DOI 10.17953/aicrj.40.4.cornellier

# Extracting Inuit: The *of the North* Controversy and the White Possessive

*Bruno Cornellier*

*[I]n the beginning all the World was America.*
—John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, §49

*I refuse to make a consensual film. I'm a punk and I don't like being told what to put in. I have the right to use what's already public and republish it. . . . I ended up picking up this footage like you go fish or go hunt.*
—Dominic Gagnon, director of *of the North* (2015)

I always liked epigraphs and I use them routinely in my writing. They are like a (low) blow before the bell, setting the stage for what's coming before it has started. The first epigraph, from seventeenth-century British philosopher John Locke, is intended to bring attention to foundational assumptions of the second: that is, the deep coloniality that underlies Québécois filmmaker Dominic Gagnon's actions, as well as the public commons Gagnon claims for himself and his art.[1] The filmmaker's "found-footage" documentary *of the North* is controversial because Gagnon extracted "found" YouTube clips of northern Inuit life and mounted this footage as aesthetic capital for cinephile *jouissance*. The documentary's title quite evidently references Robert Flaherty's 1922 *Nanook of the North*, but sans Nanook, and thus remains haunted by the Inuit iconicity and settler-colonial fantasies Gagnon seeks to defer with such double act of erasure and inscription. This article points to the ways his aesthetic and ideological

Bruno Cornellier is an assistant professor in the Department of English at the University of Winnipeg. He is the author of *La "chose indienne": Cinéma et politiques de la représentation autochtones au Québec et au Canada* (Nota Bene, 2015). He coedited (with Michael Griffiths) the "Globalizing Unsettlement" special issue of *Settler Colonial Studies* (2016). His articles also appear in *Discourse*, *Occasion*, *Settler Colonial Studies*, *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, *London Journal of Canadian Studies*, and *Nouvelles Vues*.

project resound the founding logic of European settler colonialism: the claiming of land, and of indigeneity itself, as white possessions supported by historically malleable legal, military, discursive, and intellectual practices and institutions meant to sustain the givenness of white dominion over those possessions.

Locke's description of indigenous America as a primeval or Edenic common, or as a kind of precultural origin of the world, partly explains the critical attention that scholars of indigenous and decolonial studies give to the philosopher's *Second Treatise of Government* (1689), most particularly his theorization of the origins of private property. Locke's treatise, which could be described as one of the philosophical blueprints of Western liberal capitalism, makes seventeenth-century America emblematic of the idea of "nature" as a universal, natural common given by God to Adam, or "Mankind." For Locke, as a reasoning and thus self-owning individual subject, "Man" has the duty to use his labor to enclose parts of this universal common, maximize its use, and extract the most value from it. In order for these arrangements to work, free and self-owning individuals must first consent to such a social contract among fellow commoners, whether tacitly or expressly, and thus sacrifice some of their individual liberties in order to secure a commonwealth ruled by received laws, which in turn protect the individual's acquired property—that is, the property that they enclosed and extracted from the common with their labor.[2]

In this context, indigenous peoples—the "Americans" in Locke's prose—are thought incapable of consent to such a social contract. Thus, as political communities, indigenous peoples are disqualified from government and sovereignty. Political and economic liberalism likewise assumes that indigenous lands are wasted under their own tenure and labor, with the result that their lands return to the universal common and become *terra nullius*: a land that nobody owns and is therefore open to colonial settlement and resource extraction. In this way, Locke's premise that "in the beginning all the World was America" echoes the current globalization of a colonial regime of dispossession, appropriation, and extraction; a regime, moreover, that finds in liberal principles of individual freedom and reasoned self-ownership its most powerful justificatory devices.[3]

Here I propose to contrast Locke's pronouncement to yet another epigraph. Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson opens her book *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* with a statement by her late uncle, Dennis Benjamin Moreton, who said, "The problem with white people is they think and behave like they own everything." Both in light of this epigraph and Moreton-Robinson's theoretical claim that white supremacy "requires the possession of Indigenous lands as its proprietary anchor within capitalist economies,"[4] this article invites readers to consider the critical and institutional discourses triggered by the controversial screening of Gagnon's film at the 2015 *Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal* (RIDM). As I will argue, such discourses cannot be disarticulated from a settler-colonial political economy predicated on white possession. In the process, I identify hegemonic "settler structures of feeling"[5] in which progressive and reactionary political impulses become porous and overlap, given how, more often than not, the voices and institutions that defend the film and the RIDM's choice to program

it are those of white-settler subjects who self-identify as progressive, anticapitalist, and/or anticolonial.

In passionate, small, local cinephile scenes in both Québec and abroad, film aficionados have lauded Gagnon's many found-footage films made before *of the North*.[6] His video collages are carefully edited together out of a selection of amateur video footage and video blogs (or vlogs) extracted from the Internet. Presented without commentary, they examine digital self-representation practices of marginal or eccentric communities such as the conspiracy theorists, right-wing religious zealots, and gun fanatics in his 2009 film *RIP in Pieces America*. Following this trajectory, *of the North* also mirrors the filmmaker's fetishistic, aesthetic affection for the grotesque and the "trashy." In *of the North* this affection oriented his quest to discover images in the "dark corners of the web" (*dans les recoins sombres du Web*) [7] of those Inuit that he described as "those people who have that kind of life—the drunks, those who neglect their children."[8] Clashing responses to the film were unequivocal: ultimately, the passionate defenses and scathing condemnations of the film and the institutions screening it broke professional and personal relationships and left the Montréal film and festival communities deeply divided.

A critical mass of Inuit and First Nations filmmakers, artists, and intellectuals rallied the outrage of Inuit and non-Inuit people and led a campaign against Gagnon's film, including world-renowned Inuit musician Tanya Tagaq, Inuit documentary filmmaker Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, Inuit broadcaster Stephen Agluvak Puskas, Innu film historian and founding member of Terres en Vues André Dudemaine, and the National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition.[9] These critics sought to obstruct *of the North*'s distribution and to shame those institutions organizing screenings of the film, not only the RIDM and the Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois (RVCQ), but also the Montréal-based Cinéclub LaBanque and the Museum of the Moving Image in New York City. Against indigenous anger and outrage, the voices and institutions supporting and/or organizing screenings of the film turned to a predictable and oft-repeated mantra: understood as a consensus-based political community in which fair, rational decision-making is collectively reached through dialogue in a free, open public space, the ideal of deliberative democracy *requires* that the film be screened and debated publicly—despite or against the alleged censorship prescribed by unruly and antidemocratic Inuit protesters—so that everyone can freely and rationally make up their own minds about its political and aesthetic values.[10]

In resorting to discourse that frames liberal democratic moral authority as self-evident, defenders of the film shore up what has historically been one of the most powerful justificatory devices for Anglo-American settler colonialism: a liberal rationality and colonial humanism presents indigenous inclusion (or ingestion) into a deliberative, democratic, and "abstract citizenry" as a gift, from *us* to *them*. The phrase "abstract citizenry" comes from Lisa Lowe, who draws a crucial contrast between capital, which "is said by Marx to be unconcerned by the 'origins' of its labor force," whereas "the nation-state, with its needs for 'abstract citizens' formed by a unified culture to participate in the political sphere, is precisely concerned to maintain a national citizenry bound by race, language, and culture."[11] In the particular settler

context of Québec and Canada, such democratically idealized and allegedly colorblind "abstract citizenry" remains robustly articulated to a default and implicit understanding of sovereignty as a white possession. The people's sovereignty belongs to those who "founded" a sovereign, settler order where it is assumed none could have existed before. In "Whiteness as Property," Cheryl Harris famously argues that "the property of being white" historically becomes the source of privilege and protection. Such "racialized conception of property implemented by force and ratified by law" provided "the ideological basis for slavery and conquest."[12] In a similar vein, Mark Rifkin builds on Raymond Williams's term to theorize a "settler structure of feeling" which he identifies in literature. For Rifkin, the proprietary and sovereign regime of settlement becomes the "unmarked, generic conditions of possibility for occupancy, association, history, and personhood" for entitled members of the body politic.[13]

What, then, are the conditions that make it possible for Montreal's film institutions and cinephile voices to unquestioningly assume their being here to be moral and lawful? I argue that these institutions and the mostly white-settler people running them can only claim a voice that is assumed and entitled to be at home—indeed, to be housed in a deliberative public space that is always already a home to *us*—if presuppositions of white possession and the denial of indigenous sovereignty remain implicit. My critical focus, throughout this essay, is thus on the assumptions and commandments that saturate the film's broader public and cultural life. As we have seen, one of these key assumptions is that all cultural and political differences and antagonisms *can* and *must* be made commensurable, translatable, or mutually intelligible, in neutral and peaceful propinquity with one another, in a "free" space of dialogue. Yet this assumption prompts at least one question: what (and who) needs to be cleared out of the way or excluded for this (never so) neutral space to be "freed" of what (and who) gets in the way of mutual understanding, recognition, and reconciliation?

Not all settlers are white, of course, and as scholars have shown, many nonwhite subjects may also reap the benefits of settlement, indigenous dispossession, and colonial genocide. Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd conceives settler colonialism as a "cacophony" of voices and struggles, a complex set of relationships between European settlers, indigenous peoples, and other colonized, enslaved, and/or migrant populations. In such context, the "struggles for social justice for queers, racial minorities, and immigrants [are often coerced] into complicity with settler colonialism."[14] She insists that we must not allow ourselves to lose sight of the coherent core project that underlies these cacophonous relations: the expansion of a settler dominion which, Moreton-Robinson would argue, is ideologically grounded in white supremacy as the primary impetus for indigenous dispossession. Indeed, the settler project in the Americas is a white supremacist project. If, on the one hand, as Lowe points out, capital is unconcerned with race—in the strict sense that the race of the exploited, enslaved, managerial, or specialized laborer does not preclude capitalism from seeking and extracting surplus value from this labor—race, on the other hand, is what makes "the nation" beyond class differences. Race is and has been the justificatory device for dispossession, confiscation, violation, and displacement, from the fifteenth-century Doctrine of Discovery to Standing Rock in 2017. While settlers are not all white,

it would nevertheless be naïve to ignore how whiteness constitutes the unmarked, normative core and direction of "governmental belonging"[15] in white multicultural nations such as Québec and Canada.[16]

## Cinema and the "Vanishing Race"

Clearly, my aim is not to provide yet another critique of the film itself. The Québécois, Canadian, and indigenous mediascapes have already featured detailed attempts—by the film's detractors as much as its defenders—to unpack what the film does or does not do or say. A long article by Montréal-based film scholar André Habib in *Hors Champ* is the most detailed, and perhaps also the most contentious, attempt to provide a defense of the film. Habib, writing with much self-confidence, claims that he "cannot . . . resign myself to recognize in these critics' words the *film I am certain to have seen*; I cannot accept to wear the hat of the colonizer they want me to wear, enjoying the exoticized spectacle of the Other."[17] Those Inuit and First Nations critics who failed to privilege the text over the social and the affective, and failed to analyze it "calmly" [*calmement*],[18] are then implicitly contrasted with Habib, the educated and reasoned academic, the one who knows, the bearer of demonstrable certitudes[19]—whose dispassionate [*calmement*] ability to see the film and perform a close, distanced, and rigorous textual analysis might alone restore "the spirit and letter of the film" [*l'esprit et la lettre du film*].[20] In the same breath, the aesthete Habib also hails his disdain for racial stereotyping and the destructive forces of capitalism on Inuit lives, and he condescendingly celebrates the "dignity" of the "sometimes intelligent, sometimes quite reasonable" indigenous critics to whose voices and knowledge we must "listen."[21] And yet, the set of educated and reasoned certainties that sustains his critical intervention clearly suggests that such listening will only be possible or acceptable as long as these colonized subjects also hear and see what *he knows* he has heard and seen in these images, and what he knows other people—those also equipped with his kind of distanced expertise and knowledge of film art and film history—should have also been able to see and extract from the film: "Let anyone hear who wants to hear" [*Entende qui voudra*].[22]

Prior to the publication of Habib's piece, Innu film historian André Dudemaine published, also in *Hors Champ*, a witty and eloquent castigation of the notion that the film simply constitutes a mash-up of Inuits' own acts of self-representation, a notion which would allegedly free Gagnon's authorial responsibility in front of these images, thus leaving audiences with the sole responsibility of seeing what they see and drawing the meaningful connection that they made in and between these images.[23] Dudemaine explains instead that the onanistic, conquering, and predating gesture of the filmmaker-as-collector of the grotesque,[24] once shielded under the umbrella of the avant-garde and its institutional organs of artistic legitimation, is experienced by Inuit and First Nations peoples as a silencing gesture—or even worse, as an "act of war."[25] Other critics insist that there is no such thing as a montage that isn't associative;[26] they expose and denounce the film's curatorial and editing choices, with the most notorious being the juxtaposition of a pornographic closeup of an Inuit women's vagina with a shot featuring a dog's rear end; the film's morbid fascination with images of drunk

Inuit men or with acts of cruelty against animals in violation of traditional Inuit hunting practices; the shot of a naked Inuit women sitting on the lap of a rural white American man, who is prefacing what is assumed to be his eventual sexual consumption of this Inuit women's body with an ignorant and exoticist line of questioning about her "eskimo" origins.[27] The list goes on.

Against these critics, many defenders of the film were quick to suggest statistics showing that these images of the grotesque and the ugly in the film are outnumbered by "positive" images of Inuit playfulness and community life, of northern natural beauty, as well as southern capitalist and extractive destruction of the North, lending credence to those insisting that the film is decolonial and anticapitalist in scope and therefore sympathetic to the plight of the Inuit. Furthermore, the film was hailed by many of its defenders for its pioneering "courage" in revealing for all to see the ugly, tragic side of settler colonialism, as opposed to more idealistic and comforting representations of Inuit life.[28] Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, Heather Igloliorte, and Stephen Puskas efficiently debunked this argument when they produced and circulated an exhaustive list of Inuit-produced films and media texts (and a few made by non-Inuit) that already documented the tragic, enduring effects of settler colonialism and/or extractive capitalism on Northern life.[29]

I need not add my own voice to these critiques to speak what has already been said and written against the film by countless Inuit and First Nations critics and their allies. My interest, once again, is in discussing the broader cultural life of the film as a catalyst for discourses steeped in our settler-colonial present. I would nevertheless like to briefly signal the ways in which the film reinforces ideological apprehensions of contemporary Inuit life by metaphorically articulating it to, or saturating it with, images of environmental and architectural decay.[30] The film performs a predictable recoupling of the white man's burden and the anthropological trope of the "vanishing race." These ideological tropes were contemporary to the burgeoning of the discipline of anthropology as a humanist project aimed at capturing and documenting dying and disappearing "primitive races," which were thought to be unfit for modernity and thus doomed to disappear with or without settler-colonial intervention. Scholar Brian Hochmann recently argued that new media technology did not merely facilitate deployment of "vanishing race" tropes, but rather that this early-twentieth-century ideological and scientific anthropological project itself prompted the development of cine-photographic and audio recording technologies.[31] We encounter the contemporary residue of this ideological project in films such as *Dances with Wolves*, *Avatar*, *Apocalypto*, or *The Lone Ranger*, which feature white narrative agents who express humanist and primitivist sympathies towards an uncorrupted indigeneity waiting to be salvaged from its own demise.[32]

Gagnon insists in interviews that, as an alcoholic himself, his affection for the drunks and for disorderly people in *of the North* stems from his own sympathies towards the Dionysian *joie de vivre* of partying outcasts: he describes them as a "cultural avant-garde," living off the grid of respectability and innocence.[33] Such statements reflect his profound and unapologetic ignorance of the colonial context and relationships he inhabits and seeks to represent, even more perhaps than any of the other

egregious statements he made in the aftermath of the RIDM screening. Hence, it is no surprise that he can repeatedly and shamelessly state that he did not consult any Inuit person or community before making his film and that he has never been north. His recourse to tropes of degeneration, loss, and decay, together with his coupling of modernity and indigeneity as always-already linked to alienation, directly locate his avant-garde proposition alongside the commercial feats of discredited anthropological ideology in James Cameron's film *Avatar*.[34]

Analyzing *Avatar* as a contemporary mirror of antiquated anthropological notions of indigeneity, Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson writes:

> *Avatar* conflates Indigeneity with an endangered cultural purity, one that is about to be sequestered, removed, and possibly annihilated for territorial possession. Because of Indigenous endangerment, there is a need for protection, preservation, and leadership by an outside force. The central protagonist—a white, injured (and disabled) American veteran—is offered the possibility of becoming in bodily form, the very people and culture under siege. When he assumes this new, improved self and bodily form (that of a Native) he no longer occupies Indigenous territory unjustly, and in this new form, leads the "Na'vi" in their resistance to dispossession, removal, and ecocide.[35]

In Gagnon's co-optative fantasy, indigenous drunkenness reflects his own alcoholism and outcast status—a narrative which he believes also shields him from accusations of having made a racist and colonialist film—he presents himself as yet another subjective embodiment of the injured American veteran from Cameron's film.[36] Like *Avatar*'s plot, a white hero's alleged critical intervention against extractive capitalism's effect on a decaying land and people become an alibi for an appropriative gesture of intervention. Likewise, it is from a disembodied, distanced, and virtual immersion into the life of "these people" that Gagnon finds moral authority and indemnity—in this case as a self-identified punk, outcast, and alcoholic who is unconcerned with systemic racial privileges that somehow wouldn't, he claims, apply to him as a poor avant-garde artist.[37]

My reading of the colonial humanism of the film and the filmmaker's statements and sentiments is supported by the way in which the RIDM advertised *of the North* to its presumed audience. At the very least, the blurb advertising the film in the RIDM official program aligns its official selection of the film with a settler-colonialist ideological fabric. Despite the blurb's insistence on Inuit self-perception, non-indigenous agencies—those of the filmmaker and the festival's presumed audience—are clearly and unequivocally cast as the subjects of representation:

> "In the land of ice and snow, don't call me an eskimo." That is the refrain of a song heard in Dominic Gagnon's latest film. In a similar vein to his recent works, *of the North* is a collage of amateur web videos that together provide a hallucinatory vision of the Arctic. Thanks to exceptional sound work that makes fine use of silences, the roughness of the recordings and fascinating but also unsettling throat singing, the film not only presents Inuit self-perceptions, but those of a filmmaker

> who, driven by the uncanny intensity of a people who live in a merciless environment, exacerbates the violence, culture shocks and fierce beauty of a world that becomes, before his eyes, a true interzone.[38]

A series of hyperboles, ranging from the "hallucinatory," the "uncanny," and the "unsettling" to the "merciless" and the "fierce," turn what is otherwise (and always has been) the Inuit homeland into a remote, exotic, and unfamiliar northern "heart of darkness": an attraction aesthetically extracted and exalted by the expert artistic and aesthetic flair of the white avant-garde filmmaker for curious, fascinated, and distant southern gazes.

I want to highlight most specifically the ideological assumptions that inform this recourse to the idea of a so-called interzone. This term beckons in various ways this conceptualization of a dialogic and intercultural logic of encounter—a movement across space between epistemologies and always-already differentiated, but mutually intelligible peoples—that constitute textual and discursive traces of the white possessive that structures and propels settler colonialism and its denial of the very possibility of indigenous sovereignty.

## Let's All Calmly Talk about This: The Fallacies of Restorative Dialogue

The voice of the "unsettling" throat singing of the festival program blurb belongs to Inuit artist Tanya Tagaq. A surge of complaints followed media interviews and social media postings in which she publicly accused the RIDM of having programmed a racist film and after she threatened a lawsuit against Gagnon for appropriating her music without her permission. The RIDM then attempted to show good faith towards their Inuit and non-Inuit detractors and issued a public statement:

> [We] have always sought to represent the diversity of perspectives, topics and approaches in the documentary genre. . . . Far from seeing *of the North* as a racist work, it was programmed as a critical discourse on colonialism and its still devastating impacts, through a montage of images recorded and uploaded to YouTube by Inuit peoples. We believe that this film confronts stereotypes that have afflicted Inuit peoples. Nevertheless, we are conscious of the harshness of the images in the film and sincerely regret the harm these images have had on members of the public. We recognize that we should have provided more context for the work and the filmmaker's approach, beyond the usual space we provide for the public to discuss works with filmmakers after each screening. We should have provided a better forum for the conversation about this work to ensure an inclusive and respectful space for everyone to express their point of view.[39]

In other words, the problem is not with the film or the festival's decision to program it. Rather, as is clearly implied, the problem lies with those who did not understand what the festival programmers already knew or understood—that *of the North* is a nonracist, anticolonial film.[40] Given the imperfect public space of dialogue it provided, the institution should have "bestowed" an enhanced forum for public dialogue that

would, could, or should have accomplished better apprehension, understanding, and even appreciation of its own, always-already-settled knowledge of this "difficult" film and of Inuit decay. The statement implies that miscommunication and misrecognition are what is at stake, and it is a public space of dialogue, inclusive of *all* differentiated members of an abstract citizenry, that must correct this miscommunication under the umbrella of a sovereign and deliberative settler democracy. A year later, on November 17, 2016, RIDM reversed course and issued a public apology recognizing it had been a mistake to program "a film with a colonial perspective that perpetuates racist stereotypes."[41] This apology statement is briefly discussed in the conclusion of this article.

In addition to the RIDM, other cultural institutions organizing screenings of the film claimed that they were seeking to enhance or restore the quality of debate. They too asserted their duty to unilaterally foster an intercultural dialogue about the issues raised by the film, regardless of the fact that Inuit communities never asked that Gagnon or these cultural institutions conduct such dialogue *for them*—not to mention that they never asked for nor wanted this film, which many Inuit experienced as an insult and an assault, to be made and programmed on their behalf in the first place.

In response to Stephen Puskas, for example, who launched an online petition demanding that the Museum of the Moving Image in New York City (MoMI) cancel its scheduled screenings of Gagnon's film,[42] MoMI issued a statement in which they celebrate the "strong artistic merit" and bold avant-garde proposition made by a filmmaker "[provocatively reinventing] the ethnographic documentary" with his use of "extreme imagery of Inuit life." MoMI goes on to insist that even though it "respects and appreciates the feelings and viewpoint of the film's critics," the avant-garde license of the film somewhat frees the filmmaker from the burden of accuracy and accountability in the representation of Inuit life. The Museum statement maintains that discussion will follow the screening and that those whose "feelings and viewpoints" are thereby "being respected" will be free to ask questions of the filmmaker. In the spirit of securing a healthy and strong deliberative public democracy, the role of the institution, they conclude, is to "[represent] many different viewpoints, and we respect the viewpoints and questions raised by members of the Inuit community and by others who have expressed their concerns."[43]

By posting hyperlinks to the petition next to some positive reviews of the film, MoMI thus finds that it has paid due diligence to Inuit anticolonial rhetoric and dissent. In the spirit of Western liberalism, the museum thus enables and graciously authorizes a peripheral space where dissent is accounted for, but in a way that paradoxically ends up silencing this very dissent, since its visible presence in such peripheral "clickable" space ensures that it can be "recognized" by those with authority and institutional power while no longer interrupting the status quo. However, for MoMI merely to gesture "concern," even as it bequeaths its institutional recognition, does not cover its actual lack of accountability in the face of those people who find themselves curated on MoMI's walls or screens.

In another instance of this recourse to liberal conceptions of deliberative democracy in defense of settler cultural institutions, the Montréal-based Ciné-Club LaBanque, which scheduled a screening and public debate about the film for March 7, 2016,

prefaced their Facebook page about the event with a bilingual statement by Gagnon in which the filmmaker insists and reiterates that he has broken no (settler) state laws by extracting and mashing together videos publicly available on YouTube. Gagnon's proprietary rapport with culture is implicitly articulated to a global cultural common in which the individual freedom of self-owning subjects ensures that there is no limit to what can be "art," or what can be used, salvaged, or appropriated in the name of artistic freedom.[44] Within such a digital *terra nullius*, apparently, the dialogic, democratic idealization of an intercultural coexistence of differences imperatively requires that barriers be knocked down between artists and a global, human-owned pool of cultural creativity and diversity. Under this scenario, indigenous protocols thousands of years old and laws on consent become nothing but impediments to artistic freedom and free access to a universal (digital) commons.[45] Gagnon then benevolently offers to make the material he extracted from such digital flora and fauna available again on the "platform from which it was conceived: YouTube," a return to a digital Lockean common that would thus close the circuit—after the filmmaker has made these indigenous cultural artifacts "his" by bestowing it with his own aesthetic flair and authorial signature, and thus turning it into a new and original piece of art available to all. Gagnon then concludes: "All are free to view [the film], screen it or clash with it during that evening."

Claiming security reasons and alleged threats against the filmmaker, the Ciné-Club decided to cancel the screening, posting the following statement on its Facebook page:

> We first decided to show the film in an open, public space of dialogue, because of the polarizing opinions. We believe that the film has been attacked and defended for different reasons. Some debunked the film with good arguments and in more convincing ways than many who defended it, and some voices brought their support to the film in more persuasive way than some who opposed it.
>
> There was food for thought. Although many found it to be racist, colonial, disrespectful, spreading stereotypes of the North, others have seen it to be embracing the joys and suffering of life, beyond the north.
>
> In that context, from one side or the other, we get the sense that calls for dialog have been avoided. Our goal was to create that space in search for common grounds through discord, it felt necessary.

In other words, the organizers somewhat sought to create and implement the interzone of the RIDM program blurb: a space where *we* can meet *them*, but on *our* own terms and in *our own* home. The Ciné-Club's rhetoric performs a self-victimizing gesture which mirrors many of the filmmaker's own expressions of white fragility and white victimhood at the hand of a mob of angry and unreasonable Inuit and First Nations critics.[46] Once again, recognition of those-who-dissent is bestowed in a way that also castigates them as guilty of obstructing a necessary dialogue about their lives and colonial situation that "we" recognize in all its complexity and have had the benevolence to set up for "them." In response, a chorus of Inuit and non-Inuit dissenters took over the event's Facebook page.[47] Indirectly echoing Moreton-Robinson's uncle's words that "the problem with white people is they think and behave like they own everything," Alethea Arnaquq-Baril astutely explains: "Make no mistake, this screening is not about having

important dialogue about the state of life for Inuit people. It is about what rights a white man has to do and say whatever he wants about anyone he wants, no matter how much damage he will inflict."[48]

As a brief final example, I examine an open letter signed by a collective of Québécois filmmakers published in mainstream Montreal newspapers in response to the decision of Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois to exclude Gagnon's film from their annual review of Québécois cinema.[49] The filmmakers were angered by this decision, which they interpret as censorship and a return to the "dark days" of Québec under Maurice Duplessis's conservative political and Catholic authorities. They call for restoring "the possibility of a dialogue between the film and its public" [*leur lettre . . . prône le retour à une possibilité de dialogue entre ce film et son public*]. The letter's signatories deploy the familiar rhetoric that finds freedom of expression to be a nonnegotiable value and the necessary conduit of a vital democracy. Yet they fail to grasp that strategies meant to compensate one's lack of institutional power with acts of civil disobedience, or other modalities of interruption or obstruction such as boycott campaigns and shaming tactics, are indeed also instances of the freedom of expression and democracy in action they value so highly.

Rather than the indignant Québécois filmmakers' published letter, consequently, it is Arnaquq-Baril's Facebook comment that leads to my core critical and theoretical argument in this article. Her statement invites us to theorize white entitlement as the unmarked condition of existence for members of an "abstract citizenry" that is in fact articulated to the white possessive. I argue that this default rhetorical recourse to the democratic imperative of an unbound, restorative dialogue actually fails to do what it pretends this space of intercultural encounters is meant to do: to solve or resolve, by means of mutual understanding and recognition, the systemic racial and colonial inequalities that many of the film's opponents wished to make visible and intelligible. Instead, this repetitive recourse to the bestowing of a deliberative public space in the name of a *necessary* intercultural dialogue reflects the very structure of feeling of liberal colonial settlement that helps to sustain the state's sovereign claims to dispossessed indigenous lands.

## Dialogue, Property Rights, and the White Possessive in Liberal Settler-States

Scholarly theorizations of settler colonialism and its proprietary regime—which is both territorial *and* epistemic—help us better assess what is at stake in the idealization of restorative dialogue and debate that animates much critical and institutional responses to the *of the North* controversy. In an insightful rereading of Karl Marx and Frantz Fanon that anchors a "place-based" radical decolonizing critique of the Canadian state, and in conversation with Patrick Wolfe, Dené political theorist Glen Coulthard asserts that "Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element." In simple, Lockean terms, settler colonialism necessitates, first and foremost, possessive claims to other peoples' land and resources. The settler-colonial relationships fostered on such a foundation are, Coulthard insists, characterized by domination: "it is a relationship

where power . . . has been structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of hierarchical social relations that continue to facilitate the *dispossession* of indigenous peoples of their land and self-determining authority."[50] This is accomplished not simply with recourse to force and direct violence, but also, and perhaps most efficiently today, via a "conciliatory" regime in which force and fraud, according to Coulthard, are discursively couched as "negotiations" that remain articulated to the same proprietary, settler regime of indigenous dispossession and elimination. "Negotiations" are meant to secure "ongoing state access to the land and resources that contradictorily provide the material and spiritual sustenance of Indigenous societies."

One of Coulthard's crucial points, then, is to argue that Marx's concept of "primitive accumulation" shouldn't be read or understood as a mere and necessary *transitional* stage. The phrase "primitive accumulation" in Marxist theory describes the violent transition from feudal to capitalist social relations during which peasants and self-sufficient small-scale producers are forcibly transformed into dispossessed waged laborers and stripped from "the source of their livelihood—*the land*." If some Marxist orthodoxies continue to frame "primitive accumulation" as an inescapable stage or moment in the transition to capitalism, Coulthard argues instead that today this process continues to structure the type of social hierarchies that are reproduced by, and continue to sustain, colonial and capitalist modes of dispossession globally.[51]

Furthermore, how are these "hierarchical social relations" (from inferiority to superiority, from entitlement to dispossession, from the "state of nature" to civility and reasoned consent) constantly reconsolidated within liberal settler states that are otherwise *aspiring* to produce justice, equality, and individual freedom for all (including for indigenous peoples)? In one of his last published articles, Stuart Hall sheds light on this conundrum. He explains how political liberalism "requires the consent of free, propertied men" whose rights and privileges to accumulate capital are then couched in "the lexicon of bourgeois ideas: freedom, equality, property and 'Bentham' (i.e., possessive individualism and self-interest)."[52] Hall maintains that in our current neoliberal moment:

> Classic liberal principles have been radically transformed to make them applicable to a modern, global, post-industrial capitalism. In translating these ideas to different discursive forms and a different historical moment, neo-liberalism performs a massive work of trans-coding while remaining in sight of the lexicon on which it draws. It can do its dis-articulating and re-articulating work because these ideas have long been inscribed in social practices and institutions and sedimented into the "habitus" of everyday life, common sense and popular consciousness.[53]

If so, there is no endpoint to classical liberalism, nor is there a possible return inasmuch as this classical liberalism never actually ended; it endures as the founding lexicon that sustains the aggressive and material institutions behind the current neoliberal distribution of wealth, power, and property on a global scale. But Hall's view of the role of neoliberalism's lexicon in its transcoding processes also allows us to discern that progressive social forces and subjects, in their obvious disdain of the official and easily identifiable organs of political and economic power, cannot so easily disentangle

themselves from the hegemonic bloc they claim to rebuke. Rather, as members of an abstract citizenry, their sense of moral righteousness, their most intimate inhabitance, and their commonsense celebration of equality, difference, liberty, and togetherness often remain articulated to the same lexicon. In terms of this article's argument, this lexicon is built on the premise of the white possessive as providing a subjective anchor for white progressives.

Moreton-Robinson points out that "white possession operates discursively within knowledge production through universals, norms, values, and beliefs." As a universal anchor, whiteness must be kept under erasure as a geographically and historically located identity marker. The reasoning (white) liberal subject speaks instead the language of verifiable universals and moral imperatives which, imagined as templates, make others' lives and worlds commensurable and intelligible as objects of knowledge and/or as recipients of aid, intervention, reform, curiosity, or inspiration. Hence, both epistemologically and physically, the racial subject's body, culture, land, and sovereignty are to be claimed and possessed by white agencies, acting as stand-ins for the human: in Moreton-Robinson's distillation, "The 'native' is an epistemological possession who is already known."[54] Such epistemological possession necessitates that indigenous epistemologies, vocabularies, or voices either be excluded or turned into peripheral or relational objects of knowledge or topics, in contrast to subjectively unmarked white Western epistemologies, rationalities, and authorship/authority.

The indigenous knowledge of aliberal, exotic peoples is located and embodied, while the white European episteme is subjectively unspecific and immune to identity politics. This matters because it is precisely this belief in the disembodied and dislocated epistemic neutrality of the unmarked white subject that structures its entitlement. It allows this white subject to assume that the public sphere is always home to their opinions, even on topics, concepts, and experiences they are more than willing to admit knowing very little about, if nothing at all; the dislocation of this white subject allows it to claim everything and everyone as a potential object of knowledge or representation that is always already intelligible, knowable, translatable, and accessible. Because the white possessive also functions socio-discursively to inform and shape white subjectivity and the law, Moreton-Robinson explains, possession "ontologically shaped the formation of white subjectivity" and hence possessiveness exceeds the materiality of settler-colonial proprietary claims over territory and sovereignty.[55]

In conversation with both Moreton-Robinson's formulation of the white possessive and Coulthard's contemporary revisioning of "primitive accumulation" as global modes of colonialist/capitalist dispossession working through and reproducing social hierarchies, I propose that stripping sovereignty over the land from Inuit and First Nations peoples (the very land where the highly prized public space of dialogue is meant to be secured) is not the only way that indigenous peoples are made commensurable with the type of self-owning subjectivities privileged by a white liberal regime of citizenship. The foundational process of dispossession known as "primitive accumulation" makes land available to settlers via physical violence, unquestionably, but also via complementary epistemological claims of authority over knowledge and rights. This helps to clarify why many Inuit and First Nations continue to show frustration that their

indigenous knowledge and protocols of cultural exchange and ownership may never be effectively "recognized" by those settler subjects and institutions assuming their entitlement to the fruits of the white possessive.[56]

According to anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli, such "granting" of so-called recognition to indigenous peoples in liberal, multicultural settler-states implies infinite commensurability, or the idea that cultural alterities are always already translatable. That is, within intercultural encounters, "they" can (and must) be made intelligible to "us" by means of a third term or arbiter that could make these differences intelligible, recognizable, and amalgamable. Those who control this third term appear as self-appointed guardians of reasoned dialogues and encounters who claim competence or capacity to know and translate. Emboldened by such disembodied capacity and curiosity to know, embrace, salvage, and tolerate, they entitle themselves with the authority to arbitrate public spaces and conversations, and to delineate the limit separating acceptable and unacceptable tones, ideas, and behaviors. In order for indigenous iterations and ways of being to be deemed acceptable and intelligible, these othered subjects must behave and speak according to "demand[s] that they *be* in relation to specific laws, policies, and identities."[57] That the operating cultural and ideological location of these laws, policies, and identities is in fact white is then hidden behind hollowed and sloganized (and allegedly universal) Enlightenment concepts of freedom and equality. The liberal politics of difference secures their proponent's entitlements, rights, duties, and capacities to measure and police away what is then *known*—within the rule-bound space of a democratically negotiated commons—to be intolerable, repugnant, aliberal, and barbaric differences. The arbiter of mutual recognition is thus afforded the power to delineate the state of exception, to condemn, exclude, eliminate, incarcerate, dispossess, silence, or manage this surplus population, this intolerable or anti-democratic *prise de position*, this aliberal difference, expression, opinion, or indignation.

The purpose of outlining this theoretical framework is to illuminate how and why it is that Inuit critics' deeply felt pain and anger, and their attempts to obstruct the screenings of the film, are reframed so easily as censorship or antidemocratic obstacles to individual and artistic freedom.[58] In this reframed discourse, "they" are preventing "us" from freely making up our own minds as reasoning, self-owning subjects and abstract citizens in front of this controversial film; "they" are clouding the possibility of mutual recognition via a healthy, open dialogue that could make our differences commensurable and mutually recognizable. This, I believe, is what Audra Simpson means when she provocatively and wittily describes liberal multiculturalism, as well as its recognition-based model for protecting and celebrating one's cultural difference, as an "orgasm of justice," and one simultaneously articulated to "the taking of territory": "'I love your difference (which I once wanted to kill), I will recognize and protect it (if it will not offend or kill me)."[59] In other words, *they* get in the way of *our jouissance*—or they get in the way of yet another liberal "orgasm of justice": reconciliation. In light of what can only be thought of as mere "misunderstandings" stemming from the divide created between *us* by *our* colonial past, Inuit dissenters are perceived as extricating themselves from the type of dispassionate dialogue (or "context") that would allow

*them* to be reconciled with *us* and with the film's "true" decolonial, anticapitalist, and pro-Inuit intentions.

In Simpson's powerful rendering of this bind, film critics and settler film institutions can (or will accept to) hear only what does not offend or kill them. Of course, I do not intend "killing" to be taken literally. Rather, I infer from these settler defenses of *of the North* and attempts to salvage Gagnon from Inuit indignation that the film itself isn't really what is at stake. A settler-colonialist "habitus" feels threatened: a certain sense of authority, common sense, and entitlement; a sense of educated sophistication as the arbiter of good taste and of the "proper" way to aestheticize politics and to politicize art. This habitus is felt to be wounded. It is this feeling, in my view, that propels some settler film critics and institutions to lash out in protective and reactionary fashion against those unruly, angry, and unreasonable (yet "dignified" and "intelligent") Inuit. What emerged at the surface is a sense of panic on the part of self-owning settler subjects who feel they are choking and losing their breath in what some of them experience as the unwelcoming and toxic atmosphere of "puritan identity politics"[60] each time their role as self-appointed arbiters of public and reasoned debate is challenged.

These same settler subjects constantly refashion their own public being by attaching it to the films and the "grands cinéastes"[61] they love, by publicly reasserting their selves or status in acts and expressions of aesthetic appreciation, cinephile know-how, and film literacy. Yet despite tending their subjectivity and status, seemingly it cannot survive the potential challenge posed by Inuit and First Nations dissenters who stand in the way of the very indigenous imageries and fantasies that southern cinephiles and institutions feel entitled to extract and exalt for their own aesthetic and intellectual *jouissance*, their own orgasmic celebration of individual (white) artistic genius. Tellingly, in each instance what "rescues" these entitled subjects is how they couch their riposte against indigenous critiques in expressions of settler pi(e)ty towards those Inuit and First Nations subjects and sad regret that these subjects failed to properly see or "get" the gift thus being bestowed upon them.

Since their surplus emotions and raw reactions to the film and to its painful and traumatic montage of images cloud their judgment and their capacity to reason, or so we are led to believe, in essence Inuit do not control (or possess) their own being. These emotional reactions drive them away from rationally assessing what *really* is in the film, which alone would enable them to *get* the film, to *get* art, or to possess the proper/proprietary knowledge of *it*, and thus *get* that the film works to their benefit. These assumptions about indigenous subjects directly support my argument that the politics of commensurability that structure the idealizing of publicly performed, restorative dialogue within liberal settler colonies are assimilationist in nature. They clearly assume an alterity that—without or despite *them*—can be known and must be recognized by "all of us." Such commensuration of differences under the rubric of restorative dialogue and under assumptions of absolute mutual intelligibility absorbs this difference within a deliberative, democratic public space as part of which whiteness occupies the driver's seat and hides behind the political fiction of an abstract citizenry. Whiteness remain both the destination and the ultimate arbiter of an intercultural

dialogue that can never be mutual and reciprocal within the hierarchical confines of enduring colonial relations of power.

Clearly, the *demands* for dialogue are demands made to Inuit people that "they" come and educate "us," or that they come and prove us wrong if they are indeed so angry at us. Until such "proof" be revealed *by them* and recognized *by us*, our epistemic entitlements will continue to secure both our knowledge of them and our apprehension of their pain, as well as our knowledge of art and cinema.[62] Furthermore, the gift or the bestowing of an appropriate space of dialogue for Inuit to better apprehend the film's "context" and true intentions comes with a demand that Inuit come *here*—or come "home." And if Inuit refuse to give us their voice, their presence, their intellectual labor, their emotional safety, their trauma, or their experience—or if they refuse to see the film or to see it "properly"—then this refusal becomes proof that they were wrong or unreasonable from the outset. Alternatively, the argument may be rephrased and reversed: What threatens to "kill" those settler critics and settler cultural institutions is a demand that "they" must justify to non-white subjects why "they" refuse to let go of their culturally appropriative ways. To command white settlers to "prove yourself right" can indeed be lethal. Like any ideology, to operate effectively entitlement must remain naturalized, the "commonsense" way of being and dwelling in the world. We must also recognize that although the "gifting" of restorative spaces of public dialogue demands that Inuit organize and speak from within white-settler supremacy, to impose speech in this way works as a silencing tactic. It is a demand that "they" speak within and for the project of creating mutual intelligibility via a dialogue that would (or must) cancel out the possibility of incompatibility or incommensurability between agents who are differently located within hierarchical colonial relations of power.

Restorative dialogue could thus be likened to putting a band-aid labeled "reconciliation" over a gaping, still-bleeding colonial wound; it is a demand that "their" pain be understood by "us," and in the process that "we" be made whole as privileged and entitled witnesses who grant recognition to, or document, their pain and their wound. Ultimately, the bestowing of spaces of dialogue with the intention of bridging cultural (and never political) differences, or in order to help restore reciprocal or intercultural togetherness within a (white) public sphere, is what contemporary settler colonialism looks like when it smiles at the colonized instead of scowling. This is what it does when it seeks to be "conciliatory," when it seeks to make indigeneity commensurable with the unilateral assumptions of sovereignty of the settler-colonial state and its unfettered access to indigenous lands—and to indigeneity itself. In this instance, Gagnon's apologists seem unable to register that decolonization is not merely a topic to be discussed and documented by filmmakers or captured for cinephile *jouissance* and audiences; rather, decolonization is both a process and a set of practices aimed at unsettling the very hierarchical social relations and enduring modes of appropriation and dispossession that dictate that such discussions "must" be had in the first place.

The institutional and cinephile responses to Inuit obstruction reveal a sense of moral panic that requires the hierarchical social relations of settler colonialism to be constantly shored up and secured against those to whom we profess *our* (and the filmmaker's) "good intentions." Such responses echo the types of antiracist pop culture

primarily made by and for liberal white people in films ranging from *The Help* and *The Blind Side* to *Dances with Wolves* and *Avatar*—a kind of antiracism that will be recognized and celebrated as long as white agencies remain in control of the narrative.[63] Once again, what these cinephile voices seem to defend is not a genuine or instrumental decolonial cinema, but rather a cinephilia that must remain pure, one that carries an inalienable right to being granted unobstructed access to indigeneity as part and parcel of a universal, human-owned cultural (and digital) common. In this rhetoric, decolonization and antiracism serve the love of cinema first—rather than the other way around.

It may be true that the critics and cultural institutions that selected, programmed, screened, and defended the film did not create the political, economic, and institutional conditions upon which the film was made, or from which ideological and material dissent and discourses of white fragility and its adjoining disqualification of Inuit anger emerged—as we have seen, often in the name of artistic freedom, with lip service paid to decolonial and anticapitalist paradigms. And it may also be that these cultural institutions, to paraphrase Wolfe, are not those mobilizing colonial techniques of state violence, as indeed many defenders of the film were eager to assert. But nonetheless they do participate in, enable, and reproduce the "social relations that underpin [the] deployment" of these techniques of violence—or, as Edward Said puts it, they exert a "stabilizing influence" upon them.[64]

To counter and resist such cinephile and institutional expressions of entitlement, I raise Audra Simpson's theorization of "ethnographic refusal": that is, a sovereign refusal to make oneself (or some elements of one's culture) available as data for exogenous knowledge and writing—a refusal that reflects an understanding of the "asymmetrical power relations that inform the research and writing about native lives and politics."[65] In the artistic realm, when this idea is applied to Inuit and First Nations resistance against the extraction of Native purity and/or decay for cinephile *jouissance*, it lays bare the assumption in documentary pedagogy that such "screened" propinquity with indigeneity will ethically elevate white audiences. Further, the important work of Seneca film scholar Michelle Raheja on what she calls "visual sovereignty" distinguishes among ethical filmmaking approaches. She writes about "creative acts of self-representation" that take "a holistic approach to the process of creating moving images . . . that locates indigenous cinema in a particular historical and social context while privileging tribal specificity."[66] With this concept, she privileges film practices that ultimately strengthen "treaty claims" and "traditional modes of cultural understanding."[67]

With these scholarly conversations in mind, in many of the Inuit critiques of Gagnon's film I hear a commitment to shield other Inuit from this film to protect them against the pain, insomnia, anger, and nausea that seeing it caused them. With such acts of refusal, they wish to erect figurative barricades, to throw sand in the gears of the machine, and to refuse to let settler cultural institutions and "experts" control the space of a so-called democratic and healthy public dialogue that would "recognize" Inuit dissent, ingest it, and/or deflect it away from the traffic. Inuit and First Nations scholars and organizers are articulating a message that, in the end, is not that hard to understand, but surprisingly, a critical mass of Québécois interlocutors—that is,

a people still struggling to negotiate its own ambivalent historical status as a white, French settler population under British settler rule—nevertheless do fail to understand this message: for the peoples on whose land the settlers seek a national-statist home, freedom must stem from a "self-initiated process" of decolonization, fought for in indigenous peoples' "own terms and in accordance with their values."[68]

Furthermore, we must continue to condemn the implicit racism behind statements that pressure marginalized and brutalized peoples to keep themselves in check—to constantly police their behavior and surplus emotion in order to better accommodate calm and reasoned conversations within a white public sphere of democratic and individual (artistic), freedom-loving dialogue. Glen Coulthard, for example, argues in opposition to calls for civility and calm (or reasoned) responses by inviting us to reappraise resentment. While Nietzschean understandings of *ressentiment* see it as a pathology of the soul and as the affliction of those who become incapacitated by their refusal to forgive or forget, Coulthard instead celebrates "politicized expression of indigenous anger and outrage directed at a structural and symbolic violence." In his critical formulation, resentment becomes an "expression of *politicized anger*" prompting the very forms of "self-affirmative praxis that generate rehabilitated indigenous subjectivities and decolonized forms of life in ways that the combined politics of recognition and reconciliation has so far proven itself incapable of doing."[69]

Indeed, when Dominic Gagnon states in interviews that his job is to "decolonize" nostalgic film audiences who resist the new forms brought forth by technological development, treating the term "decolonization" as simply a hollow shell to be filled at will with his own authorial presence and white entitlements, he manifestly reveals his ignorance. Yet, as this article argues, it is not merely Gagnon from whom we must require more humility in front of political tools, concepts, and modes of representation that his own white privilege renders unfamiliar, but which he handles nonetheless as always-already accessible to him. Cinephilia itself, together with the cultural institutions that provide southern and urban cinephiles with films, cultural resources, vocabularies of legitimation, and spaces for debates and screenings, are also in need of a reality check. Inuit and First Nations critics and their allies are refusing to allow museum and settler film institutions to exploit liberal conceptions of freedom of expression and/or restorative dialogue which cloak or abstract their own subjective and material investment in settler colonialism and the white possessive into civility and invisibility.

Having said that, however, I recognize that the cultural institutions I am criticizing are not monolithic entities, but often sites of deep internal disagreements, dissent, and contradictions. In some cases, programming or editorial blunders do not always preclude humility or the possibility for some to be prompted to initiate a much needed unlearning of their own white-settler privilege. The aim of this article is not to simplistically label individuals involved in this controversy as racists or nonracists. This type of finger-pointing is a rather unproductive kind of antiracist advocacy, since it fixates on intentionality while it provides indemnity to those who, in the act of pointing their fingers towards the racist, can claim not to be "it," can assume that they dwell outside the deep structurality of white supremacy. My purpose instead is to intervene in the

settler public sphere that Inuit and First Nations voices are seeking to unsettle, to critically unpack the "habitus" and "commonsense" vocabularies that white privilege makes available to those people and institutions that naturally feel "at home" there.

To that effect, I now return to the public apology issued by the RIDM, from which I believe something valuable can be "extracted" rather than assumed. The apology was issued on November 12, 2016 in response to indigenous filmmakers and artists sitting on the "Indigenous Videographers Shoot Back" panel discussion, which included moderator Audra Simpson (Mohawk) and featured indigenous filmmakers, organizers, and artists Alethea Arnaquq-Baril (Inuit), Stephen Agluvak Puskas (Inuit), Adam and Zack Khalil (Ojibwe), Alanis Obosawin (Abenaki), and Isabella Weetaluktuk (Inuit). Some of the panelists pressured festival representatives to state their position about the role they had played in the *of the North* controversy the previous year, which prompted RIDM's apology.

As a white Québécois settler, I of course do not claim any standing to welcome, accept, validate, or reject an apology not directed to me, nor do I question those indigenous people who may react cynically to the recent global trend towards public or state apology, which some experience as a ploy to maintain the status quo. That being said, I find there is a very particular way in which this prompted apology may also speak to people like me, settlers with a personal and professional history in the Montréal film culture. Capturing and exposing an active and widening fissure in the foundations of an already divided community, the apology reveals a certain loss of innocence, perhaps: the demise of the *appearance* of consensus within and between settler cultural institutions. To apologize in this particular instance is to find oneself at a loss, scrounging for answers and new relationships when forced to witness the illegitimacy of one's dwelling in a hegemonic house—a house that is finally starting to feel remotely unhomely, as Native peoples come and kick the door open, refusing to let go of what had been theirs from the very start.

## *Acknowledgments*

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Stephen Agluvak Puskas, Nicolas Renaud, André Dudemaine, Michelle Stewart, Julie Burelle, Andrew Burke, and the anonymous reviewers of the journal for their generous insights and suggestions prior to and/or during the writing process. I also thank Sarah Henzi and Isabelle St-Amand, organizers of the "Réciprocité et décolonisation" summer institute at the Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (Université de Montréal), who invited me to present an earlier version of this argument in July 2016.

## Notes

1. The second epigraph is from a Dominic Gagnon interview with Jesse B. Staniforth titled "'of the North'—Quebec filmmaker Uses YouTube and Unauthorized Music to portray the Inuit," *The Nation* (Eeyou Istchee), December 8, 2015, http://www.nationnews.ca/of-the-north-racist-documentary-quebec-filmmaker-uses-youtube-and-unauthorized-music-to-portray-the-inuit-people/.

2. For a more detailed critical assessment of the hegemonic reach of European social contract theory as the principal justificatory device for settler-colonial governance and the usurpation of indigenous sovereignty, see Robert Nichols, "Contract and Usurpation: Enfranchisement and Racial Governance in Settler-Colonial Contexts," in *Theorizing Native Studies*, ed. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 99–122; Robert Nichols, "Indigeneity and the Settler Contract Today," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 39, no. 2 (2013): 165–96, https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453712470359.

3. For recent analyses of the global reach of settler-colonial modes of dispossession and appropriation within a liberal internationalism or imperialism not restricted to the domestic containment and control of indigenous lives and lands inside the borders of settler-colonial states, see Scott L. Morgensen, "The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now," *Settler Colonial Studies* 1 (2011): 52–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2011.10648801; Alyosha Goldstein, "Towards a Genealogy of the U.S. Colonial Present," in *Formations of United States Colonialism*, ed. Alyosha Goldstein (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 1–30; Bruno Cornellier and Michael R. Griffiths, "Globalizing Unsettlement: An Introduction," *Settler Colonial Studies* 6, no. 4 (2016): 305–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2015.1090522.

4. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xi, xix.

5. Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense: Queerness and Everyday Colonialism in the American Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), xvi.

6. One of the most prestigious accolades the filmmaker received on the international stage is the award he received for *of the North* at the 2015 Visions du réel festival in Nyon, Switzerland.

7. André Habib, "of the North: Positions," *Hors Champs* (January–February 2016): par. 15, http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/spip.php?article621. This and all subsequent English translations of French-language texts are mine.

8. Quoted by Staniforth, "of the North." In an interview with Marie-Claude Loiselle, published in the Montreal-based cinephile journal *24 images*, Gagnon said about Inuit: "it isn't a people that opens up easily. You won't go and knock at their door to ask permission to film them when they are dead drunk" ["*ce n'est pas un peuple qui s'ouvre facilement. Tu ne vas pas cogner à leur porte pour leur demander si tu peux aller les filmer lorsqu'ils sont saouls morts*"]. Marie-Claude Loiselle, "Avoir ou voir: Entretien avec Dominic Gagnon," *24 images* 172 (2015): 44.

9. Tagaq said about Gagnon's film: "This one-sided, racist slight propagating violence and actual violence . . . disgusts me. I am fully out for blood.... I am an artist and, I am sorry, his art sucks. I do more than disrespect him, I discredit him with everything I have in my body." Quoted by Jorge Barrera, "'Tanya Tagaq 'out for blood' over 'racist' experimental documentary by Quebec filmmaker," *APTN National News*, November 25, 2015, http://aptn.ca/news/2015/11/25/tanya-tagaq-out-for-blood-over-racist-experimental-documentary-by-quebec-filmmaker/; Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, interviewed by Ezra Winton in "Curating the North: Documentary Screening Ethics and Inuit Representation in (Festival) Cinema," *Art Threat*, December 17, 2015, http://artthreat.net/2015/12/alethea-arnaquq-baril/; Stephen Puskas, "Petition: Remove 'Of the North' from Museum of the Moving Image Film Festival & Other Film Festivals," *ipetitions*, January 2016, http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/remove-of-the-north-from-museum-of-the-moving. In interviews, Puskas denounced the film as "an aesthetic failure spawned by ignorance." Quoted by Jorge Barrera, "'Tanya Tagaq 'out for blood;'" André Dudemaine, "*of the North:* Inventer l'Inuit pour mieux l'asservir: Le cinéma colonialiste et ses fantômes," *Hors Champs* (January–February 2016), http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/spip.php?article620. Terres en Vues/Land InSights: Société pour la diffusion de la culture autochtone is a Montréal-based, indigenous-led cultural association that has been organizing the Présences autochtones festival since 1990; National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition (NIMAC), "An Open Letter

from the National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition (NIMAC)," March 14, 2016, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_hGu67fJzC5SGo4Tlc0WldVUTg/view.

10. Philosophers Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls have most famously theorized such understanding of deliberative democracy. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

11. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 13.

12. Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: The New Press, 1995), 277–79.

13. Mark Rifkin, *Settler Common Sense*, xvi.

14. Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), xvii.

15. Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 46.

16. For a survey of this argument on hegemonic whiteness and settlement more explicitly articulated to a Québécois context, see Daniel Salée, "Vivre-ensemble et dynamiques de pouvoir: éléments pour comprendre l'anxiété antipluraliste actuelle des Québécois," in *Les conditions du dialogue au Québec: Laïcité, réciprocité, pluralisme*, ed. Alain G. Gagnon and Jean-Charles Saint-Louis (Montréal: Québec Amérique and CRÉQC, 2016), 253–81.

17. "Je ne peux . . . me résoudre à reconnaître, dans les propos qu'ils ont tenus, le *film que je suis certain d'avoir vu*, pas plus que je ne peux accepter de porter le chapeau du colonisateur jouissant du spectacle exotisé de l'Autre que l'on veut me faire porter." Habib, "Of the North: Positions," par. 23 (emphasis in original).

18. Ibid., par. 9 (emphasis in original). Of course, Habib is not alone when requesting such return to "calm," dispassionate, and reasoned dialogues and analyses as antidotes against misapprehension and miscommunication. For instance, Jean-Baptiste Hervé, from the francophone cultural weekly *Voir*, was particularly resolute about this. He denounced the "bellicose exchanges" about the film, the lack of real dialogue and "comprehension of each other's points of view," before presenting himself as a self-appointed mediator tasked with making opposite perspectives meet by juxtaposing fragments of interviews he conducted with both Gagnon and Tagaq. He concludes by stating that social media encourages epidermic, impulsive responses to controversies, and that Inuit activists seeking to interrupt the free distribution of the film should perhaps "watch [it], dialogue, and then make noise if necessary" about a film that is "everything but racist." Hervé, "Of the North, un film raciste?" *Voir*, November 30, 2015, https://voir.ca/cinema/2015/11/30/retour-sur-la-polemique-avec-tanya-taqaq-et-dominic-gagnon-of-the-north-un-film-raciste/. See also, Hervé, "Of the North retiré de la programmation des RVCQ : Un débat à poursuivre," *Voir*, February 8, 2016, https://voir.ca/cinema/2016/02/08/of-the-north-retire-de-la-programmation-des-rvcq-un-debat-a-poursuivre/.

19. Or, as he states, "articulate and authorized" critical positions can only be legitimated by a competent close reading that privileges the film-as-text first (par. 29); in "Of the North: Positions," Habib privileges the voice of those who must remain "lucid and precise" (par. 8).

20. Ibid., par 11.

21. Ibid., pars. 3, 23, and 20. Habib also describes some of the film's critics as "people whose intelligence we must appreciate" (par. 13), or people "capable to 'see'" [*capable de 'voir'*] the film and whose "intellectual credibility' and "artistic merit" is without question (par. 23). Ironically enough, he criticizes in the same breath the patronizing nature of other critics' recourse to tropes of feminine emotionality (par. 23).

22. Ibid. For a scathing response to Habib's article, see Simon Galliero, "Un peu à l'ouest," *Panorama Cinema*, March 24, 2016, http://www.panorama-cinema.com/V2/article.php?categorie=9&id= 436.

23. André Dudemaine, "*of the North:* Inventer l'Inuit pour mieux l'asservir: le cinéma colonialiste et ses fantômes," *Hors Champ* January/February 2016, http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/spip.php?article620. About his editorial input in the creative process, Gagnon explained: "I am making a film about people who film themselves, not the people. . . . It doesn't need to be objective . . . but lets the viewer free, more like jazz, a free association of images. It is almost an unrealistic piece." Quoted by Barry Walsh, "RIDM Responds to 'of the North' controversy," *Real Screen*, November 27, 2015, http://realscreen.com/2015/11/27/ridm-responds-to-of-the-north-controversy/.

24. Dudemaine calls it "the hunter trophy case of a YouTube predator and collector of abjection" [*le tableau de chasse d'un prédateur de YouTube collectionneurs d'abjections*]. Dudemaine, "*of the North:* Inventer l'Inuit."

25. Dudemaine used this expression in an unpublished presentation during Réciprocité et décolonisation: rapports à l'oeuvre dans les processus de création autochtones (summer institute), Centre d'études et de recherches internationales—Université de Montréal (CÉRIUM), Montréal, July 6, 2016.

26. Adjunct film lecturer, film reviewer, and festival programmer Nicolas Renaud was particularly insistent on that point during the "Réciprocité et décolonisation" CÉRIUM event cited above. Even some ardent defenders of the film, such as Eric Hynes, acknowledged that it is precisely the very "strong but opaque editorial hand and sensibility" of the filmmaker (or his montage work) that secures its authorial strength, thus making these images "uniquely his own" and "creat[ing] the context" that make or break those images gleaned from YouTube. Eric Hynes, "Make it Real: The Artist Is Present in the Edit," *Film Comment*, October 1, 2015, http://www.filmcomment.com/blog/make-it-real-the-artist-is-present-in-the-edit/. Even though Gagnon later claimed that one shouldn't see any "associative montage" in his film, he himself defended his inalienable right to do and say whatever he wants with the images he extracted from the Internet, and otherwise likened his entitlement to that of an artist's inalienable "right to make a precise film. I wanted to make a film specifically about those people who have that kind of life—the drunks, those who neglect their children." Quoted by Caroline Montpetit, "'of the North': la controverse se poursuit," *Le Devoir*, March 2, 2016, http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/actualites-culturelles/464367/cinema-of-the-north-la-controverse-se-poursuit; Jesse Staniforth, "'of the North.'" Prior to the RIDM screening, Gagnon also made a strong case in interview for the precision of his editorial work, of his labor as a *monteur* "putting things in relationship" [*mise en rapport*]. Loiselle, "Avoir ou voir."

27. Habib is right to insist about this last clip that the Inuit woman is not powerless or devoid of agency. She indeed—ever so politely—talks back. I would argue, however, that the undeniable fact that the Inuit people in Gagnon's film are subjects with agency has never really been what animates the controversy triggered by the screening of the film. What animates much of the critiques and expressions of anger against the film and its filmmaker has more to do with the absence of consultation and the disregard for Inuit agency, consent, and pain (collectively, individually, and intergenerationally), as well as the filmmaker's appropriative extraction and decontextualization of northern Inuit lives for southern cinephile *jouissance*.

28. *24 images* film critic Alexandre Fontaine Rousseau produced what may perhaps be the most passionate defense of Gagnon's film using such arguments. He insists that those who saw the film as a mere malevolent *Jackass* movie for Inuit failed to appreciate how *of the North* celebrates Inuit resistance against "alienation" and against "life conditions imposed on marginalized inhabitant of remote regions." He also claims that the film's depiction of the "trash" and the "grotesque" (my words, not his) are essential in order to free ourselves from the "fabricated hope" stemming from the "aesthetics of optimism" that normally saturates representations of "misery in our contemporary capitalist societies."

Rousseau, "Sans Nanook: *of the North* de Dominic Gagnon," *24 images* 175 (December 2015–January 16): 63. See also Jason Béliveau, "Le cas 'of the North,'" *Spirale*, December 1, 2015, http://www.magazine-spirale.com/article-dune-publication/le-cas-north.

29. The list was produced for distribution at the Roundtable Discussion "Cultural Representation in the Media Arts, Ethics and Freedom of Expression" organized by FoFA Gallery, Concordia University, Montréal, March 17, 2016. A recording of the Roundtable is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UU7MZpvj-pc&feature=youtu.be. For a sample of recent scholarly engagements with Inuit film and media production, see Faye Ginsburg, "Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media" in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, ed. Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 39–57; Faye Ginsburg, "Atanarjuat Off-Screen: From 'Media Reservations' to the World Stage," *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 4 (2003): 827–31, https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2003.105.4.827; Joanna Hearne, "Telling and Retelling in the 'Ink of Light': Documentary Cinema, Oral Narratives, and Indigenous Identities," *Screen* 47, no. 3 (2006): 307–26, https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjl024; Peter Kulchyski, "Violence, Gender, and Community in *Atanarjuat*," in *Film, History and Cultural Citizenship: Sites of Production*, ed. Tina Mai Chen and David Churchill (New York: Routledge, 2007), 131–42; Michelle H. Raheja, "Chapter 5: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*," in *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 190–220; Jerry White, "Frozen but Always in Motion: Arctic Film, Video, and Broadcast," *Velvet Light Trap: A Critical Journal Of Film & Television*, no. 55 (2005): 52–64, https://doi.org/10.1353/vlt.2005.0010.

30. Alethea Arnaquq-Baril makes a similar point in an interview, stating that the problem with the film is "not just the fact that it's chock-full of shots of drunken Inuit. . . . It's also the way that industry and development is presented, and the destructive resource extraction industry, the way that's portrayed in the film, juxtaposed with what seems to be an Inuit society disintegrating and falling in on itself. The way all of that is cut together, it just feels like the film is saying: look what we're doing, we're just sending these huge faceless corporations up there to extract the wealth, meanwhile we don't give a shit about the people and they're just imploding and disintegrating and why aren't we helping them? I suspect it's that perceived message that makes the film 'beautiful' to some. My guess is that this is the good intention behind the film . . . suggesting 'we should be doing something more for these people'. . . [It] is presenting our situation as though we've fallen in on ourselves without the help of outsiders. It's saying to me that the role of the rest of Canada in our destruction has been a passive one. It's been one where the damage is incidental: we're just casualties of development and that without having our hand held, we fall apart and kill ourselves with alcohol. . . . Our state of trauma and dysfunction is not a result of being saved or not being saved. It is the result of active destruction by the Canadian government and the Canadian people." Quoted in Winton, "Curating the North," pars. 70–75.

31. Brian Hochman, *Savage Preservation: The Ethnographic Origins of Modern Media Technology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

32. *Dances with Wolves* (1990; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainement, 2004), DVD; *Avatar*, directed by James Cameron (2009; Beverly Hills, CA: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD; *Apocalypto*, directed by Mel Gibson (2006; Burbank, CA: Touchstone Home Entertainment, 2007), DVD; *The Lone Ranger*, directed by Gore Verbinski (2013; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studio Home Entertainment, 2015), DVD.

33. As quoted by Jesse Staniforth, "'of the North,'" Gagnon said, "I'm sorry, but I'm a drunk, I'm a *toxicomane* [drug addict], I have no prejudice about how they live right now. They have the right to have fun a little bit, even if they're drunks and sociopaths. Half the people here already were drunk or under the influence of drugs. So who are we to judge them?" Gagnon claimed elsewhere that the Inuit

in his film are "defiant" and "not following the path that some people would like them to follow, and I feel I had a right to represent that as well"; quoted by Simon Nakonechny, "Tanya Tagaq threatens legal action against 'racist' Quebec film 'of the North,'" *CBC.ca*, November 25, 2015, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/tanya-tagaq-of-the-north-1.3336733.

34. These also happen to be the tropes that ostensibly thrilled the Visions du réel festival in Nyon, Switzerland when it selected Gagnon's film and then rewarded it with one of its prizes: "In this new film that, like its predecessor, draws on amateur films posted on YouTube, Dominic Gagnon shows the descendants of Nanook in the process of making 'their own' cinema. He creates an anti-exotic Vertovian 'Kino-Eye,' which reveals trashy and unbridled acculturation and takes apart the existing clichés about the Inuit, too often confined to the borders of the contemporary world." "Of the North," Visions du reel: Festival international de cinéma de Nyon, https://www.visionsdureel.ch/en/film/of-the-north-1.

35. Audra Simpson, "Settlement's Secret," *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 2 (2011): 206, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2011.01095.x.

36. Most egregiously, Gagnon also claimed that somewhere in his family genealogy he has an indigenous ancestor and cannot therefore be racist (!) Quoted in Barrera, "'Tanya Tagaq 'out for blood.'"

37. Gagnon said in an interview: "I am being bashed because I am a man and I am white. I am only a young man who lives on his own, in his own studio and I don't see where the privilege comes. . . . I made this film with love." Quoted by Rea McNamara, "Racist Quebec Film Draws Ire from Everyone," *Art F City*, November 27, 2016, http://artfcity.com/2015/11/27/racist-quebec-film-draws-ire-from-everyone/.

38. "of the North," Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal (RIDM), November 12–22, 2015, 57, http://www.ridm.qc.ca/uploads/document/ridm_2015_web_spread.pdf. For another critical discussion about this blurb, see Winton, "Curating the North."

39. RIDM, "Regarding *of the North*," Press release, November 26, 2015, http://www.ridm.qc.ca/uploads/document/_en_cmq_ridm_of_the_north.pdf.

40. On that particular point, *24 images* blogger Fabrice Montal is even more unequivocal: "Dominic Gagnon's work is not and has never been racist" [*L'oeuvre de Dominic Gagnon n'est pas et n'a jamais* été raciste]. Montal, "L'auguste cas," *24 images* (blog), December 1, 2015, http://revue24images.com/blogues-article-detail/2706.

41. RIDM, "Of the North, The RIDM Apologizes," Press release, November 17, 2016, http://www.ridm.qc.ca/uploads/document/en_cmq_ridm_public_apologies_171116.pdf.

42. Stephen Puskas, "Petition: Remove 'Of the North,'" https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/remove-of-the-north-from-museum-of-the-moving.

43. "Screening & Live Event: Of the North and Pieces and Love All to Hell," Museum of the Moving Image, January 10, 2016, http://www.movingimage.us/visit/calendar/2016/01/10/detail/of-the-north-and-pieces-and-love-all-to-hell.

44. About Gagnon's use of a copyright and CopyLeft discourse to anchor the ethics of his practice in a language of right and (settler-state) law, see Nakonechny, "Tanya Tagaq threatens legal action"; McNamara, "Racist Quebec Film Draws Ire from Everyone"; Montpetit, "'of the North'"; Loiselle, "Avoir ou voir." For a critique of this recourse to copyright and CopyLeft language, to accusations of censorship, and to the freedom of expression defense, see NIMAC, "Open Letter." NIMAC's letter insists that copyright laws "do not override Indigenous protocols and laws on consent and permission."

45. NIMAC, "Open Letter."

46. Perhaps the ultimate expressions of Gagnon's white fragility are to be found in his sense of self-sacrifice and martyrdom when many of the Inuit people who produced the clips he appropriated asked that they be taken out of his film. His response was to replace these clips with digital black

leader, thus making his film look like the type of redacted document resulting from government censorship or state secrecy. The paroxysm of his passive-aggressive self-victimization came when he allegedly submitted to independent distributor Videographe a 74-minute version of the film without sound or images. In a gesture reminiscent of the white man's burden, he also suggested replacing the faces of the Inuit featured in his film and superimposing them with the face of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, with the hope, or so he claims, that state officials may finally listen and pay attention to the struggles of northern Inuit populations. Gagnon does not seem to register the irony in this proposition. David Murphy, "Controversial film 'Of the North' Gets Revised: It's Now Blank," *Nunatsiaq News*, March 18, 2016, http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674controversial_film_of_the_north_gets_revised_its_now_blank/; Robert Everett-Green, "Debate Rages on Over Dominic Gagnon and Consent in the Age of YouTube," *The Globe and Mail*, March 25, 2016, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/debate-rages-on-over-dominic-gagnon-and-consent-in-the-age-of-youtube/article29392709/; Brigitte Noël, "Filmmaker Who Pissed Off Inuit Wants to Fix It by Swapping Everyone's Face with Trudeau's," *Vice*, March 9, 2016, https://news.vice.com/article/filmmaker-who-pissed-off-inuit-people-wants-to-fix-it-by-swapping-everyones-face-with-trudeaus. Despite promises that he would remove from his film the footage and music he used without consent, including footage of naked Inuit children, Gagnon predictably went back on his words and instead "sought successful legal protection for the film's content and switched distributors." He now continues to show the integral, original version of the film at several international venues, including at the Dokumentarfilmwoche Hamburg (Germany, April 2016) and at AstroDoc 2016 (Napoli, Italy, April 2016). Max Carpenter, "of the North/Tabu," *Reverse Shot*, June 9, 2016, http://reverseshot.org/archive/entry/2218/tabu_north.

47. Of note amongst these Inuit critical interventions on the event's Facebook page is Stephen Puskas's patient and painstaking archiving of the overwhelming number of clips from the film that, contrary to Gagnon's claim, were *not* shot in the North (and not shot by, nor featuring, Inuit). Puskas insists that the most egregious clips are those whose titles Gagnon altered in the film credits in order to hide the fact that they were not "of the North."

48. Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, "Alethea Arnaquq-Baril Responds to 'of the north' Screening," *Point of View Magazine*, March 5, 2016, povmagazine.com/blog/view/alethea-arnaquq-baril-responds-to-of-the-north-screening.

49. "Of the North: Un groupe de cinéastes dénonce un cas apparenté à la censure," *Voir*, February 25, 2016, https://voir.ca/cinema/2016/02/25/of-the-north-un-groupe-de-cineastes-denonce-un-cas-apparente-a-la-censure/. For a critical response to this letter, see Léa Marinova, "Les cinéastes qui ont signé la lettre ont ignoré ce mot: privilège," *Le Devoir*, March 2, 2016, http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/cinema/464331/la-replique-appui-a-of-the-north-les-cineastes-qui-ont-signe-la-lettre-ont-ignore-ce-mot-privilege.

50. Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 6–7 (emphasis in original).

51. All previous quotations are from Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 7.

52. Stuart Hall, "The Neo-Liberal Revolution," *Cultural Studies* 25, no. 6 (2011), 709, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2011.619886.

53. Ibid., 711.

54. Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 110.

55. Ibid., 113.

56. A detailed account of Coulthard's critique of the liberal "politics of recognition" is in chapter 1 of *Red Skin, White Masks*.

57. Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 253.

58. Several Inuit interlocutors made statements to the effect that watching the film didn't simply offend their sensibilities; it also made them physically ill. See McNamara, "Racist Quebec Film Draws Ire from Everyone"; Dudemaine, "*of the North:* Inventer l'Inuit"; Noël, "Filmmaker Who Pissed Off Inuit"; Christopher Curtis, "Director Yanks Controversial Film about Inuit from Film Festival," *Montreal Gazette*, March 8, 2016, http://montrealgazette.com/news/director-yanks-controversial-film-of-inuk-people-from-film-festival. On the broader topic of offense, hurt, representation, and the freedom-of-expression defense, see Bruno Cornellier, "Representation, White Resentment, and the Freedom-of-Expression Defense," *Occasion* 9 (2015), http://arcade.stanford.edu/occasion/representation-white-resentment-and-freedom-expression-defense.

59. Audra Simpson, "Whither Settler Colonialism?" *Settler Colonial Studies* 6, no. 4 (2016), 440, https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2015.1124427.

60. Habib, "Of the North: Positions," par. 13.

61. Ibid., par. 4.

62. NIMAC's open letter states that "assumptions that Inuit would want to engage in a dialogue regarding a film made about them but without them, in a space dominated by non-Indigenous people and eurocentric worldview, speaks to a profound ignorance regarding cultural safety and is indicative of the naivete afforded to those with white privilege."

63. *The Help*, directed by Tate Taylor (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2011), DVD; *The Blindside*, directed by John Lee Hancock (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD; *Dances with Wolves* (1990; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment, 2004), DVD; *Avatar*, directed by James Cameron (2009; Beverly Hills, CA: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD.

64. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995), 201; Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016), 15.

65. Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 104. In their open letter, NIMAC uses a vocabulary that strongly echoes such notion of refusal: "NIMAC stands in solidarity with Inuit filmmakers and other members of the Inuit community as they reclaim their intellectual property and enact their right to self-determination and cultural survival, by restricting or refusing access to that property as they see fit."

66. Michelle H. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 194.

67. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 19.

68. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 43.

69. Ibid., 109–10.