Canadian Federal Government. Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "The Climate of History: Four Theses." *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009). 197-222.

CLUI. "Partially Buried Woodshed, Ohio." *Center for Land Use Interpretation*. Creative Commons. <http://clui.org/ludb/site/partially-buried-woodshed> . Accessed 4 June 2017.

- Coulthard, Glenn. *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minnesota, MI: Minnesota UP. 2014.
- Crary, Jonathan. *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.
- Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Boston, MA: MIT.
- Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. New York: Verso, 2013.
- Crimp, Douglas. *On The Museum's Ruins*. Boston, MA: MIT Press. 1995.
- Cumulative Environmental Management Association. *Guide to the Landscape Design Checklist in the Athabasca Oil Sands Region*. RSDS Government Regulator Version: 2010.
- De Maria, Walter. *Mile Long Drawing*. 1968.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*. Chris Tomlinson, trans. Minneapolis: UMP, 2009.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Chris Tomlinson, trans. Minneapolis: UMP, 2009.
- Democracy Now, "Standing Rock Special." Podcast. November 28, 2016. Itunes. Accessed, December 1 2016.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Aporias*. Thomas Dutoit, trans. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1993.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, The Work of Mourning, And The New International*. Kamuf, trans. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Force of law: the 'mystical foundation of authority'", in Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld, and David Grey Carlson (eds) *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, London: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass. Chicago, IL: Chicago UP, 1978.
- Derrida, Jacques. "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials." in *Derrida and Negative Theology*. Coward and Foshay eds. SUNY, 1992
- "Doug Aitken". *Desert X*. Desert Biennial LLC 2015. <https://www.desertx.org/doug-aitken>. Accessed 04 June 2017.
- Drumright, D.A. "The Irreconcilable Acceptance of Near-Term Extinction." 2013, <http://guymcpherson.com/2013/04/the-irreconcilable-acceptance-of-near-term-extinction/>. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office. "Determining Whether A Project is Likely to Cause Significant Adverse Environmental Effects." 1994

Forensic Architecture. "Atacama File." <http://www.forensic-architecture.org/file/atacama/> . Accessed 4 June 2017.

Francois, Anne-Lise. *The Literature of Uncounted Experience*. Stanford, CA: SUP, 2008.

Freud, S. *Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. Strachey, J. Basic Books: First Trade Paper Edition, 2010. p.202

Freud, S. *Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva*. Green Integer. 2003.

Freud, S. Three Case Histories. Rieff, P. eds. New York, NY: Touchstone. 1996. p.45

Galloway, Alexander. *The Interface Effect*. New York, NY: Polity. 2012.

Gendall, John. "Why Desert X Is the World's Newest Must-Visit Art Fair." *Architectural Digest*, February 27. 2012, <http://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/why-desert-x-is-the-worlds-newest-must-visit-art-fair>. Accessed 04 June 2017.

Goodyear, Dana. "A Monument to Outlast Humanity." *The New Yorker*. August 29. 2016, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/08/29/michael-heizers-city. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Grant, Jennifer. *Fact or Fiction? Oil Sands Reclamation*. Institute, 2008.

Hegel, G.W.F, trans: Miller, A.V, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1977.

Heise, Ursula. *Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species*. Chicago, IL: Chicago UP. 2016.

In Search of the Center. *Nancy Holt's Burial Project*. October, 2010. <http://earthworksnearyou.blogspot.com/2010/10/nancy-holts-burial-project.html> . Accessed 4 June 2017.

Jameson, Fredric. *Valences of the Dialectic*. New York, NY: Verso. 2012.

Kastner, J. eds. *Land and Environmental Art*. New York, NY: Phaidon: 1998.

Karatani, Kojin. *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*. Brett de Bary, trans. Durham, NC: Duke UP. 1993.

Kimmelman, Michael. "Michael Heizer's Big Work and Long View". *The New York Times*, May 13, 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/05/17/arts/design/michael-heizers-big-work-and-long-view.html?_r=0. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Kinder Morgan Canada, Ltd. "Trans Mountain Expansion Project, ESA - Biophysical. Vol. 5a." December 2013

Kinder Morgan Canada, Ltd. "Trans Mountain Expansion Project, ESA - Socio-Economic. Vol. 7." December 2013

Kingsnorth, Paul. "Why I Stopped Believing in Environmentalism and Started the Dark Mountain Project." *The Guardian*, 29 April, 2010, www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/apr/29/environmentalism-dark-mountain-project. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Kingsnorth, Paul. ed. "Uncivilisation: The Dark Mountain Manifesto." *The Dark Mountain Project*. <http://dark-mountain.net/about/manifesto/>. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Kinkle, Jeff and Toscano, Alberto. *Cartographies of the Absolute*. London, UK: Zone Books, 2015.

Klein, Melanie. *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945*. York, NY: Free Press, 1984.

Kolbert, Elizabeth. "Fort McMurray and the Fires of Climate Change." *New Yorker*, May 2016. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/fort-mcmurray-and-the-fires-of-climate-change>. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Krauss, Rosalind. "Sculpture in the Expanded Field." *October*, Vol. 8. (Spring, 1979), pp. 30-44.

Kwon, Miwon. "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity." *October*, Vol. 80. (Spring, 1997), pp. 85-110.

Laplanche, Jean. *Essays on Otherness*. Fletcher ed. New York: Routledge, 1999.

LeMenager, Stephanie. *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century*. Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 2014.

Lenz, Garth. "Abstract Energyscapes." *National Geographic*. August 2014. <http://proof.nationalgeographic.com/2014/08/29/garth-lenzs-abstract-energyscapes/>. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Levin, Sam, and Wong, Julia. "North Dakota governor orders evacuation of Standing Rock protest site." *The Guardian*. November, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/28/north-dakota-access-pipeline-evacuation-order-standing-rock>. Accessed 4 June 2017.

- Lloyd, David. (2014) Representation's Coup, *Interventions*, 16:1, 1-29
- Lloyd, David & Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonial Logics and the Neoliberal Regime." *Settler Colonial Studies*, Vol. 6: 2. 2016.
- Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. Schwarzschild, A. trans. London, UK: Routledge. 2003.
- MacDonald, Scott. *A Critical Cinema: Interviews With Independent Filmmakers, Volume 4.* , CA: UC Press, 2005.
- Maguiles, Ivone. *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist* . Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996
- Mair, Rafe. "Memo to Enbridge: Special Effects Don't Erase Risks." *The Tyee*. August, 2012. <https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2012/08/20/Memo-To-Enbridge/> . Accessed 4 June 2017.
- Marriott, David. *Haunted Life: Visual Culture and Black Modernity*. New York: Rutgers UP, 2007
- Marriott, David. "Waiting To Fall," *Centennial Review*, 13.3 (2013), 163–240
- Masao, Matsuda. "City as Landscape." <http://www.bordersphere.com/events/adachi9.htm>
- Meister, Robert. *After Evil*. York, NY: Columbia UP. 2011
- Masayeva, Victor, Jr. dir., *Itam Hakim Hopiit* (1984). Film. 87 minutes.
- Milewski, Terry. "Lakes Across Canada Face Being Turned into Mine Dump Sites." *CBC News*. June 2008. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/lakes-across-canada-face-being-turned-into-mine-dump-sites-1.733972> . Accessed 4 June 2017.
- "Mind Your Own Bismark". *Snopes*. November, 2016. <http://www.snopes.com/dapl-routed-through-standing-rock-after-bismarck-residents-said-no/> . Accessed 4 June 2017.
- Mitchell, WJT. *Landscape and Power: First Edition*. Chicago, IL: Chicago UP: 1994.
- Mitchell, WJT. *Landscape and Power: Second Edition*. Chicago, IL: U Chicago UP. 2002.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "Visualizing the Anthropocene." 213-232. *Public Culture: 26: 2*. 2014.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Right to Look a Counterhistory of Visuality*. Durham, NC: Duke UP. 2011.

- MoMA. "Dennis Oppenheim." 2017. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/166091> . Accessed 4 June 2017.
- Morton, Timothy, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World*. UMN Press, 2014
- Morton, Timothy. *Ecology Without Nature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard, UP. 2007.
- Morton, Timothy. "Romantic Disaster Ecology." *Romantic Circles*, January. 2012, www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/disaster/HTML/praxis.2012.morton.html.
- National Energy Board, *Filing Manual*. 2016.
- National Energy Board, "Decision on Kinder Morgan's Trans-Mountain Extension." 2015.
- National Energy Board. "Final Argument of Trans Mountain," August 20, 2015.
- Nigianni, Chrysanthi. "Chantal Akerman's *Là-bas*: The Suspended Image and the Politics of Anti-Messianism". *Sense of Cinema*, Issue 67. July 2013. <http://sensesofcinema.com/2013/feature-articles/chantal-akermans-la-bas-the-suspended-image-and-the-politics-of-anti-messianism/#14>. Accessed 4 June 2017.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011.
- Oppenheim, Dennis. *Relocated Burial Ground*. 1978.
- Oppenheim, Dennis. *Cancelled Crop*. 1969.
- Papapetros, S. and Rose, J. eds. *Retracing the Expanded Field: Encounters between Art and Architecture*. Boston, MA: MIT Press. 2014.
- Parikka, Jussi. *A Geology of Media*. Minneapolis, MN: UM Press. 2015.
- Ranciere, Jacques. *The Future of the Image*. New York, NY: Verso. 2009.
- Razack, Sherene. "It Happened More Than Once": Freezing Deaths in Saskatchewan." *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*. 26: 1. pp. 51-80.
- Resnais, Alain. dir. *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. 1949.
- Resnais, Alain. dir. *Nuit et Brouillette*. 1955.
- Reynolds, Ann. *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere*. Boston, MA: MIT Press. 2003.

Scarre, C. eds. *Monuments and Landscape in Atlantic Europe: Perception and Society during the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age*. London, UK: Routledge. 2002.

Schor, E. "Reclaimed Dump Sparks Oil Sands Sustainability Debate." *New York Times*. August, 2011.

<http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2011/08/16/16greenwire-reclaimed-dump-sparks-oil-sands-sustainability-44003.html?pagewanted=all> . Accessed 4 June 2017.

Serra, Richard. *Writings/Interviews*. Chicago, IL: U Chicago UP. 1994.

Shaviro, Steven. *The Cinematic Body*. Boston, MA: MIT Press. 1993.

Shinn, Dorothy. *Robert Smithson's Partially Buried Woodshed*. KSU School of Art, exhibition catalog. 1990.

Shannon, Joshua. Talk given at UC Irvine, Desert Modernism Symposium. Anza-Borrego, May 2015.

Silva, Denise F. da. *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007

Silva, Denis Ferreira. da. "No Bodies: Law, Raciality and Violence." *Meritum - Belo Horizonte*. 9: 1. pp. 119-162. Jan/Jun. 2014

Smithson, Robert. *Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty: True Fictions, False Realities*. Cooke, L. and Kelly, K. eds. Dia Art Foundation. Berkeley, CA: UC Press. 2005.

Smithson, R. *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam. UC Press, 1996.

Smithson, Robert. *Partially Buried Woodshed*. 1969.

Smith, Tony. "Tony Smith's Ride on The NJ Turnpike." *Art Outside the Gallery*. January 31, 2013, <http://artoutsidethegalleryblog.blogspot.com/2013/01/tony-smiths-ride-on-nj-turnpike.html>. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Struzik, D. "On Ravaged Tar Sands Land, Big Task for Reclamation." *Yale Environment* 360. March, 2014.

http://e360.yale.edu/features/on_ravaged_tar_sands_land_big_challenges_for_reclamation . Accessed 4 June 2017.

Suncor Canada. "Wapisiw Lookout." <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tags/wapisiw%20lookout/> . Accessed 4 June 2017.

Syncrude Canada Ltd. "Mildred Lake Extension Project Volume 2 – Environmental Impact Assessment." December 2014

Syncrude Canada Ltd. "Mildred Lake Extension Project Volume 1 – Environmental Impact Assessment." 2014

Syncrude Canada Ltd. "Mildred Lake Upgrader Expansion Application and Environmental Impact Assessment." July 1998

Syncrude Canada Ltd. "Mildred Lake Impact Assessment - Volume 1, Overview." 1973

Syncrude Canada. "Waterfowl and Bird Protection." 2017.
<http://www.syncrude.ca/environment/biodiversity/waterfowl-and-bird-protection/> . Accessed 4 June 2017.

Szeman, Imre, and, Whitman, Maria. "Oil Imag(e)ries: Critical Realism and the Oil Sands." *Imaginations*, 3:2. (2012).

Tencer, Daniel. "Northern Gateway: Enbridge Accused of Misleading Public." *Huffington Post*. August 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/08/16/enbridge-douglas-channel-islands_n_1789223.html . Accessed 4 June 2017.

Terada, Rei. *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009.

Terada, Rei "Historical Transitions and Transitions as Such," (unpublished)

Terada, Rei, "Hegel and the History of The Postracial," *Hegel and the Prehistory of the Postracial*, *European Romantic Review*, 26:3, 289-299.

Terada, Rei. "Frailty of the Ontic." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 2011. Volume 110, Number 1. 37-55 p.51

Terada, Rei. "The Image Beyond Futility." <http://workwithoutdread.blogspot.co.uk/>

Richard Prince. *Third Place. Desert X*. Desert Biennial LLC 2015.
<https://www.desertx.org/richard-prince>. Accessed 04 June 2017.

Trapp, Erin. "Arendt, Preference, and the Revolutionary Spectator." *Cultural Critique*, Number 86, Winter 2014, pp. 31-64

U.S. Department of Energy. *Reccomendations for the Preparation of Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements: Second Edition*. December 2004

Tuck, E., Yang, W. K. "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*. 1-40 1: 1. 2012.

Trudeau, Justin. "Pipeline Announcement." <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/11/30/prime-minister-justin-trudeaus-pipeline-announcement> . Accessed June 4, 2017.

United District Court For the District of Columbia. *Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, et al. v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, et. al.* September, 2016.

Virno, Paolo. *Deja Vu and the End of History*. David Broder, trans. New York: Verso, 2015.

Voyles, Traci. *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*. Minnesota, MI: Minnesota UP. 2015.

Wark, McKenzie. "Anthropo{mise-en-s}cène." *Public Seminar*, December. 2014. publicseminar.org/2014/12/anthropomise-en-scene/. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Weber, Sam. *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge, UK: CUP. 1991

Weizman, Eyal. *Forensic Architecture: Notes from Fields and Forums*. NOOO, Documenta 13. 2011.

Weizman, Eyal. Prochnik, George. "The Desert Threshold." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, October 2015. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-desert-threshold/>. Accessed 4 June 2017.

Weizman, Eyal. Sheikh, Fazal. *The Conflict Shoreline: Colonialism as Climate Change in the Negev Desert*. London, UK: Steidl. 2015.

Zara, Janelle. "Desert X: The Arid Exhibition That's Bringing Land Art to Coachella." *The Guardian*, February 28. 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/feb/28/desert-x-palm-springs-land-art-doug-aitken>. Accessed 04 June 2017.

Zuromskis, Catherine, "Petroaesthetics and Landscape Photography: *New Topographics*, Edward Burtynsky, and the Culture of Peak Oil," in *Oil Culture*. Barrett and Worden eds. Minneapolis, MN: UMN Press. 2014.