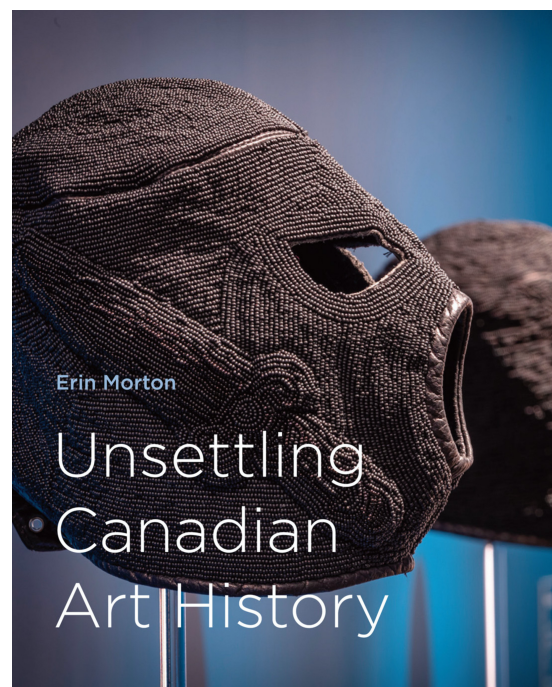
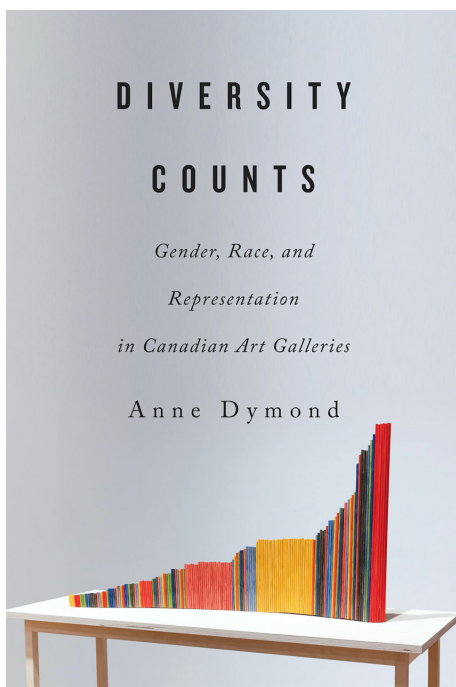


# Diversity and Decoloniality: The Canadian Art Establishment's New Clothes

Marc James Léger



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Anne Dymond, *Diversity Counts: Gender, Race, and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal/Toronto, 2019

Erin Morton, ed, *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal/Toronto, 2022

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About five decades ago, the stereotype of the art historian in Canada was a white German male whose focus was on the art object, sometimes conceived in relation to historical and social context, but more often in terms of the category to which a work formally belongs, whether drawing, painting, sculpture or architecture. Around the same time, in the realm of contemporary art, pluralism assailed modernist formalism in so many ways. A short while

afterwards, as the social history of art and feminist art history had become relatively routine, and as discourse theory and post-structuralism replaced aesthetics with representation, ethics with power, the new school of visual studies indulged almost all that continental theory had to offer, along with older paradigms like phenomenology, semiology and structuralism, and this, in addition to all of the possible identity-oriented methodologies, especially feminism, post-colonialism and queer theory, to then take a leap into everything global.<sup>1</sup> As I have argued with my version of the concept of the ‘colonial copy’, Canadian art scholars have adopted these methodological shifts just as surely as colonial painters in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries became realists, academic painters, impressionists, cubists, abstractionists, and so on. It was with global conceptualism in the 1970s that paradigms emerged simultaneously on an international level, rather than percolating from a few metropolitan places to the broader world. While some reject the Eurocentrism of this narrative, and emphasise instead alternative modernities, there is no question that the Western canon, with its inclusion of non-Western developments, is what was taught in the art academy until relatively recently.

As the keynote speaker at the 2010 Universities Art Association of Canada annual conference, visual studies scholar James Elkins presented some statistical data on the methodologies that are most commonly used in contemporary art history research. He mentioned all of the usual approaches, with the exception, as I pointed out to him and the assembled, of Marxism, which, in the heyday of the social history of art, and even in the claims of some Cultural Studies scholars, was fundamental. That might still be the case today for undergraduates who are learning the basics, or even graduate students with an interest in critical theory, but it is no longer considered essential to the work of a finished scholar. In fact, in culture as in politics, too much Marxism is considered a career killer. While it could be said that the Canadian art establishment never cared much for it, and I would not dispute the assertion, it is safe to say that the contemporary art establishment not only ignores Marxism, but that it is in the process of making Marxism anathema to what it takes to be serious scholarship.

The social, political and economic agenda that underwrites this rejection of Marxism goes not only by the name of neoliberalism, but also by the latter’s social policy orientation: namely, diversity.<sup>2</sup> Two fashionable components of the diversity agenda in contemporary art theory are intersectionality and decoloniality. For the most part, the paradigms of intersectionality and decoloniality are now comfortably nested within the hegemonic bloc that Nancy Fraser refers to as ‘progressive neoliberalism’, a powerful alliance, she writes, that is

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<sup>1</sup> See Marc James Léger, ‘Art and Art History After Globalization’, *Third Text*, vol 26, no 5, September 2012, pp 515–527

<sup>2</sup> On this subject, see Terry Eagleton, *Culture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 2018; and Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics*, HarperCollins, New York, 2018

based on the odd coupling of an expropriative globalisation agenda with a liberal politics of recognition:

on the one hand, mainstream liberal currents of the new social movements (feminism, antiracism, multiculturalism, environmentalism, and LGBTQ rights); on the other hand, the most dynamic high-end ‘symbolic’ and financial sectors of the US economy (Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and Hollywood).<sup>3</sup>

The political status of intersectionality and decoloniality is not a settled matter but is debated in leftist circles. The further you move away from mainstream academia and towards socialist intellectuals, the less these paradigms are thought to be unambiguously progressive. This question of polemics is complicated by the fact that identity politics plays a considerable role among new social movement activists and on the anarchist left. Academic leftists have criticised the petty-bourgeois or middle-class character and function of diversity among the virtue signalling professional-managerial class in this era after the decline of the anti-globalisation movement and the fizzling out of Occupy Wall Street.<sup>4</sup> Although legitimate efforts to diversify the curriculum have been around since the 1960s and the rise of New Left protest movements, recent struggles around Black Lives Matter, MeToo, cancel culture, woke washing, Critical Race Theory, and so on, are public manifestations of complex debates that derive from structural changes like post-Fordism, the real subsumption of labour, the technologically-driven network society and the new spirit of global capitalism, as well as intellectual if not political challenges coming from postmodern theory, left populism, post-humanism and new materialisms.<sup>5</sup>

For those who are concerned with socialist politics, the field of critical cultural theory must produce its own assessment of the decolonial thrust of intersectionality. One effort in this direction was the questionnaire on decoloniality that the journal *October* published in 2020, this being the sort of public service the journal had previously provided on the subjects of visual studies and new materialisms.<sup>6</sup> It appeared after a spate of publications that herald the ‘unsettling’ of this or that monolithic bloc of European-derived coloniality. Titles in decolonial theory, which one could distinguish from anti-colonial and post-colonial theory and practice, began to be produced around 2011. An early instance of this in Canada was the special 2013 ‘decolonial aesthetics’ issue of the now defunct *FUSE* magazine, which defined the subject in

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy Fraser, ‘From Progressive Neoliberalism to Trump – and Beyond’, *American Affairs*, vol 1, no 4, Winter 2017, p 48

<sup>4</sup> See Catherine Liu, *Virtue Hoarders: The Case Against the Professional-Managerial Class*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2021; and Marc James Léger, *Bernie Bros Gone Woke: Class, Identity, Neoliberalism*, Brill, Leiden, 2022

<sup>5</sup> On these subjects, see Richard Wolin, *The Reasoning of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2004; Timothy Brennan, *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2006; Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, Verso, London, 2012; Vivek Chibber, *The Class Matrix: Social Theory after the Cultural Turn*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2022; see also Daniel Zamora and Michael Behrent, eds, *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2016 [2014]

<sup>6</sup> Editors, ‘A Questionnaire on Decolonization’, *October* 174, Fall 2020, pp 3–125

terms of *postmodern* subversion and transgression of colonial power and modernity.<sup>7</sup> The post-Occupy aspect of decolonial struggle gained momentum in 2012 and 2013 with Indigenous-led protests against the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines. The Idle No More movement of Métis, Inuit and First Nation peoples in Canada also organised ecologically oriented solidarity protests and actions while asserting the need for the Canadian government and corporations to recognise their obligation to negotiate in good faith with sovereign land defenders.<sup>8</sup>

The activist aspect of Indigenous and other bases of resistance underscores not only the political dimension of the current scholarship, but also the problems that the postmodern aspects of the diversity and decoloniality frameworks entail on the left. In 2006, visual culture historian Annie E Coombes defined the rethinking of settler colonialism as the understanding of colonial societies and the contestation of the legacy of unequal rights.<sup>9</sup> This endeavour has been facilitated by the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was reluctantly signed by the Canadian government in 2010. However, in texts like *Unsettling Ourselves*, published in 2009 by the Unsettling Minnesota collective, the postmodern and anti-universalist character of decolonial struggles attacks the rights model that sustained progressive politics from the Enlightenment era through to the Civil Rights movement.<sup>10</sup> Along these lines, and following the anti-rights rhetoric of intellectuals like Wendy Brown, scholars such as Asad Haider confuse matters by mixing leftism with discursive historicism.<sup>11</sup> The post-political tendency in contemporary theory is reinforced by the success of such intellectuals whose work is not as radical as it seems to many in the cultural sector – for example, the diversity theory of Sara Ahmed, the anti-Europe decolonial theory of Walter D Mignolo and the archival studies of Ariella Azoulay.<sup>12</sup> The high theory cachet of such work makes it appealing to scholars who want to elevate the radical chic of activism with the safe topics of diversity, which are supported, at least in symbolic terms, by the state, corporations, the culture industry, the news media and trade unions. However, while applying postmodern relativism and epistemological incommensurability to the cross-class project of excavating and repairing the legacies of colonial violence, none of these authors who attack the foundations of

<sup>7</sup> See the special 'Decolonial Aesthetics' issue of *FUSE*, vol 13, no 4, Fall 2013, available at [https://e-artexte.ca/id/eprint/25209/1/FUSE\\_36-4.pdf](https://e-artexte.ca/id/eprint/25209/1/FUSE_36-4.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> On the links between post-Occupy activism and decoloniality, see MTL Collective, 'From Institutional Critique to Institutional Liberation? A Decolonial Perspective on the Crisis of Contemporary Art', *October* 165, Summer 2018, pp 192–227; see also Ken Coates, *#IDLENOMORE and the Remaking of Canada*, University of Regina Press, Regina, Saskatchewan, 2015; and Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, Verso, London, 2019

<sup>9</sup> See Annie E Coombes, ed, *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006, p 2

<sup>10</sup> Unsettling Minnesota, eds, *Unsettling Ourselves: Reflections and Resources for Deconstructing Colonial Mentality, a sourcebook compiled by Unsettling Minnesota*, Unsettling Minnesota, 2009, available online only at [https://unsettlingminnesota.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/um\\_sourcebook\\_jan10\\_revision.pdf](https://unsettlingminnesota.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/um_sourcebook_jan10_revision.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> See Asad Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump*, Verso, London, 2018

<sup>12</sup> See, variously, Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2012; Walter D Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 2011; and Ariella Aisha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, Verso, London, 2019

Western Enlightenment have much to say about the uses of diversity and anti-racism in today's global political economy. As Kenneth Warren puts it,

From the replacement of public schools with charters to the replacement of cabbies with uber drivers, neoliberalism argues that the only solutions to the inequalities created by markets are more efficiently functioning markets. And that the true victims of capitalism are not all the workers impoverished by exploitation but only those workers even more impoverished by discrimination.<sup>13</sup>

Instead of a radical political programme based on universal rights, a philosophy of universal victimhood substitutes politics for ontology and replaces the hagiography of the Western canon with its demonisation. At the same time, cultural knowledge is siloed into zones of authenticity in ways that reinscribe the conservative anti-Enlightenment tradition, all the way through to twentieth-century fascism.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore not surprising to discover that at the level of critical praxis, more sober assessments of how to tackle race-based disparities are offered. The Indigenous activist Arthur Manuel's recounting of the genocidal efforts of French, British and Canadian colonisers resists the effort to rebuild Indigenous societies through Wall Street or Bay Street multinationals, as proposed by what he refers to as the 'professional Indian negotiating class'.<sup>15</sup> Manuel says that Indigenous control over land does not imply the *reductio ad absurdum* of throwing Canadians off their territory and sending white settlers back where they came from. This is contrary to the radical-seeming 'land back' rhetoric of Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang, according to whom Occupy-type activists are 99 per cent settler.<sup>16</sup>

By 2019 the term 'unsettling' was in common use and extended the 'racial reckoning' from the study of Indigenous issues like Residential Schools to the exploitation and oppression of racialised groups more generally.<sup>17</sup> This solidarity through racist or race-first 'racecraft', as Barbara and Karen Fields refer to the tendency to understand human groups in terms of race and racism, blends identity politics, understood in terms of the Combahee River Collective's policy of focusing on one's own oppression, with the multi-axis framework of intersectionality

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<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Warren, 'Reparations and Other Right-Wing Fantasies', *Nonsite*, 11 February 2016, <https://nonsite.org/reparations-and-other-right-wing-fantasies/>; see also Walter Benn Michaels, *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality*, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2006

<sup>14</sup> See David Walsh, 'The socioeconomic basis of identity politics: Inequality and the rise of an African American elite', *World Socialist Web Site*, 30 August 2016, [www.wsws.org/en/articles/2016/08/30/pers-a30.html](http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2016/08/30/pers-a30.html); Walsh, 'Should art be judged on the basis of race and gender?', *World Socialist Web Site*, 27 April 2017, [www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/04/27/sdsu-a27.html](http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2017/04/27/sdsu-a27.html)

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Manuel, *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-up Call*, Between the Lines, Toronto, 2015, p 163

<sup>16</sup> See Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization is not a metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol 1, no 1, 2012, p 27

<sup>17</sup> See Paulette Reagan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling and Reconciliation in Canada*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2010; and Michele A Johnson and Funké Aladejebi, eds, *Unsettling the Great White North: Black Canadian History*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2022

and its ‘relationality’ politics of coalition and rejection of either/or binary thinking.<sup>18</sup> On the more propitiative side of this gender, race, sexuality and class gambit, Olúfemi O Táíwò acknowledges that many have chosen to weaponise identity politics by closing ranks around ever narrower conceptions of group interest.<sup>19</sup> In addition to group advocacy, a ‘deferential standpoint epistemology’, he argues, contributes to elite capture and the weakening of solidarity. A ‘racial Reaganomics’ presents deference by the privileged as a solution to political problems by distributing attention and centring elite spokespeople from stigmatised and marginalised groups – often foregrounding traumatic experiences – while at the same time drawing attention away from those political processes, organisations and institutions that emphasise interdependence.<sup>20</sup> Such means-tested social theory and policy, as I refer to it, brings me to my assessment and critique of the many blind spots in the otherwise well-intentioned books by Anne Dymond and Erin Morton. However, as I argue below, that such concerns are absent from these texts is less accidental than it is ideological and programmatic within today’s art establishment. I therefore conclude this review with some Marxist thoughts on decoloniality.

Anne Dymond’s *Diversity Counts: Gender, Race, and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries* was researched and written a short while before the current interest in decoloniality took off, and as such, despite advocating the decolonisation of museums, has a mostly ad hoc interest in this aspect of the intersectional critique of what are now conceived as white supremacist and white settler institutions. The book is concerned first and foremost with the statistical assessment of gender representation and equity in Canadian public art institutions. In that regard, it is based on the quantification of solo contemporary art exhibitions, between the years 2000 and 2010, in some one hundred museums, galleries and artist-run centres (ARCs). Since during this time women accounted for more than 53 per cent of contemporary Canadian artists and 60 per cent of art faculty in post-secondary institutions, the persistent lack of equity that Dymond discovers is both the benefit and the limitation of this exercise in gender populism. Aware of the problem of imposing statistical information on artists who are thereby identified and reified according to binary gender categories, she nevertheless insists that such problems are not worse than the consequences of not acknowledging gender disparities. That the issue of biological determinism has been ‘deconstructed elsewhere’ only obviates the question of universality as it applies to definitions of culture and questions of class politics.<sup>21</sup> Dymond mobilises instead a feminist use of statistics and discounts concerns about the administration

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<sup>18</sup> See Karen E Fields and Barbara F Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, Verso, London, 2012, p 16; and Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2016, pp 75, 169

<sup>19</sup> Olúfemi O Táíwò, ‘Identity Politics and Elite Capture’, *Boston Review*, 7 May 2020, <https://bostonreview.net/articles/olufemi-o-taiwo-identity-politics-and-elite-capture/>

<sup>20</sup> See Olúfemi O Táíwò, ‘Being-in-the-Room Privilege: Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference’, *The Philosopher*, 1 January 2020, [www.thephilosopher1923.org/post/being-in-the-room-privilege-elite-capture-and-epistemic-deference](http://www.thephilosopher1923.org/post/being-in-the-room-privilege-elite-capture-and-epistemic-deference)

<sup>21</sup> Anne Dymond, *Diversity Counts: Gender, Race, and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal and Toronto, 2019, p 9

of creativity through data-driven quotas. The benefits, she argues, outweigh the drawbacks. While she acknowledges that metrics are a starting point and are by themselves not enough to appreciate the complexity of the issues involved, one does not find in this study anything remotely similar to Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture (the use of statistics to elaborate the socio-historical grounds of cultural production and the objectivity of the subjective) or Bill Readings' critique of neoliberal institutions after the advent of 'post-historical' Cultural Studies (the end of nation-based Enlightenment culture along with its dedication to critical social functions).<sup>22</sup> To have a more complete understanding of the class function of diversity in Canada and elsewhere, one would have to combine the austerity of Dymond's quantitative analysis with Morton's qualitative foray into the issues and go from there.

The first chapter of *Diversity Counts* provides a preliminary glimpse of the data. For the first decade of the twentieth century, and in some 4,684 solo exhibitions, 47.4 per cent were by women artists. While this yield seems more than respectable, the breakdown by national, provincial and artist-run galleries paints a different picture. While more institutions award more solo shows to male artists, a few give considerably more to women artists. Those institutions that show far more male artists tend to be the prominent art museums that attract international audiences. The worst of these was the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, which showed only 19 per cent women artists, and the best was the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, which showed 34 per cent women artists. The National Gallery of Canada showed 20 per cent, the Art Gallery of Ontario 32 per cent, the Winnipeg Art Gallery 32 per cent and the Vancouver Art Gallery 24 per cent women artists. The type of institution therefore has a considerable impact on equity and it is not surprising that ARCs, which have diversity mandates that serve Aboriginal artists and LGBT constituencies as well, have the best showing for women artists, with twenty-four of these showing up to 65 per cent of female solo shows. University galleries performed less well than ARCs but better than the major galleries. While Dymond's book does not comment on the politics of culture in a capitalist society and economy, one can nevertheless take note of how it is that ARC 'farm teams' transform progressive policy into the kind of cultural capital that is transformed down the line into the economic capital represented by the 'major league' of global art markets and trustee-controlled institutions.

The rest of *Diversity Counts* has four chapters dedicated to the representative institutions of specific cities – Ottawa, Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. The mandate of the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) to narrate the history and identity of the country makes it a potential site of resistance, Dymond argues, while she at the same time affirms its capacity to mainstream and market culture. That her analysis is less about art and more about cultural authority means that the discourse of diversity is primarily concerned with the acquisition and

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<sup>22</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984; Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996

maintenance of class status. Her book nevertheless provides a useful presentation of facts with some analysis of the struggles and processes that have led to where we are now. It is good to be aware of the fact that the 20 per cent rate of shows assigned to women artists at the NGC is down from 30 per cent in the 1990s, when curators like Diana Nemiroff and Jean Gagnon were active during what now seems like a pre-Internet golden age of cultural production. Other than the poor results for solo shows by women artists, the presentation of works through the permanent collection, special exhibitions, biennales and art awards increases the chances of gender equity. Most notable at the NGC, however, is the attention given to the acquisition and display of Indigenous art (First Nations, Métis and Inuit). The compensatory visibility of saleable Inuit art outside the Western narratives of European and Canadian art has, since the late 1980s, been supplemented and corrected, however problematically, through a number of initiatives: major exhibitions of contemporary Indigenous art, a room in the contemporary galleries dedicated to non-Inuit Indigenous art, the creation of a permanent position for a curator of Indigenous art, the creation of a department of Indigenous art, and a re-installation of the historical Canadian collection to highlight both Canadian and Aboriginal art. These shifts bring attention to the fact that women of colour are particularly disadvantaged in contemporary solo shows, a phenomenon that came to the fore when the former director, Marc Mayer, made the much-criticised statement that the NGC is concerned with the quality of art rather than the gender and identity of its maker.<sup>23</sup> Dymond seems to think that widespread criticism of Mayer among postmodern academics implies the obsolescence of the notion of objectivity, an assertion that neither explains contemporary culture wars nor her chosen methodology.

The case of Vancouver – headlined as another diatribe against the Vancouver ‘boys’ club’ – has a poor showing for women artists, statistical parity with regard to the Indigenous population, but a low showing for visible minorities. Here, Dymond’s celebration of the power of art to ‘overcome complex histories’ says both more and less than intended. A diversity agenda that not only alleviates neoliberal guilt but serves it unsurprisingly makes much ado about blockbuster shows on the ‘feminist revolution’ in art and radical-seeming breakthroughs like the cross-fertilisation of ‘hip hop with aboriginal culture’.<sup>24</sup> This over-estimation of diversity content only heightens the problem of ignoring those contemporary practices that do not look for validation in terms of what John Roberts refers to as the ‘dry goods’ of the ‘primary economy of art’.<sup>25</sup> In the more commercial city of Toronto, the Art Gallery of Ontario made similar efforts to avoid the charge of institutional racism. Its European galleries now include Canadian and First Nations work, and its Canadian collection includes Indigenous art through the non-chronological themes of memory, myth and power – all the

<sup>23</sup> See Marc James Léger, ‘Whose Excellence? Our Excellence!’, *FUSE*, vol 33, no 3, Summer 2010, pp 24–26

<sup>24</sup> Dymond, *Diversity Counts*, op cit, p 97

<sup>25</sup> John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde*, Verso, London, 2015, pp 22, 26

better, I would think, to make capitalist exploitation and divisions of labour timeless as well. That relativism and empowerment are the main motifs of postmodern nihilism does not so much oppose teleological progressivist narratives, as Ruth Phillips is cited saying, but paradoxically reformulates progress in the terms and interests of the same elite sector that gave us the '1619 Project' and thinks that the monumental pompier paintings of Kent Monkman illuminate history rather than obscure how it is that twenty-first century academicism dishes out queer cupidity to art world sycophants.<sup>26</sup> Such considerations are beside the point if you think, as Dymond does, that the problem with Canada is that it is the only G8 country with 20 per cent immigration – that is, rather than the fact that it is a member of the toxic G8 hydra. Decoloniality, if it is to have any meaning, cannot begin and end at the borders of our shining seas. Diversity in one country would make Canada more like the United States than its immigration quotas. Along these lines, it is not surprising that a Monkman painting in the mode of 'trauma porn' as well as 'porn trauma', titled *Les Castors Du Roi* (aka The King's Beavers, a play on the prostitutes known as *les filles du roi* that Louis XIV is said to have deported to New France), co-opens (alongside a work by Nadia Myre) the Montreal Museum of Fine Art's (MMFA) new 'Founding Identities' gallery of works from 1700 to 1870, which disrupts the settler narratives of the historical galleries by including Indigenous art.

Dymond finds in Montreal more than just a vibrant contemporary art scene. Notwithstanding the decent record of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) on gender diversity, the situation worsened after director Marcel Brisebois retired in 2004. A series of rapid personnel changes allowed for fewer opportunities for visitors to see themselves, as it were, reflected in the choice of artists, bringing the MAC more in line with the MMFA, where shows by white males predominate. Unlike the rest of Canada, one problem in Quebec is said to be the role that regional and linguistic identity plays. The fact that with regard to Quebec the term regional often means linguistic, and linguistic means for many Quebecers ethno-national as well as *souverainiste*, is perhaps too much for Dymond to acknowledge, since, after all, she is advocating identity politics, which leads me not to her conclusion that bias in exhibitions matter, but that within these increasingly corporatised institutions, the meaning of diversity is empowerment through the elimination of disparity. As Walter Benn Michaels and Adolph Reed have demonstrated, diversity equity does not result in a more egalitarian society because its aim is a society in which each structurally differentiated group (or nationality) has its proportional share of the combined wealth.<sup>27</sup> Even if one was to interpret *Diversity Counts* generously and extend economic considerations to the realm of aesthetic value, which is irrelevant as far as this book is concerned, it is difficult to imagine how combatting oppression through the decolonial and reconciliation process is going to make the world a much better

<sup>26</sup> See Dymond, *Diversity Counts*, op cit, p 116

<sup>27</sup> See Walter Benn Michaels and Adolph Reed, Jr, 'The Trouble with Disparity', *Nonsite*, 10 September 2020 <https://nonsite.org/the-trouble-with-disparity/>

place. Not that gender separatism does not have its own problems, but the intersectional slide from gender to race brings with it some historical considerations concerning the shift from pseudo-scientific theories of race to more capacious cultural definitions, which then blend in with popular culture and fine art. Just as race and identity obscure the workings of capitalism, a cultural sector that is as hooked on identity as ours is today is not likely to pay any attention to the way that culture also occults the global political economy.<sup>28</sup> In more pragmatic terms, the vulgar reductionism of interest group pluralism means that while the (academic) professional-middle class pays less tax, it applauds itself at the same time for promoting the kind of cultural development that marginalises leftist opposition. As for development, the disparagement of meta-narratives of progress, which some deluded people think is great for 2SLGBTQIA+ and BIPOC constituencies, accompanies some less interesting phenomena: the disappearance of the telos of artistic development; the decline of challenging cultural production and the homogenisation of local art scenes, thanks in part to the new information and communication technologies as well as the attack on autonomy through the transformation of arms-length welfare state funding for culture into creative industry entrepreneurialism and economic boosterism; the practical disappearance of art magazines as vehicles of criticism and theory; the surrender of scholarship to identity politics and of identity politics to the neoliberal end of history.<sup>29</sup> Despite my criticisms here, *Diversity Counts* does take interest in and elaborates many of the postwar developments that have led to the now mainstream approach that Dymond champions. Its partiality and indifference to class politics, however, is what makes the reader wonder about the *double entendre* of the word ‘counts’ in the title, the missing analysis of economic inequality that is otherwise suggested by the use on the cover of the book of a multicoloured work by Richard Ibhgy and Marilou Lemmens titled *Real GDP per Capita of Inequity of Global Population*.<sup>30</sup>

Because diversity is official discourse today, the politics of symbolic recognition takes precedence over the politics of economic redistribution. More insidiously, the discourse of diversity, which is now motivated by activist hysteria focused on the ongoing trauma of the suffering that was directly experienced by past generations, prevents discussion of the most effective ways to improve the lives of all, including and especially those who are most disadvantaged. Along with their progressive neoliberal acolytes in business and government, today’s diversitarian artists, scholars and curators have engineered a new bourgeois reform movement – not against homelessness, indigence or alcoholism, but against toxic masculinity, cisgender normativity, whiteness and settler privilege. Petty-bourgeois this time around,

<sup>28</sup> See the contribution of Ellen Meiksins Wood in Diane E Davis, ed, *Political Power and Social Theory*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, 2006

<sup>29</sup> Some of these issues are addressed in Lane Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2013; see also Marc James Léger, *Don’t Network: The Avant Garde after Networks*, Minor Compositions, New York, 2018

<sup>30</sup> Symptomatic in this regard is the fact that Dymond mentions Michael Maranda’s ‘excellent’ 2009 study, *Waging Culture: The Socio-Economic Status of Canadian Visual Artists* (published by the author and the Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, and available as a PDF: [http://theagvisoutthere.org/wagingculture/images/AGYU\\_WagingCulture.pdf](http://theagvisoutthere.org/wagingculture/images/AGYU_WagingCulture.pdf)) but only draws from it the percentage of women artists in Canada, occluding the question of living standards.

the concern with equity shifts to a post-Enlightenment difference politics that challenges norms as the selling feature of its boutique activism. This is what one expects and obtains from Erin Morton's edited volume *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, a posh production by McGill-Queen's University Press in the Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation Studies in Art History. If Dymond's book cover is somewhat misleading, this one braves the normies with an Indigiqueer S&M mask by the artist Dayna Danger and a title page image by Kent Monkman with naked male primitives pushing an iron Trojan horse along railway tracks in the midst of a bucolic Bierstadt landscape. This foregrounding of questions of sexuality complements intersectional questions of race and gender. In this instance, three of the eleven essays are focused on sexuality, four are concerned with decolonial archives and four are concerned with methodology. It is slightly unfortunate that this title nabbed the 'domain name' of a book that could have been more concerned with questions of art history and method. Instead, an eclectic approach gives the reader a sense of the kind of research that is being conducted in Canada under the aegis of decoloniality.

There is certainly food for thought in *Unsettling Canadian Art History* and the reader will not come away from it famished. I found particularly advisory Leah Decter and Carla Taunton's earnest if politically relativising thoughts on decolonial methodology. I also appreciated Lindsay McIntyre's sensitive treatment of the story of her grandmother's tragic relationship to a colonialist RCMP constable. Carmen Robertson's essay on the Anishinaabe painter Norval Morrisseau uncovers the kind of Indigenous artist who is as politically and culturally relevant today as he was in his time. Here at least is one Indigenous artist other than Monkman who complicates the landscape tradition but does not, as Robertson asserts, parasitise (straight) settler audiences. Henry Adam Svec provides a sound studies examination of the paradoxes of authenticity in the 'salvage ethnography' of Indigenous narratives and songs.<sup>31</sup> Charmaine Nelson's treatment of refugee slave advertisements is equally informative and for the most part dispenses with decolonial jargon. For Nelson, who is now the Founding Director of the Institute for the Study of Canadian Slavery at NSCAD University, the specificity of Canadian racism is the tendency to make slavery a non-issue. While no one can dispute the notion that slavery in Canada was as terrible as slavery elsewhere, the racist thrust of Nelson's thesis that Canada replaces knowledge of slavery on this territory with celebrations of the Underground Railroad leaves aside some not completely irrelevant information, like the fact that between the years 1671 and 1831 there is recorded the lives of some 4,200 slaves, 2,700 of them Indigenous and those of African descent imported mostly from the US.<sup>32</sup> This is slightly fewer than the ten million slaves that were forcibly taken to the US. Moreover, Indigenous peoples, especially on the West Coast, also possessed slaves before contact with Europeans. Such facts should not be used to relativise the brutality of slavery, but rather, the

<sup>31</sup> Henry Adam Svec, "'Miner with a Heart of Gold': Native North America, Vol 1 and the Colonial Excavation of Authenticity", in Erin Morton, ed, *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal/Toronto, 2022, p 182

<sup>32</sup> Erin Morton, 'Introduction: Unsettling Canadian Art History', in Morton, ed, *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, pp 21–22

brutality of Europeans, whose exceptionally racist character is used by decolonial critics like Mignolo to displace the brutality of colonial relations under feudalism and through to the transition to capitalism. To paraphrase the Black Panther leader Bobby Seale, one does not fight accusations of racist specificity with counter-accusations of anti-racist specificity, but with international socialism.

Nelson's critique of Canadians' 'pathological' desire for an unblemished narrative of historical progress finds its most dubious execution in Morton's introductory essay, which is co-authored with Mi'gmaq scholar Travis Wysote.<sup>33</sup> This short essay on the settling of Mi'kmaq territory spans the sixteenth to the twentieth century with an intriguing but decontextualising use of artworks. A textbook case of oppression Olympics, the plight of the Acadians who were deported by the British governor Charles Lawrence is said to pale in comparison with the irrigation and cultivation of the land previously controlled by the Mi'kmaq. Since there are no sufficient records that would allow us to say for sure whether the Mi'kmaq had good relations with French settlers, the authors appeal to the land itself as witness to colonial imperialism. In this case, where, in relational terms, kin includes animals, plants, rocks, the sea and the sun, a native worldview trumps the 'pioneer lies' that are advanced by the visual iconography of the oxen and plough. That the authors seek to challenge such visual 'tautologies' with an equally tautological cosmology does not go very far in unsettling art history and instead attacks the constitutional firewall established by Enlightenment thinkers between the state and religion.<sup>34</sup> I would suggest that someone who fights such a battle should not do so as a self-declared and self-abnegating 'white settler editor'.<sup>35</sup> One does not have to be Judith Butler to understand that the rejection of the position of the universal subject is the most delicate route towards what Tuck and Yang, citing Janet Mawhinney, refer to as a 'move to innocence'.<sup>36</sup>

In her preface and introduction Morton takes properly marked 'care' to disidentify from 'occupying' settlers who appropriate struggles so as to self-promote and come across as 'more aware', that is, in comparison with scholars such as Taunton and Nelson who have dedicated their careers to foregrounding Indigenous, Black and racialised diasporic art.<sup>37</sup> This trio is repeated like a mantra more than a couple dozen times in these two introductory texts to make certain that the reader understands the disruptive character of decolonial and anti-racist perspectives. The possibility that such scholarship does not necessarily live up to its rhetorical claims is never broached as a problem of method and political ideology, but only as a question

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<sup>33</sup> Travis Wysote and Erin Morton, 'White Settler Tautologies and Pioneer Lies in Mi'kma'ki', in Morton, ed, *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, p 162

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p 45

<sup>35</sup> Erin Morton, 'Preface', in Morton, ed, *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, p ix

<sup>36</sup> Tuck and Yang, 'Decolonization is not a metaphor', op cit, p 9; see also in this regard Slavoj Žižek, 'Tolerance as an Ideological Category', *Critical Inquiry* 34, Summer 2008, pp 660–682

<sup>37</sup> Erin Morton, 'Preface' and 'Introduction: Unsettling Canadian Art History', in Morton, ed, *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, pp xiii, 3

of dedication and lived experience. Who speaks is not only as important as what they say, but who speaks and is spoken about is defined for the most part in not very relational terms as not white. Along the typical line of attack against institutional and systemic racism, violent legacies of oppression are asserted as ever-present, a condition which charges disciplines like art history for being oriented towards whiteness.<sup>38</sup> One proof given for this is the fact that Canadian art history, which is said to be filled with ‘violent operatives of the white settler state’, is also said to not attract enough black, Indigenous and racialised diasporic scholars.<sup>39</sup> To disrupt this living legacy of oppression through historical research means decolonising European settler art categories, institutions and models of inclusion.

In one example of how recognition displaces the politics of redistribution, Morton asserts that the work of decolonising the discipline of Canadian art history is not the responsibility of those who are most oppressed. In contrast, the black scholar Kobena Mercer once referred to ‘the burden of representation’ as the unavoidable concern with the question of access to the means of production.<sup>40</sup> Alert to the different and multiple positionalities in ‘unsettled’ scholarship, Morton mentions that not everyone doing decolonial work is impacted in the same way by the intersections of caste, class, gender and sexuality.<sup>41</sup> Since this is her only reference to class, the critique of white supremacy is not simply positional, personal and scholarly, but cannot be said to be leftist in any meaningful sense of the term, a point that is driven home by Morton through the way in which contemporary disputes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous fishers around St Mary’s Bay are not described with the goal of class solidarity in mind but strictly in terms of treaty rights.<sup>42</sup> White fishers be damned. This outlook is justified by reference to the words of Tiffany Lethabo King, who ‘suggests that colonial capitalist Marxian categories of “labour” do not account for the dehumanising process of turning humans into property under the chattel slavery that helped settler statecraft in the Americas’.<sup>43</sup> White settler common sense can therefore only be disrupted by ‘embodied perspectives’ that are conceived in anthropological terms *inside* the reigning neoliberal relations of power.<sup>44</sup> And as the post-structuralists say, there is no outside. Situated knowledge and standpoint epistemologies, Morton argues, take feminist and related decolonial, queer and trans scholarship away from the disembodied abstractions, denials, repressions, forgettings and disappearing acts of what one must presume to be white, European, cisgender male settler knowledge.<sup>45</sup> Put simply, this work of decolonisation does not pit progressives

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<sup>38</sup> Erin Morton, ‘Introduction’, p 10

<sup>39</sup> Erin Morton, ‘Introduction’, p 19

<sup>40</sup> See Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York, 1994, pp 90–91

<sup>41</sup> Erin Morton, ‘Preface’, p xi

<sup>42</sup> Wysote and Morton, ‘White Settler Tautologies and Pioneer Lies in Mi’kma’ki’, pp 59–60

<sup>43</sup> Morton, ‘Introduction’, p 12

<sup>44</sup> Erin Morton, ‘Introduction’, p 5

<sup>45</sup> Erin Morton, ‘Introduction’, p 6

against reaction and tyranny, socialists against the national bourgeoisie, but white settlers against non-white diasporic and Indigenous subjects. That people have no say about where they are born and what ethnic group they are ascribed to, and that they are compelled to sell their labour to survive, is irrelevant to a social constructionist discursive historicism that sees everything as interconnected, both in terms of guilt structures, on one side, and ally complicity, on the other. This is what you get when you diversify Canadian art and art history without recourse to class analysis and the critique of political economy.

In today's world of woke correctness, deconstructing whiteness or any other normative category is academic pabulum. The reality that it takes idealistic undergraduates some time to learn the tropes is enough for many instructors to get away with relativistic nihilism and a nice paycheck at the end of the month. If not all of the contributors to *Unsettling Canadian Art History* are against the standard art history methodologies, as Morton acknowledges, those that refuse everything that one can attribute to 'white settler' approaches have their work cut out for them. Mark Cheetham's postmodern take on the aesthetic potential of 'parafiction', for example, mixes Jacques Rancière with Afro and Indigenous Futurism in tendentious support of some pleasant interventions by Iris Häussler, Camille Turner and Robert Houle. We have seen this kind of work before, and Houle's work dates from the late 1990s. However, this repetition is less important than the aspect of embodiment that calls on spectators to 'engage belief' and 'give up intellectual control'.<sup>46</sup> This, to my mind, does not imply the suspension of 'overbearing' institutional structures, but rather, an interpassive acquiescence to those same structures.<sup>47</sup> How plain, theory-wise, and how telling, with respect to the work of Michel Foucault, that it should precede Nelson's essay on the punishment of escaped slaves. Equally familiar, as far as contemporary art is concerned, but nevertheless interesting, was Andrew Gayed's discussion of the queer Arab artist 2Fik's identi-pics and remakes of canonical paintings as critiques of 'homocolonialism' and instances of 'coming out à l'oriental'.<sup>48</sup>

As Sharon Smith has argued, one problem with 1960s and '70s radical separatist movements was the endless recursiveness of their grievances.<sup>49</sup> The notion that only those who experience a particular form of oppression can define it presumed that the forms of oppression that divide people could not be overcome. The middle-class individualism that characterised identitarian 'movementism' was fundamentally different from socialism and demonstrated a sense of defeatism with regard to the possibility of revolutionary change. Although antagonistic to the organised left, the women's movement drew upon anti-imperialist movements in China, Cuba and Vietnam, and compared itself to Third World

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<sup>46</sup> Mark A Cheetham, 'Truth Is No Stranger to (Para)fiction: Settlers, Arrivants, and Place in Iris Häussler's He Named Her Amber, Camille Turner's BlackGrange, and Robert Houle's Garrison Creek Project', in Morton, ed, *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, pp 144–148

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p 148

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Gayed, 'Coming Out à l'Oriental: Diasporic Art and Colonial Wounds', in Morton, ed, *Unsettling Canadian Art History*, p 241

<sup>49</sup> Sharon Smith, 'Mistaken identity – or can identity politics liberate the oppressed?', *International Socialism*, vol 2, no 62, Spring 1994, available at [www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isj2/1994/isj2-062/smith.htm](http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isj2/1994/isj2-062/smith.htm)

and colonised peoples, in the sense that women, independent of class considerations, were held to be more oppressed than men. The first splits in the women's movement were between middle-class liberals and socialists. Feminist separatists then defined patriarchy independently of capitalism. The disconsolate slogan 'the personal is political' led feminism away from mass politics and towards nebulous concerns with hierarchy and moralism, attacking men as well as the lifestyles of married heterosexual women, women with children and then the hidden racism of white women. In the name of anti-elitism, Smith says, changing one's lifestyle became imperative and social change was thus reduced to conversion narratives, nihilistic offensiveness and freak power, all of which contributed to the rightward political shift that was ratified with postmodernism and the emphasis on oppression, difference, subjectivism, moralism, marginality and anti-assimilation. Because oppression is by and large defined by the rule of majorities over minorities, all of these developments have been detrimental to the groups involved.

Only a very different kind of book would do the work of evaluating new research agendas according to leftist intellectual and political traditions. Some of what is presented here could be accused of race and identity reductionism.<sup>50</sup> This is the case with an essay that places bear grease, whips, beads and human bodies in the same set. Co-authored by two Two-Spirit Indigiqueer contributors, the artist Dayna Danger and curator-writer Adrienne Huard, and one third-gender scholar, the curator-writer Dorian J Fraser, the essay combines theory with collaborative self-promotion and compares Indigiqueer praxis to Marxist definitions of revolutionary activity. Their strategy to undermine the colonial gaze, which has as much to do with Lacan as their politics does with Lenin, is consensual power play in sexual practices. BDSM rituals, they argue, can help train the victims of settler colonialism to reclaim their lives from voyeurism, objectification and the kind of 'trauma porn' that history has inflicted on them. The shamanistic 'technique of the self' that is put forward is appearing nude and lubricated for the camera with animal antlers covering private parts so as to subvert the heteronormative obsession with 'big racks', thereby 'dis/playing the phallus', as Amelia Jones once referred to 1970s performance practices.<sup>51</sup> Beyond these Indiglyphs, consensual community bonding allows for healing and ostensibly creates a world apart from Western narratives for born-again masochists.

The concluding essay by Shaista Patel examines the photographic diptychs of Anna Palakunnathu Matthew, which juxtapose Edward Curtis-style nineteenth-century images of Native Indians with their re-performance by the artist, a Syrian Christian East Indian living in the US who is also a British citizen. The presumption that a racialised diasporic Indian artist can empathise across time with another kind of Indian could be an opportunity for Patel to

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<sup>50</sup> See Preston H Smith II, 'Which Black Lives Matter?', *Catalyst*, vol 4, no 3, Fall 2020, pp 123–141

<sup>51</sup> Amelia Jones, 'Dis/playing the phallus: male artists perform their masculinities', *Art History*, vol 17, no 4, December 1994, pp 546–584

engage in serious political theory and defend those universal categories that are defensible.<sup>52</sup> Instead, Patel bores into settler critique to emphasise the fact that the caste, class and race hierarchies that East Indians escape when they travel to the West cannot be simply left behind. Such uneven and combined development is not attributed to differences in the global economy, however, but instead, through the nebulous medium of power, which is more difficult to measure and distribute than capital, is brought down to the level of the individual, who here is charged with complicity in the reproduction, across the ages, of genocidal colonial imperialism. If nineteenth-century Indian subjects could exceed the reductive categories of the colonial gaze, as Patel argues, why, one wonders, can Matthew not also? The answer provided is that only one of the two resists oppression. Not that many Native Americans did not fight to the death, but Adolph Reed criticises this sort of ‘infrapolitics of resistance’ that is advocated for contemporary artists, along with ‘standpoint theory’, as a consequence of the New Left structuralism that ultimately led away from political efficacy and instead towards a brokerage model of elite representation.<sup>53</sup>

Authors like Patel, and the contributors to this book, have difficulty including themselves in the revolutionary class analysis that their postmodern predecessors stole their thunder from. This is not what one should expect from people who claim to be serious about anti-colonial politics and the realities of disparity in Canada, where Indigenous peoples control less than 0.2 per cent of land despite comprising close to 5 per cent of the population, where 44 per cent of reserve residents live in low-income households with lack of access to clean water, unemployment rates are four times the national average, education spending is 30 per cent lower than the rest of Canada, aboriginal life expectancy is eight years below the Canadian average, suicides are five times the Canadian rate, and where Indigenous peoples constitute 37 per cent of the prison population. Through the intersectional distortion of class analysis, the current politics of decoloniality subordinates the political, economic and social processes that define settler colonialism to the notion of white supremacy. Notwithstanding historical and geographic specificity, settler colonialism is defined as a project that was made possible by the white racism that justified the disappearance of Indigenous peoples as well as the coercion of a labour force that was sometimes imported as indentured and slave labour. While legacies of white supremacy have been displaced in mainstream discourse by the concepts of multiculturalism and post-racial ideology, decoloniality defines white supremacy as essential to the logic of a colonial racism that continues to be enacted through practices, relations, institutions and policies. According to decolonialists, the permanent occupation of lands in countries like Canada makes the white supremacy of settler colonialism an ongoing problem

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<sup>52</sup> On this subject, see Vivek Chibber, ‘Capitalism, Class and Universalism: Escaping the Cul-de-sac of Postcolonial Theory’, *Socialist Register*, vol 50, 2014, p 65

<sup>53</sup> See Adolph Reed, Jr, ‘Introduction’ in *Class Notes: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene*, The New Press, New York, 2000, pp vii–xxviii

that is integral to the dialectic of so-called racial capitalism.<sup>54</sup> Yet there is no way to address the capitalism side of racial capitalism when the activists who are involved in this most recent wave of movementism typically accept the claim by Indigenous activists that Marxism and liberal capitalism are two sides of the same Eurocentrism.

A decade after the occupation of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement, Ward Churchill staged a debate between First Nations and Marxists so as to challenge the Marxist monopoly on radical consciousness.<sup>55</sup> Counterposing spiritual and materialist traditions, contributor Russell Means attacked all left theories as belonging to the traditions of European intellectualism and imperialism. It is not surprising that some of this confusion has returned under the auspices of woke intersectionality. Marxists reject the charge of Eurocentrism. Within Marxism itself, the accusation that Marxists consider Indigenous traditions to be developmentally backward, which we hear today even from revered writers such as Glen Sean Coulthard, contradicts Karl Marx's deep interest in the link between capitalist and colonial relations.<sup>56</sup> Marx criticised colonialism remorselessly. He did not presume that the various forms of Indigenous communalism were destined to disappear but studied them for whatever they could contribute to the theory of communism.<sup>57</sup> According to David Michael Smith, Marxism does not view industrial productivity as the measure of human progress and instead understands the combination of industry with colonialism as key features of imperialism.<sup>58</sup> Marx and Engels did not believe that European bourgeois civilisation, which they viewed as barbaric, would be the leader of progressive change. Whereas they viewed the 'universalisation of capital' to be a global phenomenon and advocated the development of productive forces for the sake of human needs, they did not presume that all societies must develop in the same way and criticised the expropriation of peasant lands.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, they supported anti-imperialist resistance to European colonialism and defended the right to self-determination, for example, in India, China, Algeria and Egypt. Lenin likewise advocated the right of nations to sovereignty and self-determination. Marx and Engels considered that humans were part of nature, which for them was essential to the notion of development and improvement. If communist regimes

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<sup>54</sup> See Anne Bonds and Joshua Inwood, 'Beyond white privilege: Geographies of white supremacy and settler colonialism', *Progress in Human Geography*, vol 40, no 6, 2016, pp 720–1; for a critique of the Cedric Robinson concept of racial capitalism, see Gregory Meyerson, 'Rethinking Black Marxism: Reflections on Cedric Robinson and Others', *Cultural Logic*, vol 6, 2000, published online in 2020 <https://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/clogic/article/view/192628>

<sup>55</sup> See Ward Churchill, ed, *Marxism and Native Americans*, South End Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1992 [1983]

<sup>56</sup> See Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2014

<sup>57</sup> See John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Hannah Holleman, 'Marx and the Indigenous', *Monthly Review*, vol 71, no 9, February 2020, pp 1–19

<sup>58</sup> David Michael Smith, 'Marxism and Native Americans Revisited', paper given at the Sixth Native American Symposium, Southern Oklahoma State University, November 10, 2005, available at [www.se.edu/native-american/wp-content/uploads/sites/49/2019/09/Proceedings-2005-Smith.pdf](http://www.se.edu/native-american/wp-content/uploads/sites/49/2019/09/Proceedings-2005-Smith.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Sagar Sanyal, 'Marxism and Post-colonial Theory', *Marxist Left Review*, no 18, Winter 2019, <https://marxistleftreview.org/articles/marxism-and-post-colonial-theory/>

abandoned these fundamental principles, there is nevertheless no reason why Marxism should not be part of the rethinking of Canadian art history today. Millions of people worldwide, in Russia, China, Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America, have supported Marxist-led movements for national liberation.

The reality that Indigenous peoples, like the rest of the world, have been forced into economic systems that were imposed on them is no reason to turn away from the most important intellectual tradition with which to understand these processes and turn instead to postmodern relativism.<sup>60</sup> Feminist and decolonial perspectives that understand culture in relativistic terms, and politics in terms of the will to power, dismantle disciplines which, despite their coincidence with colonial modernity, not only offer means to understand the world across cultures but also to challenge global capitalist social relations. The advent of ‘corporate feminism’ as well as ‘red’ and ‘black capitalism’ in the neoliberal era means that robust debates within and outside academia cannot be served through the creation of mutually supportive ‘care’ groups that conflate the politics of separatism with the practice of careerism. If intersectionality is the opiate of the professional-managerial class, as Michaels has said, then *Diversity Counts* and *Unsettling Canadian Art History* will no doubt be received by some as intellectual highs.<sup>61</sup> For those with a sense of world affairs, who are concerned with the neoliberalisation of knowledge and culture industries, global divisions of labour and capital, escalating economic inequality, the re-emergence of the far right and anti-democratic authoritarianism, the rollback of labour and civil rights, destructive militarism and climate catastrophe, the struggle continues.

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<sup>60</sup> Scott Simon, ‘Indigenous Peoples, Marxism and Late Capitalism’, *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry*, vol 5, no 1, November 2011, pp 6–9

<sup>61</sup> See Walter Benn Michaels’ contribution in Richard Kreitner, ‘What Is the Left Without Identity Politics? Four writers consider the question dividing the Democratic Party,’ *The Nation*, 16 December 2016  
[www.thenation.com/article/archive/what-is-the-left-without-identity-politics/](http://www.thenation.com/article/archive/what-is-the-left-without-identity-politics/)