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"Raven, Dog, Human: Inhuman Colonialism and Unsettling Cosmologies"

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As capitalism's unintended, and often unacknowledged, fallout, humans have developed sophisticated technologies to squirrel away our discards: waste is buried, burned, gasified, thrown into the ocean, and otherwise kept out-of-sight and out-of-mind. Some inhuman animals seek out and uncover our wastes. These "trash animals" choke on, eat, defecate, are contaminated with, play games with, have sex on, and otherwise live out their lives on and in our formal and informal dumpsites. In southern Canada's sanitary landfills, waste management typically adopts a "zero tolerance" approach to trash animals. These culturally sanctioned (and publicly funded) facilities practice diverse methods of "vermin control." By contrast, within Inuit communities of the Eastern Canadian Arctic, ravens eat, play, and rest on open dumps by the thousands. In this article, we explore the ways in which western and Inuit cosmologies differentially inform particular relationships with the inhuman, and "trash animals" in particular. We argue that waste and wasting exist within a complex set of historically embedded and contemporaneously contested neo-colonial structures and processes. Canada's North, we argue, is a site where differing cosmologies variously collide, intertwine, operate in parallel, or speak past each other in ways that often marginalize Inuit and other indigenous ways of knowing and being. Inheriting waste is more than just a relay of potentially indestructible waste materials from past to present to future: through waste, we bequeath a set of politically, historically, and materially constituted relations, structures, norms, and practices with which future generations must engage. (Text from authors' abstract)

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