The e(thi)co-political aesthetics of 'designer water': 'becoming water' in the Anthropocene

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Abstract. *This essay attempts to affectively politicize the global condition of water in the context of 'designer capitalism' by calling on its commodification through a colonial discourse that romanticizes Nature to sell its 'bottled purity.' The ethical concerns of 'designer water' (bottled water) are raised within the broader agenda of ecosophy as inspired by Félix Guattari's last essay, The Three Ecologies. Designer water is explored in relation to Global and Modern Water proceeding to raise the question of 'multiple water ontologies' where indigenous water ontologies present further ethical and political issues within the Anthropocene era. I end with a section called 'becoming water' with an*

attempt to provide a pedagogical way to face the crisis of water in the Anthropocene based on the journey taken through this problematic.

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1. Introduction

When it comes to the Anthropocene, Félix Guattari's (2000) three ecologies - environmental, social and mental - which form an 'assemblage' (*agencement*); that is, a heterogeneous complex of interlocking, conjugated and transdisciplinary flows held together by desire through habituated patterns, currently dominated by what he called Integrated World Capitalism (IWC), or *Empire* by Michael Hardt and Tony Negri (2000). Throughout my own work and in this essay, what I am calling *designer capitalism* (i.e., jagodzinski, 2010). The environment cannot be thought outside these three-overlapping mental, social, and natural registers since the contemporary turn to natureculture was already in place with Guattari's ecological writings. The assemblage of such an eco-logic presents an opportunity to grasp and participate in what Guattari developed throughout his oeuvre as 'transversality,' the possibility of a dissensual culture for an imaginary other than the hegemonic market driven consensual techno-scientific postmodernism of designer commodities. As Guattari put it, 'Rather than looking for a stupefying and infantizing consensus, it will be a question in the future of cultivating a *dissensus* and the singular production of existence' (p.50, original emphasis). Such a 'deterritorialized aesthetic direction' (as alter-imaginaries) formed by ecological acts of micropolitical and microsocial dissent would cut across entire fields, bringing disciplines together in a new way, recreating them as some 'thing' else, so as not to give designer capitalism our unconscious consent. It is 'aesthetic' in the sense that the assemblages we are caught by are foremost affective forces that draw us in by the lifestyles offered that surround the 'agency' of the thing – the designer bottled beverage. 'We have to learn to make our thought traverse the interrelations and mutual influences between empty systems, the material world, social and individual relations' (Guattari 2000, p. 35). Water is the test case in this essay for such an approach; water as the *empty* signifier that holds the global eco-system in place - transparent, a source of renewal and rebirth, a blessing, a gift, and a human right - seemingly ubiquitous and abundant to those who have no need to be concerned about it, but progressively more and more under the control of globalized capital. Guattari's three ecological planes - the environment, social, and mental - form the remaining structure of this essay. I end with some projected conclusions where I attempt to project an assemblage of 'becoming water'

that riffs on Deleuze and Guattar's (1987) 'becoming-molecular,' which marks the conditions for the affirmation of a new subject position in relation to water and lays down a possible foundation for a different future regarding its value as a precious resource.

2. Global Politics of Water: Assemblages of the *Environmental* Material Plateau

Many analyses of the state of the global hydrocommons are sensitive to its de-colonization via indigenous interventions. In this section, the shift is simply to a broad outline of what the Canadian geologist Jamie Linton (2010) charted as the 'modernization 'of water (or Modern water) to eventually achieve its current state where PET bottled designer water became the apotheosis of such a hegemonic ontology. This is to say, designer capitalism's ability to bestow an exclusivity on a certain brand of water that is differentiated from 'tap' water, as well as from rivers, lakes, streams that are utilitarian, pedestrian and possibly polluted. As Linton makes clear Modern Water was 'worlded' or enacted as a process by Lavoisier in his Paris laboratory as that abstract, measurable and knowable chemical compound that has been deterritorialized, universalized and uniformed to morph into Global Water as an abstraction that is to be (im)possibly managed as it now becomes a commodified and quantified resource part of the world's total hydrological stocks and flows. Modern water has now morphed into 'Anthropocene water' (Neimanis 2017). It is now projected as a way for 'global water governance,' marking the Third Water Age (Gleick, 2010), which follows the Second Water Age characterized by massive physical interventions in the natural hydrolytic cycles (The First Water age was simply when water was stored and taken when needed and available). The intensified engineering of water aptly describing the impact this has had on the globe, confirming the anthropogenic impact on the earth's hydro-cycles that jumps us into this Third Age. The Global Water Systems Project, a promotion video for a conference called, Water in the Anthropocene held in Bonn, Germany in 2013, (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-TduHRocw8) provides the startling statistics for such dramatic changes: 800 million people live without safe drinking water, 2.4 billion lack adequate sanitation, and a further 1.7 billion live in areas where groundwater extraction is happening faster than the rate of replenishment. 48,000 large dams have been constructed worldwide that move more sediment that natural erosion and rivers. Two-thirds of all major river deltas are sinking while half of all wetlands in the word have been drained by human activity. Anthropocene water is not planetary NASA water. The frozen liquid on Mars presents yet another ontology, another imaginary

as to its futuristic properties, a cosmological engagement quite apart from what Lavoisier had started with the recognition that water was not its own element but composed of two hydrogen and one oxygen atom.

The four best-known major corporate players (Nestlé, Danone, PepsiCo, Coca-Cola) have global water control over the most precious of the four classical Greek elements: water, air, earth, fire. All have been commodified and controlled, if only by illusionary means. Earth, as territorialized land has been aestheticized and made open for sale as capitalist private property, designer soils proliferate for home gardening and agriculture, clay bodies for ceramics are in constant development; fire has been commodified through various technologies - from matches, BIC disposable lighters, to technologies of pyrolysis); air too has been packaged and compressed, its value as a resource magnified in India with the Covid-19 pandemic when no bottled oxygen was available to meet the need of their medical emergency. All this seems to take a backseat when it comes to water as global warming, where the continual rise of CO_2 levels has increased droughts, flooded, and dried up rivers, increased the rate of glacial melt, shrank wet-lands, and polluted water basins and lakes with trace pesticides, herbicides, heavy metals and plastics. The commodification of all these basic 'free' elements is inter- and intra-connected. Big agribusinesses (corporate farming) guzzle up most of the water through irrigation schemes that dam(n) up and drain river systems; raising cattle follows when it comes to inefficient land use and dung pollution in rivers and lakes. The San Joaquin Valley in California would return to desert conditions if it wasn't for irrigation schemes. Its vineyards and orchards would disappear. Add to this the burning of the Amazon rain forests that releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere by the mismanaged neoliberal economic policies of Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro. The Amazon Rainforest is now losing resilience as a sink for carbon storage (Boulton et al., 2022). The hydrologic rain cycle continues to degrade creating extreme flooding, not only in monsoon countries. All four life-sustaining elements are imploding, raising the earth's temperature. The global picture projected for 2050 is dire. Reassessing the United Nations World Water Development Report of 2018, Alberto Boretti and Lorenzo Rosa (2019) report shocking projected statistics that will see 6 billion peoples suffer from clean water scarcity. Their assessment of other ecological changes, especially to soils, grass-lands and wetland areas is equally dire. This is to say nothing as yet of the oceans (acidity, plasticity and desalination).

In 1995, Ismail Serageldin the World Bank's President for Environmentally Sustainable Development said that "the wars of the next century would be over

water, not oil" (http://www.serageldin.com/Water.htm). UN Secretary General
Kofi Annan, six years later, stated in a press release to the Association of Amer-
ican Geographers that "fierce competition over freshwater may become a source
of conflict and wars in the future." Ban Ki-Moon, his successor, in a *Washington
Post* editorial, wrote: "Darfur is an environmental crisis a conflict that grew at
least in part from desertification, ecological degradation and a scarcity of re-
sources, foremost among them water." The *Dune* scenario, directed in 1984 by
David Lynch based on Frank Herbert's 1965 sci-fi novel, is already with us as
protests and skirmishes to make water an environmental human rights are in full
force extended to rivers. The paradigm case, often cited, is New Zealand granting
the legal status of personhood to the Whanganuui River, a recognition of the
Māori social relations to it as a living 'being,' as well as "recognition of its ele-
mental and cultural value" (Hawke 2022, p. 6). This is (arguably) an example of
how "decentering the role of humans in water governance involves acknowledg-
ing the rights of water itself" (Wilson and Inkster, 2018, p.531). Such a relational
ethics of the Ngai Tahu's (a Māori *iwi* tribe) engagement with the Hurunui River
in Aotearoa, New Zealand has been articulated by Amanda Thomas (2015, 2017),
and is taken up in the next to last section of this essay. In the Canadian context,
Green leaders such as Maude Barlow (2005) helped found the Blue Planet Project
(https://www.blueplanetproject.net/) (BPP), an initiative by the Council of Ca-
nadians. It is an organization committed to supporting global grassroots struggles
for the right to water under the slogan "water is life." BPP is part of the 2022
Alternative World Water Forum to globally seek for water justice. The Canadians
Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke (2002) were involved in the Blue Gold initiative
that raised awareness of the corporate theft of the world's water by the 'big four'
companies. Clarke (2007) went on to write the first comprehensive attempt to
critically analysis the social, political, and environmental impact of the bottled
water industry in Canada and the United States (*Inside the Bottle*). He became the
founder and director of the Polaris Institute, organizing conferences and meet-
ings to draw public awareness through articles and public speaking as to what is
happening to water rights globally. Fortunately, there are legitimate organizations
like the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP) (https://www.essp.org/) who
have a comprehensive reach with other organizations for a future earth, projects
that include water issues (Global Water System Project - GWSP) and Monsoon
Asia Integrated Study (MAIRS) as well as projects regarding carbon, food and
health.

Such committed leaders are invaluable, but it was a 'lowly' Bolivian machinist-turned-union activist, Oscar Olivera, who, in protest at water privatization in his country ("Cochabamba Water Wars") organized La Coordinadora de Defensa de! Agua y de la Vida' and started the *first* water war in the year 2000 against the World Bank and Betchel, a giant San Francisco engineering company (Olivera and Lewis, 2004). Latin America has been the site of the most intense struggles against the privatization of water since the so-called "Washington Consensus" model of development that advocated the wholesale adoption of deregulations, privatization and unregulated free trade (Barlow and Clarke, 2002). In the 1980s, the World Bank targeted the developing counties of Latin America to adopt these neoliberalist policies in exchange for debt relief. Foremost, in Argentina under the public privatization policies of President Carlos Menem, and then in Bolivia, Brazil, and Uruguay, the privatization of water has caused nothing but grief. In the Peruvian Andean Highlands similar clashes between differing water ontologies take place: Andean societies 'hydrocosmological cycle' is at odds with the governmentality that is being imposed on them (Boelens, 2014). Climate change has further intensified such ontological disjunctions in the Peruvian Andeas (Stensrud, 2016). We now weep for the devastation of Amazon rain forests and the indigenous peoples whose cultures are being obliterated.

Perhaps a paradigm example of water justice is the case of India. A five-year protest and struggle by the community of Plachimada in Kerala against Coca-Cola, who set up a bottling plant in the year 2000 sets the scene (Berglund and Helandser, 2015). Within a year, the groundwater started to decline and the wells became polluted. Despite the protests and the support of the local government, which denied the renewal of the plant's license, Coca-Cola was able to have this decision overruled in 2005 by two judges of the same court who then enabled Coca-Cola to have use of the water over the local government's right to regulate it. The state government took its appeal to the Supreme Court. Finally, on August 9, 2006, the Supreme Court of India ruled in their favor. The government of Kerala was able to ban the production of Coca-Cola and Pepsi in the state as it was also found that the bottled soft drinks contained pesticide residues 24 times higher than the European Union standards and those proposed by India's own Bureau of lndian Standard (BIS). Many states across India followed suit. In 2017, over a million traders in India boycotted 'fizzy drinks' including Coca-Cola and Pepsi for exploiting the country's water resources to manufacture their bottled drinks. However, that is perhaps only the start of the story, since Coca-Cola rallied as mentioned earlier, with their campaign of 'giving every drop back' (https://www.coca-colacompany.com/sustainability/water-stewardship)

although, by all accounts, this is a myth, as Arjen Hoekstra, the creator of the water footprint, showed before his sudden death (MacDonald, 2018).

South Africa is one more continent to end this section on Guattari's global environmental plateau where the abstraction of Global Water is in play. Since apartheid ended in 1994, it has also become a hotbed of civil unrest, especially in Soweto in 2000, as the poor were unable to pay for the water at prepaid water dispensers. Every Afrikaner household in Johannesburg was then allowed 6000 liters of 'free' water per month. After that they had to pay for it. Even if people couldn't pay, the constitution guaranteed them a minimum of water to sustain life. The Suez water company met this obligation by installing water pipes known as *'tricklers,'* a suitable name for taps that drip water a drop at a time 24/7 to fulfill this mandated law of survival, frustrating the collecting of water (Docherty, 2006). Patrick Bond (2020), for example, examines the sanitation rules and regulations that emerged due to drought conditions, focusing on Durham as a paradigm example to find the 'perfect toilet.' The situation worsened in 2018 when South Africa was hit with a terrible drought. Three years of drought left Cape Town on the verge of an unimaginable abyss. In March of 2018, Cape Town was going to be the first city to run out of drinking water: 'Day Zero,' as it was called, the point where the municipal water supply was to be cut off. Its citizenry was asked to cut half of their already reduced water consumption from 50 liters per day to 25. The good fortune of rain and citizenry efforts to institute water saving measures staved off the day's coming by consciously changing habits of water use. Water saving initiatives meant 2 min. showers, flushing toilets only when necessary, reducing the city's water pressure, recycling water, redirecting farming water into the city, and no more swimming pools! As a result of this near disaster, the Institute of Water Modelling (IWM) now tries to establish a universal set of ethical principles making water subject to 'common' ownership and not the marketplace. IWM became committed to the equal distribution and conservation of water since it is no longer a renewable resource, a global institution which wants to maintain water quality and democratize it in the hands of communities and not governments nor corporations.

3. The *Social Relations* Plateau of Water Assemblages

The theme 'water is life' appears to be an all-pervasive catch phrase when it comes to Global Water. This becomes a 'contested zone' to forward an ecological economic message to secure the support of NGOs as well as 'ethically branded water' companies so that consumers can donate as well as 'drink' with a good

moral conscience, knowing that part of the company's profits will be directed toward water-related charitable causes. These marketing strategies, referred to as cause-related marketing (CRM) are an old ploy to offset intense negative publicity that the industry has had with its PET bottle pollution. Like Coca-Cola's 'give back every drop' campaign, Buying Thirst Aid Water means knowing that a percentage of their profits are directed to clean water projects in Africa or Asia. Bottled water as a political object in this assemblage is complex since this niche sector of designer water is small in comparison to the big four companies mentioned above. 'Ethical water' is usually started by people who have a clear moral agenda and passion to make a difference. Peter Gleik (2010, p.163ff.), for example, provides the background that drove Peter Thum to start Ethos Water and Kori Chilibeck to found the Canadian company called Earth Water. Chilibeck introduced a corn-based biodegradable bottle in 2007, claiming to donate 100 percent of its net profits to developing countries. Charting a CEO's personal narrative becomes part of the brand itself, as does disseminating statistical data, images of impoverished African villages, celebrity endorsements as ambassadors, business sponsors and NGOs. Gleik provides a list of 'ethical bottled water' along with a summation of their charitable contributions, websites, activities and the countries of origin: the three being UK, US, and Canada. Examples include: Frank Water, One Water and Global Ethics, Belu Spring Water, Aquaid Ltd., Ethos Water, Earth Water International, Thirsty Planet, Athena Bottled Water and Nika Bottled Water). Gay Hawking et al. (2015, p.193) discusses corporations who engage with Cause-Related Marketing (CRM), such as the Australian company Mount Franklin and Coca-Cola Amatil (CCA). These two-business models intentionally make themselves ethically visible to show off their 'good work,' biopolitically and socially when it comes to global water issues. Such a strategy of green capitalist practice of 'social responsibility' mimics Coca-Cola's 'drop' campaign style.

In relation to Guattari's ecological call for a dissensus, the attempt here is to refigure political action by explicitly providing the consumer with a moral choice rather than simply refusing wholesale to drink designer water or to position choice as a purely individual calculation. Consumption becomes a virtue, of generosity, and the concern for the Other. One Water has the slogan: "When you drink One, the world dinks too." Duncan Goose, its CEO states: "People have recognized that water is water; why wouldn't you opt to buy a brand that changes people's lives? […] These ethical brands enable consumers to make political gesture without effort *and* without explicitly identifying with an activist counterpublic; these gestures also offer translocal connections and scale shifting: choosing here reverberates there" (Hawkins et al., 2015, p. 191).

There is a downside to this. In Astrida Neimanis' (2017, 178-179) view, charitable organizations like WATERisLIFE (https://www.waterislife.com/), whose mission is to provide clean water, sanitation and hygiene programs focused in Africa, end up repeating racist discourses of white saviourism of gendered brown bodies. While the UN Conference on Sustainable Development campaign: 'The Future We Want: Drop by Drop' does much the same through its call for Drop by Drop Image contest. The winner's (!) copy reads, 'Wasting water will kill the future/Change begins at home.' The image "featured a hand (the body out of view) holding a blue (water?) gun, pointed at the head of a white, cherubic baby [an image] drenched in heteronormativity and family values, saturated by straight time and a progress narrative of messianic future orientation" (Neimanis, 2017, p.181). The issues with the bottled ethical water are more subtle as they coverup or 'erase' the consumption of a 'demonized product' by empowering the consumer to make a 'choice' which is 'no choice.' Which is to say, the informed consumer citizen is said to make the 'better' choice rather than not choosing designer water at all to feel that something worthwhile is accomplished. The obvious 'truth' is that it seems ridiculous to pay for designer water when you can get it 'free' from the tap, *but*, then you are not given an opportunity to help solve the World Water Crisis. You are not part of the 'solution.' If you *are* going to drink bottled water, then make a *difference*. In this way the unsustainable market-based practice of designer water remains intact.

A variant of ethically bottled designer water, often mentioned for its usual affective impact, also performs a dissensus but one, like the above examples, 'claws' back its effects and offsets the often contingent and situational anti-bottle activism. It specifically targets the single-serve PET 'bottle' as the source of plastic environmental devastation. Anti-bottle campaigns problematize any clear distinction between consumers and publics as they appeal to both at once. Gay Hawkins et al. (2015, 149ff) reviews the anti-bottle activism of the Polaris Institute, mentioned earlier, a Canadian NGO (https://www.polarisinstitute.org/) whose campaign slogan, 'Inside the Bottle' has proven to be resilient and effective. Do Something, an Australian-based organization (also known as the Bottled Water Alliance) ran a campaign centered on bringing back water fountains into vogue at pedestrian malls. The new assemblage around state-of-the-art water fountain technology that facilitated easy refilling of pedestrians' own bottles enabled a public 'commons' to be established, a new habit of sharing a resource that reevaluated public drinking water and drastically reduced the buying of bottled water as the act of drinking from the same 'well' established a new ethical public space.

In terms of dissensus on the social scale, it is Brita's 2008 Filter For Good Campaign (https://www.brita.com/intl/), which has drawn the most attention, and is often cited in the literature for its impact. It alone has been able to change dramatically the perception of the materiality of the PET bottle, its material contents transformed in its campaign to promote and sell water filters. Its advertisement campaign can be seen as an *assemblage breaker*, an ontological disturbance (or n-1), as it generates an affect which metamorphizes the PET bottle onto an object of abject. The image is that of an ambiguously young man wearing a white-T shirt or an ambiguously young girl wearing a White-T string top drinking oil, which is flowing from their mouths on and down their T-shirts as if they were vomiting it. The text is blunt and matter-of-fact as it states statistically the amount of oil used to make the plastic water bottle. The consumer is asked to make a virtuous choice between filter use or, again, a single-use bottle. When viewers were directed to the Brita water filter company site the information reiterated the anti-bottle activism as to plastic hazards. The invitation was to 'take the pledge' to use filtered water rather than PET bottles as the more sustainable drinking choice. Bottled 'pure' organic water was transubstantiated into oil, collapsing the imaginary life-worlds as constructed by the industry. Oil becomes 'magically' the abjected substance that was disguised as plastic. It has been unveiled for what it is (Hawkins, 2009).

The ambiguity between the politics of consumption and the politics of public 'good' appear as this human-nonhuman assemblage presented the 'matter' of plastic in another unexpected associative form that carried its effect as a pollutant. It all weighs down on the Anthropocene, quite distinct from the critical campaigns of the Polaris Institute, which relies on statistics, experts, scholarly articles, and conferences for its informational appeal to empower an issues public. As Hawkins (2011) maintains, Brita's campaign is a paradigm example of a 'hybrid-market' forum that mobilizes the affective modulation of vital materialism (cf. Bennett, 2009; Connolly, 2017) creating in the process an 'infrapublic'. Like the ethical bottle business model, Brita's advocacy for the use of water filters is able to get a market share into the industry and gain superiority by amplifying the uncertainty about the quality of tap water, in many situations, not an unreasonable justification when it comes to excessive amounts of iron and calcium. A Take Back the Filter campaign (http://www.takebackthefilter.org/) was launched against Brita in Canada, which ended up Brita recycling its filters by teaming up with Preserve Company that recycled plastic products. As such, it restructured its campaign by pulling the ads and generating a number of videos to promote its anti-bottled water pledge.

4. Mental Ecological Plateau; *Multiple Water Ontologies*

In his chapter on 'hydrolectics,' Linton (2010) outlines the practice of social hydrology that "conceives of a water process out of which particular instances of water get fixed or instantiated in social relations" (p.223.) Hydrolectics is a recognition of how a particular assemblage is formed around an imaginary that shapes a particular ontology as to what water 'is.' In other words, water as an empty signifier is imbued with particular values and qualities. Elsewhere Lintion (2019) writes: "Publicly-owned and managed water system is constitutionally different from the commercial water distributed and sold in individual bottles" (p.54). In one sense he is right, and in another sense, he is mistaken. If there are 'multiple ontologies of water' (Yates et al., 2017) with multiple assemblages that are formed through the desire that holds a particular ontology or 'worlding' together then the complexity of the hydrocommons has increased.   Throughout this long exposé on designer water and its affective force in relation to the larger Global Water crisis the political and ethical issues are always in play in the assemblages of 'water worlds' that are formed (Barnes and Alatout, 2012; Hastrup and Hastrup, 2016). In this section the difficult question concerning the indigenous relationship to water needs to be raised as issues of postcolonialism imbued throughout the Anthropocene are vividly exposed (Sundberg, 2014). This comes towards the end of this paper as it directly confronts the difficulties of 'multiple ontologies of water' (often referred to as the 'anthropological turn') that are on display throughout the journey I have taken. The clash between indigenous 'being-with-water' as opposed to Modern Water (Hawke and Spanning, 2022; Linton, 2010) as a natural source to be managed or commodified is not about to go away, and it forms a global struggle for water governance by indigenous peoples with the grounding of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (tellingly and shamefully abstained by Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US at the time, 2007). Marlowe Sam and Jeannette Armstrong (2013) provide a succinct overview of its grounding and the global struggles over water rights and governance that have taken place since, which is constantly evolving.

The recognition of a 'multiple ontologies' position confronts any possibility that there is one overarching ontology that would make manageable the global crisis of water. Julian Yates et al. (2017) outline this difficulty by referring to ontological processes that shape the hydro-ontological contestation of water governance within the province of British Columbia, Canada, opening up ontological conjunctures and disjunctures between provincial (settler-colonial) regulations and indigenous 'water-as-lifeblood,' described by a place-based, rights-producing ontology. Aboriginal elders describe water as 'earth veins.' It is a 'living being,' a

more-than-human entity with its own agential character. 'The Elders believe water is alive or biotic. It has a living spirit […]. Water still has […] a special fundamental place in the First Nations' ecosystem—it is at its heart, since it provides the "blood of life"' (Blackstock, 2001, p. 12). Such an ontology enhances rather than undermines drinking water requirements. It prioritizes source-water protection against its pollution and mistreatments. In this view, there is no 'distance' to be had cognitively and spatially as to its source, completely opposed to the Modern Water notion of 'end-of-the-pipe' treatment. Nicole Wilson and Jody Inkster (2018), in a further study, provide a 'political ontology' of four Yukon First Nations in the Canadian North to 'decolonize water.' Through interviews with no less than 27 elders, they elaborate how the term 'respect', along with responsibility, reciprocity and relationality define the values that govern their being-with-water, and the ceremonies which reiterate such a relationship confirming that water is 'more-than-human person' (p.517). This ontological turn has generally ignored intracommunity, and, in particular, intergenerational differences, as it is most often elders who possess traditional knowledge. There are several attempts to specify women's roles as Elders in water ontologies (Anderson et al., 2013; Blackstock, 2001), something which raises unexplored questions as presented below.

The literature is extensive and far reaching when it comes to the tensions between indigeneity and settler ontologies. What is striking is how to approach the complex diversity of multiple indigenous ontologies without overly generalizing. This suggests that the 'singularity' of a "kincentric' ecological assemblage (Salmón, 2000) provides perhaps the 'safest' response to grasp the changing forces and relationships in play. Often such specificity of situatedness that avoids any over-reach quickly extends to the necessity of nothing less than the recognition of equal nationhoods, furthering any easy resolutions as there are none to be readily had. The tendency of scholars who do not identify themselves as First Nations (a term used in the Canadian context which includes Métis and Inuit (oddly the Dene Nation is rarely mentioned), Aboriginal, or Indigenous (as used by the UN charter) tend to be upfront in their disclaimers as the identity politics are difficult to negotiate. They proceed cautiously, navigating their positions of reconciliation. Those scholars who belong to the *minoritarian position*, in Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) terms, which is not attributed to numbers but to resistance and struggle, qualify representational specificity of their identity by land, treaty, tribe, and clan as a point of pride and honour in relation to their ancestral heritage. It is in the 'messy' space of in-between these ontologies where gains and losses over water rights are made. In the literature of reconciliation around water there are attempts made to see where the mutual conjunctions between ontologies can take place

so that a mutual respect can take place. Co-management is the usual solution, which requires mutual co-learning. The interconnections of ontology happen where water-as lifeblood overlaps water governance approaches that are based on watershed and source protection rather than the end-of-pipe technologies. This solution to achieve sustainability of drinking water and does not disturb the question whether water is an 'animate being.'

We now arrive at the more moot questions regarding these multiple ontologies. The 'new animism' (e.g., Abram, 1996; Harvey, 2005) 'rights of nature' that has emerged is criticized by many indigenous-Métis scholars who accuse this development as a form of appropriation (Todd, 2016), but there are attempts at reconciliation (Rosiek, et al., 2020). Further, the vitalism that is pervasive throughout the posthumanities, so-called 'new materialisms,' has been (as shown) cleverly appropriated as the 'vitalism' of life itself - for health - as peddled by designer water. *This is not a question of kind but degree and is consonant with 'water-as-lifeblood'.* Fundamentally, multiple water ontologies present ethico-political choices with water's 'agential' force changing in each assemblage chosen. The water rights activist, Josephine Mandamin, an Anishinaable elder, celebrated as the "Grandmother Water Walker" for her hydrosocial practice around Lake Superior as the gesture of 'responsibility' to Mother Earth as a giver of life, had a very specific order of ritual daily enactments. In water management laboratories around the world who carry out experimentation with Modern Water, a specific order of ritual enactments is carried out as well, especially when it comes to experimental nanotechnologies for drinking water. To extend this to designer water, there are also laboratory protocols for developing better disposable plastic bottles, or reusable ones which use less plastic (e.g., V*ittel*® GO system). The point being that ontological difference in thought and belief is not intrinsic to the person or the 'thing' itself. The relations and *performative* practices of the assemblage (the apparatuses included as in the protocols of ritual be it in the laboratory, a NASA experiment in search of water in space, or a lake 'walk' where a specific copper pail is used, tobacco ritually offered, and an eagle staff daily cleaned) is what 'matters.' Epistemologies (traditional 'knowledge', scientific 'knowledge') pervade these ecologies, as do both an ethics and an aesthetics. The assemblage 'creates' the 'thing' (water), in each differently. Yet neither indigenous peoples nor scientists know entirely just what water 'is.' There is only the belief in its impact on health and survival as performed in the embraced assemblage. That said, the *materiality* of water (as Nature) cannot simply be dismissed: it 'is' after all an 'entity' of some sort, which cannot be grasped or fully known. To dismiss this claim leaves us with 'floating' (groundless) simulacra: be it Jean Baudrillard's (1975) variety or Karen Barad's (2007) 'agential realism,' or as 'powers of the false' as

Deleuze (1989) would say. So, we are indeed 'left' with a cosmological question pervasive throughout the Anthropocene: How are we to live on this planet in relation to 'entangled' Nature? An ethical and politically contested question that will not go away since it is fundamental to the problematic of this era.

5. Becoming Water?

As an educator for art and media pedagogy, I am compelled to end this essay in a hopeful direction rather than leaving the reader on the cliff of the closing sentence of the last paragraph. Pedagogically the task is to compel a change in the visual imagination and symbiotic attachment to water. In other words, to intervene in the established assemblages in such a way so that a wider attunement is possible to other assemblages which open up and provide new qualities and characteristics of water in new contexts. This is not to say any one of us are able to 'escape' from the assemblages that already define us. "Becoming indigenous" has raised the ire of First Nations as yet other forms of appropriation (Chandler and Reid, 2019). Rather, a *positionality* is required where learning happens from the 'outside' by attuning to ontological differences that affect us so as to be able to go 'outside' ourselves. This is to follow Deleuze's (1997) Nietzschean materialism; 'to be done with judgment.' It becomes a question of feel and aesthetics to sustain conflicting views of water ontologies.

Such a position of attunement to the assemblages that one is embedded in and to other assembles of possibility are what I would call 'becoming water' (following Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming animal,1987). But there is a danger here. 'Ecology,' Guattari wrote, 'must stop being associated with the image of a small nature-loving minority or with qualified specialists' (2000, p. 52). Mystical nature, as a re-enchantment of the earth, can be marshaled as a 'countering discourse' (see Cohen, 1994; Conley, 1997) to the Romanticization of Nature as mobilized by the designer companies, but to what degree? The new 'science' of animism makes evident that water in trees contracts and responds to lunar cycles. Its crystal make-up will change according to different kinds of music that are played. Angry talk at water engenders a different crystal formation, while plant life and its colors change according to the molecular crystal formation of the water that they drink. Such anthropomorphic thinking enables one to imagine what is going on when coral reefs become bleached and lose color as instances of environmental 'suffering.' Such 'mystical' findings require us to pause in the way natureculture are intimately woven in the strange way deep ecology and indigenous people's intuitive understandings meet in the recesses of unknowable Nature.

'Becoming water' allows the human to imagine life from an inhuman perspective as 'impersonal matter,' physiologically changing our bodily feeling towards how the 'outside' affects us. To 'see' in Deleuze's Nietzschean sense is to experience the moment of learning as an attunement to the disruption taking place to one's material entanglement; it means to suspend judgment of those instincts and aims before acting on them. This requires experiencing the 'impersonality' of ourselves rather than simply affirming who we already believe ourselves to be (see Orlie, 2010). The Swedish eco artist Henrik Hakansson (Andrews, 2004), influenced by Deleuze and Guattarian theory, attempts to decenter human perception through installations like Sweet Leaf (2000) where alliances with the non-human (in this case birds and insects) are formed. By calling on a wide range of eco-artists who are generating enormous amounts of exemplary performances and installations to help sensitize the public specifically to the water "issue."

The greenmuseum's website (greenmuseum.org) yields an astonishing array of practicing artists from all over the world whose multiplicity in their singularities form a 'becoming water' sensibility. Many specifically work with water - be it with oceans, beaches and fishes, bacteria, stream systems, ponds, river systems, wetlands, and deserts where water is lacking. This host of artists offers many ideas for site-specific installations, agit-prop performances and ritual approaches to water as stepping-stones for opening the environmental imagination to the 'multiple water ontologies' that are in circulation within multiple assemblages. Educators can utilize this 'multitude of visions and approaches' to further students' sensibilities to dissolve the natureculture divide in the search for a more symbiotic, gentle and complex vision for the Anthropocene. This has already been the initiative by early childhood educators who now use the moniker 'childhoodnature' to forward their pedagogical initiates (Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles et al., 2020). Such an array of artists also counters romanticized nature and introduces new imaginings and new fantasies as to surrounding an ethical and political relationship with the earth's ecospheres, counteracting the new exotic fantasies to market water that are equally available. Richard Wilk (2006), for example, had 25 marketing professionals at a major U.S. business school generate brilliant new exploitative possibilities for designer water within the brief time of fifteen minutes! This *studium* approach (I am using the German word to suggest that the studio must be contextualized to social issues and concerns outside the confined space of the artist's work-place and the school room) is one part of a necessary two-part approach to 'ruin' the representation of water developed by designer capitalism.

While this pedagogical turn establishes counter-possibilities as to our relationship with water, it is necessary that a further pedagogical strategy be developed alongside it so as to directly attack the symbolic system, to empty it of desire and further ruin representation. This second pedagogical tactic is the obvious semiological deconstruction of idealized Nature (the patter) as represented by the design of the labels, on designer water Internet sites, the pseudo-science that surrounds the processes, and so on. But more specifically, it must combat the *technological imagination* (more pointedly the *technocratic imagination* and the symbolic capital it offers) that has been set up as a solution to global warming and Global Water management. It seems that such a task has only just started.

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