

Trafficking in Petronormativities: At the Intersections of Petrofeminism, Petrocolonialism, and Petrocapitalism

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Trafficking is at the core of a global infrastructural network that has greatly contributed to the culture of climate change. Here, I evoke two meanings of trafficking: the straightforward definition as the transportation of commodities by land, air, or sea for the purposes of commercial trade, as well as in its more common usage regarding the trafficking of illicit goods, including but not limited to women. Beyond the more obvious connections between traffic and climate change, today's ecological situation might also be attributed to more nuanced forms of traffic and trafficking—that is, the ways in which bodies (human and otherwise) are managed, (im)mobilized, and (dis)connected in the name of those extractivist, patriarchal, and colonial worldviews that perpetuate the (North) American Dream(s) of nationhood, prosperity, and petrocolonial futurity. Today's culture of climate change (i.e., rising CO₂ levels and greenhouse gas emissions), at least in North America, traffics in hegemonic fantasies of mobility that both reflect culture and shape it, producing and reproducing the limits that define a successful life.¹ These fantasies of freedom that make up the American Dream, as the moniker suggests, are aspirational notions of what we should be striving for. These imaginaries are circulated through media infrastructures that traffic in particular narratives of freedom shaping our individual and collective future(s). These freedoms, in reality, however, are only available to an elite few, and rely on the enclosure and containment of the many via our own indenture to the capitalist debt

system that ties us figuratively and literally to mortgages and loans, and the waged labor necessary to pay off these debts. Whether we abide by or resist these dominant imaginaries, they function to delimit what is deemed possible when it comes to imagining the future, or what I call our *energy futures*.

In the age of the Anthropocene, or better yet, the Plantationocene and Capitalocene, an “era marked by ongoing enclosures of the commons and heavy reliance on slave labor and other forms of exploited, alienated, and usually spatially transported labor,”² the issue of trafficking necessitates not only analyses of mobility and transportation but also the inverse: analyses of stasis, stuckness, settlement, and occupation. Put another way, today’s culture of climate change is not only defined by ecological devastation and an increasingly uninhabitable planet but also represents a profoundly material crisis anchored in *infrastructure*. Reaching across time, existing infrastructures link us to our past, while new infrastructures provide an opportunity to redesign the future.³ Whether we are referring to the material infrastructures of transportation, the media infrastructures that play a key role in shaping the narratives that underpin our everyday experiences, the informal and often immaterial infrastructures of resistance movements, or the energy systems that undergird them all, infrastructure projects have the potential to create new pathways for moving into the future.

Taking this dynamic understanding of both trafficking and infrastructure as a starting point, this chapter interrogates the (dis)connection between mobility and the culture of climate change, particularly as it is represented in contemporary media, in order to unsettle current conversations and launch new discussions around energy transition projects, especially those designing more livable futures for all. In this chapter, I analyze two Canadian cultural texts: a CBC documentary film titled *Colonization Road* (2016)⁴ that exposes the enclosures affected by hegemonic petrocultural fantasies, and a Canadian Ethical Oil commercial (2011)⁵ that markets the colonization of women’s lifeworlds⁶ via what I call *petrofeminism*.⁷ I do so in an attempt to unfold the ways that (auto)mobility and infrastructure are represented in contemporary Canadian media ecologies, and, in turn, examine how these representations illuminate an extractivist dream sustained through particular “energy imaginaries” that leave us at an impasse—an intersection, if you will—in desperate need of reimaginings.⁸ Put briefly, these media texts offer a starting point to investigate how the tightly intertwined politics of “mobility” and “freedom” rely on patriarchal and colonial infrastructures, which necessitate the ongoing *extraction* of surplus value, whether by the colonization of commonly held lands or via the expropriation of human and nonhuman labor power. By unravelling the

complex relations between infrastructures of (auto)mobility and the current culture of climate change represented in these media artifacts, this analysis seeks to investigate how mobility for some, be they people or ideas, necessarily relies on the immobility and confinement of others, and further, how this uneven power geometry limits possibilities for addressing the current energy impasse and thus the potential for imagining alternative futures.⁹

Trafficking in Extractivist Dreams

The current culture of climate change, or what is understood in this analysis as a dominant “petroculture,”¹⁰ has developed over the past century and a half based on both the availability of (relatively) cheap carbon-based fuels *and* dreams of ever-increasing mobility: the transportation of commodities in commercial trade; the high-speed mobility of ideas (communication being yet another kind of commodity); and the migration and mobility of people as they commute and move through the everyday as well as more distant work, leisure, and vacation destinations. These forms of petrocultural mobility are associated with increased social mobility for those with the greatest access to and control of energy supplies, or those who have been able to shape global capitalism by extracting surplus value and labor from those “resources” (natural, human, and more-than-human) seen to be at their disposal. For example, the creation of a large mobile middle class that consumes goods transported via worldwide networks of global trade continues to be integral to sustaining a capitalist financial system and its necessary infrastructures, which are fueled by fossil power and driven by extractivist worldviews. That is, the status quo understanding of a *successful* (middle-class) life has been produced and maintained by marketing the Dream narrative that operates on a narrow and homogenous definition of mobility, revolving around a concept of freedom that is most often materialized through a house, a car, and a nuclear family. Today’s fossil-fueled narratives of mobility rely on the often-unquestioned entitlement to private property (via a home and car) and conservative forms of social reproduction (via a nuclear family)—a Dream of success that is only possible, as I discuss further below, through an *originary theft*. In this way, the Dream that has come to constitute the vision of success is not so much a once-viable ideal now corrupted by an extractivist worldview, but is instead a necessary apparatus, or infrastructure, for concealing the primacy of extraction and exploitation on which illusory representations of the “good life” are founded.¹¹ Extractivist occupation is the very basis of the Dream of freedom via mobility.

While the post–World War II fantasy of the American Dream was designed to produce a white heteronormative middle class in the United States, its material origin is based in a petroculture whose extractive character is global.¹² In western Canada, where I write from Treaty 6 Territory in the province of Alberta, for example, we have our own cultural, financial, and infrastructural equivalents of the Dream.¹³ Here, the extractivist worldview that sustains our contributions to global capitalism is deeply ingrained in the Canadian psyche and tied explicitly to the project of settler colonialism. Attention to the extractive basis of capitalism in settler colonial countries reveals that, despite the particularities of national histories, Canada’s situation is not so very different from what has taken place in the United States, Australia, and throughout the colonized world. Canada’s national identity, for instance, rests on the facts that Canada is a staples economy—whether the staples are those of the fur trade or the oil industry—and that the nation’s worth and its political-economic *raison-d’être* relies on extracting value from “resources,”¹⁴ thus informing the relationship that many Canadians have to the land, to other species, and to one another. This extractivist worldview also defines relationships beyond our borders and over time, much as the infrastructural networks powered by fossil energy weave power relations across time and space. In short, where mobility, be it physical or social, is defined by uneven processes of circulation across stolen lands and by the unquestioned extraction of resources necessary for maintaining the reproduction of a gas-guzzling middle class, the Dream and the freedoms it promises are intimately entangled with the infrastructures that enable the ongoing project of settler colonialism and that are invested in its perpetuation.

The Dream, secured in part through private property (white picket fences included) and (auto)mobility, exemplifies some of the great contradictions inherent to contemporary understandings of freedom and the good life. For example, home ownership in and of itself anchors the individual to a specific space and time, thus limiting both social and physical mobility. That is, the acquisition of private property requires that the buyer leverage their anticipated lifetime of labor to secure home mortgages and car payments, all in an effort to reproduce social life and support a family. This indebtedness is, contrary to any lived reality, packaged and sold as freedom—specifically, the financial freedom and/or purchasing power to buy other freedoms. However, the steady repayment demanded by the debt cycle requires that people maintain regular waged labor, which in turn inhibits mobility, while also limiting capacities for socio-political organizing and actions of solidarity with others for better working conditions. In addition to home ownership, (auto)mobility—or the necessity

of personal vehicles (sometimes two or three per home!)—further highlights the contradictions inherent to today’s extractivist Dream.¹⁵

In the current paradigm, at least in North America, traffic is made possible via personal vehicles, which, regardless of mythic tropes of the *freedom of the road*, have become more practically an extension of the domestic space whose anchored nature is affectively made up for by perceived physical and social mobility. But any promise of emancipation—particularly women’s emancipation—linked to the automobile cannot hold up to much scrutiny. The freedom of the road, popularized in the early twentieth century, originates in market strategies that target women as consumers. And, within this patriarchal system, women become both consumers of automobile culture as well as commodities within the same circular network: both are objectified and both fetishized.¹⁶ As I shall expand upon below, following the work of Silvia Federici,¹⁷ the witch hunts of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe were prototypes for both the colonization of populations around the world, as well as for the ongoing enclosure of women’s lives under capitalism: a system that markets their un/underpaid labor back to them as emancipation under the banner of what I call *petrofeminism*, a term that I coin to indicate the co-optation of feminism by petrocultural capacities and logics. Rather than moving freely through space and time, women in North America often find themselves boomeranging back and forth along a largely predetermined course: moving from home, to work, to community destinations, to stores. On a weekly (if not daily) basis, women where I live now spend a significant number of hours driving to a variety of gigantic, widely dispersed commercial centers—accessible only by car—and shopping for food, clothing, and newly designed consumer goods marketed as necessities. The mobile woman is at the center of a consumer-oriented society. This is particularly true of mothers. The reality of automobility being quite different from the fantasy, the personal vehicle has been imbricated as a normal and necessary tool for personal independence and the successful management of a nuclear family, which has significant ramifications for women and everyone else.

The nuclear family is intrinsic to the neoliberal social and cultural construction of personal success, as well as to the perpetuation of cisheteronormative-patriarchal-petrocapitalism and to the ongoing project of settler colonialism. As Deborah Cowen argues, “In colonial and settler colonial contexts, infrastructure is often the means of dispossession, and the material force that implants colonial economies and socialities.”¹⁸ All of this is to say that the nuclear-family home at the base of the imagined fantasy of the nuclear family is, like the big box shopping outlets, in and of itself an infrastructure. It likewise

shapes the infrastructural design of urban and suburban living in our modern petrocultures, just as the necessity to provide each family home with all of the goods and services to run a single residence has grown and maintained enormous consumer market.

Moreover, the Dream of freedom afforded by both private property and the personal vehicle are tethered to infrastructures—shipping networks, roads, telecommunications, energy grids, structures of financialization and debt, and so on—that rely on an originary theft of Indigenous lands. Sold as mobility, the Dream is simultaneously about occupation and settlement. It is about the soft and hard infrastructures of extraction and colonialism that promise the chimera of freedom to some (ironically all the while binding them to the systems of their own oppression), while ensuring the containment of Other bodies, restricting Indigenous Peoples through the infrastructures of cultural genocide, including residential schools and the many iterations of the child welfare system and the criminal justice system.¹⁹ The Dream is about the domestication and “development” of nature that has destroyed local ecosystems and perpetuated ecocide on a global scale. Any transition away from extractivist practices of the environmental variety must be accompanied with a shift in worldview, *raison-d’être*, and relationality that includes human and more-than-human relationships. Decarbonization of the environment alone is inadequate to address the challenge of climate change. Rather, we must address the root cause: the worldview that relates to bodies and their potential labor, as well as other species and nature, for the profit that can be extracted from them.

(De)Colonization Road: Towards Deep Energy Literacy

Colonization Road

Examined through a critical lens focused on the extractivism that is central to the project of settler colonialism, and on the subtending constructs of mobility upheld through private property and personal vehicles, the Canadian Dream is quite literally founded on land that has been stolen from its rightful owners. That is, the land that we now call Canada legally belongs to the Indigenous Peoples whose territories have been colonized. This is the history and current lived reality that Anishinaabe comedian Ryan McMahon navigates in Michelle St. John’s 2016 documentary film *Colonization Road*. The film’s title comes from the many roads named “Colonization Road” throughout Canada (see fig. 11.1), and this documentary examines the idea of the road



Fig. 11.1. Two green street signs crossed at an intersection with the street sign "COLONIZATION RD." in full focus. (Michelle St. John, *Colonization Road* [Toronto: Decolonization Road Productions Inc., 2016], aired on CBC, *Firsthand*, <http://www.cbc.ca/firsthand/episodes/colonization-road>, 7:22. Image from film.)

itself as both a literal and figurative or metaphorical manifestation of colonization in Canada. Released on the heels of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's reports, the film mobilizes political humor as one strategy to push Indigenous and non-Indigenous viewers alike to think through what reconciliation and decolonization mean for our future.²⁰

The film opens with a clip of McMahon performing his stand-up comedy routine on the topic of colonization. He starts out with the following bit: "You ever notice that when you ask the government for *your* land back, they're all like, 'Ok, one sec—Ok, let me see, one second, ok, alright here, let me just, one—, ok, one, uh, uh [*Pause for dramatic effect*] NO!'"²¹ The scene then cuts directly to McMahon doing a street interview with a Canadian passerby asking, "Have you ever heard of colonization roads?" The young woman replies "No." This scene is followed up by a media clip of former Prime Minister Stephen Harper (2006–2015) publicly declaring: "We [Canada] also have no history of colonialisms."²² Following discussions with two Indigenous experts, who put Harper's comments into context, McMahon then asks more Canadians on the street if they know which leader made this claim. Two take

a guess. Two definitively answer that they do not. When he asks yet another pair of young women, “Do we think this country has a history of colonialism?” one responds with a tentative “to a certain extent,” while the other asserts “oh, most definitely. . . . That’s kind of how we were founded.”²³ Juxtaposing such responses with his own voiceover reflections, which are more serious in tone, and interviews with historical and legal experts, in addition to more clips of his stand-up, McMahon illustrates that while there is some awareness of colonization and its histories, many Canadians are not attuned in the same ways as Indigenous people in Canada are to the ongoing violences enacted through the performative slights of hand demonstrated by Harper—which become not only part of the mainstream (toxic) media ecology of the nation but also make their way from political rhetoric into law and policy. McMahon shows that it is precisely this chasm in understanding and attunement to the ongoing nature of colonization that needs to be bridged to even begin to address the impacts of historical and ongoing colonization in Canada. Media, political rhetoric, law, and policy are all soft infrastructures of the nation-state. One of the experts who speaks about Prime Minister Harper’s understanding of colonization in this introductory segment is Hayden King. Since the release of this film in 2016, King has spoken out extensively about the ways in which Harper’s successor, Prime Minister Trudeau and his government, understand the nation-to-nation relationships between Canada and Indigenous nations that further threaten to entrench colonial relations, this time mobilizing the infrastructure of the language of reconciliation.²⁴

Where McMahon uses humor to point out discrepancies between public perceptions of historical and ongoing colonization, I look to decolonial and feminist frameworks to make evident the complex relations connecting land, extractivism, and fantasies of freedom, so as to offer more adequate approaches to addressing climate change by organizing around energy transition. Within our present petroculture, energy systems require the extraction of fossil fuels from “resource-rich” lands that ultimately belong to the Indigenous Peoples of these territories.²⁵ A move away from oil and fossil fuel energy systems, and by extension from the social-economic-political power relations and infrastructures they require, therefore necessitates the development of alternative relationships, both with the land and with the stewards of those lands. With this in mind, energy transition is not merely a technical issue (i.e., what new technologies will replace the old?) but also requires a deep and concerted effort to examine and dismantle power relations in order to develop energy imaginaries that allow us to design more livable futures for all.

Deep Energy Literacy

In other words, what is truly required of us at this time is a full-scale energy transition, informed by what I call *deep energy literacy*. This approach to literacy draws from theories of deep ecology that originated in the 1970s and argued that technocratic solutions were (and remain) inadequate to the challenges of ecological devastation. I make the allied claim that deep energy literacy is the understanding that all of our relationships are grounded in the energy systems that have fueled our networks of power and oppression—and thus deep energy literacy must be intersectionally feminist and decolonial in its mobilization. To be clear, both deep energy literacy and a more technology-based understanding of energy transition are needed. One is not more important than the other; rather, they round out one another. Installing a smart thermostat or taking public transportation might be part of engaging in energy transition depending on where you live in the world (because so many solutions will be oriented to local conditions), but so too is an understanding of how energy is social and how energy transition is—or could be—a galvanizing political force. In Canada, for example, full-scale energy transition and any new uses of the land must occur by first reconciling our relationships to the land and our concomitant relations with one another—Indigenous and non-Indigenous and also all manner of gendered, racialized, classist, ableist, relations in and between us—as well as our relations with the other species of flora and fauna, earth, air, water, and fire, with whom we coexist on this planet we call home. To dismantle and challenge the extractivist Dream that has come to undergird the way in which mainstream Canadians understand themselves in relation to land, to one another, and to energy, we need to practice alternative forms of literacy and understanding—again, deep energy literacy—to renegotiate power relations and reimagine more livable futures for all.

In *Colonization Road*, McMahon's inherently transgressive political humor provokes these same foundational issues about land, albeit in a different manner. As an Indigenous person, he is resisting the oppression and the genocidal dispossession of his people, for instance, by calling into question who owns so-called private property within ongoing regimes of colonial control and expansionism. In a particularly cutting segment, McMahon speaks to the then-recent report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2008–2015), dedicated to documenting the history and legacy of Canada's residential school system, and its final report and ninety-four calls to action:

Oh, we are in a time that we have never seen before and we are not ready, folks. We are not ready, 'cause I'm talking about nation-to-nation shit, right? Like I'm talking about getting land back. Which, I don't even know if that means you have to go back to where you came from. I'm not sure yet. Maybe it does, I don't know. Oooh . . . feel that? That's the assholes of . . .²⁶

At this moment, McMahon gestures and laughs about the sphincters of his white audience members tightening up, as he riffs on the very serious issues of reconciliation and land rights and what they mean for the future of non-Indigenous and Indigenous relations.

To further stress these points, *Colonization Road* moves viewers through the history of Canadian colonization and Indigenous dispossession, including a short history of the Doctrine of Discovery, its inceptions, and its ongoing impacts into the present. As a recap, the Doctrine of Discovery “emanates from a series of Papal Bulls (formal statements from the Pope) and extensions, originating in the 1400s. Discovery was used as legal and moral justification for colonial dispossession of sovereign Indigenous Nations.”²⁷ It declared that the first European nations to discover lands inhabited by “non-civilized”—in other words, non-white and non-Christian—peoples would be given sovereign ownership over those lands. While subsequent legal documents, such as the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and numerous treaties would, in fact, recognize that Indigenous Peoples have rights to their land, the long-held belief that Christians were entitled to the land led to the Free Land Grants of the nineteenth century that parceled out Indigenous territory to settlers. As Indigenous legal scholar and activist Pam Palmater explains in the film, Indigenous rights are inherent and existed before settlement.²⁸ As Palmater asserts, “If you read the Royal Proclamation, they say why they had to recognize those rights, and it was because the only way that their ‘colony’ could be secure or have any justice is if they recognized and protected those rights, because we weren’t giving them up.”²⁹ Treaties, she explains, do not undermine Canadian law, but are instead foundational to it, and thus Canada must “recognize our [Indigenous] sovereignty and nationhood in order to even exist as a state.”³⁰ *Colonization Road* weaves these historical and political facts shared by a range of Elders and academic experts to illustrate that the dispossession of land central to the colonial project is ongoing: *it is not an event but a structure*.³¹ Put otherwise, colonization is defined not only by historical events but also by the current *infrastructures* that enable its affirmation and continuation, in this case laws that validate discovery and erode Indigenous Treaty Rights.

Accordingly, today's pressing political and economic hot topics—be they pipeline infrastructures, carbon pricing (an infrastructure of economy), or energy transition (another material infrastructure)—must be contextualized within the fraught history *and* present context of colonization; this is a process that necessitates deep energy literacy. That is, rather than trafficking in discussions about how to power the country through new technological innovations or ad hoc solutions, which often fail to address the ongoing exploitation of Indigenous Lands, we might instead redirect current conversations around climate change and energy transition towards more fulsome popular *energy imaginaries* that hold the capacity to speculate not only on a range of decarbonized possible futures but also futures in which the worldview that drives decision making shifts from extracting value to valuing all lives—human and more-than-human. As highlighted above, and as seen through the lens of deep energy literacy, McMahon's critiques of the land are part of a larger critique related to the current energy system. Implicitly, his demand for reorienting our nation-to-nation relationships and our relationships to the land is also a call to explicitly recognize who owns and controls "resources," how that land is "managed," and for whose benefit. In other words, he asks us to consider who profits from the way things are?

At this historical moment, when energy transition is needed as a first critical response to decarbonizing the environment, energy transition can also become a material reality and a politics around which we can begin to imagine and organize for new futures. As new "resources" and energy sources and systems are proposed for use (for example, rock bed formations with geothermal potential, or wide-open spaces ripe for wind-power capture or solar-power generation), we must rethink anew our relationships to the lands on which these projects are situated. As we embark on this renegotiation of land use for new low-carbon energy transition projects, it is also possible and necessary to renegotiate the deeper relationships we have to these spaces and places and to the people who live on them and have rights to them, especially Indigenous Peoples, given that Crown lands and Indigenous lands in remote areas of the country are often the sites and sources of new energy projects. In this way, decarbonized futures *could* help bring about more socially just futures for everyone in these territories, as well as those we are impacting around the world, through our ongoing petrocapiatist practices. Because if Indigenous Peoples are constrained by existing infrastructures, so too—to differing degrees at the intersections of power—are the majority of the population whose own mirage of freedom is, when exposed, another form of enclosure. While a solar farm in and of itself holds no promise of providing more equitable futures, the

negotiations around these new infrastructures—from where they are built, on whose lands, to who controls those lands and who controls the means of power generation, and for whose benefit—could seriously reorient existing relations of power for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and communities alike.

Paving the Road for Colonization: Infrastructures of (Im)Mobility

In addition to challenging the representations that have concealed the originary theft on which the Canadian Dream is founded, St. John's film explores infrastructural issues by identifying and debunking the metaphor of the road as benign, and of mobility as freedom. To begin, McMahon's voiceover narrative introduces the literal and metaphoric meaning of the road (see fig. 11.2):

Colonization. We need to talk. I know you well. I wish I didn't, but I do. How crazy is this? There is a road named after you in my hometown. The road starts at the base of our traditional ceremonial grounds on my reserve: Koocheching First Nation in Northwestern Ontario. I played on this road. I swam off of it. I drove and walked this road. But I never knew what this road had done to my people. And, it turns out, there are colonization roads scattered across Manitoba and Ontario. Crazy.³²

The same privilege that made it historically possible for European explorers to declare *terra nullius*³³ and claim dominion/*dominus*³⁴ over the discovery of the New World as their God-given right also works to mobilize settler colonial freedom fantasies that pave the way—quite literally by mapping, surveying, and building infrastructure such as colonization roads—for the cultural genocide and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples, their land, languages, and cultures. Further highlighting the power of roads as infrastructures of colonization, Palmater adds, “To me, roads, railways, they're like an infection, not just metaphorically but actually. It was a way of invading our territories without legal authority, without consent. And what are roads used for now? They literally bleed our territories dry of people, of resources, everything that matters to us. And, they pose a hazard.”³⁵

Both McMahon's and Palmater's comments invoke the invasive, predatory nature of roads at multiple levels, symbolic and infrastructural. For many Indigenous communities, roads not only allow for unofficial logging and mining operations that move resources unidirectionally out of Indigenous territories into the coffers of multinational corporations, but roads also play a role in other modes of illicit trafficking. For example, the Highway of Tears

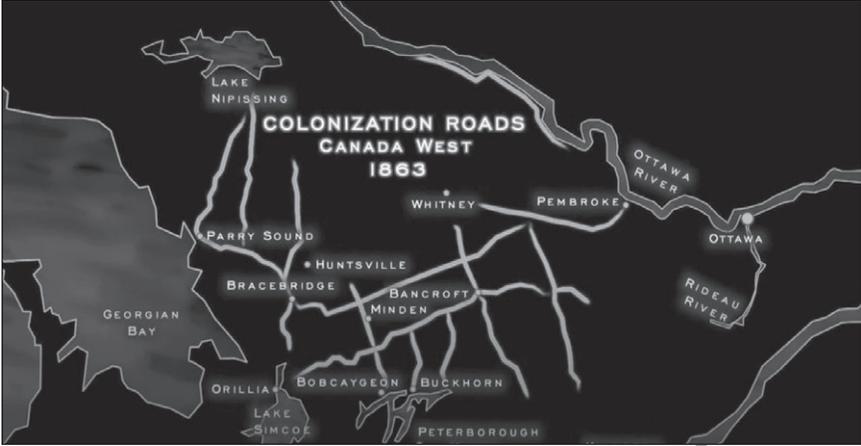


Fig. 11.2. Simplified map of colonization roads in 1863 running through what is now Ontario. (Michelle St. John, *Colonization Road* [Toronto: Decolonization Road Productions Inc., 2016], aired on CBC, *Firsthand*, <http://www.cbc.ca/firsthand/episodes/colonization-road>, 3:37. Image from film.)

(Highway 16 in British Columbia, Canada), where hundreds, by some accounts, and thousands by others, of Indigenous women have gone missing or been murdered since the 1960s, sparking a national inquiry, is also invoked by Palmater when she talks about invasion without consent. In a world of settler colonialism, women of color are more at risk than men of color or white women, and Indigenous women are often most at risk. Audra Simpson argues eloquently that this is because, according to Indigenous structures of governance, women are the original keepers of the land, and petrocolonialism therefore requires their ongoing dispossession and disappearance.³⁶ In the settler colonial reality of Canada's modernity, the Highway of Tears is a synecdoche for the many roads that have led to the dispossession and erasure of Indigenous women's power through the sociological phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.³⁷

Colonization Road, and the voices it gives space to throughout, speaks back to the Dream founded on a particular vision of success as "freedom" to own private property and freedom to access the open road and move through the world, as well as the freedom of class mobility narrated as the rightful reward of hard work (never of structural violence and privilege—which are unavoidably a foil for one another). In a world designed by white men for white men, the Dream built on freedom and mobility—both literal and metaphoric, both

physical and social—that might be attained by the most privileged is experienced differently by those bodies situated differentially at the intersections of power. Furthermore, this same system and network of exploitation and extraction that has fueled colonial dispossession and reinforced an extractivist worldview is also responsible for the global warming that now presents a threat to us all. If we are going to address climate change, it will take more than technological shifts to slow and reverse the rampant rise of CO₂ issuing from these histories of extracting and moving value globally for the profit of a few. What is needed, instead, is deep energy literacy that interrogates and challenges power dynamics so as to develop full-scale transitions toward more just futures by dealing not simply with CO₂ emissions but with the deep causes of these emissions. The current media ecology traffics in the stolen Dreams necessary to sustain bankrupt capitalist financial worlds that continue to rely on colonialism. Our attachment to these fantasies contributes to our actions and inaction in response to the grand challenges of the twenty-first century, most pressingly, global warming.

Colonizing Women's Lives, Past, Present, and Future

Histories of Oppression: From Witch Hunts to the Nuclear Family

Having outlined how the infrastructures of the Dream narratives are inseparable from colonialism, in this section I aim to illustrate how the Dream is also cisheteronormative and patriarchal, illustrating by way of Silvia Federici's examination of historical witch hunts where and why feminist visions of the future that aim to subvert and overturn the infrastructures of modern social reproduction are, to my mind, inextricably linked to and have common cause with decolonization efforts.³⁸ Under capitalism, the lifeworlds of the majority are colonized, albeit in uneven and intersectionally different ways. The lives of oppressed people, Indigenous people, and women are colonized in different ways based on where our gendered, raced, classed, and abled bodies intersect with existing power structures. In addition to the house and car—private property and (auto)mobility—another central component of the Dream fueled by existing *energy imaginaries* is the nuclear-family unit. Indeed, the conversation often halts when we ask how transformations to energy infrastructure might impact the daily (and family-focused) privileges to which we have become accustomed. Further, and in addition to legitimizing the need for private property and personal vehicles, this heteronormative-familial mode of relationality also relies on (mostly) women's social reproductive

labor, largely unpaid. For example, women are most often responsible for domestic work that is integral to the production of value, but is unrecognized as formal “labor” within capitalist logics of production and accumulation. Furthermore, when this labor is waged, it is often relegated to marginalized women such as women of color and poor women, those least able to benefit from the already scanty protections afforded to labor by the state. To ensure buy-in and thus the perpetuation of the status quo, colonial capitalism in Canada not only normalizes the exploitation of land and resources, and in so doing subsumes and represses the treaties and relationships on which this nation’s own legitimacy rests, but it also continues to colonize the present and the future by normalizing the exploitation of the bodies and labor of women and women of color.

Looking to the histories that have led to the current moment, Federici has argued that European women’s lives were colonized through the witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, which involved the torture and killing of hundreds of thousands of women.³⁹ The historically overlooked “witch-hunt was a major *political* initiative” and “one of the most important events in the development of capitalist society,” an “essential aspect of primitive accumulation and the ‘transition’ to capitalism.”⁴⁰ During this period, women who engaged in traditional women’s work—midwifery, medicine, the foraging and cultivation of food on commonly owned lands—were dispossessed of their access to these communal holdings and to their own expertise (i.e., the commons). These female bodies and knowledges were then integrated into a rationalized patriarchal capitalist market, a market in which women would henceforth participate only as poorly waged laborers, who earned half of what a man earned in the fourteenth century and one-third of what men earned by the mid-sixteenth century.⁴¹ This history of oppression, which was multifaceted and included the aforementioned erasure of particular knowledge systems and subsistence practices, as well as tools of power such as the decriminalization of rape (which resulted in state-sanctioned rape and erased women’s rights to their own bodies) and the mass killing of women, is intrinsically intertwined with the subjugation of the poor, people of color, and Indigenous populations. The witch hunts occurred “simultaneously with the colonization and extermination of the populations of the New World, the English enclosures, the beginning of the slave trade, the enactment of ‘bloody laws’ against vagabonds and beggars, and it [the persecution of witches] climaxed in that interregnum between the end of feudalism and the capitalist ‘take off.’”⁴²

Not unlike the history lessons provided by *Colonization Road* in relation to

the Doctrine of Discovery outlined above, this historical account of women's history and specifically of the witch hunts also demonstrates how the control of land, bodies, and ideas (i.e., knowledge systems) is made possible by soft and hard infrastructures of the Dream of mobility and freedom, which enclose all but a very few. As Federici notes, "The colonized native Americans and the enslaved Africans . . . shared a destiny similar to that of women in Europe, providing for capital the seemingly limitless supply of labor necessary for accumulation."⁴³ Under capitalism, the colonized masses are positioned as resources from which value can be extracted. And, under modern petroculturalism, women's labor and lives continue to be colonized through the division of private from public life that relegates *free* reproductive labor to the non-monetized domestic realm that sustains the *free* market.

Petrofeminism, (Auto)Mobility, and Ethical Oil

In my research around motivations for and resistances to energy transition, I have had to ask, what version of feminism is being trafficked to sustain petronormativity? An initial response might be articulated in relation to the second media text featured in this investigation—namely, the television commercial produced by Ethical Oil, a pro-Alberta oil sands organization with close connections to conservative politics in Canada. In 2011, the EthicalOil.org billboard campaign and associated television commercial in Canada mobilized both foreign and domestic women's images in numerous ways, not the least polemical of which invoked "foreign" women's deaths by stoning in Middle Eastern oil-producing nations.⁴⁴ In Ethical Oil's television commercial, the Canadian (or Western) woman is defined against the Saudi woman, as someone whose liberty is linked directly to her mobility, specifically her (auto)mobility, which enables her to move from home to work to shopping.⁴⁵ The commercial promotes a brand of feminism—what I call petrofeminism—that has been normalized as part of Western neoliberal petroculture. Petrofeminism reveals the ways in which oil, as an energy source, has shaped the lives of Western women not only through infrastructure, but also through explicit advertising strategies with well-defined consumer aims, as well as through political discourse that mobilizes the concept of "woman" as a means to justify resource extraction and international political relations of power.

In the West, shopping and consumer activity are largely defined as "feminine" and associated with the female-gendered or female-identified subject. As an example, the Ethical Oil commercial elaborates, in a voiceover, that through its purchase of Saudi oil, Canada "bankroll[s] a state that doesn't allow women

to drive,” a claim that is substantiated through subtitles that read, “‘Five Saudi women drivers arrested.’ *Associated Press*, June 29, 2011,” followed by “‘Saudi women . . . can’t even leave the house to shop, let alone get a job, without a male family member’s permission.’ *Time*, October 19, 2009.”⁴⁶ These “facts” about women’s abilities to drive a car, shop, and work are placed on equal footing with Saudi women’s lack of legal rights, as the commercial testifies to the fact that “‘Women also faced discrimination in courts, where the testimony of one man equals that of two women.’ U.S. State Department.”⁴⁷ While Ethical Oil strategists might have used Saudi women’s continuously postponed access to the vote as an argument to illustrate their oppression, the automobile and consumerism were chosen instead. In this way, the extractivist Dream perpetuated in the Ethical Oil campaign, as well as in the current media ecology, reveals the powerful role of the automobile in the Western social imaginary as a symbol for autonomy and freedom, particularly as it has been constructed in relationship to women as petrofeminism: that is to say, a vision of women’s lives that serves white supremacist cisheteropatriarchal colonial petrocapi- talism. Petrofeminism is an easily exportable ideal of womanhood used to justify the continuation of business as usual, and to not only slow any transition away from fossil fuels to other energy sources but to potentially open up new female consumer markets in the East. Petrofeminism casts a broad petronormative net. The infrastructures of language mobilized by petrofeminist messaging recuperate the lives and limits of the imaginary for women in Canada and around the world about what futures are available to us.

This discourse builds on long-standing cultural narratives that tie women’s freedom—or emancipation—to mobility, and specifically to automobility. The ideal of petrofeminism, like the “beauty myth” or the “mommy myth,” mobilizes women’s images, and largely white women’s images, against all women, white or not, enclosing what is acceptable or possible for any of us.⁴⁸ For example, the petroleum-powered automobile has a symbolic resonance with first-wave feminism and the suffragette movements of the early twentieth century. The acquisition of the vote is a landmark moment in Britain, the United States, and Canada, and the Western suffragette campaigns that gained increasing visibility during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries popularly aligned women’s emancipation directly with the automobile through media campaigns that photographed suffragettes campaigning for the vote in gas-powered cars, particularly US suffragettes before 1920 (see fig. 11.3).⁴⁹

With this historical mobilization of petrofeminism in mind, the Ethical Oil commercial not only represents a denial of the deep and complex social transitions that are required as part and parcel of any just energy transition—that



Fig. 11.3. Image of Nell Richardson and Alice Burke photographed in their yellow Saxon automobile in 1916, while on the first cross-country suffrage trip by automobile, which was sponsored by the National American Woman Suffrage Association. (Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ggbain-21391. Digital file from original negative.)

is, of any “ethics” of oil or energy—but it also defers entirely the issue of global warming in a desperate bid to maintain the power that fossil capital endows on the most privileged within the system. It is able to do this as part of a larger media ecology that has historically and ongoingly mythologized the role of the automobile, conflating it with individual autonomy and the Dream of freedom and success. The Dream and reality do not align for anyone, but least of all for women. Quite in contrast to the fiction, women’s (auto)mobility drives an ever-expanding consumer market, rather than fulfilling any visions of feminist emancipation in the present or the future. As Andrew S. Gross argues, “the most common trope of driving—‘the freedom of the road’”—popularized in the early twentieth century is linked to marketing strategies that were targeting women as consumers.⁵⁰ He goes on to argue, “the woman driver quickly became the central figure of consumerism. Gender, in fact, turns out to be an important strategy for mediating some of the conflicts and anxieties attending

the transition to a consumer-oriented economy.”⁵¹ And, within this system, women also become commodities. Women and cars, in many instances, are made synonymous with one another, the automobile being perceived as an object of desire and either equated to or accessorized by the voluptuous and semi-naked woman draped on the hood (or over a motorcycle). The woman and the vehicle are culturally linked: both objectified and both fetishized.⁵² It is a patriarchal double bind: Women = Car = Sex object. Women + Car = Independence. Either way, petrofeminism is part and parcel of the patriarchal petrocultural imaginary: and it is these imaginaries that must also be reclaimed and decolonized as part of future energy imaginaries.

Overworked and Perpetually Exhausted: Petronormative Social Reproduction

As highlighted above, the automobile is a symbol of a freedom, but the cultural myth has not been actualized for Western women.⁵³ Instead, as (middle-class) women fill their homes with consumer goods, so too do they fill their itineraries and their children’s lives with an ever-increasing list of extracurricular activities. As a further example, throughout the twentieth century, as doctors’ home visits became increasingly rare and health and hygiene standards rose, women were increasingly expected to travel to doctors’ offices, dentist appointments, and hospitals, not only for emergency medical care but for regular check-ups and routine appointments.⁵⁴ By the mid-twentieth century, large segments of the female population had been relegated to the suburbs as part of the cisheteronormative petrocultural Dream, where they now labored alone in their own homes, reproducing on an individual level all of the tasks that were socially identified as within the purview of mothers and wives. Fast-forward to today, where women now spend a significant number of hours driving—commuting, running errands, and chauffeuring family members—and we can see how women’s lives are not merely enhanced but also limited by their petrocultural inheritances. The Age of Oil gave rise to the Dream, designed and marketed to promote (auto)mobility in specifically gendered and racialized ways.

The automobile has been imbricated as a tool for personal independence and the successful management of a nuclear family, which in and of itself is intrinsic to the extractivist Dream that underlines the perpetuation of capitalism and, by extension, the ongoing project of settler colonialism. The promotion of the nuclear family as social norm has had significant ramifications for women, who must now independently reproduce in each household tasks that, had they

been socioculturally constructed otherwise, could have easily been industrialized.⁵⁵ The infrastructural design of urban and suburban living in our modern petrocultures must be entirely remade at the relational level, whether the relations are to the ecosystems of which we are a part, to the territories we live on, to other species, or to our most intimate lived realities within our families and communities. A fulsome energy transition adequate to the challenge of climate change demands of us not only that we decarbonize the environment but also that we remake the relations of power that have led to this moment.

There are, of course, societies with radically different relational infrastructures. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were rich with social experiments that sought greater gender equality.⁵⁶ Indigenous kin networks, in North America and elsewhere in the world, also provide alternatives in the ways they invite expanded definitions of family that include extended and community relations.⁵⁷ However, these alternative modes of relationality have been largely eradicated through the creation of normative standards that declared them un-Christian, uncivilized, communist, or some combination thereof. And so, cisheteropatriarchal colonial capitalism has become the norm. With this history of disappeared alternatives in mind, I'd argue that the Ethical Oil television commercial attempts to further erase any alternative to petroculturalism by invoking a mythic understanding of the automobile and the open road as symbols of freedom that are necessary for the emancipation of, for instance, Saudi women. In short, according to Ethical Oil, *true* freedom involves the development of capitalist petronormativity, at the cost of any and all alternative energy imaginaries.

There is also the obvious fact, hidden in plain view, that personal vehicles are designed for optimum use on low-friction surfaces (roads), which are made possible through a series of public infrastructures, not the least of which are publicly maintained networks of streets, freeways, and highways, as well as local, national, and global financial marketplaces. In turn, these infrastructures create an interlocking set of path dependencies, not only in the way we construct and move through the material world but also in terms of what we deem possible when thinking through future energy transition scenarios. But what connects also divides, contains, and encloses. These roadways, as prerequisites for (auto)mobility, constitute, as McMahon and Palmater have illustrated above, an infrastructure of invasion and dispossession. Mobility through this space follows roads and networks used to conquer the Indigenous Peoples of these territories and to extract resources, including the fossil fuels that power this individual mobility. Having mapped the territory, these roads then work to colonize the lifeworld of the capitalist subject, who is endlessly relegated

to the social reproduction of the nuclear-family home. The Dream of mobility and emancipation through that nuclear-family home, extended by personal vehicles, is held out as a lure for all, when in reality the Dream is designed to serve those who control/master it (*dominus*). If we want other more equitable futures for all, the fantasies that sustain the Dream and the Dream itself need to be reimaged by all for all.

While there are real and pressing issues related to the social, economic, and political status of women in Saudi Arabia, the rhetorical strategy of petrofeminism deployed by Ethical Oil neither proposes nor promises any solution or aid to the women of Saudi Arabia. Instead, the narrative relies on naturalized elements of women's lifestyles in Western petrocultures—driving, shopping, and employment—as though these activities equate directly with autonomy and feminism. The standard against which Saudi Arabia is being judged is not a feminist standard, nor even a standard of liberal human rights. It is a capitalist standard. The Ethical Oil campaign is invested in a certain brand of feminism—petrofeminism—that can serve as the handmaiden to reinforce and sustain global fossil-fueled capitalism. This system is bankrupt. Quite literally, capitalism went bankrupt in 2008 as part of the global financial crisis. It is furthermore socially bankrupt in that it more recently persists only through its subsidization with public tax dollars that further impoverish those most devastated by the cisheteronormative patriarchal colonial power relations of petrocapitalism. Further still, it is bankrupt in terms of providing alternative energy imaginaries—and this is where our investments for the future, I argue, should be going. We must replace the existing petrocultural Dreams that have always required and continue to demand the ongoing colonization of the stolen territories that make up Canada through the extraction of resources (the tar/oil sands, to name the most obvious), and the continued exploitation of under- and unpaid domestic labor, as well as the opening up of new consumer markets, all in the name of emancipation and freedom.

Energy Transition: Toward More Livable Futures for All

Disrupting the “Freedom Dream”: Land, Bodies, and Collective Action

We must build new Dreams that redefine success, not as (auto)mobility and speed and unlimited access, but in ways that reorganize our imaginaries around new energy futures. If we cannot imagine just energy transition or just futures for all, then we cannot build the necessary soft and hard infrastructure projects to get us there. Invoking humor and fun is one viable

strategy for imagining, and *Colonization Road* is one such example, giving voice to Indigenous attitudes toward the land and reconciliation. As a serious comedy, dark even in its inflection and yet still laughter inducing, it offers a sharp contrast to ongoing discourses of liberalism and right-wing politics in Canada that claim Canada's moral superiority to other nations, justifying the historical exploitation of land and resources so clearly illustrated in the 2011 Ethical Oil advertising campaign. *Colonization Road* disrupts the hegemonic narratives promoted by texts like the Ethical Oil commercial, which suggest that the infrastructures of the Dream—whether the hard infrastructures of freedom and (auto)mobility such as the road, or its soft infrastructures such as petrofeminism—need to be reworked. If we are to exceed the limits of the hegemonic Dream narratives and the associated (infra)structural violences that have defined modern petrocultural subjects, then we need to start trafficking in new future energy imaginaries. To this end, we need to hack existing media ecologies—the infrastructures that move and/or enclose existing stories—and we must, with care, form new feminist and decolonial Dreams that can be organized around material energy infrastructures that newly account (literally account in the sense of valuing) for our relations to one another, other species, and the land. These are the infrastructures needed for our reworlding. Or, as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson puts it in *Colonization Road*, “So I don’t think we’re having the right conversations in this country. We’re talking about reconciliation, but we’re not talking about land. We are talking about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, but we are not talking about the land. Where the root causes of every issue that Indigenous people are facing right now in Canada comes from dispossession, and it comes from erasure, and it comes from this system of settler colonialism that keeps us in an occupied state.”⁵⁸

Genuinely reconciling Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations requires that we deal with issues of land ownership, dispossession, and use—past, present, and future.⁵⁹ It requires us to not only reconceptualize our relations but also create new language for them: language and communication, while one of the most important infrastructures, is also an infrastructure that is susceptible to redesign when glitches present themselves. While the negotiation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations has been drawn out for centuries by the powers that be, climate change and the rising CO₂ levels that are an outcome of extractivist dispossession now force the issue. Or at least they should. At this historical juncture, on the lands known as Canada, the calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are being put to us at the very moment that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada must urgently

address global warming. The threat of a warming planet has the potential to force a reckoning with the impacts of cisheteronormative patriarchal colonial capitalism that have produced climate change and ongoing social injustice at the intersections of power and oppression—whether we are able to effectively mitigate rising CO₂ levels or not. These problems all originate in the land and in bodies, which are so intricately connected. We cannot deal with one without the other. Nor can we address either without first addressing our human and more-than-human (multispecies) relationships to the ecosystems in which we live.⁶⁰ If we understand the exploitation of social reproduction and unpaid labor—even when it is sold back to us as a freedom—as part of and not separate from the colonization of land and resources and the dispossession and erasure of Indigenous people and other people of color, then it becomes possible to organize against the common denominator of capitalism and neoliberal life, which rely on the individuation and atomization of the modern subject to foreclose collective action.

Energy Transition as a Feminist, Decolonial Collective Practice

With the above analyses in mind, I propose that energy transition, driven by deep energy literacy, provides one of the most important material realities around which to organize climate justice action on the ground. The current energy transition underway is being embarked upon as a largely technical problem that presents financial opportunity for those able to seize the market potential of new multisourced energy systems organized around the local geological and cultural conditions best suited to solar, wind, geothermal, hydro, and nuclear forms of power. However, by engaging in varied and ongoing processes of deep energy literacy, for instance by analyzing the current trafficking of the extractivist Dream within Canadian media ecologies, we might be able to not only recognize but also dismantle those modes of relation that have come to limit future energy imaginaries. To merely add to or tweak the system that has gotten us to where we are is insufficient; instead, we need to hack existing media ecologies. Lauren Berlant talks about the glitches that appear during times of crisis: “an interruption within a transition, a troubled transmission . . . the revelation of an infrastructural failure.” She is interested in how the repair or replacement can generate “a form from within brokenness beyond the exigencies of the current crisis, and alternatively to it too.”⁶¹ We need to create these types of productive “glitchinfrastructures” wherever possible: these alternative solutions that allow us to remake the infrastructures of the present in ways that mobilize for Other futures.

We can do this in the language we use, in the medias we mobilize, in the relations we reorient.⁶² We need wholly different systems—new infrastructures based in decolonial and feminist approaches—that expand our capacity to imagine more livable futures for human and more-than-human life. This means collectively creating the conditions to live less energy-intensive and more socially, economically, and politically empowered lives in search of decolonized feminist futures.

Just as the histories of these oppressions are linked, so too are any possibilities for our liberated futures. In Canada, Indigenous communities often have the strongest legal standing from which to resist industrial expansionism into their territories, because of their inherent rights as First Peoples and because of the treaties that are recognized by international law, despite the ways in which they are disregarded by the Canadian governments and run roughshod over consistently as part of ongoing colonization. However, these communities should not be required to sustain, alone, the emotional and financial strains of long-term litigation when the population at large benefits from these legal maneuvers; all of us benefit from choosing life-affirming relations with the land that protect air, water, and multispecies health. We must all take responsibility and avoid succumbing to the capitalist drive, articulated as “development,” “expansion,” “growth,” and a series of other capitalist nomenclature that linguistically reclaim extractivist practices as implicitly positive. We must *all* interrogate our relationships to our ecologies, as central to energy transition discussions and actions, where the struggle for women’s rights, Indigenous rights, land rights, and so on can find common cause and paths for solidarity.

Feminist praxis is about these solidarities. As Angela Davis puts it, “When we identify into feminism, we mean new epistemologies, new ways of producing knowledge and transforming social relations.”⁶³ What I’m asking for, in particular, is for us to organize these solidarities around energy transition projects, as a material reality on the ground that will implicitly bring with it certain social transformation. I’m also asking that where we recognize common cause, we must likewise recognize that common cause does not equate with one-size-fits-all solutions to energy transition. Here, for example, I think of the ways that many “environmental solutions” are urban-centric, classist, and racist and will not apply across cultures and cannot be scaled across both urban and rural spaces and logics. Berlant reminds us that the commons, for instance, has too often been invoked as “an uncontestably positive aim, [that] cover[s] over the very complexity of social jockeying and interdependence it responds to . . . the commons concept is a powerful vehicle for troubling troubled times” but one that also means living “with some loss of assurance

as to one's or one's community's place in the world, at least while better forms of life are invented and tried out."⁶⁴ That is, we cannot continue to separate out issues of energy transition from other deeply interrelated rights issues. In Canada, in particular, post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), with its ninety-four recommendations, and post-United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008), we need to think deeply about what it means to decolonize and indigenize our ways of thinking, doing, and being. This must happen simultaneously with the decisions we have to make about how we either "use" our resources to make a transition or transition to other ways of living in relation to our local and global ecosystems.

A feminist and decolonial approach is central to how we must think about energy transition and our energy futures. We need to organize our solidarities around energy transition projects because energy transition is a first critical step in decarbonizing the environment. It needs to be done. We absolutely need to make decisions about energy transition if we are to even continue to pretend that we are aiming for internationally agreed-upon targets limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees above preindustrial levels.⁶⁵ Plus, energy transition is a material problem that we can address and imagine incrementally, unlike, for example, the more amorphous problem of climate change—a hyperobject⁶⁶—which is even more multifaceted and difficult to organize around politically. And a transition in power—a *powershift*—both literally and figuratively provides a fulcrum around which to mobilize feminist and decolonial politics in the interest of just futures. For instance, we can organize around community-networked energy systems, taking control of the materiality of energy production and distribution, as well as the politics and economics of these systems. Those who control energy and who benefit from it socially and financially have power, and so I am simply advocating that we take control of the means of production. We can get involved in making sure that the transition—energetic and social—is orchestrated for the maximum potential benefit of all. Taking into account the "all" also forces us to account for the fact that it is not just humans but also countless other species that will be the benefactors of humans thinking our relationships anew in these ways on this planet we share. Any energy transition that imagines a perpetuation of the status quo—or worse, an ever-growing demand for energy—demonstrates a vested interest in maintaining a system that promotes the privilege of some by externalizing the human, nonhuman, and more-than-human casualties of state-sponsored cisheteronormative patriarchal colonial capitalist violences. Whatever the bodies we are identified with, we must, as Angela Davis counsels us, take our identity/ies from our politics and not our politics from our

identity/ies.⁶⁷ Any energy transition that does not reconsider human-to-human relations, and any energy transition that does not conceptualize of us all as part of our ecologies, not superior to them, is a failed transition. Any energy transition that does not fundamentally reorient the conceptualization of the Canadian economy as a staples economy—and problematize the fact that our current lives and economies are built on stolen lands, labor, and extractivist Dreams—is, from my perspective, inherently incapable of the reimagining necessary to save not only the planet but our humanity.

The energy imaginary of our culture of climate change often promotes purely scientific approaches to energy transition that seek to optimize and maintain our current ways of living. These techno-scientific solutions fail to recognize that energy is social. Energy shapes the societies we build, create, and live in. Thus, any sort of energy transition also holds the potential for social and cultural transformation. Understanding energy transition as synonymous with social change reveals that our current crises cannot be reduced simply to replacing oil with solar, wind, or geothermal energy. Instead, it demands the complete reinvention of daily lived reality. It requires that we rethink everything from the clothes we wear, to where those clothes are manufactured, to what we eat and where it is grown, to how we wash those clothes and dishes. It requires that we rethink how we collect and use “natural resources,” including water, solar, and wind, and ultimately how, and how fast (or slowly), we move about in the world and how we live together in community, sharing our food, energy, shelter, labor, and lives. It also demands that we question not only gender roles and the gendered division of labor but the nuclear family that is currently at the core of social organization. A full-scale energy transition also requires a rethinking of our gendered, classed, and racialized relationships: it requires the erasure of gender binaries that limit our potential to fully realize our humanity.

Conclusion

In sum, we must thoughtfully organize to work through a range of energy scenarios and fully investigate the paths forward. We need to recognize what we stand to gain or lose, not just financially, but in terms of (if not survival, then at least) more equitable, livable lives. This can only happen, however, if our energy transition plans are informed by deep energy literacy in order to recalibrate social inequities, whether our goal is to reverse climate change, mitigate it, be more resilient to it, or merely die better on an ailing planet.⁶⁸ Far better than trafficking in false petronormative Dreams of freedom and

mobility that rely on our own enclosure, indebted to a system that is always already exploitative and exploiting, we must seize the current moment to interrogate and disrupt existing energy imaginaries and the infrastructures that enable or limit our ability to do so.

A shift away from our global petroculture requires that ongoing energy transition conversations move into a dialogue with feminist and decolonial knowledge in order to imagine other more ecological ways of being into being less autonomous, more collaborative, more community-oriented lives. Instead of mobilizing for the purpose of accumulating capital, which defines the culture of transportation and trafficking during the age of oil, I advocate mobilizing for justice. “Justice is love in the public sphere.”⁶⁹ We must find the joy and the pleasure in resisting, where possible, the extinction of so many species of flora and fauna, including but not limited to our own. To my mind, this is a radically necessary response if any of the solutions imagined by us as local or global decision makers are to undo the infrastructures of extractivist injustice, past and present. We are at an impasse in desperate need of reimaginings and new action. This is an impasse that requires deep energy literacy: a way of being that resists petronormativity in all of its guises—petrofeminism, petrocolonialism, petroculturalism—and that instead gives its all towards decolonized feminist energy futures—in other words, *just* futures for all.

NOTES

1. In this chapter, I explore the relationship between mobility and North American petro-imaginaries of freedom as mobility, with specific attention to what types of occupation and stasis are required to colonize these ideals of mobility. What I do not have space to explore in this chapter are other types of mobilities and immobilities of the petrocultural socio-scape, including the forced diasporas and mobilities required for many people to secure paid labor, who must either relocate or work at long distances from their families and lives. For more information on that, from a feminist perspective, please look to the work coming out of *On the Move: Employment-Related Geographical Mobility in the Canadian Context (2012–2019)* (www.onthemovepartnership.ca), a seven-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Partnership project based at Memorial University and led by Barb Neis; Sara Dorow, a member of the Just Powers (www.justpowers.ca) team, is the Alberta team lead for *On the Move*, and explores these issues in specific relationship to the oil and oil sands industry of Northern Alberta. Another important aspect of mobility studies is done under the umbrella of critical mobility studies. For more information on this approach, see the work of Danielle Peers, among others, and the work coming out of their Media in Motion Lab (www.mediainmotion.ca).
2. See Donna Haraway, Noboru Ishikawa, Scott F. Gilbert, Kenneth Olwig, Anna L. Tsing, and Nils Bubandt, “Anthropologists Are Talking—About the Anthropocene,” *Ethnos* 81, no. 3 (2015): 335–64. Riffing off the term *Anthropocene*, a term used to signal an era where, through its activities and its growing population, the human species has emerged as a geological force now altering the planet’s climate and environment, the *Plantationocene*

- was introduced by Donna Haraway et al. (2015) to acknowledge how the current geological era is also marked by ongoing enclosures and a heavy reliance on indebted and exploited laborers. While the Anthropocene and the Plantationocene are not direct synonyms, these terms both refer to the human impacts of modernity on the geological and ecological form of the planet; however, they differ on how far back we can or should trace the roots of the heteronormative, patriarchal, and colonial forms of capitalism that define modernity, and thus where critical energy might be directed in addressing these geological transformations. See also Jason Moore, *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016).
3. Deborah Cowen, "Infrastructures of Empire and Resistance," *Verso Blog*, January 25, 2017, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3067-infrastructures-of-empire-and-resistance>.
 4. Michelle St. John, *Colonization Road* (Toronto: Decolonization Road Productions Inc., 2016), aired on CBC, *Firsthand*, <http://www.cbc.ca/firsthand/episodes/colonization-road>.
 5. Ethical Oil, "Saudi Arabia (The Ad Saudi Arabia Doesn't Want You to See)," YouTube video, 00:45, posted August 26, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SjZlqbDudI>.
 6. By "women" I mean all those interpolated into the gender category, structurally, as a function of a patriarchal social order.
 7. For more information about the theoretical underpinnings of petrofeminism, see Sheena Wilson, "Gendering Oil: Tracing Western Petro-Sexual Relations," in *Oil Culture*, ed. Ross Barrett and Daniel Worden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2014), 244–66; Sheena Wilson, "Gender," in *Fueling Culture: 101 Words for Energy and Environment*, ed. Imre Szeman, Jennifer Wenzel, and Patricia Yaeger (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 174–77; and Sheena Wilson, "Petrofeminism and Petrointersectionality," *Deep Energy Literacy*, November 7, 2017, <http://deepenergyliteracy.csj.ualberta.ca/2017/11/07/petrofeminism-and-petrointersectionality>.
 8. See Sheena Wilson, "Energy Imaginaries: Feminist and Decolonial Futures," in *Materialism and the Critique of Energy*, ed. Brent Ryan Bellamy and Jeff Diamanti (Chicago: MCM Prime Press, 2018), 377–412.
 9. See Doreen Massey, especially "Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place," in *Mapping the Futures*, ed. John Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson, and Lisa Tickner (London: Routledge, 1993), 59–69.
 10. Petroculture, as a concept, refers to the ways twentieth- and twenty-first-century global systems and the associated networks of economic and political power have been shaped by energy-intensive carbon-based fuels, but more specifically it names the fact that these systems have shaped modern life and us, as moderns, into petrocultural subjects through and through. Our values, our habits, and our ways of being in and with the world, with others, and other species, have all been shaped by the availability of energy-intensive fossil-fueled mobility, telecommunications, and the plethora of products made available to us by these fossil-fueled networks—everything from the food we eat, to those things we never even knew we needed until the desire was manufactured, to the garbage we dispose of in such great abundance. For more information on the concept of petroculture, see Sheena Wilson, Imre Szeman, and Adam Carlson, "On Petrocultures: Or, Why We Need to Understand Oil to Understand Everything Else," in *Petrocultures: Oil, Politics, Culture*, ed. Sheena Wilson, Adam Carlson, and Imre Szeman (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 3–20.
 11. See Lauren Berlant, "Cruel Optimism," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3 (2006): 20–36, especially 24–27.
 12. For more on the exclusionary history of the New Deal, see Matthew Huber's *Lifefood: Oil, Freedom, and the Forces of Capital* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), particularly chapter 2, "Refueling Capitalism: Depression, Oil, and the Making of 'the American Way of Life.'"
 13. Treaty 6 covers a vast territory in the center of the provinces of Alberta and

Saskatchewan. It was signed in 1876. (See Michelle Filice, "Treaty 6," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last edited October 11, 2016, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/treaty-6>). The British Crown signed eleven numbered treaties with Indigenous Peoples on the lands now called Canada between 1871 and 1921. (See Michelle Filice, "Numbered Treaties," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, last edited August 2, 2016, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/numbered-treaties>.) However, there is ongoing debate about what that relationship entails, and there has been a long history of the conflict between the way Indigenous communities understand these treaties and their relationships to the Canadian governments (largely provincial, territorial, and federal, but also at other levels), and the way the Canadian government(s) understand their relationships and obligations to Indigenous Peoples. See note 24 for more details. The Idle No More Manifesto, for example, explains the relationship as follows: "The Treaties are nation to nation agreements between First Nations and the British Crown who are sovereign nations. The Treaties are agreements that cannot be altered or broken by one side of the two Nations. The spirit and intent of the Treaty agreements meant that First Nations peoples would share the land, but retain their inherent rights to lands and resources. Instead, First Nations have experienced a history of colonization which has resulted in outstanding land claims, lack of resources and unequal funding for services such as education and housing" (IdleNoMore.ca, <http://www.idlenomore.ca/manifesto>).

14. I use the term *resources* with the awareness that this term objectifies nature as something from which profit can be extracted.
15. As David Harvey argues, borrowing for homeownership is the control mechanism that stabilizes restive lower-income populations. He explains that "there was a wonderful phrase the business-class used to use, 'Incumbent homeowners don't go on strike!'" Vincent Emanuele, "Rebel Cities, Urban Resistance and Capitalism: A Conversation with David Harvey," *Counterpunch*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/02/01/rebel-cities-urban-resistance-and-capitalism-a-conversation-with-david-harvey>.
16. I address the discourses of (auto)mobility, women, and the family in a *Deep Energy Literacy* blog post. See Sheena Wilson, "Women and the Car," *Deep Energy Literacy*, November 13, 2017, <http://deepenergyliteracy.csj.ualberta.ca/2017/11/13/women-and-the-car>.
17. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).
18. Cowen, "Infrastructures of Empire and Resistance."
19. The child welfare system and criminal justice system are populated by disproportionately high numbers of Indigenous people in Canada. For more on the implications and intersections of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the criminal industrial complex, see Lisa Monchalin, *The Colonial Problem: An Indigenous Perspective on Crime and Injustice in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).
20. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2008–2015) had the mandate to document the impacts of residential schools in Canada. In 2015, it released an executive summary that included ninety-four calls to action. See *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, https://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf.
21. St. John, *Colonization Road*, 0:09–0:20.
22. St. John, *Colonization Road*, 2:00.
23. St. John, *Colonization Road*, 2:00.
24. In February 2018, the federal government, under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, introduced the *Indigenous Rights, Recognition and Implementation Framework*, which claims to be aligned with reconciliation efforts. However, this framework, which has led to the rapid deployment of a string of legislations, is the subject of much critique by Indigenous

- and non-Indigenous scholars who see it as part of the ongoing colonization of Indigenous Peoples. In brief, the new framework raises questions about how Section 91(24) of the British North America Act of 1867 is understood in relationship to Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982, on Treaty and Aboriginal Rights. Section 91(24) undermines nation-to-nation rights, seeing Indigenous Peoples and lands as under federal jurisdiction, while Section 35 of the Constitution recognizes Indigenous rights to self-government. In their June 2018 report, King and Pasternak express their concern that “the federal government will now make a distinction between its constitutional obligations, organizing First Nations into Section 91(24) or Section 35 categories” (11). See the King-Pasternak report online: Hayden King and Shiri Pasternak, *Special Report: Canada’s Emerging Indigenous Rights Framework: A Critical Analysis* (Toronto: Yellowhead Institute, 2018), <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/rightsframework>. And for another perspective, see the two-minute video-short featuring Indigenous legal scholar and Idle No More organizer Janice Makokis explaining the situation in lay terms: Just Powers, “Janice Makokis on Trudeau’s Indigenous Framework,” Vimeo video, 2:18, posted March 4, 2019, <https://vimeo.com/321275450>.
25. I use *belong* here with the understanding that many lands in Canada are unceded, which means that Indigenous Peoples never gave up their original rights to the land. In other contexts, there are signed treaties, which recognize Indigenous rights to the land.
 26. St. John, *Colonization Road*, 14:00.
 27. Assembly of First Nations, *Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery* (Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations, 2018), <http://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/18-01-22-Dismantling-the-Doctrine-of-Discovery-EN.pdf>.
 28. Dr. Pamela D. Palmater is a Mi’kmaw citizen and member of the Eel River Bar First Nation in northern New Brunswick. She has been a practicing lawyer since 2001 and is currently an associate professor and the Chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University.
 29. St. John, *Colonization Road*, 17:00.
 30. St. John, *Colonization Road*, 19:00.
 31. In the film, interview subject Jeff Denis, associate professor of sociology, paraphrases theorist of settler colonialism Patrick Wolfe to remind viewers that “colonization is not just something that happened in the past . . . It is a structure, not an event. It is an ongoing process, something that we reproduce everyday through our actions” (4:00).
 32. St. John, *Colonization Road*, 4:00.
 33. *Terra nullius* is Latin for “nobody’s land,” because “nobody” signaled non-civilized peoples or rather non-Christians.
 34. The term *dominion/dominus* means master or owner, in this case land controlled by the subject of a king or divine ruler.
 35. St. John, *Colonization Road*, 36:00.
 36. Audra Simpson, “The Chiefs Two Bodies: Theresa Spence and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty,” lecture, Unsettling Conversations, Unmaking Racisms and Colonialisms, R.A.C.E. Network’s 14th Annual Critical Race and Anticolonial Studies Conference, University of Alberta, October 2014, <https://vimeo.com/110948627>.
 37. Simpson, “The Chiefs Two Bodies,” 34:00.
 38. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*.
 39. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*.
 40. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 168, 165.
 41. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 77.
 42. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 164–65.
 43. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 198.
 44. In one billboard, a red banner message reads “Conflict Oil Countries: Women Stoned to Death,” superimposed over the black-and-white image of a burqa-clad woman being buried alive in preparation for stoning. This woman is not identified and simply stands in

as a synecdoche for the perceived oppression of women in Muslim areas of the world. The use of this image is part of a larger rhetorical practice that fails to read and understand exceptional moments of gender violence in other contexts. Instead, these images of violence against women are invoked because they appeal to the Western narratives of the foreign woman as victim, while denying violence against women in Western cultures. See the *Globe and Mail*, “Ethical Oil Ad Campaign,” In Pictures, July 28, 2011, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ethical-oil-ad-campaign/article637242/>.

45. The female voiceover narrator of the Ethical Oil television commercial explains the situation in Saudi Arabia to viewers as follows: “Fact. Last year we bought over 400 million barrels of oil from Saudi Arabia. We bankrolled a state that doesn’t allow women to drive, doesn’t allow them to leave their homes or work without their male guardian’s permission, and a state where a woman’s testimony only counts for half of a man’s. Why are we paying their bills and funding their oppression? Today there is a better way. Ethical Oil from Canada’s oil sands. Ethical Oil, a choice we have to make.” There are also text and subscript citations, indicating their sources, which appear throughout the commercial, provided to support further the information in the voiceover. They are as follows: “North Americans bought over 400 million barrels of oil from Saudi Arabia. U.S. Energy Information Administration. [“Five Saudi women drivers arrested.” *Associated Press*, June 29, 2011.]” “Saudi women . . . can’t even leave the house to shop, let alone get a job, without a male family member’s permission. [*Time*, October 19, 2009.]” “Women also faced discrimination in courts, where the testimony of one man equals that of two women. [U.S. State Department.]” (Ethical Oil, “Saudi Arabia”).
46. Ethical Oil, “Saudi Arabia.”
47. Ethical Oil, “Saudi Arabia.”
48. See Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1991) and Susan J. Douglas and Meredith W. Michaels, *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women* (New York: Free Press, 2005).
49. Julie Wosk, *Woman and the Machine: Representations from the Spinning Wheel to the Electronic Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 125.
50. Andrew S. Gross, “Cars, Postcards, and Patriotism: Tourism and National Politics in the United States, 1893–1929,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 40, no. 1 (2005): 85.
51. Gross, “Cars, Postcards, and Patriotism,” 85.
52. See Sheena Wilson, “Gendering Oil: Tracing Western Petro-Sexual Relations,” in *Oil Culture*, ed. Ross Barrett and Daniel Worden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2014), 244–66; and Cecily Devereux, “‘Made for Mankind’: Cars, Cosmetics, and the Petrocultural Feminine,” in *Petrocultures: Oil, Politics, Culture*, ed. Sheena Wilson, Adam Carlson, and Imre Szeman (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017), 162–86.
53. For more details on the transformations to women’s domestic work and roles, see Ruth Schwartz Cowan’s award-winning 1983 monograph *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Pen Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books), which documents and analyzes how “industrialization transformed every American household sometime between 1860 and 1960” (3).
54. Cowan, *More Work for Mother*, 84–85.
55. Cowan details social moments or specific social experiments in industrializing aspects of women’s domestic work, such as laundry and cooking, which ultimately failed in the face of sociocultural pressures and advertising campaigns. For example, a market for the washing machine was created by undermining industrial laundries through discourses of suspect hygiene linked to racism. Cooking as the responsibility of each mother-wife was reinforced through concerns about how communal kitchens and other social-housing experiments that eliminated this task from daily life posed a threat to Western family values and insinuated parallels with communism.
56. For an extensive history of the “lost feminist tradition” of American material feminists

- who worked between the Civil War and the start of the Great Depression to challenge industrial capitalism by creating “feminist homes with socialized housework and child care,” often through communal living, as a means to achieve equity, see Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 3.
57. These include polyamorous, polygamous, polyandrous, multigenerational, and communal ways of living, and the creative remakings of these relationalities for the twenty-first century. See Kim Tallbear, *The Critical Polyamorist* (blog), <http://www.criticalpolyamorist.com>, and Kim Tallbear, “Disrupting Settlement, Sex, and Nature,” lecture, Future Imaginaries Lecture Series from Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, October 14, 2016, <http://abtec.org/iif/output/lecture-series-kim-tallbear>.
 58. St. John, *Colonization Road*, 25:00.
 59. Lauren Berlant writes at length about language as an infrastructure that can be mobilized when the glitches, those aspects of the infrastructure that aren’t working, appear. See Lauren Berlant, “The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 3 (June 2016): 395, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775816645989>. Ryan McMahon, in his own way, also addresses this issue in his stand-up routine in *Colonization Road*, when he jokes about the pronouns and the way Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are put at odds with the “us”/“we” he uses for “Native people” and by association the “them” and “you” he associates with non-Indigenous folks. Language too needs reimagining if we are to think through our solidarities across political divides and even species divides. We must remake our language so that it is not so binary, so anthropogenic, so isolating and alienating in its orientation. And, in this, we can learn from the queering of language that is necessary for the queering and expansion of relationality and other futures.
 60. See Kirsty Robertson, “Oil Futures/Petrotextiles,” and Janine MacLeod, “Holding Water in Times of Hydrophobia,” in *Petrocultures: Oil, Politics, Culture*, ed. Sheena Wilson, Adam Carlson, and Imre Szeman, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017), 242–63, 264–86; Maya Weeks, “Closed Loop Dead Matter,” *Guts Magazine*, November 5, 2015, <http://gutsmagazine.ca/dead-matter>, and “Myth of the Garbage Patch,” *New Inquiry*, May 2015, <http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/myth-of-the-garbage-patch>.
 61. Berlant, “The Commons,” 393.
 62. Berlant, “The Commons,” 396.
 63. Angela Davis, *The Meaning of Freedom: And Other Difficult Dialogues* (San Francisco: City Light Books), 197.
 64. Berlant, “The Commons,” 395.
 65. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Summary for Policymakers,” in *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*, ed. V. Masson-Delmotte et al. (Geneva: World Meteorological Organization, 2018).
 66. See Timothy Morton, *Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
 67. Davis quoted in Natalie Loveless, “Review of *Desire Change: Contemporary Feminist Art in Canada*,” *RACAR: Revue d’art canadienne/Canadian Art Review* 44, no. 1 (2019), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26654447>.
 68. See Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization* (San Francisco: City Lights Open Media, 2015).
 69. See Cornel West, “Justice Is What Love Looks Like in Public,” sermon, Howard University, Washington, DC, April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGqP7S_WO6o&feature=youtu.be&t=21s.