

CHAPTER 2

Part of the Landscape

Quebecois Nationalism and Indigenous Sentience

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With the abrupt spring thaw of 2017, the Saint Lawrence River, which circles around the island of Montreal, rose from its banks, flooding many villages on its shore, including the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) Indigenous community of Kanehsatà:ke. In neighboring settler towns, the Canadian Army was in charge of relief work, but for Kanehsatà:ke, whose memory was still scarred by the 1990 Oka Crisis—a two-month-long standoff between Mohawk warriors and the Canadian Army over the construction of a golf course on an ancestral cemetery—requesting assistance from the army was out of the question. Kanehsatà:ke community members thus called for volunteers to help clean up the rubbish that was left in the yards. Upon arriving there I found a large group of French Canadians who seemed fairly well organized, having brought their own shovels and pickup trucks. Many were wearing the same T-shirt depicting two hands shaking around planet Earth, under the printed word *L'Alliance*. I overheard the conversation they were painstakingly trying to hold with English-speaking Mohawks, attempting to overcome the age-old enmity between Mohawks and French settlers ever since explorer Samuel de Champlain slew three Mohawk chiefs with his harquebus upon their first encounter, in 1609. “Doesn't it feel good to be here together, having both lived on this land for so long?” said one of the members of *L'Alliance*, “especially when [Canadian Prime Minister Justin] Trudeau is opening the border for all those immigrants to sweep in.”

Quick research revealed that the so-called *L'Alliance* was but an offshoot of the Storm Alliance, an ultranationalist anti-immigration group who made headlines when they staged protests at the US-Canada border

against asylum seekers escaping Donald Trump's xenophobic policies. Later in the summer, another Quebec far-right paramilitary group called La Meute (The Pack) elicited criticism from Indigenous leaders after waving the Mohawk Unity Flag at the head of an anti-immigration protest in Quebec City. With limited success, La Meute sought to lure Indigenous members into its organization, using their traditional wolf paw print as its logo, and including environmental concerns on its militant agenda. At the same time, La Meute claimed that Francophone settlers also deserved to be considered Indigenous, by way of a Métis ancestry often dating back to the seventeenth century and shared by a majority of the population (Leroux 2019). One of La Meute's leaders, who renamed himself Sylvain "Maikan" after the Innu word for wolf, bluntly stated that "if you're a second-generation Quebecer, you are Aboriginal" (Curtis 2018). If such self-indigenizing efforts are not restricted to the far-right, they are increasingly present at the intersection of xenophobic and environmentalist narratives.¹ This chapter examines the role played by representations of Indigenous people by Quebec nationalists with regard to shaping such convergence between ecology and xenophobia. Or rather, it deals with colonial representations of Indigenous representations of the landscape and its nonhuman inhabitants as sentient, agentive beings, whom Quebecois settlers gradually imbued with xenophobic sentiments. Methodologically, this chapter takes the "imprint" of Indigenous worldviews within Quebec's territorial nationalism to be at once historically, spatially, politically, and semiotically layered. Drawing on Tsing, Mathews, and Bubandt's (2019: 187) invitation to retrace the historical emergence of landscapes' "patterns of human and nonhuman assemblages," it proposes to analyze the semiotic analogies that allowed Quebec nationalism to self-indigenize its spatial relationship with the nonhuman landscape, ultimately pitting its alleged sentience against later waves of immigration. In this process, I argue that the colonial animalization of Indigenous peoples and their "animistic" ecologies made them "part of the landscape" in such a way that their common sentience was simultaneously confiscated by, and excluded from, the constitution of Quebec's national territory.

To this end, I follow the historical development of Quebecois identity from its colonial inception to the moment it successfully marshaled a modern provincial state, paying attention to the key symbols on which it based its relationship with the Indigenous landscape. I start by articulating the core analogies that were drawn in the early colonial period between the nomadic and sedentary behaviors of French Canadian settlers and Indigenous peoples, and the two animal species whose behavior has the greatest impact on the eastern woodlands' landscape: wolves and beavers. By introducing a xenophobic interpretation of beaver ethology, the

French settlers' domestication of the landscape was set against the lupine nomadism of Indigenous populations, as the latter's adventurism was gradually put to the service of sedentary needs. I then analyze the impacts of British conquest on this semiotic scaffold, as French Canadians were debased into a paradoxical state of "colonized colonizers."

While its proponents faced British competition for settling new lands and tried to curb the mass emigration of French Canadians to the United States, the rural Catholic ideology hegemonic in French Canada throughout the nineteenth century gave rise to Romantic conceptions of the landscape, whose sentient qualities could help French culture survive against foreign intruders. The invisibilization and extermination of Indigenous peoples and animals, altogether relegated to details in the landscape, nonetheless raises the question of their spectral participation in the sentience of the landscapes that were cleared and settled at the time. To tackle this problem, I move on to the modern era, when Quebec nationalists, now with a secular and liberal demeanor, endeavored to build the then-biggest hydroelectric dams in the world on unceded Cree territory. Mobilizing the anthropology of infrastructures to understand how settlers simultaneously suppress and integrate prior landscape ecologies within their own "enchanted" sentience, I argue that their human exclusivism set the stage for a new resource-based xenophobia.

Wolves and Beavers: Keystones of Land Occupation

I heard my host say one day, . . . "The beaver knows how to make all things to perfection: It makes kettles, hatchets, swords, knives, bread; in short, it makes everything."

—French Jesuit missionary Paul Le Jeune, 1634

The French regime (1534–1763) that preceded British conquest provided Quebec with the raw materials of its identity, which acquired mythical import with time. Two contrasted figures are traditionally considered as the polar ends of early modes of land occupation. On one hand, the *coureurs des bois*, called "wood runners" or "bush lopers" by the British, symbolize the nomadic and free-ranging experience of the territory lived by these independent French traders, who were instrumental in the early exploration of the continent as they traveled to remote locations to exchange furs and other goods, thereby mingling with Indigenous peoples. The *coureurs des bois* reflect the French mercantile approach to the colonization of Canada, dispersed throughout an extensive network of inland trading posts in North America, by contrast with New England's intensive settler colonialism.²

On the other hand, the figure of the *habitant* designates French Canadian homesteaders who settled along the Saint Lawrence River on farms modeled after European agricultural and stockbreeding practices. Given that Indigenous peoples were then seen as “akin to the forests in which they lived and the animals they hunted” (Trigger 1985: 3), the opposite relations to the Indigenous landscapes nurtured by the *coureurs des bois* and the *habitants* are best evidenced by the analogies drawn within early colonial discourse between human and animal ways of dwelling. In particular, two animal species consistently emerge from these narratives as metaphors for nomadic and sedentary behaviors, coinciding with the two keystone species of the eastern woodlands of North America, whose behaviors deeply shape its landscape: wolves and beavers.

The presence of wolves is known to engender tremendous trophic cascades, determining the habitat of their herbivore prey, and consequently the distribution of vegetation. As the sovereign predators of both old and new worlds, they symbolized the threat of wild nature for early French settlers. Exhibiting colonizers’ systematic fear of being beleaguered by the very people they invade (Hage 2017), French settlers consistently depicted their Indigenous foes as wolves prowling and howling about their precarious settlements. The French Governor Jacques-René de Brisay, Marquis de Denonville, who had attempted to curtail the freedom of movement of the *coureurs des bois* in 1685, also compared the Iroquois to “a band of wolves in a forest, who ravage those who live at the edge of the woods,” suggesting that “to hunt them down, we would need good hounds, meaning other Savages”³ (Prince-Falmagne 1965: 226). The *coureurs des bois* were at high risk of being contaminated by the lupine Indigenous they frequented, and seventeenth-century *habitants* of Quebec City, the colony’s capital, called Montrealers “wolves,” as their settlement bordered savage-ridden woodlands (Vincent and Arcand 1978: 33).

On the other hand, beavers fell on the side of *habitants*, as builders and dwellers. It is estimated that when the first Europeans arrived in North America, around 400 million beavers lived there, their dams creating vast wetlands harboring a wide variety of species.⁴ With beaver felt hats trending in the European aristocracy, their pelts were a choice game for the *coureurs des bois* and accounted for 71 percent of exports from Canada (Delâge 2014: 16). For all these reasons, beavers truly “embodied the continent” (Feeley-Harnik 2001: 65), giving their name to the “Beaver Wars,” which pitted the English and the Rotinonhsión:ni (Iroquois) against the French and their Huron-Wendat and Great Lakes Anishinaabek (Algonquin) allies for most of the seventeenth century. The Indigenous peoples living in Canada’s boreal forest (Cree, Innu, Naskapi) acknowledged a special bond between beavers and humans, with a widespread myth suggesting that

beavers had originally acquired their building capacities from a human who plunged in the waters to marry a beaver wife (Delâge 2014: 8). However, commercial overhunting soon broke this alliance between human and beaver nations, and natives accused colonial powers of having caused a war between them, becoming wolves to beavers (Parmenter 2010: 85).

Beavers piqued the nascent republican curiosity of the French. Based on Indigenous accounts, the proto-Enlightenment French writer Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce, Baron de Lahontan, noted that beavers seemed to possess an "intelligent jargon," by means of which they consult among themselves "about everything that concerns the Preservation of their Commonwealth," in a way similar to what Lahontan witnessed in Native American councils (1905: 477). Acadian explorer Nicolas Denys described beaver dams as complex engineering projects, where a team of architects commandeered troops of specialized masons, carpenters, hood builders, and diggers (Delâge 2014: 30). Reappropriating Indigenous conceptions of beaver sentience, the French appended to them protophysiocratic theories of workflow management based on chains of command and division of labor. Indigenous myths, where the beaver played a cosmogonic role in shaping the "architecture of the world," were incorporated into a new "white myth" explaining the origins of society through communication, orderly work, and monogamous family units (*ibid.*: 39). A specimen was sent to Versailles, where renowned academician Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, scrutinized its behavior. In Buffon's view, private property structured the beaver's republic to the extent that each family possessed its own lodge and did not "allow any strangers to settle within its enclosure" (1831: 437). This exclusive, not to say xenophobic, conception of beaver territoriality ignored the interspecies companionship that the Innu highlighted between beaver and muskrat nations, the latter being considered as the beaver's dogs, with whom they shared the same lodging and food (Clément 2012: 94).

Clearing the Way for the Nation

These vast landscapes seem destined for the expansion of French Canadians, as the theater set aside by Providence for their action. Therein their children will be able to spread quietly without any stranger mixing with them for a long time.

—Edme Rameau de Saint-Père, 1859

Following the British conquest of Canada, in 1763, the hope of reverting back to French rule sparked the first forms of French Canadian nationalism. While French Canadian traders stationed in the Great Lakes and the

Midwest played an important role in the 1763–66 anti-British rebellion by Pontiac, whose large Indigenous confederacy nevertheless failed to obtain effective support from the French, Canada's habitants attempted their own insurrection in 1837–38. Influenced by French republicanism, the Lower Canada rebellion, known as the Patriot's War in Quebec, also failed to ally with local Indigenous peoples. After Kanehsatà:ke Mohawks refused to lend their cannon to the Patriots who hastily required it, rumors spread in French Canadian and Mohawk towns to the effect that each was preparing to slaughter the other (Greer 1993: 348). In November 1838, the Patriots' secret society of the *Frères chasseurs* (Hunter Brothers), whose leaders were incidentally called "beavers," was ambushed on its way to disarm Kahnawà:ke Mohawks, an event that announced the insurrection's upcoming defeat (ibid.: 349). Thereafter, republicanism would vanish into thin air for more than a century, and as timber replaced fur as Canada's main export, the *coureurs des bois* were replaced by lumberjacks, whose nomadism was put at the service of the sedentary interests of the habitants (MacKay 2007: 17). To clear forests and build the nomadic British naval fleet, the *coureurs des bois*, once wolves to beavers, now became beavers themselves, or rather wolves to the forest.

Ultramontanism, a radical Catholic doctrine holding that the power of the pope must cross mountains (*ultra-mons*), filled the ideological vacuum left by the defeat of republicanism (Beauchemin 1997). Incidentally called "beavers" (Groulx 1952: 18), ultramontane priests sought to preserve French culture in America while advocating compliance with British authorities (Fahmy-Eid 1975: 55). Praising rural life as a site for religious edification "in the interests of a unified, religio-familial conception of society" (Beyer 1985: 46), this "conservationist ideology" (Juteau 1993) more or less put a halt to industrial development in French Canada, instead pushing families to breed in large numbers, a nationalist endeavor dubbed the "revenge of the cribs." In 1838, a prominent Whig intellectual, John Lambton Earl of Durham, was sent to Canada to investigate the underlying causes of the Patriots' rebellion. His report suggested that the socioeconomic inferiority of French Canadians was a consequence of their deeply embedded reluctance vis-à-vis progress and improvement. In addition to comparing them with Irish Catholics, Lord Durham explained the idleness of French Canadians by way of their historical proximity to Indigenous peoples.

As early as 1731, French Jesuit Pierre-François Xavier de Charlevoix had deplored "the scantiness, the aversion of assiduous work, and the independent spirit" of Canadians that resulted from their relationship both with Indigenous peoples and the landscape itself, as Charlevoix held "the air that we breathe in this vast continent" responsible for this idleness

(Vincent and Arcand 1978: 215). Such conflation was a constant feature of British slander against French Canadians. Jeremy Cockloft suggested in 1811 that the Canadians' "aversion to labor springs from pure, genuine, unadulterated indolence. Give a Habitant milk, a few roots, tobacco, wood for his stove, and a bonnet rouge, he works no longer;—like the native Savage, who seldom hunts but when driven thereto by hunger" (1960: 9). Yet this disparaging analogy did not drive French Canadians closer to Indigenous peoples; instead, nineteenth century French Canadian intellectuals increasingly worked to dissociate themselves from Indigenous defects (Smith 1974).

By contrast with French mercantilism, the British possessed a consistent ideology grounding private property in work. Provided that each man possessed his own body, John Locke's doctrine of improvement stated that "whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property" (quoted by Zimmer 2015: 144). Facing this powerful theory, as well as the massive arrival of Anglophone settlers, French Canadian conservatism was driven in a race to reconquer the soil it had purportedly already acquired. The roman du terroir (rural novel), the dominant French Canadian literary genre until the 1960s, contains stark examples of the "colonized colonizer" mentality that resulted from British competition. It advocated rural, agricultural, patriarchal, and religious lifestyles for French Canadians as a means both of taming the forest and resisting the rapidly expanding cities sparked by British industrialism, seen as dens of debauchery and race-mixing. In Félix-Antoine Savard's *Menaud, maître-draveur* (1937), lumberjacks and log drivers witness the British taking hold of the hinterland, while the protagonist of *Rivard le défricheur* (1874) has a dream suggesting that French Canadians should set out to clear land and create an "earthly paradise" before "the inhabitants of another hemisphere take over our forests before our eyes" (Gérin-Lajoie 1874: 20).

In these novels, the counterpart of the evil urban foreigner was the figure of the emigrant, as over one million French Canadians left for the United States between 1840 and 1930 (Courville and Séguin 1989). The relation between this wave of emigration and the nomadic tradition of the *coureurs des bois* is attested by the works of Quebecois emigrant Jack Kerouac, who pioneered the stream of consciousness writing style of the Beat Generation by writing the first draft of his road trip novel *On the Road* (1957) in a broken oral form of French. In the 1870s, Catholic authorities attempted to contain the nomadic dispersal of French Canadians by redirecting its flow northward in order to settle new regions—notably Abitibi and Lac Saint-Jean (Morissonneau 1978: 41).

The figure of the *défricheur* (land clearer) captured the mythical taste for adventure of the *coureurs des bois* yet regimented it into serving sedentary ends. Prominent priests such as curé Antoine Labelle framed their call for clearing new lands as a national endeavor to “conquer this land of America against the English philistines, . . . to conquer our conquerors” (Desbiens 2013: 88). Each new Anglophone settlement in the Laurentides north of Montreal (Rawdon, Morin Heights, etc.) had to be met with a French Saint-Côme or Saint-Michel-des-Saints (Morissonneau 1978: 47). Most importantly, the natural properties of the Laurentides’s Matawinie mountains played an important part in the colonial advocacy of priests such as curé Théophile-Stanislas Provost, who associated them with the spiritual qualities required for the survival of French Canadian culture.

Drawing on the example on how mountainous landscapes offered a refuge for Balkan peoples, such as Montenegrins, to protect their culture against Turks, curé Provost suggested that “mountains protect and conserve particularisms,” while “plains are an opening to the world, an obliged proximity with the other, the foreigner, or the enemy” (Morissonneau 1978: 43). Following this argument, mountainous landscapes were portrayed as inherently xenophobic, given their rugged, secluded, and enclosed wilderness. More than a mere geostrategic argument, curé Provost envisioned an analogic transfer of the landscape’s properties to the people who would settle there, suggesting that rocky mountains would harden their souls and faith, thus buttressing their resistance to foreign influence (ibid.: 45). But in order to inherit the landscape’s xenophobic seclusion, settlers would first have to break it open and tame its wilderness by clearing the ways for settler colonial infrastructure.

On the one hand, curé Provost’s appeal to the xenophobic sentience of wild landscapes showcases the paradox William Cronon (1995) underlined regarding American Transcendentalists’ cult of the “wilderness,” which universalized the historical situation they witnessed, in which the landscape had been forcefully depleted of its Indigenous inhabitants by the mid-nineteenth century. The Matawinie mountains could therefore be presented as simultaneously wildly chaotic and passively empty, as fiercely xenophobic yet idly waiting for settlers to plant their roots therein. On the other hand, the Romantic appraisal of the sentient qualities of uncivilized landscapes paradoxically coincided with the call to civilize them. This equivocation seems to cut across the distinction Eric Kaufmann draws between two distinct forms of geographic nationalism: the nationalization of nature, which focuses on the imprint of civilization upon a fundamentally passive nature, and the naturalization of the nation, “praising the primeval quality of untamed nature and stressing its regenerative effect upon civilization” (1998: 669). This distinction collapses regarding Quebec

nationalism, which comprises both the French inclination to civilize nature and the Romantic cult of wilderness found in “nations that possessed an abundance of unsettled landscape” (ibid.: 667).

The dialectic between these two orientations is particularly manifest in the writings of Lionel Groulx, a Catholic priest and historian whose clerico-nationalism exerted a tremendous influence on Quebec intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century. On the one hand, Groulx suggested that “the people mark the land with their soul and personality” (1919: 87), while on the other he sensed that the “national milieu possesses a somewhat generative power. It creates a human variety, just as the soil, and the climate create biological varieties” (1937: 192). Groulx considered the “natural fatherland” (1922) as a result of this convergence between the ways in which the landscape “mirrors the features of those who have settled it” (1952: 175), and the ways in which settler behaviors reflect the ecological affordances of their land.

In *L'Appel de la race*, a major landmark of French Canadian nationalism, Groulx tells the story of a couple formed by a French husband and an English wife, whose kids consequently suffer from a “cerebral disorder,” a “psychological duplication of mixed races” (1922: 130). A priest thus advises the family to take some rest in the forest, in the same Laurentides that curé Provost foresaw as French Canada’s future cultural crucible. The family’s confusion is rapidly cured by the wilderness, as they witness how the landscape itself seems to “naturally speak French” (ibid.: 120). In a crucial scene, the family witnesses oblate missionaries signing French Canadian folk songs on a lake, and the music resonates through the mountains as “the natural acclamation, the innate chant of the Canadian land” (ibid.: 119).

Incidentally, the oblates are paddling a canoe, relying on the utmost symbol of Indigenous culture. In this dramatic account of French Canadian nationalism, Indigenous culture is simultaneously included and excluded from the national sentience of the Canadian landscape, relegated to a barely visible imprint in the landscape, albeit literally providing its vehicle. This approach is consistent with the stereotypical image of Native Americans that prevailed in Romantic artwork at the turn of the twentieth century, which ascribed to them psychological features that pertained to the landscape, depicting them from the back or at a distance, part of the scenery like mute and stoic mountains (Vincent and Arcand 1978: 226). This invisibilization superseded the prior association of Indigenous peoples with large predator animals, as both were largely decimated throughout the nineteenth century. No longer a threat, Indigenous peoples lost their wolf fangs, which could now be worn by French Canadians themselves, as evidenced by Lionel Groulx’s invitation to engage in predatory

behaviors to resist foreign powers: “In a world where wolves are kings, there is no future for sheep” (1937: 176).

The fact that French Canadian clerico-nationalism was the expression of an allegedly “oppressed” minoritarian culture does not necessarily argue against its proto-fascist character, as both Italian and German fascisms were formed in opposition to the colonial hegemony of France and Great Britain. Fascism might be conditioned by the will to overcome one’s minoritarian status by subjugating other minorities. The most salient manifestation of fascism in French Canada, Adrien Arcand’s swastika-adorned National Unity Party, also glorified the regenerating effects of pristine, untouched wilderness, by contrast with cities filled with foreigners and Jews, whom he deemed “more corrupting and degraded than any sort of Redskins” (Nadeau 2010: 74). Yet at the first assembly of his fascist “Goglus,” Arcand’s main proposal was the nationalization of forests, waterfalls, and dams, an idea that obsessed him (61). This project would reemerge some forty years later, when a new secular and liberal form of Quebec nationalism looked across the Laurentides to the land where Arcand planned to build concentration camps, and which curé Antoine Labelle already coveted in 1879: “the beautiful and fertile lands of James Bay” (Quoted by Auclair 1930: 182).

Sentient Infrastructures

In this copper-snake, invented by Edison, he has wrested the lightning from nature.

—Aby Warburg, 1923

Following the death of conservative Prime Minister of Quebec Maurice Duplessis after eighteen years of power in 1959, the newly elected Liberal Party put an end to the “Great Darkness” that had held French Canada under a Catholic shroud for more than a century (Rousseau 2005). In record time, the Liberals’ “Quiet Revolution” transformed one of the most Catholic regions of the world into one of the most secular, as clerico-nationalism was superseded by a modern, industrious, and liberal form of nationalism. Out of this modernist strain stemmed a new Quebecois separatist movement, whose most radical faction formed the Quebec Liberation Front (FLQ), an armed revolutionary group whose 1970 kidnappings of a British diplomat and a minister were met with the Canadian army taking the streets. Following the repression of the FLQ’s socialist and decolonizing stance, linked to Algerian, Cuban, and African-American revolutionary movements, the Parti Quebecois (PQ) took power in 1976, aiming for the separation of Quebec. Its leader, René Lévesque, had

previously been instrumental in the Liberal Party's proposal to nationalize electricity, then in the hands of private interests, under the watchword *maîtres chez nous!* (masters at home). Yet the problem was that this home was not quite theirs (Nungak and Curley 2017).

In addition to nationalizing Hydro-Quebec's extant hydroelectric plants, the plan was to build new ones to meet the ever-growing needs of the population. In 1968, the largest multiple-arch buttress dam in the world was inaugurated: the Manic-5 dam on the Manicouagan River. Lévesque took great pride in insisting on using local expertise and on keeping all communications in French among construction workers and foremen. Clinging to the ambitious visions of Quebec engineers, notwithstanding the doubts of their international colleagues, the dam also featured the very first 735 kV power lines in the world. The republican beavers were back, with land clearers, pioneers, and lumberjacks being dramatically invoked in the project's propaganda material (Desbiens 2013: 169), as were the *coureurs des bois*, who were associated with the "cable-runners" (Fleury 1999) in charge of maintaining the thousands of miles of power lines in harsh conditions. It is as if the dam recapitulated and subsumed Quebec's entire history, closing the loop with the very mythical origins of the nation, while revealing its secular manifest destiny in the extraction of electricity from mighty pristine rivers idly flowing in the forest. Dams were, in a nutshell, as convenient politically as they were economically.

Regarding the new cultural awareness that replaced the self-denominator "French Canadians" with "Québécois" during the 1960s, the youth's nomadic tendency to desertion—instead of fleeing south as in the last century—was now increasingly turning inwards to threaten the state, as the FLQ's violent revolutionary methods gained widespread support. Seeking to deflect the youth's defection by creating thousands of jobs, and to distract attention from the separatist turmoil, the government sent the first engineers to James Bay in October 1970 to study the feasibility of a hydroelectric complex, at the exact same moment when the army was taking the streets against the FLQ.⁵ Liberal Prime Minister Robert Bourassa announced the project by resorting to the old rhetoric of colonial rivalry:

A territory cannot remain unoccupied. [James Bay] must be conquered, like the Europeans have conquered America, like the Eastern pioneers have conquered the West, like the Americans now want to conquer the moon. As for us, our heritage is that of the harsh territories of the North. Even still, we must conquer these territories if we want them to truly belong to us, otherwise they will belong to others. (Quoted by Desbiens 2013: 248)

As an alternative to the FLQ's anti-imperialist struggle, Bourassa thus suggested nothing short of a Québécois invasion of Indigenous lands where,

like the moon, no government official had set foot before the 1960s—and with no regard for the native inhabitants (Nungak and Curley 2017).

In 1965, the Pessamit Innu had been offered a meager \$50,000 to allow the construction of the fourteen dams composing the Manic-5 complex (Binette 2018). The government was hoping to do the same with the Cree people living in their ancestral territory of Eeyou Istchee, around James Bay. But the world's then-largest hydroelectric project was met with fierce opposition both from Cree and Inuit communities, who won their case against all odds in the 1973 Malouf court ruling. Yet this ruling was quickly overturned on appeal, and no fewer than fifty-five thousand workers were sent up north, roughly as many as Canada's total Inuit population, where they proceeded to flood 11,000 square kilometers of boreal forest. Painstakingly reached in 1975, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was a unique example of modern treaty making, handing over more than 170,000 square kilometers of Eeyou Istchee territory to the Quebec government, while granting subsidies and exclusive hunting and fishing rights to the Cree. Throughout the court proceedings, Anglophone experts working with the Cree confronted the consistent attempts of Hydro-Quebec's Francophone experts to extinguish aboriginal claims, in the spirit of the federal 1969 white paper's proposal to municipalize Indian reservations. Thus, at the very same moment that Quebec was recognized as a "distinct society" within Canada, Indigenous peoples within its boundaries were proposed outright assimilation (Vincent 1995), as if the only way for the Quebecois to become a majority within their own society was to prove their "power to minoritize other cultures" (Handler 1988: 158). As journalist Boyce Richardson reported:

After a decade of awakening, The Quebecois had shed much of the xenophobia they developed during their fierce struggle for survival. . . . But, oddly enough, it had become increasingly difficult to tell the difference between the Quebecois and the rest of the North Americans, apart from the fact that they spoke French. Like all other North Americans, they wished to embrace the technological dream. (1975: 22)

As Quebec nationalists now took pride in their own power to domesticate nature, the conflicts surrounding the James Bay project led to a frontal confrontation between Indigenous and colonial conceptions of the landscape, shedding light on their semiotic discrepancy.

One of the Cree's main contentions concerned the location of the first dam, LG1, projected to be built on one the most important sites for their subsistence and culture: the Grand River's Uupichun rapids. With its long and sharp slope engendering high water flows, Uupichun was a prime

spawning spot for whitefish and was easily accessible to fishermen thanks to the wide rock platforms protruding over the waters. The Cree used to camp there in the summer, picking berries and drying fish, while elders allegedly predicted the future by reading its rapids. As geographer Caroline Desbiens points out, the very same “characteristics that made Uupichun such a strategic site for the Cree economy also made it highly desirable from the perspective of hydro engineering” (2013: 248). To this idea that the dam harnessed the same affordances of the landscape that sustained the Cree economy, I would add that it might be said to have captured Uupichun’s fortune-telling properties as well, banking calculable amounts of electricity with what was previously a node of interspecies relationships.

Was the sentience of Uupichun also thereby captured by the hydroelectric complex? Would such infrastructure have the power to convert, or rather “transduct,”⁶ the intricate ecological, economic, and spiritual interactions accounting for an Indigenous land’s sentience into electricity, which, channeled through “copper-snakes,” will come to animate the remotest human machines? What is this more-than-human animation to the less-than-human animism it supersedes on the same landscape? These questions point toward the nationalist sentience of hydroelectric power, which René Lévesque deemed “at once the engine and the mirror of the awakening and rise of francophone Quebec” (Desbiens 2013: 153)? It would seem that the mutually transformative relationship that Lionel Groulx indicated as shaping the “fatherland” now linked the Quebecois people to the energetic potential of its landscape, now the sole aspect accounting for its sentience, regardless of its other human and nonhuman inhabitants.

Repeating the nineteenth century’s messianic call for land clearers to change nomadic desertions to serving sedentary ends, Quebec’s infrastructures were now the object of its national pride, a nationalist “enchantment” that may have been drawn from the clearings that pertained to the interspecies sentience previously pervading its landscape. Martin Heidegger famously theorized the phenomenology both of hydroelectric dams and clearings, which in German (*Lichtung*) evokes at once an “opening” and a “lighting.” The clearing designates the foundational aperture of Dasein, which “grants and guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are” (1971: 53), that is, it grants access to the self as related to a plurality of other beings.

According to Heidegger, technology also operates a clearing, in the sense of a mode of revealing. Yet by analyzing the difference between hy-

droelectric dams and watermills, he identified a threshold whereby dams, instead of attending to the river's patterns, challenge them to deliver the sum of their energetic "standing reserve," extracted and stocked to the sole benefit of humans (1993: 320). Through this "en-framing," suggested Heidegger, technology "drives out every other possibility of revealing" (332), blocking access to other beings as possessing their own clearings, perceptions, and modes of revelation as it were, including those shared and communicated with humans. Heidegger further associated this totalizing logic of technology with the exclusionary imperialism of Western metaphysics, of which technology appears to be the accomplishment (244). He held technology's mode of revealing responsible for the disenchantment and vanishing of "any sense of awe and wonder in the presence of beings" (Wheeler 2018).

I would argue that, far from disappearing, the landscape's enchantment was confiscated by the James Bay hydroelectric dam, which subsumed and sublimated the beyond-the-human sentient landscapes that Indigenous sapience was previously attuned to. In other words, the infrastructure's abstraction and extraction of a sheer, countable, energetic potency out of Uupichun's complex set of interspecies interactions was tantamount to the dam "en-framing" the relational complexity that animated the Indigenous landscape into a monoculture of hydroelectricity. This is to say that the dam enchanted itself, and animated faraway machines, by transforming "the indigenous cultural and natural order to become part of this infrastructure" (Manning 2012: 60). The modern national landscape of Quebec thus simultaneously integrated and excluded the sentience of the Indigenous landscape it came to replace. On the one hand, the sentience previously shared by Indigenous and nonhuman forms of life was invisibilized, pushed into the background and absorbed into the backdrop of the national landscape throughout the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the infrastructures which heralded the colonial appropriation of the Indigenous landscape somehow incorporated the latter's sentience, endowing these infrastructures with an enchantment of sorts.

I would suggest that this analogic transduction of a sentient energy potential constitutes an important addition to the three features by which Penny Harvey and Hannah Knox (2012: 524–34) explain the "enchantment of infrastructure": the moral virtue of job creation and business opportunities (524); human labor, fueled by an epic battle with the elements (528); and the "encounters of stasis, rupture and blockade" (534)—in this case, the victory over Indigenous opposition. On the other hand, the infrastructure's exclusion of alterity—prohibiting any alternative use of the territory for humans and nonhumans alike—seems to invalidate Jane Bennett's

theorization of enchantment as a “surprising encounter” (2001: 5). This points to a recurring debate within the anthropology of infrastructures, whereby a certain “scale-blindness” (Bird-David 2018: 306) sometimes leads to universalize the concept of infrastructure to the point of encompassing what infrastructures replace and supersede—that is, what they “are after” in both temporal and intentional terms (Moten and Harney 2013: 92).

Strategic Indigenous reappropriations of this pervasive definition of infrastructure, like Uni’stot’en camp spokesperson Freda Huson’s statement that the berry patches which the Wet’suwet’en people seek to defend against pipeline projects in northern British Columbia constitute their own “critical infrastructure” (Spice 2018: 40), are testament to the difficulty in defining the essence of infrastructures. Susan L. Star’s (1999) oft-quoted suggestion that infrastructures are “by definition invisible,” and only “become visible on breakdown,” based on Heidegger’s analysis of how tools reveal their essence when they are broken and lose their invisible readiness-to-hand, was contested by Brian Larkin (2013: 336) as failing to account for the fact that infrastructures are often staged in highly visible and spectacular forms. This was seen, for example, during the 1967 International and Universal Exposition in Montreal, where visitors were invited to watch a live transmission of the Manic-5 hydroelectric dam construction site on a widescreen display. Yet Larkin’s definition of infrastructures as “matter that enable the movement of other matter” (229) would comprise phenomena as different as dams built with sand and gravel extracted on site, and canoes made from bark to travel the continental waterways using the affordances provided by the landscape for humans to encounter other beings through its natural river clearings. Larkin rightfully insists on how infrastructures, by contrast with non-transformative tools such as canoes, modify and recreate the basis of all relations within a landscape, as they are “things and also the relation between things”; that is, they are “objects that create the grounds on which other objects operate” (229). Yet what remains unaddressed is what lies beneath these new grounds and the imprint on which they are sealed: namely, the ontological difference in kind presumed by a technological difference in scale. Such a scale-blindness may stem from infrastructures’ power to invisibly invisibilize what they are after.

Discussing the invasion of Afghanistan, Gaston Gordillo (2018: 61) argues that warfare technologies are essentially “efforts to fight the opacity of the countless forms, atmospheres, encounters, and lines of flight that make up the terrain of planet Earth.” In this sense, the invisibility of the infrastructure’s inner workings, as in the James Bay dam’s underground

power plant, is not opposed to visibility, but rather to an underlying opacity. This infrastructural leveling, where the landscape is thoroughly transformed to fit all-too-human grids of state legibility (J. Scott 1998), invisibilizes an “opaque” and “countless” entity by blocking access to its smaller relational scales, whose variegated multiplicity of “selves,” with their own intersecting perspectives, or “clearings,” are unintelligible to the all-too-human eyes of the state. Yet given the codependence of these perspectives for their mutual survival, their heterogeneous multiplicity nevertheless constitutes an undividable “whole,” an emergent, self-contained, and self-consistent form. What infrastructures do is to technologically distinguish elements within this whole, to connect them afterwards as separated elements of a larger network and at a larger scale, both visible and invisible, but neither opaque, nor whole, nor multiple.

Drawing both on Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotics and Philippe Descola’s typology of social ontologies, Eduardo Kohn (2019) suggests an “emergentist” understanding of this conversion, assessing the continuity and reliance of higher scale infrastructural networks on smaller scale relational patterns. Kohn suggests a parallelism between Peirce’s view of all-too-human symbolic communication as relying on referential indexes, themselves ultimately composed of “icons,”⁷ and Descola’s ontological superposition of the “analogism” typical of imperial and colonial societies onto animist or totemic worldviews. “Analogism analogically emulates the logic of symbolic reference” (Kohn 2019: 5) by suspending indexical references to iconic qualities, allowing them to “leap-frog” symbolic abstractions over iconic animisms, “subsuming them in the process” (17).

In this sense, I would suggest that colonial infrastructures seem to naturalize human landscapes by subsuming Indigenous humanizations of natural landscapes. This is how the modern, disenchanting, and environmentally ravaged territory of Quebec can still feel sentient to its nationalists, whose infrastructures trapped, as trappers would do, animalized Indigenous humans underneath their new ground. By contrast with beavers, hydroelectric dams render impossible other use of the landscape, setting in concrete the Province of Quebec as the sole recipient of its potential energy. Under the pretext of thwarting Anglophone hegemony, the colonial nature of this appropriation qua transformation was obliterated in such a way that the state self-indigenized its exclusive grip on the landscape, resulting in a new form of resource-based nationalism, pitted against both Indigenous human and nonhuman forms of life alike. I would suggest that the indigenophobic and zoophobic nature of hydroelectric dams laid the groundwork for the subsequent return of xenophobic sentiments based on the exclusive use of Quebec’s energetic powerhouse.

Immigrant Excursus

He is one of the animals which roam the land. He is the predator on all others, but just as a wolf pack depends for its continued existence on the survival of the caribou herd, so this predatory man will not survive unless the animals continue to flourish.

—Cree hunter Isaiah Awashish, quoted by Boyce Richardson, 1975

In a petition filed to the Minister of Indian Affairs to protest the James Bay hydroelectric project, Cree protesters stated that “only the beavers had the right to build dams on our territory” (Richardson 1975: 84). Humans should refrain from playing beaver, for if beavers once borrowed their construction skills from humans, it was in a mythical time when borders between animal bodies and nations had not yet been fixed. Should the white man awaken this liminality by acting as a beaver, he would bring about a tremendous ontological danger, which the Cree associated with the coming of a mythical blundering monster destroying the earth in a flood (C. Scott 1995: 38). The survival of a wolf-like keystone predator, such as the hunting man, “depends on knowing where he must stand” within an ecological equilibrium which took eight thousand years to achieve (Richardson 1975: 175). It also implies letting other beings shape their own landscapes and clearings. As the *coureur des bois* converged with the *habitant* through Quebec’s mobile land clearing and dam building endeavors, the beaver was conflated with a wolf-like predator, and the wolf with a beaver-like constructor. And as gaps between perspectival beings were blurred to the benefit of an exclusively human keystone grip on the landscape, intercultural gaps incurred the same colonial filling, as the native “right to opacity” (Glissant 2010: 189) was denied through assimilationist policies.

Quebec separatists have had a hard time understanding the separatism of Quebec’s own Indigenous peoples, as evidenced by nationalist geographer Louis-Edmond Hamelin’s (1999) dismissal of the alliance protocol of the Rotinonhsión:ni (Iroquois), the Two Row Wampum, which suggests that different nations (human and beyond) can only follow the same direction if they remain in their own vessel on parallel rivers. Hamelin accused the protocol of eliciting a xenophobic fear of settlers, portrayed as “bad wolves.” The 1980 and 1995 referendums on the separation of Quebec brought this issue to the forefront, as several Indigenous nations declared that they would separate from Quebec if Quebec separated from Canada. When asked if an independent Quebec would allow other sovereignties to access to their own independence, David Cliche, the spokesperson on

Indigenous affairs for the Parti Québécois, answered that Quebec would strive to protect its territorial integrity, as any state would do.⁸ A minority at the scale of Canada, Quebec nationalists became a majority at their own provincial scale by minoritizing both Indigenous and immigrant people.

Quebec Prime Minister Jacques Parizeau's famous televised rant against the "money and ethnic vote" after the loss of the 1995 referendum marked a shift whereby the old conservationist xenophobia crept back into the modern, liberal, multicultural, and hydroelectricity-fueled nationalism. This brings us back to *La Meute* and its wolf paw print. Isaiah Awashish's quote, which opens this conclusion, suggests that when xenophobic movements take inspiration from wolves, they neglect how predators can only survive if their prey thrives. French philosopher Jean-Baptiste Morizot, who spent several years tracking wolf paths, suggests an altogether different way for humans to embody wolves. His "werewolf diplomacy" follows wolves' interspecies means of communication, acknowledging each form of life as an autopoetical "perfection with no model, a divergence with no canon." To relate with these others, which are only autonomous inasmuch as they are "tied to the biotic community," the werewolf diplomat "attends to the very force of things—and restricts itself to this attending" (2016: 53). Like a watermill rather than a dam, this way of relating to other beings acknowledges how one derives energy from smaller-scale forces, and that one's emergent higher pattern depends on the integrity of what it is grafted upon. As Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2015: 11) suggests in reference to the "ontological wolf," such a diplomatic ethnography must "always leave a way out for the people you are describing"—that is, it must keep their own clearing intact.

If "Kanatiens"—the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) term for Canadians—designates those who have "embedded themselves on the land," their survival equally depends on their capacity to let other beings and their clearings crack through their new infrastructural grounds. This involves attending once again to the landscape onto which their "European elsewhere" (Taussig 1997) was superimposed; such an anamnesis would somewhat reverse their coloniality by way of assuming an immigrant conception of their presence in the landscape. To confront the current era, when people are increasingly divided between natives and foreigners, Achille Mbembe reminds us that "we are basically made of various loans to foreign subjects, and have therefore always been frontier beings" (2016: 46). When visiting the Western frontier around Michigan in the 1850s, Lewis Henry Morgan witnessed the remnants of hybrid forms of sociability and polyglot communication between Indigenous trappers, French immigrant traders, and beavers, each of them "using their knowledge of the

others' distinctive ways of communication, what the trappers themselves called 'signs'" (Feeley-Harnik 2001: 75).

Involved in land speculation around projected railroad lines, Morgan became increasingly aware that colonial "improvement" was directly imprinted onto the geographies drawn by beavers, whose dams provided the frame for the colonists' roadbeds (Feeley-Harnik 2001: 67). Morgan grew weary of its "deadly appropriation of vital flows of earth, water, and blood" (80). Yet lacking a state, let alone infrastructure, as they were scarcely distributed throughout the West, the nomadic vestiges of French *coureurs des bois* on the frontier seemed to take part in the landscape's sentient interactions rather than superimpose new exclusive forms onto them. In this essay, I suggest that the difference in scale measured by the presence of infrastructures implicates the difference in kind between immigrant and colonial relationships with the landscape. The self-indigenization infrastructures brought about by transforming the landscape to fit the state's perception and needs seem to act as a threshold allowing former immigrant settlers to become xenophobic colonizers, jealously watching over the riches they incorporated from the landscape by becoming its apex predator on top of wolves, beavers, and people. This is to say that in settler-colonial contexts at least—and colonized-colonizer ones at best—the landscape appears xenophobic only once its sentience is funneled into fueling what destroys it.

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Notes

1. For instance, the title of the 2016 documentary *Footprints*, directed by Carole Poliquin and Yvan Dubuc, echoes La Meute's paw print, with the difference that it suggests that the Quebecois inherited left-wing values from their privileged contacts with First Nations: the search for peaceful, consensual solutions; gender equality; and an ecological respect for the land. It is also worth noting that in the 2019 Canadian elections, the Bloc Quebecois, historically formed by the convergence of left- and right-wing nationalists, won the ma-

- jority of Quebec seats by campaigning on two issues purportedly prioritized by Quebec voters: restrictive immigration policies to protect Quebec culture and an ecological reluctance to build new pipelines.
2. In 1763, at the time of British conquest, there were fewer than seventy thousand settlers in Canada, whereas the British colonies already counted more than one million inhabitants (Barbieri and Ouellette 2012).
 3. The French realized this by welcoming “domiciled Indians” within Catholic missions created near Montreal at the end of the seventeenth century and attempting to use them militarily against their Indigenous enemies—albeit with limited success.
 4. If this number dropped to a historical low of one hundred thousand in 1900 because of overhunting, the beavers’ wetlands still welcome up to 80% of the biodiversity on the West coast to this day (Worrall 2018)
 5. According to the poet and filmmaker Pierre Perrault, the development of James Bay was expressly proposed to bring the population to forget the October Crisis (1973: 48).
 6. Drawing on Simondon and Jakobson’s idea of “transmutation” between non-verbal and verbal languages, Silverstein (2003) suggests the notion of “transduction” to highlight the materiality aspect of translating ideologies, using the metaphor of a motor’s transducer which converts electrical energy into mechanical energy.
 7. Icons constitute the most basic unit of signs, which are opaquely undifferentiated from their object, as they signify the “Quality of Feeling” in its “firstness”, that is “regardless of aught else” (Peirce 1935: 32).
 8. Cliche notably remarked that only a small triangle between Quebec, Drummondville, and Saint-Georges-de-Beauce is devoid of any Indigenous land claim (Vincent 1995: 222).

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