



WHAT IF? WHAT NEXT?

SPECULATIONS ON HISTORY'S FUTURES

ROUNDTABLE

THE FUTURE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL (POST)HUMANITIES

TO CITE THIS PAPER | Hélène Frichot. "The Stories We Tell: Damaged Environment-Worlds and Speculative Gestures." In *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia and New Zealand: 37, What If? What Next? Speculations on History's Futures*, edited by Kate Hislop and Hannah Lewi, 629-637. Perth: SAHANZ, 2021. Accepted for publication December 11, 2020.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND (SAHANZ) VOLUME 37

Convened by The University of Western Australia School of Design,
Perth, 18-25 November, 2020

Edited by Kate Hislop and Hannah Lewi

Published in Perth, Western Australia, by SAHANZ, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-646-83725-3

Copyright of this volume belongs to SAHANZ; authors retain the copyright of the content of their individual papers. All efforts have been undertaken to ensure the authors have secured appropriate permissions to reproduce the images illustrating individual contributions. Interested parties may contact the editors.

THE STORIES WE TELL: DAMAGED ENVIRONMENT-WORLDS AND SPECULATIVE GESTURES

Hélène Frichot | University of Melbourne

In posing the question of history's multiple possible futures, there is embedded the suspicion that the story told about a past determines what its future will become. As Donna Haraway argues, it matters in a material and relational sense what stories tell stories. For instance, when the story of terra nullius is told, in the process locating First Nation peoples under the category of indigenous fauna, then the future that subsequently unfolds in the Australian context is unsurprisingly one of violent dispossession and alienation of a First Nation peoples from their land-use practices and spiritual beliefs. This constitutes a form of colonial earth-writing or geologics, as Kathryn Yusoff explains, wherein dispossession is attended by practices of mineralogical extraction, put simply, mining. Arguing in support of a posthumanist thinking and ethos for the architectural humanities, this paper focuses on two seemingly disparate events, both of which set in motion a violence that will no doubt shift the shape and geologics of future environment-worlds. Story one: On the weekend of the 23-24th May 2020, caves in the Juukan Gorge, Hamersley Ranges, Western Australia, where evidence of indigenous cultural occupation was found to extend back over 46,000 years, were dynamited by the mining company Rio Tinto. Story two: Nearly a month later, standing in the Press Club, the Australian Minister of Education Dan Tehan, having offered his acknowledgement to the traditional custodians of the land – in this instance the Ngunnawai people – proceeded to explain a series of proposed moves to “reshape the architecture” of the higher education sector. Notably, these included raising the student contribution on a Humanities education by 113%. Both of these events are dominated by the associated stories that might be told and how they affect future possibilities. Stories like these impact architecture understood both as a material practice supported by complex infrastructures and supply chains, and as a disciplinary and cultural formation. To counter such violent turns in history, is it possible to work with a speculative gesture that imagines peoples, places, things and their relations otherwise? In closing, this paper will introduce Isabelle Stengers and Didier Debaise's notion of a speculative gesture, one aim of which is to draw forth other possible material environmental relations.

This paper commences with the premise that it matters, in a real and material sense, what stories are highlighted when it comes to histories of architecture, where architecture is understood both as a material practice entangled in complex infrastructures and supply chains, and as a socio-culturally informed discipline. The stories we choose to tell of the past determine what history's futures will become, which inevitably results in moments of erasure as well as the disenfranchisement of more vulnerable subjectivities, human and non-human. This then risks the foreclosure of possible environment-worlds, where the formation of subjectivity is understood to be inextricable from environmental milieux. I position my approach to the stories I tell in the Posthumanities, specifically where this domain intersects with the Environmental Humanities, which also means engaging in the proliferating discourse around the so-called Anthropocene thesis.¹ The paper further offers a contribution to the Architectural Humanities, creating a conundrum by proffering the promise of the Posthumanities for the Architectural Humanities. To focus my concerns, I tell the story of two recent events, both of which, by round-about routes, lead us back to what we think we are doing in architecture, and what happens when we extend the speculative gesture of a "what if?" Speculation can lead to the renewal of environmental relations, as well as their devastation. The first event describes the mining giant Rio Tinto's thoughtless destruction of cave shelters in the Juukan Gorge, Hamersley Range, Western Australia, where archaeological evidence of continuous cultural use going back more than 46,000 years ties these sites to the traditional custodianship of the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura peoples. The second event would appear to be more prosaic in drawing attention to a speech made by the Australian Minister of Education in the Press Club, some weeks later, where he outlined proposed changes to the "architecture of higher education",² including a notable impact on the Humanities. In both instances modes of extraction can be witnessed to be at work, on the one hand, the extraction of material resources, on the other hand, the attempted extraction of something like cultural values.

Donna Haraway, famous for her cyborg manifesto and her work on cross-species encounters, and more recently known for her insistence that we stay with the troubles of our current environmental, social, and political crises, insists that it "matters what stories tell stories".³ For instance, when the story of terra nullius is told on the founding of "happy Australia", in the process locating an ancient peoples under the category of indigenous fauna, then the future that subsequently unfolds in this context is unsurprisingly one of violent dispossession and the alienation of a First Nation peoples from their land-use practices and spiritual beliefs. Kathryn Yusoff goes further and speaks of such stories, or "colonial earth stories"⁴ according to their geopolitics, associating settler colonialism, which, supported by convict labour was the mode of occupation of Australia, with practices of extraction, including the extraction of subjectivities. By extraction she means not only the obvious, in the mining of minerals such as iron ore and gold, she further means the extraction of labour and even what it means to be classified as human, as distinct from inhuman. She explains: "Geology is a relation of power and continues to constitute racialized relations of power, in its incarnation in the Anthropocene and in its material manifestation in mining, petrochemical sites and corridors, and their toxic legacies—all over a world that resolutely cuts exposure along color lines."⁵

Processes of extraction, and the neoliberal capitalist modus operandi of extractivism, have been raised as urgent issues elsewhere in the humanities too. As Laura Junka-Aikio and Catalina Cortes-Severino explain in a recent issues of *Cultural Studies*, where these terms would normally be understood in association with the "mass-scale industrial extraction of non-renewable resources,"⁶ such as iron ore, oils and gold, they must equally be understood as related to how intellectual labour, discourses and ideological orientations are extracted and subsequently worked upon, even reformed as new 'products.' Again, the very formation of human subjects amidst their daily material practices and beliefs is at stake, the outcome tending toward, as Junka-Aikio and Cortes-Severino put it, "dwindling resources, environmental degradation and heightened social and economic inequality."⁷ To say nothing of how the intersectional line is cut according to race, gender and class.

As rendered evident in continued cycles of media attention, as I write the two events I draw

attention to are both live. They present concrete instances in an unfolding world history that we are in the midst of experiencing. One event is explicit in its brute material violence, the other is a speech act that inaugurates the possibility of a future violence rendered against the Humanities, and by association the Posthumanities. Before offering an account of these events and their extractivist logic, it becomes necessary to back-track and briefly explain the contested relationship between the epistemological fields of the Humanities and the Posthumanities, in order to defend the relevance of the Posthumanities for the Architectural Humanities, which is where this paper locates itself. Broadly, the Posthumanities is way of thinking beyond the perceived limits of the Humanities, a way of challenging its premises and of addressing the implications of privileging a specific kind of human subject. If the human subject is located as exceptional, as wed to progress, innovation, and advancement, as European, as white and male (that is to say, neither racially marked, nor marked by gender), and if we are to understand that the Humanities attaches privilege to such a subject and his associated stories, then, it is clear that the Humanities as a field of knowledge leaves way too much out. Rosi Braidotti, who draws both implicitly and explicitly on the thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, asserts that the human has never been a neutral category, but one always linked to power and privilege.⁸ Braidotti has published not one but two volumes addressing what it is to be posthuman, and what it might mean to discover ourselves at a “posthuman conjunction”, by which she offers a couple of conflicting definitions.⁹ The posthuman conjunction is the moment we find ourselves within, right here, right now, thrown into a flux of fast paced technological development driven by neoliberal capitalism and advancing, most likely irreversible, climate change. It is also, following Braidotti’s account, the juncture wherein new ways of knowing might emerge from the conjunction of posthumanist and post-anthropocentric approaches.¹⁰ The Humanities tradition can be rightly critiqued, but in its current formation, even as it appears to be dwindling, it shelters the possibility of such new modes of practice as are ventured by the Posthumanities.

Cary Wolfe, who edits a series with Minnesota Press dedicated to the Posthumanities in which authors such as Michel Serres, Donna Haraway, and her former student Maria Puig de la Bella Casa are represented, suggests that Posthumanism emerges in its current form within the critical discourse of the 1990s, but its backstory can be tracked along a number of storylines, which subsequently lead to such radically distinct destinations as animal studies and transhumanism. Where the former destabilises the pre-eminence of the human subject, the latter seeks to advance what it means to be a technologically augmented super-human subject. The project of rethinking the status of the human subject in relation to power and knowledge is an epistemological orientation that can be heard, as Wolfe further points out, in Michel Foucault’s infamous pronouncement in *The Order of Things*, that “man is an invention of a recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end,”¹¹ that is to say, the human subject is an invented concept, required for a period of time in relation to the kinds of problems addressed in an epistemological field, specifically the human sciences. It is of course important to stress here that the material existence, the embodied specificity of humans as sentient creatures is not being challenged, rather the human located as a subject of interest in a domain of knowledge, as well as that human subject who claims privileges with respect to how that domain is arranged and managed, and what resources they thereby hold the right to extract without further question: this is what is being placed under interrogation. All the same, given what we are facing today, the spectre of extinction is one well-worth keeping in mind.

Following much the same track, Foucault’s compatriot Gilles Deleuze argues that once the epistemological field shifts, or rather, once what is at stake takes on a different value, then the concept of the human subject can be dispensed with, classified as obsolete. Deleuze, for his part, proposes another, posthuman landscape of thought, occupied not by a human subject as preliminary unity of apprehension who takes charge of territorialising a domain of knowledge. Instead Deleuze proposes a reorientation by describing a posthuman landscape witness to dynamic arrangements of things, of individuations and *heccities*, all undertaking complex processes of composition and decomposition as they encounter each other and form more or less durable relations.¹² Rather than the subject in knowledge, Deleuze, and Guattari too, turn to the construction of concepts, percepts and affects, in relation to the problems and disciplinary

orientations that call out for them.¹³ With each concept it is a matter of asking what role it serves in relation to the problems it is obliged to address and the field that fosters its emergence. Supporting this posthuman orientation, philosophers Isabelle Stengers and Didier Debaise, whose work I will return to in closing, explain: "Any thought is, from this viewpoint, absolutely located, embedded in the situation from which it emerges and which gives it meaning."¹⁴ Hence for me, the necessity of paying close attention to the two events I will now offer an account of, as it matters what material sites and situations we focus our attention upon to then venture stories about.

Juukan Gorge, Hamersley Ranges: On the Weekend of the 23-24th May 2020

As far away as Frankfurt, Germany they can hear the champagne corks popping in Perth, Western Australia, as resources prices continue to boom with gold breaking records on reaching \$2000 an ounce. An article in the conservative German newspaper FAZ describes profits rising 35% since the beginning of the year, despite the COVID 19 pandemic. Ore that is dug from the ground in north Western Australia at AUD\$14 per kilo, is sold to a resource hungry China for AUD\$110.¹⁵ Meanwhile, in advance of the weekend of 23-24th May 2020, in the Hamersley Range, explosives are discretely set into the ground around about the Brockman 4 site managed by Rio Tinto. It is somehow significant that the detonation of these explosives is considered a *fait accompli* the moment they are wedged into a network of holes drilled into the red dirt. One can only speculate upon whether the choice of a weekend for the detonation of the explosives that would destroy the cave shelters at Juukan Gorge was in the hope that no one would be paying too much attention. In the media fuelled controversy that was to abruptly follow, the echo of the *fait accompli* still sings through what sounds too much like a disingenuous apology. As noted in a *Guardian* article, those responsible did not initially apologise for the material destruction of the cave shelters themselves and the irrevocable loss of tangible heritage, but only extended their apologies in acknowledgement of the distress suffered in the aftermath by those concerned.¹⁶ We are all concerned, and we are all complicit. As Imre Szeman drily remarks: "After being insensate to our connections to and dependence on the non-human world over the course of modernity, the environment will now always, necessarily and unavoidably be an aspect of our political reckonings and social imaginaries."¹⁷

From way above, taking a non-human satellite's serene point of view, Juukan Gorge looks like the crinkled creases of the palm of an ancient weather-beaten hand, hardened with the toil of managing the lithic crust of the world. A journey across the lands of Google Maps is mesmerising, scrolling east then west, north-west and then south-east, zooming in, and zooming out, cartographic movements adjudicated by a mouse pad. Remotely viewed in satellite mode the earth's lithosphere gives up myriad details, but in map view, there is nothing but an off-white expanse, cut across by a pale blue water way, the Minindi Creek. It looks like the kind of creek that would give way to a torrential downfall, a flash flood carrying messages southwards, or northwards. The closest settlement appears to be Pannawonica, to the north west. Then I realise my hunt for Juukan Gorge on Google Maps has led me astray, and the brutal erasure I am seeking is toward the south-east. Juukan Gorge, as it turns out, is simply called Brockman 4, in anticipation of the extraction site it is now in the midst of becoming. It's within cooee of Mt Sheila, and not far from Tom Price. There is even a drinking hole nearby called the Diamond Tavern. I'm looking for roads, or the inevitability of a rail line leading into and out of the vicinity of Juukan Gorge for the purposes of carrying tons of ore back to the coastal ports at Cape Lambert and Dampier. I'm searching for signs of a dig, which from an amateur's point of view looks something like the terracing of a negative pyramid, a void, a landscape signifier of extraction.

Scrolling across the Hamersley Range, Western Australia, the disembodied eye happens upon one pock mark after another, dig sites, geological disturbances. From an urban centre many hundreds of kilometres away, let's say Perth, you would not realise that all this furious activity was taking place. Rio Tinto is also a massive infrastructural enterprise, managing 16 mines across the region, and four independent port terminals. As Szeman explains "the very existence of extraction can be difficult to render visible"¹⁸ though the material urban wealth that manifests in the city of Perth as a side effect is no doubt plain to see. Szeman continues: "we are doubly

distanced from the spaces and material processes of extraction, sheltered from them first by physical distance and second by techno-utopian fantasies of a quotidian reality shaped by immaterial forces.”¹⁹

Of what relevance are these remote land surveys in Google Maps satellite view to architecture? The iron ore that is dug out of the ground, at the rate of 100 million tonnes a year, is shipped off to destinations such as China, as the journalist of FAZ has explained, where it is turned into steel that manifests in infrastructures that organise urban conglomerates. It’s also rediscovered transmogrified into your white goods, your car, your neat architectural details, and your structural systems, adequate in strength to hold a multi-residential or a skyscraper up. A little like the single source coffee beans sold in gentrified neighbourhoods the iron ore is described according blends, for instance, the Pilbara blend is known for its “high grade quality and consistency.”²⁰ Soon the Chinese will be able to order the raw material by using an app, the Rio Tinto webpage explains. Their driverless train, the AutoHaul™ is capable of moving 1 million tonnes of iron ore a day. Rio Tinto nevertheless reassures visitors to their webpage that they recognise the “cultural, spiritual and physical connections that Traditional Owners have with the land, water, plants and animals across the Pilbara region of Western Australia.” Furthermore, they have a “comprehensive cultural heritage management framework.” The extent of their support to the community makes it difficult to argue with them, they are doing all that is “practicable” and they also want to stress that they are sincerely sorry for the hurt caused by the destruction of the 46,000 year old cave shelters at Juukan Gorge. The thing is, that extra 8 million tons of ore was just too tempting, as rendered all too evident in Rio Tinto’s 6.73 billion profit for the six months ending June 30 2020.²¹

Architecture, in its material and political embroilments, in acknowledgement of the material resources it depends upon, and the widespread network of supply chains in which it is embedded, can be connected, one way or another, with all this furious activity, increasingly automated, that goes into the digging out of the ground of material resources such as iron ore. Architecture as material act, simply put, is inextricably hooked up with acts and sites of extraction.

Working on this paper, troubling myself with this tour at a great distance from above of the vast, ancient landscape composing the Hamersley Range, the red dirt began to creep into my dreams, and I found myself on the ground part of a colonial expeditionary party. I am implicated, we all are. In all likelihood our superannuation funds are invested in these mining interests.²² The Hamersley Range, as a quick search divulges, “was named on 12 June 1861 by explorer Francis Thomas Gregory after Edward Hamersley, a prominent promoter of his exploration expedition to the northwest.”²³ Who was Francis Thomas Gregory and what was he looking for? The great inland sea? This would have been a happy prize, that is to say, a determination of what the interior might yield, had his journey not been delayed, and the loss of so many horses suffered. The report F. T. Gregory (the initials to distinguish him from his elder brother, August Charles Gregory, also a well-known explorer) returns to the Governor is a running account of the land he covers with his party from May to October 1861. His prosaic account is a reading of the landscape conceptualised as a patchwork of resources and future value to be procured. The expedition, which ventures two forays into the interior along squiggly lines commencing from and returning to a base at Nickol bay (in the vicinity of present day Karratha), report the promise of agricultural land, adequate sources of water, evidence of iron ore, but no evidence of gold or coal: “Of minerals I was unable to discover any traces but iron” F. T. Gregory explains. On the coast, beds of pearl oysters promise “immediate commercial importance”, the aggregate value of which, he estimates, is between £500 to £600. One pearl alone is “valued by competent persons at £25.”²⁴

As F. T. Gregory imperiously passes through the landscape he allocates names to land-forms, to rivers, and to mountains, and by naming them he claims a proprietorial relationship as a representative of Empire. On the banks of what he names the De Grey, running through the Hamersley Range, valuable arable land is located. Wheat and other grain may not do so well here, but cotton, he argues, based on his experience in Egypt and his knowledge of this crop, promises to do well. This will depend on mobilising indentured labour. As for the aborigines, they should not prove “troublesome”, and even seem keen to be under the employ of a European. Relations,

he suggests, will go well with them if they are “fairly treated.” He further observes that in stature many of them measure two or three inches above 6 feet. Even the labour of the ‘natives’ can be extracted from this territorialising exercise. The presumed forbears of the Puutu Kinti Kurrama and Pinikura have offered help in the collection of firewood and freshwater in exchange for a few pounds of “damaged biscuit”.²⁵ Value can be extracted from their labour, and for a cheap price too.

Although F. T. Gregory mentions the presence of iron ore in passing, the resources wait quietly intact for close to another century.²⁶

The traditional custodians in the region of the Hamersley Range are the Puutu Kinti Kurrama and Pinikura peoples. They were awarded native title as recently as 2015. Not a few of them interviewed during the event of their celebration – beneath tents, before a makeshift court of law laid out on trestle tables, with children running about in the background, and people in camp chairs listening in as though around a camp fire – not a few of them remark on the irony of having to ask for the return of something that they had never given up in the first place.²⁷ They are entangled in what Yusoff calls Anthropocene origin stories, against which they must fight back.²⁸ They have argued successfully for the reclamation of title for their traditional lands, ground never originally ceded when the colonial settlers arrived to codify Country according to so many classifiable resources. With the wonton destruction of the Juukan Gorge caves, a further erasure is ensued. The slow realisation that a few mines will soon become a larger number of mines, as resources continue to be greedily sought after and dug up. As Yusoff strenuously argues “geology can finally be recognized as a regime for producing subjects and regulating subjective lives—a place where the properties of belonging are negotiated.”²⁹ There are rumours circulating that traditional groups have been effectively gagged, and made somehow complicit in their own undoing.³⁰

But a spokesperson for the Puutu Kinti Kurrama and Pinikura Aboriginal Corporation (PKKPAC), Burchell Hayes, makes a swift response following the desecration, countering the claim that the significance of the sites had not been fully communicated to the mining giant.³¹ The damage is a tragedy, Hayes explains, “not only to the PKKP people, but also a tragedy for the combined history of all Australians, and indeed humanity.”³² Here we see how “geology is a racialized optic razed on the earth,”³³ an indelible mark, a wound awaiting a future scar.

Minister for Education Dan Tehan, National Press Club Address. 19th June 2020³⁴

He holds his hands, fingers folded in front of him, as his media advisors have no doubt told him to do.³⁵ He wears a pale-yellow tie and a white shirt the cuffs of which protrude from his jacket. While these details would appear to be extraneous, yet they constitute the dressing of the scene forming part of the message conveyed. Yellow is luminous, but also represents cowardice, betrayal, and egoism. In ties it is supposed to represent a balance of confidence and courage. I can’t help but wonder as I watch whether he means what he says, whether he believes in himself. What is at stake in the address to the Press Club on the 19th of June, from the midst of the crisis that is the current COVID 19 pandemic, is the Humanities, which is the hardest hit. It must have been hard to enunciate the 113% proposed hike on deferred fees for prospective Humanities students. During question time, two journalists in the room ask different versions of the same question: Don’t you place much value in your own degree in the Humanities, Minister? To which the Minister of Education Dan Tehan answers that if only he had taken a second language, which in the newly proposed “architecture of higher education” will mean a slight discount on your Humanities degree. A second or third language is deemed a practical skill, beneficial in the workplace. The Humanities will cost more because they are now judged to be worth less. This ‘price signalling’, as journalists in the room called it, has not worked before, why should it now? The point, it would appear, is not whether or not it will dissuade prospective students, the point concerns the pre-emptive judgement on anticipated future value to be extracted from your degree, paid for through the current deferred debt system. Paid for, effectively, by your future capacity as a wage earner with sufficient tax income to return the debt owed. The coalition government’s Higher Education Bill was passed late afternoon on the 9th October 2020.³⁶

As argued above, the process of extracting resources is not just about the minerals we dig out of the ground, an activity historically tied with colonisation, slavery, and the racialization of indigenous peoples, it is also about how thoughts are extracted, refined, and returned to us as digestible platitudes, goods, services, and experiences. Value extraction can be applied to intellectual or cognitive labour. The Humanities generally accommodate those disciplines that enable a critical if not a constructive analysis of society and culture. It is in this disciplinary domain, furthermore, that a critical capacity tends to be inculcated, where students are trained to ask questions and make as few assumptions as possible, where unconscious bias can be interrogated, and what we value, and who we think we are can be brought under interrogation.

With the emergence of the Environmental Humanities, there is the realisation that these critical, as well as creative skills in imagining environment-worlds otherwise, can be brought into intimate material proximity with situated problems on the ground.³⁷ Less the intellectual exercise of discourse than discourse addressed to ethical and political concerns that are specific and situated, placing researchers in a quagmire of entangled relations of matter and meaning.

To think about what we are in the midst of becoming, I turn finally to Stengers and her ongoing collaboration with Debaise. Their methodological emphasis on the speculative gesture, challenges us to ask about history's other possible futures, ones that might be directed at more equitable environment-worlds where an emphasis is placed on connectedness and care, rather than disenfranchisement and destruction. They explain that a speculative gesture is performed as a way of giving rise to the possible, but the challenge is to address problems that are not false, to frame problems that identify something that is truly at stake. The speculative gesture is ethos and approach, both, and it seeks to explore modes of existence in their own setting, in relation to their successes and failures, and in contact with their immanent demands. This further requires acknowledging the thoroughgoing connectedness of all modes of existence, not leaving anything out. It is a daunting task, because how is it possible to avoid resorting to categories, abstraction, and processes of purification, which are such compelling aids in the organisation of both resources and thoughts? What Stengers and Debaise call for is a specific, concentrated attention to things, to a problem that calls out urgently to us. Stengers also composes a series of essays under the title *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting The Coming Barbarism*, where she draws attention to the global crises with which we are all too familiar today. By her conclusion she proffers, in place of barbarity, joy: "the joy of thinking and imagining together, with others, thanks to others."³⁸ It's a sliver of a possibility she opens up in what have now become truly extraordinary local and global environments where relations are attenuated in the extreme.

In Conclusion: Imagine an Epistemological Field

Imagine an epistemological field. As researchers we are required to position ourselves in a field in order to argue for the contribution we propose to make to that field. We operate much like explorers, surveying and classifying what we behold on our research travels. We assume our location as a (re)searching human subject, but what if we were to reorientate the long held assumption of our pre-eminence? A European enlightenment legacy assumes man's central role, and inevitable propulsion toward ever new knowledge across a vast field assumed to be available for territorialisation.

Let's return to Gregory's expedition into the Hamersley Range, which he names, as though they were newly emergent. This is his field, and in his report to the Governor he offers an account of what he has found there. He assumes his position. What does Gregory see when he encounters Country? He sees a colour coded map, the colours determined by perceived resources that correspond to a ledger that anticipates their future value. He makes provisional calculations in order to extract value from Country. What he sees is a landscape of available resources, over which he, as a representative of Empire, can claim unquestioned ownership. The Posthumanities demands instead that we acknowledge that there is a great deal that F. T. Gregory cannot see and does not see. One way to contend with the impossibility of our situation is what Yusoff calls a geo-poethics,³⁹ placing a material geological awareness together with an ethical poetics, the

ethos of which acknowledges the vast skein of intersectional lines we are all bound up within. To cope with this complex interconnectedness, where as much as possible must be ethically acknowledged, Donna Haraway offers what she calls “response-ability”, which as Stengers and Debaise explain is the capacity to be accountable for an action or an idea to those for whom the action or idea will have consequences.”⁴⁰ Specifically, Stengers and Debaise recommend speculative pragmatism as the art of response-ability.

To leave a discursive mark in a historical record, here in the specific location that is SAHANZ (Society of Architectural Historians Australia and New Zealand) and its yearly proceedings, is much like leaving behind a geological trace that patiently awaits a future to come. This is how the Anthropocene thesis is often dramatized, by speculating what our descendants in the year 2200 or 2500 might apprehend when encountering this damaged earth. Probably they will remember us as barbarians.⁴¹ To address such issues as the logic of extractivism in the disciplinary domain of the Architectural Humanities means reflecting upon what we think we are in the midst of doing. It requires extending a speculative gesture in order to sketch the outline of the moral of our earth stories and asking what else might be possible? What other practices might we foster instead? The outcome of our history making can have devastating as well as ameliorative effects. Citing James Baldwin and Margaret Mead, Yusoff argues that what we call history is sometimes a way of avoiding responsibility for what is happening to us.⁴² That is, again, to avoid response-ability, to not respond.

Multiple futures are held in suspense here, which future will eventuate, or else, which multiple futures as they pertain to any number of multiple modes of existence (individual and collective) will materialise, will depend on how adequately we frame our problems, how best we respond, and how responsibly we tell our tales.

Endnotes

¹ Etienne Turpin, “Who Does the Earth Think it is, Now? Introduction,” Etienne Turpin, ed., *Architecture in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Design, Deep Time, and Philosophy* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, Michigan Publishing, 2013), 3-10; Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stroemer, “The ‘Anthropocene’,” *Global Change Newsletter*. International Geosphere-Biosphere Program Newsletter, no. 41 (May 2000): 17-18. <http://www.igbp.net/download/18.316f18321323470177580001401/1376383088452/NL41.pdf> (accessed 17 March 2017).

² Minister for Education Dan Tehan, National Press Club Address. 19 June 2020.

See <https://ministers.dese.gov.au/tehan/minister-education-dan-tehan-national-press-club-address> (accessed 14 August 2020)

³ Donna Haraway (1991), *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991); Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 34.

⁴ Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 13.

⁵ Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, 21.

⁶ Laura Junka-Aikio and Catalina Cortes-Severino “Cultural Studies of Extraction,” *Cultural Studies*, (May 2017) Vol 31 Issue 2-3, 175-184, 177.

⁷ Junka-Aikio and Cortes-Severino “Cultural Studies of Extraction,” 177.

⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*, 2019.

⁹ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013; Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*, Cambridge: Polity, UK, 2019.

¹⁰ Rosi Braidotti, 2019, 13-14.

¹¹ Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, xii. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London: Routledge, 1970, 422.

¹² Gilles Deleuze, “A Philosophical Concept...,” *Who Comes After the Subject?* Eduardo Cadava, Peter Conner, Jean-Luc Nancy, eds (London: Routledge, 1991) 94-95. 95.

¹³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994

¹⁴ Isabelle Stengers and Didier Debaise, "The Insistence of Possibles: Towards a Speculative Pragmatism," *Parse Journal*, Issue 7 (Autumn 2017), 13-19. 15. <https://parsejournal.com/article/the-insistence-of-possibles%20%20A8-towards-a-speculative-pragmatism/> (accessed 26 June 2019).

¹⁵ Christoph Hein, "In Perth knallen die Korken," FAZ, 8 August 2020. Die Rekordpreise für Bodenschätze haben Profis, reichen Erben und Politikern eine Bonanza beschert. Nun werden Rufe laut, Australien solle höhere Lizenzgebühren für das Schürfen und Fördern verlangen <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/finanzen/finanzmarkt/rekordpreise-fuer-gold-und-erze-machen-investoren-reich-16895071.html?premium=0x9de5cd6fd722e58cc9d2b67bd7eb3821&GEPC=s5>

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/16/rio-tinto-repeats-apology-for-blasting-46000-year-old-rock-shelter-to-expand-mine> See also Rangi Hirini, "Rio Tinto responds to allegations they're 'not sorry' for Juukan Gorge destruction," NITV, 17 June 2020. <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2020/06/17/rio-tinto-responds-allegations-theyre-not-sorry-juukan-gorge-destruction>. Rio Tinto's apology can be found at https://www.riotinto.com/news/inquiry-into-juukan-gorge?gclid=Cj0KCQjws536BRDTARIAnUZ5-t1QpZ1bxMrMC6AB21X9IUPMnPgsBhcS4I-Ejsdaq-P3Cqc_Ero74aArBTEALw_wcB

¹⁷ Imre Szeman, "Oo the Politics of Extraction," *Cultural Studies*, 31: 2-3, 2017, 440-447. 441,

¹⁸ Szeman, 443

¹⁹ Szeman, 443.

²⁰ <https://www.riotinto.com/en/products/iron-ore>

²¹ Killian Plastow, " 'Astonishing revelation': Rio Tinto's Juukan Gorge explosion could have been avoided," *The New Daily*, 7 August 2020. <https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/finance-news/2020/08/07/rio-tinto-juukan-gorge-parliament/>

²² <https://www.investmentmagazine.com.au/2020/06/leadership-and-tough-decisions-at-juukan-gorge/>

²³ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamersley_Range:

F. T. Gregory, Northwestern Australia: Gregory's Expedition, *Empire*, Sydney NSW, 1850-1875, Friday 3 January 1852, p. 2.

²⁴ .T. Gregory, Northwestern Australia: Gregory's Expedition, p. 2.

²⁵ F. T. Gregory, Northwestern Australia: Gregory's Expedition, p. 2.

²⁶ <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gregory-francis-thomas-frank-3899>

²⁷ <https://ymac.org.au/tag/puutu-kunti-kurrama-pinikura-pkkp/>

²⁸ Yusoff, 72.

²⁹ Yusoff, 23.

³⁰ Hamish Hastie, "Juukan Gorge Destruction shines light on Aboriginal group 'gags'," *WA Today*, 10 August 2020. <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/juukan-gorge-destruction-shines-light-on-aboriginal-group-gags-20200807-p55jpd.html>

³¹<https://www.theleader.com.au/story/6775423/traditional-owners-lash-rio-heritage-claim/>; <https://www.katherinetimes.com.au/story/6775423/traditional-owners-lash-rio-heritage-claim/>

³² Peter Ker, "Rio Revelation 'deepen anguish' of traditional owners, *Financial Review*, 9 August 2020. <https://www.afr.com/companies/mining/rio-revelations-deepen-anguish-of-traditional-owners-20200808-p55jtv>

³³ Yusoff, 23.

³⁴ See <https://ministers.dese.gov.au/tehan/minister-education-dan-tehan-national-press-club-address>

³⁵ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-21/university-fees-overhaul-deregulation-key-difference/12372566>

³⁶ See <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-06/minority-support-for-higher-education-bill/12734980>; <https://campusmorningmail.com.au/news/tehan-funding-package-passes-senate/>

³⁷ See Stephanie LeMenager, "The Humanities After the Anthropocene," Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen and Michelle Niemann (eds), *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 473-481.

³⁸ Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism* (2015)

³⁹ Yusoff, 102.

⁴⁰ Stengers and Debaise, 2017, 17; Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (London: Open Humanities Press and Meson Press, 2016), 155-156.

⁴¹ Paul Crutzen and Christian Schwägerl cited by Kathryn Yusoff, "Anthropogenesis: Origins and Endings in the Anthropocene," *Theory, Culture and Society*, 33 (2) 2016 : 3-28. Paul Crutzen and Christian Schwägerl "Living in the Anthropocene: Toward a new global ethos," *Yale Environment 360* (January 24 2011). http://e360.yale.edu/feature/living_in_the_anthropocene_toward_a_new_global_ethos/2363/ (accessed 25 August 2020).

⁴² Yusoff, 25.