

**Jeff Derksen**

**Canadian Literature and the Temporality of Dying Colonialism**

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**Abstract:**

This paper historicizes cultural appropriation in Canadian Literature today by examining key texts from the critiques of cultural appropriation in Canadian culture in the 1990s. Appropriation is contextualized in relation to a modernist temporality that constructs an Other outside of modernity, and the temporality in Franz Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism*, a temporality in which the colonized is liberated, but the colonizer is still "choked" and not yet rehabilitated. Reading appropriation through its cultural historical context in relation to modernist art and conceptual art, the practice of appropriation emerges as an extension of colonial practices and as an extractivist economy. Countering this, I point to the Indigenous concept of "cultural belongings" as a form of critique and alterity that counters the logic of cultural appropriation.

**Key words:**

Cultural appropriation, temporality, modernism, colonialism, Canadian Literature.

## **Canadian Literature and the Temporality of Dying Colonialism**

In May 2017, *The Globe and Mail* republished a text directly titled ‘Stop Stealing Native Stories’ originally written in 1990 by Lenore Keeshig-Tobias. Reading it online was a jarring experience, for it was only until I hit the name of W.P Kinsella that I realized that this text, unfortunately fitting the present context of cultural appropriation in Canadian writing, was almost two decades old. Keeshig-Tobias’s central question, “But why are Canadians so obsessed with native stories anyway? Why the urge to ‘write Indian’?”, gains even more resonance given that this urge to treat Indigenous belongings and knowledges as commodities in the marketplace of ideas or as fodder to bank on for cultural capital remains disturbingly, and unapologetically, present today. From my perspective of having been involved in a politicized writing and visual art scene back in the day when Keeshig-Tobias’s column was originally published, and having learned from the extremely productive discussions and battles that shaped the concepts of *identity politics* and, crucially, *the politics of identity* alongside notions of cultural imperialism and the on-coming wave of “the commodification of everything,” it was similarly jarring to follow the debates that emerged out of the call for a new prize for cultural appropriation by Hal Niedzviecki, the editor of The Writers Union of Canada’s (TWUC) journal, *Write*. They reflected a lack of historical perspective and yet another blocking of progress regarding equity, the right to self-determination, and generally any sense that the culture industry of Canada had done anything other than reify itself through liberal

multiculturalism. Following Niedzviecki's editorial, and then the eager social media endorsements of the prize, showed that people involved in Canadian cultural institutions up and down the line still *believe* that cultural appropriation is tied to the freedom of a white writerly imagination. This was essentially the argument W.P. Kinsella made for his series of stories set in Hobbema (now Maskwacis), Alberta, that more or less portrayed Indigenous people as guileless dolts back in 1989.<sup>1</sup> The statement from the Equity Task Force of TWUC, expressing anger, points to the anti-racist work the TWUC did in the early wave of cultural appropriation critique:

An important part of its [cultural appropriation] history resides in the 1993 conference *The Appropriate Voice*, held in Orillia, Ontario and led by Lenore Keeshig-Tobias and Daniel David Moses, which was a TWUC sponsored conference. For Niedzviecki to suggest that cultural appropriation is just a device for our imaginary work is highly problematic and re-entrenches the deeply racist assumptions about art, and about what constitutes giving and taking. (Equity)

Why then this repetition of positions and this replication of the right to appropriation? The names have changed, but the positions remain more or less the same despite the decades of anti-racism and institutional critique across communities and a recent positive explosion of cultural, activist, and scholarly work from Indigenous people.<sup>2</sup>

Alain Badiou, writing to acknowledge (and call into being) a “global popular uprising”, proposes that “we find ourselves in a time of riots wherein a rebirth of History, as opposed to the pure and simple repetition of the worst, is signalled and takes shape” (5). Yet, from a perspective of CanLit, a productive time of struggles has yet to fully overcome the “simple repetition of the worst.” What does this mean? And what are the

deeper structural aspects of cultural appropriation within a moment of Indigenous resurgence? What other factors beyond CanLit and the personalities and positions involved shape the repetition of cultural appropriation? To make some larger connections here, I propose that our current cultural appropriation moment has to be seen within the longer history of appropriation as an artistic device. This history shows appropriation is shaped by the temporality of modernism and the parallels between the economic model of extraction, which is central to colonialism and dispossession, and artistic appropriation. This emphasis on the temporality of modernism, which defines admission into the present as a subject, leads me to understand the current time of CanLit as a moment of “dying colonialism”, a term I rejjig from Fanon. This moment lies between the production of a new future and a “simple repetition of the worst.”

In relation to Indigenous people, as Mark Rifkin argues, modernity is not only a specific “temporal experience”; rather, “the use of modernity as a means of describing and understanding forms of presentness in which both Native and non-natives were enmeshed (a ‘world’ inhabited ‘together’) seems to be shaped by forms of settler extension and extraction that are taken as fundamentally altering the conditions of being-in-time for Native peoples” (8-9). This is the classic temporal trick of modernity. In order to exist in the present – that is to be a sovereign body in the present -- it is necessary to be recognizable by settler modes of recognition as determined by modernity. I’ll go on to argue that this temporal trick of modernity is also at the heart of appropriation as an artistic practice as it emerged in modernism in relation to “the primitive” and that it is still lurking in the debates of appropriation as practice within CanLit. As Benjamin Buchloh lays it out in in his examination of European and American art from 1955 to

1975, appropriation (and what is selected for appropriation) is “intimately connected with the momentary driving forces of each culture’s dynamics” (343). In reaction to these cultural dynamics, and also driven by tendencies within a cultural field, appropriation has moved through several critical periods within contemporary art, yet within CanLit appropriation still proceeds as if it were in denial of its own earlier moments of critique and somehow outside of the very dynamics that shape it. I’ll return to the appropriation debates from the late 1980s and early 1990s in order to argue that what we have is a form of *extractionist appropriation* that parallels the economic and educational models that treat Indigenous cultural belongings as if they are the equivalent of fetishized commodities shorn free of their contexts and histories – that is, as free-floating things, ideas, stories, and concepts in an temporally singular present that are available for extraction. I will use the concept of “cultural belongings”, which emerged from the Musqueam community during the development of the exhibition “*c’əsnə?əm: the city before the city*”, to point to an alternative to this understanding of objects and stories primarily defined by the relations of property or the commodity within capitalism or how information is figured with the new data extraction economy.

As much as it is necessary, and compelling, to critique the new assertion for cultural appropriation (almost the same as the old!), I also hope to carve a speculative space which is not just a negation of the bad practices of CanLit – practices that tempt settler colonizer writers with the shine of recognition. As George Ciccariello-Maher asserts in relation to Enrique Dussell’s thought, “a global and decolonial dialectics cannot remain strictly internal to the totality and cannot neglect the positive alterity of non-European struggles without becoming blind to coloniality in the process.” (114-5).

Essentially Ciccariello-Maher argues here for a form of critique that does not have the end point of the negation of a condition internal to our present but rather a form of decolonizing dialectics that can include positions, ideas, and relations outside of the structure being critiqued. These “positive alterities” are outside the recognition of existing relations, but that does not mean they have not existed longer and simultaneously to coloniality. Ciccariello-Maher summarizes that “Dussel’s essential point is that the overcoming of various systems of oppression cannot emerge – or does not emerge most powerfully – from that system’s internal parameters, in part because these are systems built on exclusion as much as oppression” (135). Making a similar argument around modernity, history, and the present, Rifkin identifies “discrepant temporalities” exterior to *the present*, which “remain nonidentical with respect to the dynamics of settler temporal formulations, indicating ways of being-in-time that are not reducible to participation in a singular, given time – a unitary flow – largely contoured by non-native patterns and priorities” (3). Today the present, as it is now configured, relies exactly on the exclusion of alternative forms of temporality outside of the modernist developmentalism. Yet, by closing the present to alternative futures, and by managing the present as crisis, the present has also been radically opened as a site of struggle and possibility. The remarkable challenge to imagine exteriorities to the present is made much easier – and desirable – when we begin to consider what has been excluded in the shaping of the present, and therefore in the shaping of the concept of time.

From the perspective of settler-colonial capitalism, the repetition of the worst is a continuation rather than a repetition, a duration rather than a loop, and dispossession has become a mode of governance bolstered by policy rather than a stage. As Julie Tomiak

points out, settler-colonial rule now works hand in hand with neoliberalism through “the project of dispossessing Indigenous peoples through privatization, anchored in the normalization of dominant property relations...” (933). This merging of settler-colonial capitalism and neoliberalism is not a mere abstraction for it combines two interlocked regimes. First, there is a temporal regime of neoliberalism which is, as Jamie Peck puts it, “not so much a triumphal, forward march as a series of prosaic ‘forward failures’” (23). This is a singular present of the continual crisis. Secondly, the temporal regime of settler-colonialism enforces forms of presentness defined by modernity; this is a temporal mode of a politics of recognition. With these combined, forms of presentness today are arrived at by entering into dominant property relation. This of course forecloses Indigenous forms of knowledge, particularly Indigenous concepts of land. The option of an assimilationist leap into modernity for Indigenous people in order to secure participation in the present (Rifkin 8) denies the very discrepant temporalities that Rifkin calls for, or the alterity beckons.

This present, which has been so forcefully constructed in the wake of the euphoria of globalization, reflects a dying colonialism. I use Frantz Fanon’s term “dying colonialism” here not to deny a colonial present, but to take away its perpetuity and to recognize that colonialism too (despite its resilience and deviousness) can be pushed to temporal limits. Rather than being the residual moment in Raymond Williams’ process of social and cultural change, in which the residual informs the present and provides a potential for the future, a dying colonialism *blights* the present by withholding potentials within it. A dying colonialism, as Fanon characterizes it, is a weight upon the emergence of the future. While Fanon is careful to describe the psychological damage that

colonialism has wrought on Algerians – whose lives are aimed at a futurity – he also adds: “What we Algerians want is to discover the man behind the colonizer; this man who is both the organizer and the victim of a system that has choked him and ridiculed him to silence” (32). Here colonizers themselves are caught in a dead temporality, choked as they choke others.

### **CanLit and the Temporality of a Dying Colonialism**

The call, poised with caustic irony and distance, for a prize for cultural appropriation within Canadian Literature that I invoked earlier, illustrates how a dying colonialism is a living aspect in Canada and how it defines the industry of CanLit within the temporal regime of colonialism. And like any moment of dying colonialism, it is a moment that both holds the future and chokes the present. In the opening editorial of a special issue of *Write*, Hal Niedzviecki asserted, “I don’t believe in cultural appropriation. In my opinion, anyone, anywhere, should be encouraged to imagine other peoples, other cultures, other identities. I’d go so far as to say that there should be even an award for doing so – the Appropriation Prize for best book by an author who writes about people who aren’t even remotely like her or him” (Niedzviecki). Along with its astounding conflation of appropriation and imagination (that modernist monolith), it is also possible to understand Niedzviecki’s assertion as a residual aspect of the euphoria of cultural globalization that was so intense before 2001. In that moment, all cultures were imagined to flow freely, with little friction, across the global scape with the dream that new and inevitable forms of cultural understanding would spring from the unique cultural hybrids and cross-pollinations, and, as a result, greater intercultural understanding would naturally arise as we all enjoyed a global culture that saw specific histories and local particularities as



value-added aspects to the global cultural marketplace. Read retrospectively, this cultural project within globalization was also a mapping of the economic onto the cultural within neoliberalism, itself a new step in the financialization of culture. This makes the conflation of appropriation and imagination even more telling for, within this new step, appropriation cannot be framed as a cultural borrowing or cross-cultural talk; instead, it figures culture as a commodity for the benefit of someone outside of that culture. The imagination of the settler-colonizer, we are told, must not be fettered. Fanon had already seen that the colonizer's imagination is necessarily fettered. So these calls for the freedom of the imagination paradoxically ring as calls for the chokehold of colonialism to continue, for appropriation was never about the freedom of a universalized imagination.

This extractionist appropriation has its roots equally in modernist aesthetics that relied on anthropological ideas of “the primitive” as well as in the extractionist economies that are key to a colonial and neo-colonial economic structure. Following the escalation of the “Appropriation prize” scandal when prominent settler-colonizer writers and editors gleefully jumped on board and signaled their pleasure at the idea and their displeasure of the critique that quickly came, Ojibwe critic (and now head of Canada's Indigenous Screen Office) Jesse Wenté participated in several eloquent and hard-edged dialogues on the CBC in which he drew a direct line from cultural appropriation to the function of the state, to appropriation as a long-term strategy.<sup>3</sup> On CBC Metro Morning, Wenté pointed out that cultural appropriation is institutionalized and that appropriation of “all things Indigenous, our lives, our lands” was “the policy of the government.” As Wenté implies, appropriation as extraction is not only evident in the mining, forestry,

fishing, water, or petrochemical industries; it has legacies and deep histories in anthropological work, in education, and in cultural industries.

### **The Returns of Extractive Appropriation**

Extractivism, tied as it is to economic development, has been through several stages which have aligned with the intensification of globalization. As H.J. Burchardt and K. Dietz note, “Since the early 200s a significant increase in global demand has seen a corresponding rise in value raw materials” (470), which has coincided with what Eduardo Gudynas defines as *nuevo extractiismo* (neo-extractivism) with the state as a key actor. The debates of cultural appropriation in Canadian cultural industries also have been through several phases or moments. I want to reach back to the late-1980s and early 1990s in order to point out the very intense debates about cultural appropriation that took place in Canadian cultural scenes. These debates represent an extended critique of cultural appropriation alongside new stages or tactics of cultural appropriation as an extractive aesthetic in Canadian literature. Reliving in the present the dumbness of the early 1990s as a form of gleeful white supremacy (“it’s our right, and our culture has been appropriated too”) has been to live in disappointing times, but it has also shown that the clarity of the critique and the forcefulness of the solutions from that earlier moment were not largely taken up by settler-colonizer writers and artists. Moreover, it also demonstrates the resilience of cultural appropriation as an active part of Canadian literature that sadly parallels economic extractionism.

The summer 1990 issue of *Parallogramme* (a magazine published by the now-defunct Association of National Non-Profit Artists’ Centre) carried the subtitle “Appropriation of Native Culture” and featured an essay by Metis Cree film and video-

maker Loretta Todd that not only caught the context of that time, it also remains instructional today. Todd notes that “The flurry about appropriation of native culture is not new” (26). Similarly, Richard Fung’s 1993 essay, “Working through Appropriation,” which appeared in *Fuse* magazine, is also salient today. Fung ends on a note that also typifies that early 1990s moment in which institutionalized racism was seen to be on the run: “the issues currently communicated by the term appropriation – respect, accountability and access to the means of production and dissemination, [sic] will either arise or not. Ironically, as systemic racism disappears, we may find that the issue of appropriation becomes progressively less significant” (24). The irony today is that systemic racism has taken on a new revanchism. Moreover, what was the social optimism of the early 1990s (racism will wither!) certainly needs to be rethought in terms of its temporality, for it has proven to be more a continual struggle rather than linear development. Through Fanon, however, it is possible to hope for a time when one *feels* a dying colonialism taken into the next palliative stage.

Todd’s essay gets at the heart of what I’m describing as extractivist appropriation in the shadow of euphoric globalization when she writes, “Here, the appropriation is performed in the guise of multiculturalism, so-called cross-cultural understanding and good old-fashioned artistic license, as well as, I should add, profit and career enhancement” (26). Along with this emphasis (“I should add”) on the relationship of cultural appropriation and the production of surplus *somewhere else* other than the community that is being appropriated from, Todd’s critique is a precursor to Wente’s analysis of appropriation as an enduring strategy of the state:

And it [“the authority of appropriation”] denies our place as exercisers of Aboriginal Title and of self-determining collectives and individuals. When the federal government is reluctant to negotiate with our nations, or when these negotiations are based on a request that Aboriginal Title be surrendered, or narrowly defined, the politicians and artists have played a role. The artist sends a message that there is no Aboriginal Title, that the dominance of colonialism and post-colonialism rules. (30)

Throughout the text, Todd links appropriation as an attempt to destabilize both the “Aboriginal Title” associated with Indigenous culture and Indigenous assertions of the right, and possibilities, of “a reality that existed without European mediation, before Native peoples were positioned as Other” (32). I have tried to draw a line between the appropriation of Indigenous culture and the temporality of modernism, a temporality that is driven by the global development of capitalism. This temporality has defined our experiences of the present in the way that the imperative of development trumps other social concerns (e.g., the logic keeps the Keystone pipeline alive despite environmental concerns and the rights of Indigenous land claims), but it has also successfully excluded other forms of temporalities that would constitute Dussel’s alterities or Rifkin’s “discrepant temporalities.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Appropriation and the Problem of Modernism**

Richard Fung also argues that the critique of cultural appropriation has suffered because of “a lack of clarity that leaves it open to misapplication” (16). The very recent debates on cultural appropriation not only show a lack of understanding of the previous debates in Canada (and what is really at stake), but they also show a lack of clarity of the understanding of the artistic history of appropriation. In a text within the same extended

moment as Fung's and Todd's essays, Hal Foster identifies, in an art context, appropriation as a "master operation": "Appropriation is so efficacious because it proceeds by abstraction whereby the specific content or meaning of one social group is made over into a general cultural form of style of another" (168). On the other hand, Foster asks, "Against this operation of appropriation, what resistant practice is possible?" (169). Foster analyzes a 1980s show at the MoMA, "Primitivism in Modern Art", to critique the ongoing role of "the primitive" in modernism: "This retrospective reading of the primitive 'role' tends not only to assimilate the primitive other *to* tradition but to recuperate the modernist *break with tradition*" (192-93). Thus appropriation ironically, and unequally, changes into the cultural capital of the new within this modernist-colonialist frame: it renders "the primitive" into a Western modernism at the same time as it awards the cultural capital of the new to the modernist artist. Within this modernist-colonialist frame, "the primitive" solves a temporal problem for the modernist artist: appropriation of aspects of cultural practices outside of the European capitals, or from outsiders within, frees the modernist artist from the freight of the past. The irony is that "the primitive" was temporally figured in the past (even if the work was contemporary), so the Western modernists could reach into an imagined past in order to bring themselves into a modern present that their art was key in constructing. In this, "tribal art" serves an outside need. "What," asks Foster, "apart from the institutional need to secure an official history, is the motive behind this desired supersession? What but the formation of a cultural identity, incumbent as this is on the simultaneous need and disavowal of the other?" (193).

This is also the model that Benjamin Buchloh proposes when he discusses how the modernist avant-garde builds cultural capital in the present through appropriation. But Buchloh also points to how modernist appropriation operates as restless and capitalist extraction, always looking for new sites of extraction: “The range of historical and geographical provinces – from which the elements required for the generation of a particular cultural coding system are extracted – changes as rapidly as the avant-gardes need for innovative appropriation” (349). Global and temporal reach, extraction, and innovation define appropriation. Buchloh is also clear that any historical argument for the autonomy of art, and for an argument of appropriation as a simple borrowing, citation, or quotation of another culture is not legitimate: “The motivations and criteria of selection for appropriation are intricately connected with the momentary driving forces of each culture’s dynamic. They may range from the crudest motives of imperialist appropriation of foreign (cultural) wealth to the subtle procedures of historic and scientific exploration” (343).

I’ve reached back to this history of appropriation, despite its troublesome language of “the primitive,” to point out that appropriation in art practices is long tied to colonialism and to the logics of an extractive economy. In its perverse dialectic, argued precisely if not passionately by Buchloh, it is not the colonized and the colonizer who are set “free” into the air of modernism, but only the modernist artist jacked into a new present partially of their own making through their selective appropriations. This is also why the temporal frame of modernism, itself central to capitalism, has been a powerful block against Indigenous people – whether they are imagined outside of it, whether they

are folded into it, or whether their life ways and knowledges are seen as the corrective to modernism and therefore ripe for appropriation.

In a recent museum project in Vancouver, “*c’asna?əm*: the city before the city,” Musqueam Jordan Wilson usefully defines the powerful term “belongings” to counter the arguments for appropriation as an act of artistic autonomy, freedom of speech, or an act of artistic imagination. While Buchloh and others may give a way within art discourse to see the relations of appropriation with capitalism and cultural capital, Wilson defines an alternative. For context, I quote him at length:

By using the term belongings, I thought we were countering the community’s painful experiences with destructive colonial language and discourse. Our community views these Western terms as dissociating; they sever the connection the community has to places and things. They turn belongings into “objects,” owner-less and open to Western academic inquiry. More often than not, Western discourses serves to disempower and displace Indigenous peoples. As I first understood it, the use of the term belongings sought to re-establish Musqueam as the present-day rightful owners of these cultural items.

Upon further listening and reflection on what the community members shared with us, I became aware our use of belongings is more than a strategic response to Western/settler discourses and the disconnect caused by it. The use of the term emphasizes the contemporary Musqueam connection to the tangible things themselves, but it also conveys that Musqueam have always been the carriers of these belongings’ intangible qualities, including knowledge about the power they continue to hold, how they should be cared for, what should be said about them,

how they should be presented (if at all), and how they fit into our ways of seeing the world.

Wilson and the Musqueam's identification of an alternative relationship to "objects" troubles the foundation of museology, but it also reveals many of the forms of critique I have used in this essay to be forms of an immanent critique that excludes the possibility of an alterity to the system I am critiquing. As Dussel cautions, this can make us blind to coloniality and, as I've argued, to modernism's construction of temporalities of belonging and exclusion. A model based on the critique of culture becoming a commodity is also fundamentally overturned by the proposition of "cultural belongings". This usefully disposes of the type of argument that has been part of the appropriation debate around the "appropriation prize" debacle. Take, for instance, Andy Lamey's reductive argument in *The Literary Review of Canada*:

Appropriation talk sees culture as more akin to private property, something to be kept from falling into the hands of those to whom it doesn't belong. The possibility of works by members of traditionally oppressed groups becoming the cultural equivalent of public property is something it unwittingly guards against. Perhaps this is why appropriation talk is most common in countries with the most capitalistic economies.

Lament's comment cannot be applied to the concept of cultural belongings as the concept refuses the possibility of culture as private property. Instead, as Anderson and Haidy Geismar explain, "The use of the term 'belongings' is a tactic to recognize cultural values and the multiplicity of ways of knowing the world, and acknowledges the right of people to self-represent and self-define" (158). The emphasis on the relationality of knowledges



and life ways confounds the roots of the modernist paradigm based on extraction and value; cultural belongings move from a cultural economy of transactions to a network of relations, responsibilities, and ethics. Yet, even that shift, as I define it, truly does not emphasize the *alterity* of this relationship to “objects,” “stories,” “voices,” or “images.”

## **Conclusion**

Outside the cool language of critical art discourse, appropriation within CanLit is figured by Oji-Cree Joshua Whitehead in this manner:

Appropriation hurts, it bears repeating, it's the machine that reiterates settler colonial ideologies. Appropriation is the iconoclasm of colonialism; the image that you see when you think of 'Indian' is how you've been programmed to see me, feel me, hear me, hate me. Appropriation is the stamp of approval that acknowledges and allows the rape of our women, the destruction of our land, the invisibility / inaudibility of our stories. Appropriation is what gifted you the very canon of CanLit.

Whitehead's approach is related to, but is outside of, the models proposed by Todd and Fung. Whitehead asserts the affective impact of appropriation at the same time as he points to the structural violence of colonialism. This builds upon the critique of capitalism on which Todd bases her position, yet goes far beyond the belief in the reform of cultural institutions which Fong pushes towards. In this context, Jordan Wilson's clarification of the lived concept of *cultural belongings*, a step which negates the foundational aspect of modernism and, of course, capitalism's drive to commodify all that is solid and all that is immaterial, brings together Todd's anti-capitalist push, Fong's

long march of institutional critique (for *cultural belongings* thwarts a non-relational understanding of *artifact* or *object*), and Whitehead's affective politics (if that is the appropriate term here). Sto:lo writer Lee Maracle, in *My Conversations with Canadians*, makes it clear how appropriation of knowledge has been at the core of Canada's particular colonialist project:

For this [medical knowledge] to have been possible, the authority of the original people had to be abrogated and usurped by the official representatives (the Crown) of the would-be appropriators and Indigenous access to the knowledge and land severed; as well, the appropriated authority had to be rationalized and maintained. That is the very nature of how colonialism works" (103).

Maracle is clear that theft is involved in the severing of knowledge from Indigenous people and that theft also blocks access to that knowledge. Appropriation, then, extends the temporality of the act of theft and leads to a politics of decolonization that includes self-determined access to knowledge. Maracle and Whitehead take up a more visceral politics, which I believe also exists in Fanon and the temporality of his decolonizing dialectic. If the temporal trick within modernism is to keep the other or the colonized perpetually outside the present, the countering temporal magic in Fanon is that the colonized *will be* liberated first and only then can the colonizer follow. Hence, the colonizers have been behind time all the while, even though they don't know it. However, for Maracle and Whitehead, the Euro-centric burden of a dialectics is not based on a negation; yes, there is theft, repression, violence, and death, but not an outright negation of Indigenous knowledges. Maracle is much more oriented toward a positive figuring of Indigenous ways of being that have not been negated (and hence don't need a negation of the present for them to exist) but have taken the onslaught of the colonial attempt to wipe them out and still exist. Ciccariello

describes the relationship to the positive and negation in Fanon in this way: “While the brutality of the Fanonian dialectic is undeniable, so too is this positive source, which later finds its basis in the reservoir of relative exteriority – to use Dussel’s terms – of the Algerian peasantry” (161). The difference in Maracle’s argument is that there is no exteriority but rather an Indigenous present, both as possibility and reality, that has always been grounded rather than being exterior.

Reiland Rabaka summarizes the base of Fanon’s decolonizing dialectic in this direct manner: “Under colonialism neither the colonized nor the colonized knows himself or herself” (109). Rabaka clarifies that, “In order for both the racially colonized and the racial colonizers to be ‘set free,’ Fanon thought it was necessary to decolonize the whole of humanity, that is, the racially colonized and the racial colonizers” (288). Applying this position today might seem like a sleight of hand, for it seems to call for the healing of the settler-colonialist self, rendering decolonization as yet another form of self-help for white folks. If I can bring Maracle and Fanon into an imagined dialogue, here, they both appeal to the colonizer to act on self-critique and reflection.<sup>5</sup> As Maracle writes: “Settlers ought to look at their own history, then look in the mirror. After annihilating our populations, and much of the animal life on this continent and in the oceans, and the waters, who would want to be you?” (132). As *A Dying Colonialism* and Maracle’s work make sanguinely clear, the answer is *no one*, including *you*!

The stakes in cultural appropriation and colonialism and their complex temporalities are extremely material, even if a level of abstraction is necessary to pose what is at stake. For Fanon, and in Maracle’s *My Conversations with Canadians*, it is the future that is at stake. Time, then, and models of temporality become a site of struggle.

A key aspect of Fanon's proposition involves calling first for a global project of closing down colonialism and then for the emergence of "a new humanity" (28). *A Dying Colonialism* is filled with phrases of futurity, of "the rising generation" (26), of "a new society [that] has come to birth" (27). Within the temporality of a dying colonialism – a temporality that has a universal horizon of liberation because of its negation of colonialism in the present -- CanLit can be seen as a residual but still powerful aspect of those forces that continue to choke both the colonized and the colonizer (although to different degrees!). I use *residual* here as a hopeful term, for it points to a future when the colonial frame is no longer the unacknowledged dominant frame for cultural production in Canada.

I've attempted to provide a critique of cultural appropriation based on its history as an aesthetic device within modernism, and I've tried to show how this aesthetic device is bound to forms of temporality necessary for colonialism and to an economic system based on extraction. I've tried to do this from the position of a writer surrounded by the institutions, myths, discourses, and economies of CanLit that I see all too often as a "repetition of the worst" that choke the roles that writing might take at this moment in the present. That is, I've tried to both look in the mirror and form a critique (for I still see critique as a necessary step) to point out that settler-colonizer writers have had many clear options and clear paths to fling off their role in cultural appropriation and theft. Insisting on the relationship of the cultural and the economic helps foreground the systemic aspect of *extractionist appropriation* and moves its critique away from tired assertions of the freedom of a writer's imagination or as a necessity of a new globalized multiculturalism. That we are seeing – hopefully – the last writhings of both an economic

model based on extraction and a cultural program that mimics that economy is the future horizon of the positive aspects of a dying colonialism.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2013, Hobbema reverted to its original name, Maskwacis, a change initiated by the Samson Cree Nation, the Ermineskin Cree Nation, the Louis Bull Tribe, and the Montana First Nation.

<sup>2</sup> In an article in *Quill & Quire*, "Examining the Roots of Cultural Appropriation," **Whitney French** points to Richard Fung's important text from 1993, which I discuss later in this essay. She also gives a quick overview of the 1990s debates on cultural appropriation.  
<https://quillandquire.com/omni/whitney-french-examining-the-root-of-cultural-appropriation/>

<sup>3</sup> Wente appeared on CBC Metro Morning with Matt Galloway on May 15, 2017. See, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J\\_G42QVH3QM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_G42QVH3QM). Accessed September 30, 2018.

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<sup>4</sup> Even when Indigenous communities are consulted, often within a process described as “the recurring tyranny of participation”, a developmental model is the dominant frame and cultural aspects are trumped by the logic of financialization. As Enns, Bersaglio and Kepe argue, “Even the High Level Panels final report [UN report on sustainable development] promotes a vision for sustainable development based on the economic valuation and commodification of natural resources, ignoring alternative visions for development and other ways of living that were identified as important during consultation with indigenous peoples” (“Indigenous Voices and the Making of the Post-2015 Development Agenda: the Recurring Tyranny of Participation,” *Third World Quarterly* 35:3 2014, p370). This puts culture, sovereignty and development in conflict.

<sup>5</sup> In *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014: 131), Glen Coulthard argues that, “far from evading the recognition paradigm entirely, Fanon instead turns our attention to the cultural practices of critical individual and collective *self-recognition* that colonized populations often engage in to empower themselves, instead of relying too heavily on the colonial state and society to do this for them.” This “realm of self affirmative cultural, artistic and political activity” that Coulthard sees in Fanon is a basis of Maracle’s *My Conversations with Canadians*.