

Nomad - Editorial Essay

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The word nomad, etymologically from the Greek word for pasture, evokes images of a pastoral landscape, a culture that relocates periodically, and suggests also that people's movement might occur in accordance with "rhythms of the landscape." Nomadic cultures, particularly those which survive today in the face of increasing cultural homogeneity, have long held a fascination for more settled cultures. NOMAD is not however, an anthropological investigation of differing nomadic cultures and their representation. Rather, the use of nomad as a theme for this issue provides the opportunity to conceive of the idea of nomad more broadly through themes of travel, movement, memory, displacement, imposition of boundaries and ideas about home, Diaspora and belonging. The nomad is at once the versatile intellectual, the wandering revolutionary, the environmental studies student, the cyber junky, the canoe tripper, and so on. His or her engagement with language, thought, praxis and interaction relates to differing notions about stillness, fixedness or movement through particular spaces. As revealed by Deleuze and Guattari, Nomadism extends our subjectivity through an understanding of the rootless self that both informs and is informed by the spaces of becoming.

The delineation between the nomadic and the fixed gives way when thinking about movement more generally. One could consider the ways in which technological devices virtually transport us from one space to another, or how the global commodity market and the politics of space affect the ability and freedom of people to move as they please. Geographical movements are not necessarily occasioned by choice. War, genocide, exile, deportation, or displacement caused by famine, drought, and disasters (such as the recent tsunami in Southeast Asia) provide us with further understanding of nomadic tendencies, broadening our understanding of who can be considered a nomad.

In his paper, *Towards a 'Nomadcity': Embodied Movement in the Modern Metropolis*, Jay Worthing makes meaning out of geography, place, and space. The concept 'nomad' necessitates envisioning locations and boundaries, differentiating here from there and placing human beings and their movements in relation to landscape and to language. Bruce Erickson's work, *Mapping Security: Writing the Trace of Nation*, presents an understanding of the written word as augment to the spoken word and the map as a supplement to our interaction with nature. The nomadic quality of representation cannot be overlooked. Nomad forever reveals itself in the vicissitudes that elude signification. Nature is always on the move and an understanding of nature is correspondingly fluid.

This year, the nomadic theme is particularly timely as the Faculty of Environmental Studies, in which UnderCurrents is situated, moved into a new building on the York University campus. Since the move, faculty and students have engaged in a number of projects aimed at 'transforming space into place'. Through the creation of murals, the growing of indoor plants and the installation of banner-like hand-knit scarves, students and faculty seek to create a sense of community as we move in and out of our daily appointments, classes, and meetings. As this year's graduates move on and next year's students move in, we witness further transience and are left with the continuing reconsideration of how the achievement of inclusion and the creation of 'place' can occur.

Many thanks to all who contributed to NOMAD: to those whose submissions follow, to those in layout and editing and to members of the editorial board and the editorial collective. Enjoy your journey as you voyage through UnderCurrents' volume 14, NOMAD.