

# UnderCurrents

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Nomad

## UnderCurrents

journal of critical environmental studies

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UnderCurrents is an independent non-profit journal of critical environmental studies. We publish creative and critical writing and artwork that explores the relationships between nature, society and self. We openly and explicitly provide space for discussions of 'environment' which challenge the conventional boundaries and assumptions of academia and environmental discussion. UnderCurrents is produced by an editorial collective that employs a collaborative editing, design and distribution process to support the publication of each issue.

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# Nomad - Editorial Essay

by Kathy Raddon, Lindsay Trevelyan, Clarine Lee and Marvin Macaraig

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.

# UnderCurrents

Journal of Critical Environmental Studies

Vol. 14

NOMAD



Cowgirls, photo composition, Sarnia French

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untitled site-specific installation, big bluestem grass (*Andropogon gerardii*) Karen Abel



## rural route millennium

by sarah pinder

the quiet explosions of fireworks from town  
pop hollow and high  
in sugared colour above the empty pasture  
where we stand together

the dog is whining behind us  
running half moons into hard packed snow  
through frozen shit and hay  
and just as I'm about to turn around to calm him  
I realize that my grandmother can't hear  
the rusted rattle, the keening  
maybe not even the dynamite blasts  
in our sky  
she stands pigeon-toed in purple duck boots and  
the brown barn coat  
her hands, limp out of the pockets

she gazes up patiently  
woken from her blue-lit lay-zee-boy  
and waiting for the sign to turn away  
the hand at her shoulder to give direction  
back up the plywood steps  
through the undershirt ghosts  
frozen on the clothesline

her slack-jaw static eclipses  
the smeared, streaking lights  
my grandmother  
between channels  
tilts like the satellite saucer on the lawn  
tentatively, towards heaven

j'oublie

Shudder up to gate bones skin eyes wrecked by virulence. At the crossing, shake out her umbrella and wait for passings to turn, her turn. Surroundings straight ocular: dentist, hitching post, wide-ledge 1/2 house on left. By memory, water having damaged directions'scraw. Store with foods of variety, besides, beside. Closed station across left. Empty space ragweed and goldenrod and white clover cross right and back one more lot. Danger shack back corner photographer's ally. Stairs directly across, narrow in breadth, if not length. Connected here to eatery; wide spaces for sitting on stop of steps to side. Mosaic, small, on either side of the door, mason's doing. Her consideration is stairs here, as much as is crossing, a looker getting looks oblivious, stride unfeminine yet, daring to doctpgiven to sinners and like women. Bag in hand.

clean window

the eventual  
deterioration  
of the street,

women.  
shudder up to gates shudder bones skin eyes wrecked by virulence, at the crossing, shake out her umbrella and wait for passings to turn, her turn, surroundings soft ocular: dentist, hitching post, wide-ledge 1/2 house on left. by memory, water having damaged directions'scraw. store with foods of variety besides, beside. closed station across left. empty space ragweed and goldenrod and white clover cross right and back one more lot deep. danger shack back corner photographer's ally stairs directly across, narrow in breadth, if not length, connected here to eatery; wide spaces for sitting on stop of steps to side. mosaic, small, on either side of the door, mason's doing. her consideration is as much as is crossing, a looker getting looks oblivious, stride unfeminine yet, daring to doctpgiven to sinners and like women.

oublier

clean me

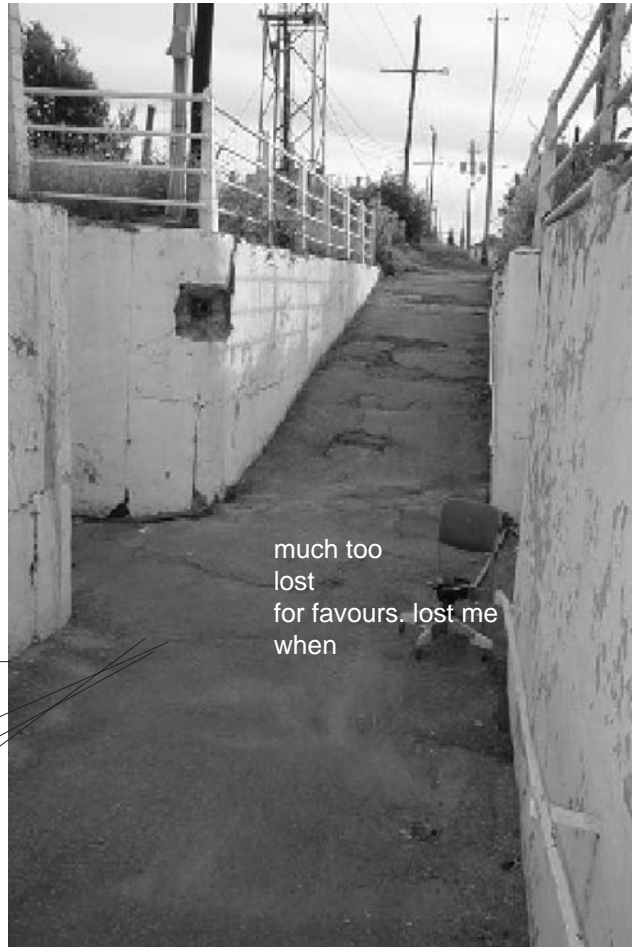


Pieces taken

(walls of their lights and brackets

an itchy dust in letters  
When they fail. it is prime  
laqueur, spackle in their finish;  
it is descent  
reforming when abducted  
for chisel, pressing, materiel.

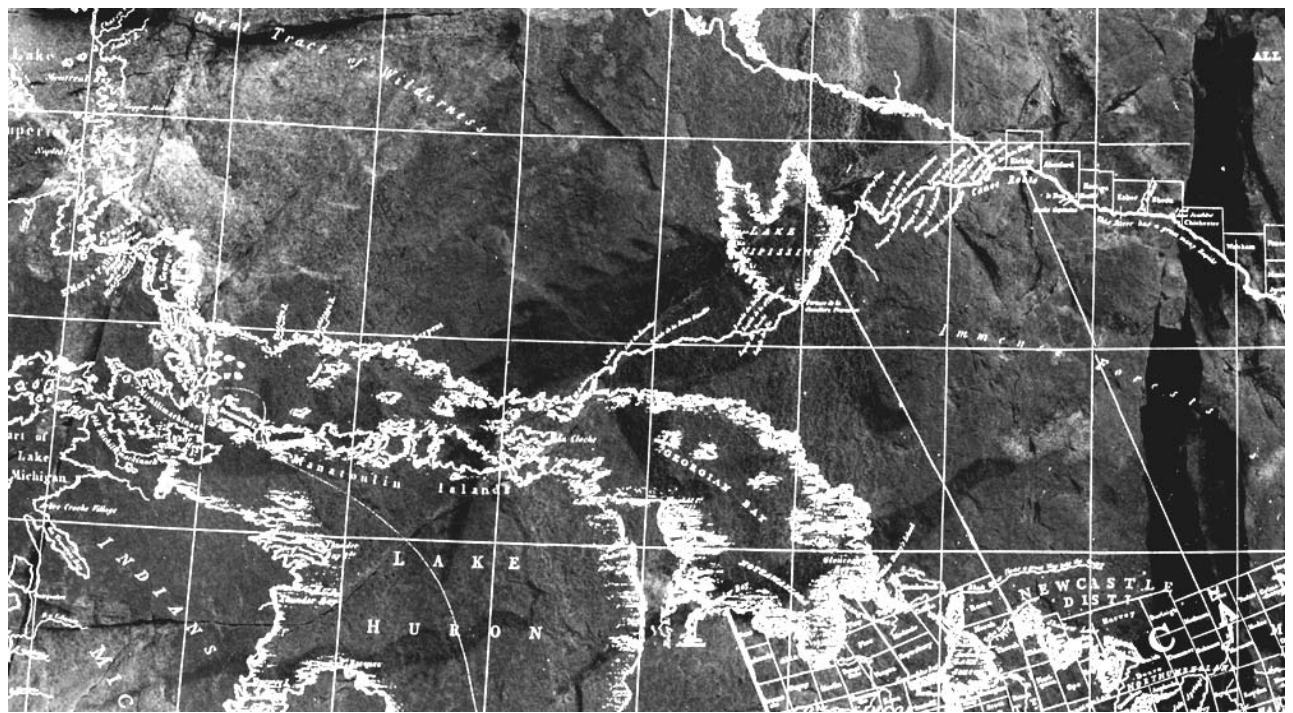
o  
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much too  
lost  
for favours. lost me  
when

warp when  
bend-hazard. yes, like  
that,

& I



Untitled, Melissa Velja

# MAPPING SECURITY: WRITING THE TRACE OF NATION

by Bruce Erickson

*Just before our love got lost you said  
"I am as constant as a northern star"  
And I said, "Constant in the darkness  
Where's that at?  
If you want me I'll be in the bar"*

*On the back of a cartoon coaster  
In the blue TV screen light  
I drew a map of Canada  
Oh Canada  
And I sketched your face on it twice*

Joni Mitchell, "Case of You"

I'm sitting at home, resolved to write a small reflection on leisurely movements, mapping and the (knowledge) production of Canada, probably one that will start with an anecdote out of *Where is Here?* (Morantz, 2002), Rick Morantz's journalistic book about the maps that make Canada. CBC radio's Definitely Not The Opera (DNTO) is on the radio in the background, interrupting my attempts to read the highlighted sections from Homi Bhabha, Jacques Derrida, and Margaret Atwood's *Survival*. Typical in its Canadian content, DNTO is featuring a story on the Canadian accent (which Matthew Perry lost before becoming *Friends'* Chandler), and the DNTO competition to nominate the best introductory couplet in a Canadian song. "American Woman" starts it off, which I find rather pathetic for a starter. "American woman/ stay away from me" not really lyrical genius, but perhaps that is considered to be typically Canadian.

My favourite nomination was "Case of You" by Joni Mitchell. "Case of You" shocked me in its appropriateness for my reflection, as it signals the gap in mapping ability, a suggestion that transfers to the knowledge of the country, the gaps in understanding and representation that are held within the constant light of the northern star that shines only in the dark. Mitchell's song points to some provocative relationships between leisure, desire and the nation, junctions that I will try to examine in this reflection.

The anecdote from *Where is Here?* (Morantz, 2002) is from a canoeing guide who has spent his life developing the ability to make maps of canoe routes, in order to reduce the danger to the canoeist. In *Where is Here?*, Morantz interviews Hap Wilson about a map he made of a set of rapids on the Missinabi River in Northern Ontario. The impetus for the map was a series of

accidents on the river in the 1970s. As Morantz writes, "accidents happen, especially on wilderness rivers, but Wilson sensed a pattern, and suspected that a contributing factor was being overlooked – misleading topographical maps" (p. 116). The maps used by many paddlers showed a portage on the wrong side of the river. By the time the paddlers would figure out there was no portage where they were looking, they would be in danger of being swept into the four-meter falls below. After consulting provincial documents about deaths in the areas, "Wilson figured that seventeen of the drownings could have been prevented had the victims known what was around the corner, what was ahead, where was the portage, what were the peculiarities in flow patterns" (p. 116). While there have been no deaths in the area since the production of the map in 1977 (along with the wholesale correction of all provincial maps of the area), it is not out of the question that Wilson's map fails its readers, at least partially.

All Wilson can do as a river cartographer is make the variables known to the paddler; it is then up to the paddler to adjust to environmental conditions. It is a fact that he acknowledges in each of his map books. In his Missinabi book, Wilson dealt with the vagaries of charting a river from the inside out: "Rapids that round bends may be impeded by sweepers or strainers (fallen trees and log jams). Each spring freshet scours the shores and washes timber downriver, frequently to become lodged in the most inappropriate places. Rapid diagrams are for reference only and gauged at optimum running conditions with all safety procedures in place" (pp. 117-119).

Telling this story, Morantz (2002) starts by seeing the mistakes on the map as a misspoken set of instructions, highlighted in the possibility of change that Wilson found. Yet Wilson's inability to speak the instructions clearly, illustrated in his disclaimer, makes a point to disrupt the ability of the mapping process to communicate properly, a disruption hidden by the map, yet integral to its process of communication. If I may say so, what Wilson is running into here is the "dangerous supplement" that Derrida (1967/1974) documents in Rousseau's writing, and more specifically in any act of writing.

The "dangerous supplement" is the exterior of the signified brought into the representation: the artifice that augments a spoken presence. Derrida explains the logic of the supplement in *Of Grammatology* by way of Rousseau's theory on the origin of languages. The supplement, for Rousseau, was that exterior addition to language which produced the artificial process of writing, a technology that he opposes to the natural art of speech. Writing is a substitute to language, but one that is formed as a response to a situation of distress; writing is a needed addition to speech that gives it a material reality (and

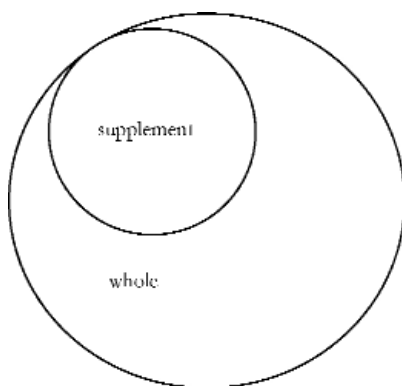


permanence). As a supplement to nature (language), writing signifies an attempt to add permanence to language when needed (as in Rousseau's need to convey his thought to history). Yet, as a supplement to language, it also serves to stand "in-the-place-of" (Derrida, 1967/1974, p. 145). Not only augmenting, but standing in for, the supplement changes the presence by signifying its lack. Writing stands in the place of speech, giving language when there is no speech present. The danger in the supplement, for Rousseau, comes with artifice standing in for nature: Since nature is the source of good, and artifice the source of evil, evil is always presented in the form of a supplement.

Wilson's map reciprocates this logic in some ways. One way to look at it suggests that the nature of the rapid is perhaps dangerous, but the pattern of death comes from the (incorrect) supplement of the map. Once that mistake is corrected, the supplement (the map itself) is still dangerous because it does not contain the vicissitudes of the river. Wilson, in his cautionary notes, is telling us that the map itself does not contain security.

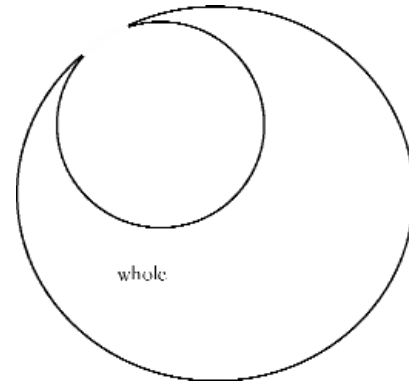
Derrida's reading of Rousseau can also point to a more complex reading of Wilson's Missinabi map. If nature is always good, then what is the need for the supplement, which by definition fills a void in the presence of the other? Contained within nature is the need for the supplement, a lack that incorporates artifice into the original good: The possibility of evil is contained within the good of nature. The logic of the supplement reduces the opposition between nature/artifice, good/evil, and for the case of the map, security/insecurity. Wilson's map, though dangerous, was created as an attempt to increase the security of the map readers, to avoid the pattern of death that Wilson noted at the rapids. Empirically his maps have done their job. Since the 1977 reprinting, there have been no deaths on those rapids, however the supplement may have reversed the security and produced a different reaction.

The supplement adds on to a whole picture; in this case, the maps produced are added on to by the natural workings of the river. A diagram of the supplement might look like this.



The map fills out and literally stands in for the river in the canoeist's mind, supplementing not only the knowledge of the

river, but also how the river is perceived. A proper map reader would be in constant consultation with the map and the exterior world in order to arrive safely at their desired destination. As Morantz (2002) explains, "Having a map does not lessen the need to look in the proverbial rear-view mirror every few minutes or so to stay oriented" (p. 120). Without the map, the rapids on the Missinabi would look empty and unrepresentable:



The empty space in the whole that is filled out by the supplement is described as the *trace* by Derrida. The trace signifies the absence that is structurally implicit with the presence of the sign. The trace documents a history to individual representations that constructs an origin for that representation. When the supplement covers the unrepresentable space, the trace lingers to remind us of the origin constructed. Derrida's trace should be understood to have the notions of track and imprint that are lost in translation from the original French (Spivak, 1974). For the map to be understood as an item promoting safety and security, the trace of the deaths of the previous pattern hides behind the presence of the mapping procedures and reminds the paddler that safety can only exist within a state of insecurity. The origin of the map is in the space of insecurity (represented by the pattern of death), and the science of cartography cancels out the artifice of the map (Harley, 1992) and tries to erase the insecurity produced by the map (the dangerous supplement), yet it merely incorporates the insecurity into the folds of the map.

Wilson's map signals a working of the trace that we might explore in the context of larger Canadian mapping and writing processes, because we always need to think of maps as a process of writing. Many have noted the use of maps as a tool of nation building (most significantly Benedict Anderson [1991] in his second edition of *Imagined Communities*) and that even applies to Canada (even Morantz picks up on this in *Where is Here*). Matthew Sparke's (1998) discussion of the use of mapping as nation building (and resistance) techniques in a British Columbia land claims trial and the publication of the *Historical Atlas of Canada* ranks in my books as one of the more interesting examinations of mapping in Canada. At stake in his article is the role of ambivalence in the mapping processes, ambivalences that are the result of the disjuncture between

writing and reading, the effect, we can say, of the trace in the map. In his reading of the court proceedings of *Delgamuukw v. The Queen*, Sparke illustrates the use of, and state response to, the First Nations' uses of non-European forms of mapping. The legal space of the court functions to limit the power of the First Nations mapping presence, however, the ambivalence of the European knowledge that supersedes it is exposed and the "roaring cartography of the trial could burst out of the courtroom" (p. 490). *The Historical Atlas of Canada* provides one example of such a break-out, where maps similar to those used in the court case were presented as part of the historical geography of Canada, and more importantly, as part of the present geography of the nation.

The supplemental insertion of the First Nations maps into the geographical understanding of Canada hides the trace of the production of the speaking/writing nation. Sparke's comments on the resistance provided by *The Historical Atlas of Canada* should be taken as celebratory, but limited. Indeed, the fact that "Canada's evolving geographical diversity...is the very diversity that is turned into the grounds of national distinction" (p. 487), warns us that heterogeneity caused by ambivalence can "sometimes serve hegemonic nation-state-building ends" (p. 488). Thus the supplementing of the map of Canada with Sparke's Map that Roared not only contains the possibility of resistance to traditional European knowledge, it also hides the trace of incorporation that defines the speaking subject behind the maps of the nation.

The production of "we" through mapping creates a heterogeneous position from which the hegemonic nation state can act. The courts and the *Atlas* were both concerned with the articulation of who is a part of this "we." The courts could only allow the roaring of the map once they figured out how to incorporate those maps into the narrative of the nation<sup>1</sup>, an incorporation that the *Atlas* accomplished. At stake in the court case was the ability of the Gitksan to articulate their own nation; at stake in the *Atlas* was the ability for the Gitksan to be considered part of Canada. Haunting both of these case studies is the trace that tracks the production of nation throughout Canada, the impossibility of the "we" that binds the nation together.

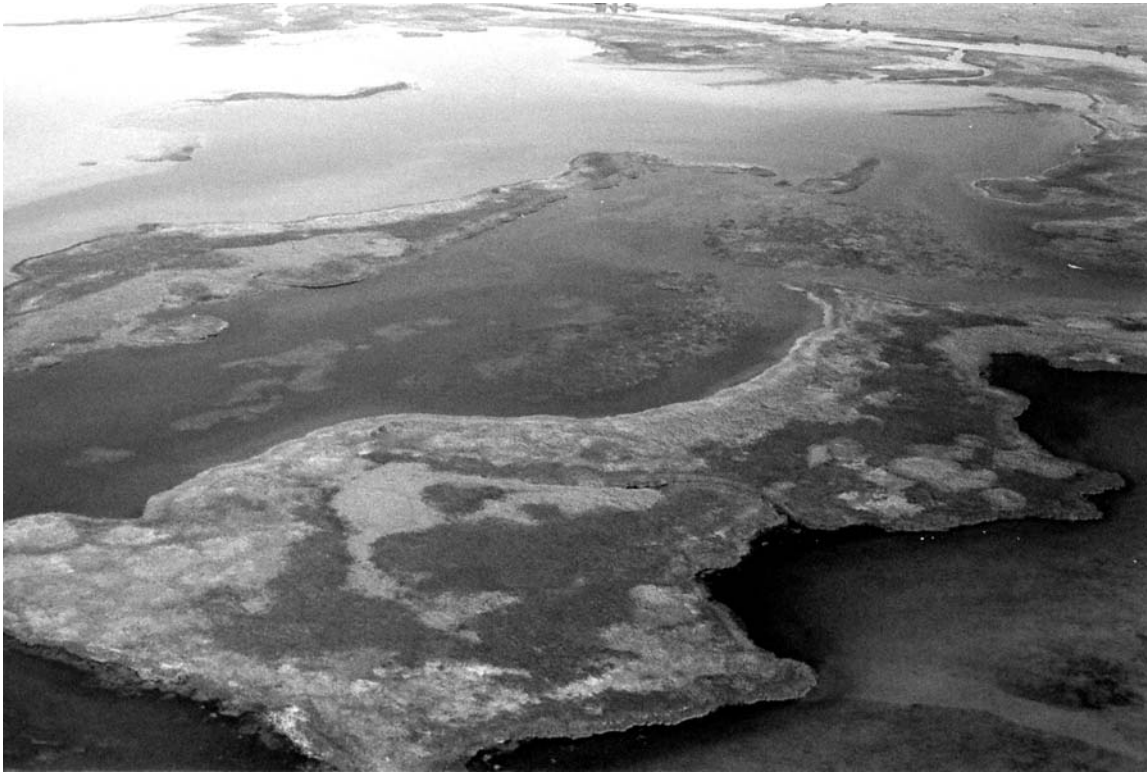
The parallel to Wilson's maps becomes clear. In any effort to produce a secure nation, even one that rejoices in the heterogeneity that exists within its borders, the trace illustrates the impossibility of that dream and initiates insecurity in the national boundaries and definitions. The production of a multicultural policy has done little to decrease the amount of concern for diversity (or even the concern for lack of diversity). As Richard Day (2000) suggests, "while Canadian multiculturalism presents itself as a new solution to an ancient problem of diversity, it is better seen as the most recent mode of reproduction and proliferation of that problem" (p. 3). The concern for creating a heterogeneous unified identity, as a part of official state policy, has only increased the amount of difference manage-

ment needed. This is, as Day is careful to point out, not to say that multiculturalism will inevitably fracture the state, but rather that, as long as you are concerned about maintaining an unified identity, then the insecurity of difference will always require management. It is in the writing of nation as a unified heterogeneous "we" that we find the insecure trace of the map: the face that is constant only in the dark, because when put to the light, it magically disappears.

<sup>1</sup> The initial decision by provincial court Judge Alan McEachern was overturned in 1997. However, the appeal decision, while useful in terms of the specific land in question, relegates First Nations communities (and their use and understanding of the land) to "traditional" forms, allowing government interference if those traditions are broken or misused. The new maps are only accepted when understood as knowledge in the past tense. It would be interesting to examine if there is any relationship between the appeal and the *Historical Atlas of Canada*.

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Untitled, Aerial photos, Walpole Island First Nations, Karen Abel

## The Long Waiting (for Joseph Kriesler 1919-2002)

by Sean Thomas Dougherty

“Water, be my memory, let me see what I have lost.”  
—Mahmoud Darwish (trans Agha Shahid Ali)

In the small room inside my mother’s  
Chest, a weeping sound that whispers across  
The tall grass of late summer, carries my mother  
Toward her childhood, my running mother  
Running through the sand in summer rain  
Toward her father’s lifting hands. My mother  
Is a laughing sound at five, —mother  
She calls to my grandmother, a hunger  
Made of kisses. When the cancer ate his hunger  
My Poppa, leaning on his bed, told my mother  
I can no longer taste the bread. Social worker,  
Scholar, he pamphleted for Socialism

Until it swallowed its own people with precision—  
The ideology of the century just ended, my mother  
Frightened by the frailness of her father’s hand—  
Social

We are birthed into the sterile light, the social  
Weight we enter with the cutting of the chord.  
Across

Our bellies, the tied knot our true tribe. Socialism’s  
Grandeur: the sound of any child sharing bread.  
Yiddish

Was a second language for Hungarian Jews.  
The rain

Against my grandfather’s windows. Summer rain:  
The sound of memory’s shoes. At the Social  
Welfare office

Paperwork piled on Poppa’s desk, the names  
of the hungry

My grandfather worked to help. The hungry

Men, women, children at the shelter called him Joe.  
Hungry

My mother left my grandfather in that room,  
a socialism

Of rain falling, four walls of waiting. She sat  
with the hunger

Of grief, picked at a plate of sardines, onion, bread.  
Hungary

Was a cracked jewel when my great grand-mother  
Boarded the boat at twenty—in 1912, arrived  
hungry

At Ellis Island: The copper torch burned the night,  
Hungary

Became a left place, a last leaving. Alone across  
The cold Atlantic, she carted a trunk of books.  
Across

Means to depart, or to arrive? My mother reaches  
for her father’s hand, Hungary?

She asks him, bones, barely breathing, Water  
He asks, closes his eyes. My mother feels  
the water

Closing above her head. My great-grandmother’s  
water

Broke in 1919. Five years later, thin and hungry  
From fever, she died. My grandfather sips  
his water

Slowly, I haven’t thought about her in a long time.  
Water

In his eyes, my mother puts a cloth upon his chest.  
The social

Agency sent nurses that night. On the *George*  
*Washington*, water

Was passed in a bucket. Waterfalls  
Of voices that rode into the harbor. Mother,  
Do you ever wonder about this woman,  
the grandmother

You never kissed? Long after her death,  
the husband who disowned his son, water  
Of my grandmother’s Christian birth? Across  
The aisle my grandfather’s side was empty. Across

The Atlantic his rebel mother knitted, not prayed.  
Across

Is to arrive, or to depart? Someone has entered  
the room. Water

My grandfather whispers, his black eyebrows  
knitted. Across

The deck my great-grandmother hummed, spray  
washing across

The boots of Czechs, Slavs, the moon spoke  
Hungarian,

Bathed her black hair with silver light. Across  
Her chest an old Magyar touched the sign  
of the cross.

My great grandmother reached for a chair—  
parochialism

Of the rural poor, the Pogroms, Socialism promised  
A world of workers sharing bread. Regina  
Moskowitz crossed

With a thousand other seamstress revolutionaries.  
Mother

Who died when my grandfather was five. O Mother

What is this ghost womb calling from the sky?  
Mother,

I hear you in the kitchen sobbing. My grandfather  
is dead: Across

The ocean, is he traveling? He is just a child.  
The summer rain,

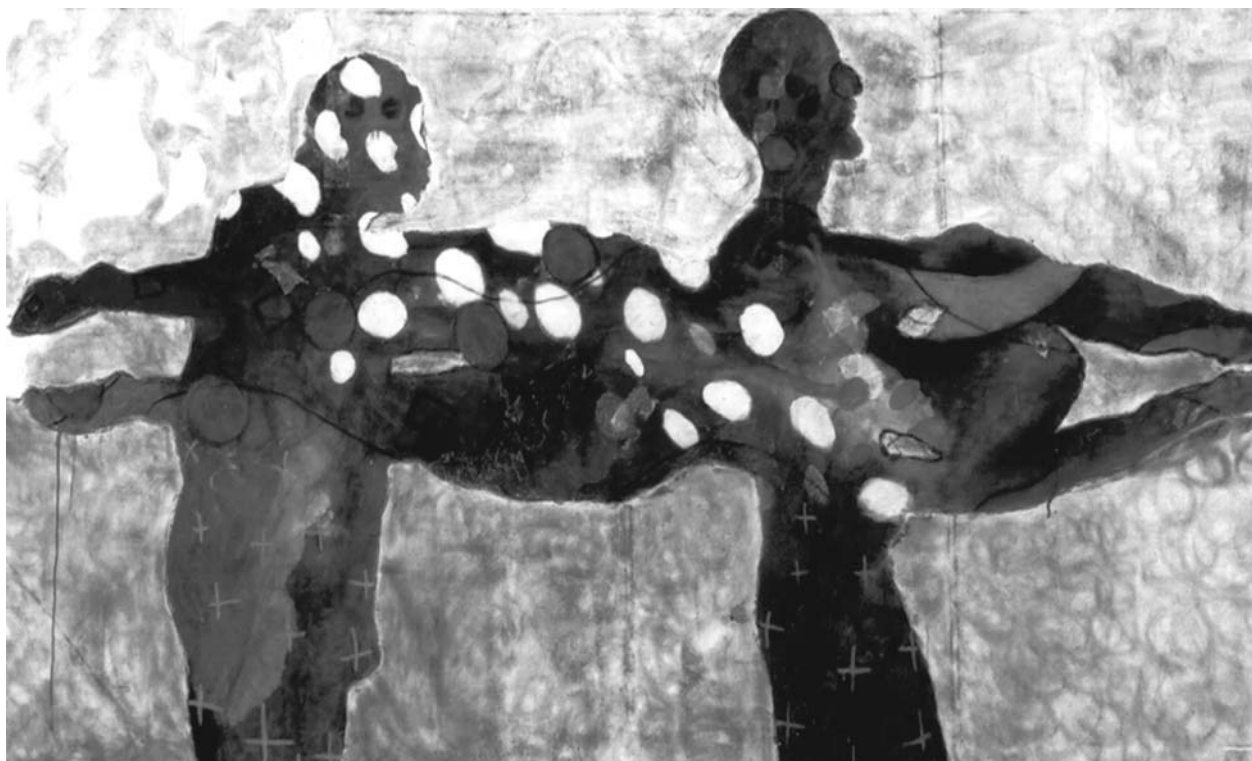
Is it carrying him towards his mother? Is she  
calling him to Hungary?

Is she singing lullabies in Yiddish? Can you hear?  
Her eyes are weeping prisms.

## Baggage

by Sean Thomas Dougherty

Great brown trunks with metal buckles, belts, train trunks, black leather and steel rivets, large round stamps: Austria, Munich, Bremen, Budapest. Piles of trunks and suitcases to the ceiling. Rooms of suitcases, bird-cages, baskets. Rooms of shoes. Ellis Island, JFK, Dachau. Rooms of trinkets, gold foiled flowers, laces, gloves, hats, crumpled shifts, teeth. Bones. Buckled shoes. “It was the buckled shoes that haunted me most,” my friend says of the camps. A shoe on the side of the road. Shoes. We walk in shoes. When we die, it is our feet who wear our soles. “Let no angel carry me the last few feet to heaven, bury me in brand new soles,” go the old blues, the deep blues. I’m humming this waiting by baggage claim, touch down in Budapest, carrying in my head the image of those great halls of Ellis Island and the wall of suitcases stacked upon each ship’s arrival. The loudspeaker in three languages. The German tourists gathering up their ski poles. Heather has her eyes half closed by a phone booth. She is sleepy in blue jeans and sweatshirt. I wonder what Regina wore as she stepped off of the George Washington? What was the weather like that September day in 1912? I read somewhere that weather is the carrier of memory, the bringer of scent, smell, the deep body memories that Proust wrote of—bite the Madeleine and your childhood returns, your aunt brewing tea in the kitchen. The smell of cornbread and your grandmother with a babushka or bandanna around her braided hair. I had a student with a chivalrous name—Dustin Chevalier—a sweet quiet kid who wrote me an essay once about “the first smell of autumn along the lake.” The changing leaves, the rain. “It is when I return to the before,” he wrote, never having read Elie Wiesel. When questioned about the time before the camps Wiesel answered, “Of course there is a before.” And when asked “Why does one return to the before?” he answered, “To eat.”



*Connection, Rodrigo Hernandez*





Nest and Leaves, Karen Abel

## EMBOUCHURE

by Elana Wolff

The sun grows garish, then gaunt.  
A fading orange organ in the bedroom,

embouchure.

This is the way you've come to me this evening—

in a box, on the wall,  
reflected.

Lodged in the slatted shadows of the shutters,  
then not even there.

Before the orange ebbs completely,  
into the autumn night

and you abscond,  
I strain myself to listen for a tune

of your affections.  
And one comes up from the loin of my tongue,

like muddy  
waters onto my lips.



Untitled, photo, Melissa Valja

# Talking Boulders: A Conversation with Maura Doyle

by Heather Hermant

*There's a New Boulder in Town* is Toronto artist Maura Doyle's latest installation. With the assistance of University of Toronto geologist James Brenan, Doyle mapped a walking tour of some of Toronto's 'erratic boulders,' and narrates their social-geological biographies through a guidebook. Among these boulders is the 10-ton piece of granite Doyle unloaded on the Toronto Sculpture Garden late in 2004. In addition to this 'sculpture,' Doyle's multidisciplinary practice has included music, videos, book works, and several small businesses. New video work had been shown at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery (Toronto) from March 25 to May 23, 2005. The next edition of the boulders project opened in May 2005 in Vancouver, in association with Or Gallery. In the following interview, Doyle talks with UC Collective member Heather Hermant.

HH: Let's talk about 'ephemera' as a descriptor of your projects. I'm struck by how in collecting unnoticed things, you generate a genealogy for them, recover them and thus give them currency. Your Money Collection web site is perhaps the most explicit connection between collecting and currency (Doyle 2002-2004b). You've also made a flow chart of all sorts of potato chips, in order to trace diverse brands to Pepsi Co. (Doyle 2004c). You've made a poster campaign for a proposal to dump 10,000 empty chip bags over Toronto (Osborne 2003). Things that would go unnoticed suddenly become glaring. And there's your series of Annual Buttons, one produced each year, depicting the current year's date. Is there a connection between collecting and monumentalizing?

MD: I don't really think about these things while in the act of art making, at least not in a clear way. But I do think about current projects in relation to what came before, and about how my entire body of work may eventually be catalogued, likely chronologically. It has something to do with my interest in context, at what point in time we are looking at these objects or artworks, and how we see them as belonging to a history. I think I play around with some of these ideas in every project. The annual button project, more a series than a collection, was

**After spending thousands of years in the forests of the Kawartha Lakes, this 10-ton boulder has acquired a gentle beard of lichens and moss, and now rests its weakly foliated structure on the grounds of the Toronto Sculpture Garden. (Doyle 2004: 8)**



started in 1997 and has continued until now. It has expanded to include dates up to 2104. I like that collections happen over time and that the process of collecting can determine the objects collected.

With this in mind, boulders that are not true 'erratic boulders' by the geologic definition, and boulders that are not even boulders, angular blocks of limestone for example, can be included in the Guidebook to Toronto's Erratic Boulders (Doyle 2004). And boulders that are not art can become art for a geologic while. I guess these projects do give currency, as you said, to otherwise forgotten objects. It can be extreme, like turning a chip bag from garbage to an integral part of a stadium style sports event, big enough to be noted in Guinness Book of World Records. Empty chip bags are NEEDED, NOW! I've always rooted for the underdog, so it's natural for me to take note of these 'worthless' everyday objects. A chunk of worn out limestone that has chewed gum stuck to it and is missing its plaque can mingle with a piece of 'conceptual' art.

HH: Your boulder is considered a sculpture, but you've actually done no sculpting per se. It's a conceptual art intervention—oooo, scary. But the project has been written about in all the big papers. Why the attention?

MD: Maybe because it's a city guide, there is that element of accessibility. The Toronto sections, not the Art sections of all the newspapers covered the piece (Agrell 2004; Heath-Rawlings 2004; Reinhart 2004)). It was the Toronto history that seems to have gotten the most attention. But I think it also refers to the history of modern sculpture, especially big minimalist work. I think Carl Andre even did a piece with glacial boulders (Andre 1977). It in some way diffuses this history of sculpture work by proudly associating it with 'just rocks', other random pieces around the city. The boulder in the garden is many things: it's a sculpture, it's a monument, and it's 'just a



rock'. Mind you, it is also a beautiful piece of rock with moss and lichens, which many people can appreciate. I guess what I'm trying to say is that there are many points of appreciation, through the history of art, through love of nature, or interest in our landscape and its history.

*HH: Why did you notice the rocks?*

MD: I first heard the term "erratic boulder" in a book by Immanuel Velikovsky called *Earth in Upheaval*, which pieces together geological and cultural evidence to offer a ludicrous account of Planet Earth's catastrophes (Velikovsky 1965). His catastrophic theory was at first embraced and then rejected by the scientific community. I think he claimed Venus approached Earth several times, at one point parting the Red Sea. I think the term was first used scientifically in referring to stars that didn't have a fixed path and seemed to wander the night sky. They were later discovered to be planets in orbit. Erratic boulders were also quite mysterious until end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was agreed that they were put into place by glaciers. For this project I stretched the definition to include rocks moved by backhoes, tidal waves, strong winds, meteor impacts, flat bed trucks, and mini front-end loaders. I started noticing erratic boulders around the city. Some were obviously put in place in the last 100 years, as part of foundations, or as monuments, etc. Others seemed to be randomly placed, their weight as an anchor, and then the city sprouting up around them.

*HH: Did you have any ethical pangs about speeding up the glacial/geological process to human time by relocating this 20,000 lb boulder overnight?*

MD: Yes I did worry about upsetting a natural environment. I had nightmares of sending a front end-loader into a quiet meadow, ripping up the ground, perhaps dropping the rock, doing three point turns, and leaving the space ravaged for the sake of Contemporary Art, which often disregards the consequences of materials used and waste created. In the end I used a boulder I found pushed aside at a quarry north of Peterborough. The quarry was interested in other dug up stuff, and so they were happy for me to take this one. I think ultimately my project reveals the process and the absurdity of monumental sculpture pieces, as well as the effort and resources in such a gesture. My disruption for the sake of art is actually quite small in contrast to, and in fact sheds light on, the urban development happening all around us.

*HH: What kinds of questions did you ask geologist James Brennan about the rocks you found around Toronto?*

MD: James helped me identify their type, age and origin. I gathered a list of about twenty and we went around with some of his students. I gave James a clipboard with the list of boulders as I had titled them for the guidebook, such as Boulder for Student Housing or Paint Bombed Rock. I soon realized that the rocks I had selected were interesting to me for entirely different reasons than they were for the geologists. I was drawn

to the rocks in imagining their dramatic arrival, and how the city has accommodated them over time. I knew next to nothing about a rock's mineral content. At one point James and his students spotted a boulder down by the waterfront. It was covered in dirt and stones and sat next to an excavation site. We deduced that it was very recently uncovered. It's at the back of the book, titled *New to the Surface of Toronto – Just Uncovered!!!* According to the rock's mineral content it likely derived from the Central Metasedimentary Belt (north of here, Pembroke to St. Lawrence River) and we presume it was carried here by a glacier about 10,000 years ago. So we shared the same enthusiasm for rocks, and had something to offer the project despite our different backgrounds. I guess I can say the same about everyone I worked with directly, including the people I spoke to while doing 'community research'. I would ring doorbells and make telephone calls to the people living nearby, and for the most part they were happy to talk about their rocks, especially the ones that were handpicked by their owners. James and I stopped to check out a gabbro boulder under the Oak Leaf Steam Bath fire escape near the backdoor, when one of the owners came out. The exchange that proceeded really captured the project for me. James had made his speculation as to where the boulder was from, and the owner confirmed, giving a more specific location, near Sudbury. The Oak Leaf has been collecting them there for over fifty years. We put together that after one year in the sauna these billion year-old rocks meet their end by cracking up from the sauna environment. Anyhow our different interests in boulders could come together, the guidebook being the platform to document all of this.

*HH: You've placed your rock in the Sculpture Garden, in such a way that it encroaches on the walkway rather than sitting in the open space. It seems you wanted to make explicit the strangeness of these anonymous monuments around the city.*

MD: This boulder is a monument like other boulder monuments in public spaces: it has a plaque (which reads 'Erratic Boulder') and it sits in a quiet garden with trees, 'waterfall' and pigeons. So on one hand it is a very typical park monument. But it is different in that it is a monument to itself, and to a timescale beyond the age of human existence. It will outlive the SkyBowl, the CN Tower, The Toronto Maple Leafs, and the Toronto Sculpture Garden. It appears to have been 'naturally' placed, and this way it will be seen as an erratic, as a wandering rock. It could have fallen from the sky in the night, or it could have been dropped by a slow moving glacier. The guidebook links it to the many other boulders arriving to this area in the last 10,000 years. Perhaps it was the boulder that inspired the construction of the park!

*HH: What's going to happen to the boulder when the show is over? I hear you're trying to sell it.*

MD: It costs \$9,500 with free shipping within 200 km of Toronto and it must be delivered when the exhibition ends in April 2005. I don't want to have to move it twice! If using the guidebook and map after that point, one would find boulder #8

missing, which I think is a nice part of the project. It leaves some mystery. However, if someone with a lot of money offered to reprint the guidebook, (which was only printed in an edition of 500), I think I would include the boulder in its new location.

HH: *The next stage is to create a boulder map for Vancouver in association with the Or Gallery in May 2005.*

MD: Yes, we recently got the go-ahead from The City of Vancouver. It will be at Thornton Park at Main and Terminal, at the Skytrain station. There are other monuments there so I think an erratic boulder will feel quite at 'home.' I plan to tuck a Vancouver area rock under the Skytrain stairs. I'm working with an Earth Scientist from Simon Fraser University. It will be like the Toronto project, but with different geological terrain and of course different rocks. I like that in the contract with the City of Vancouver, it says the sculpture will be 'semi-permanent,' which better suits the inevitability of an erratic boulder.

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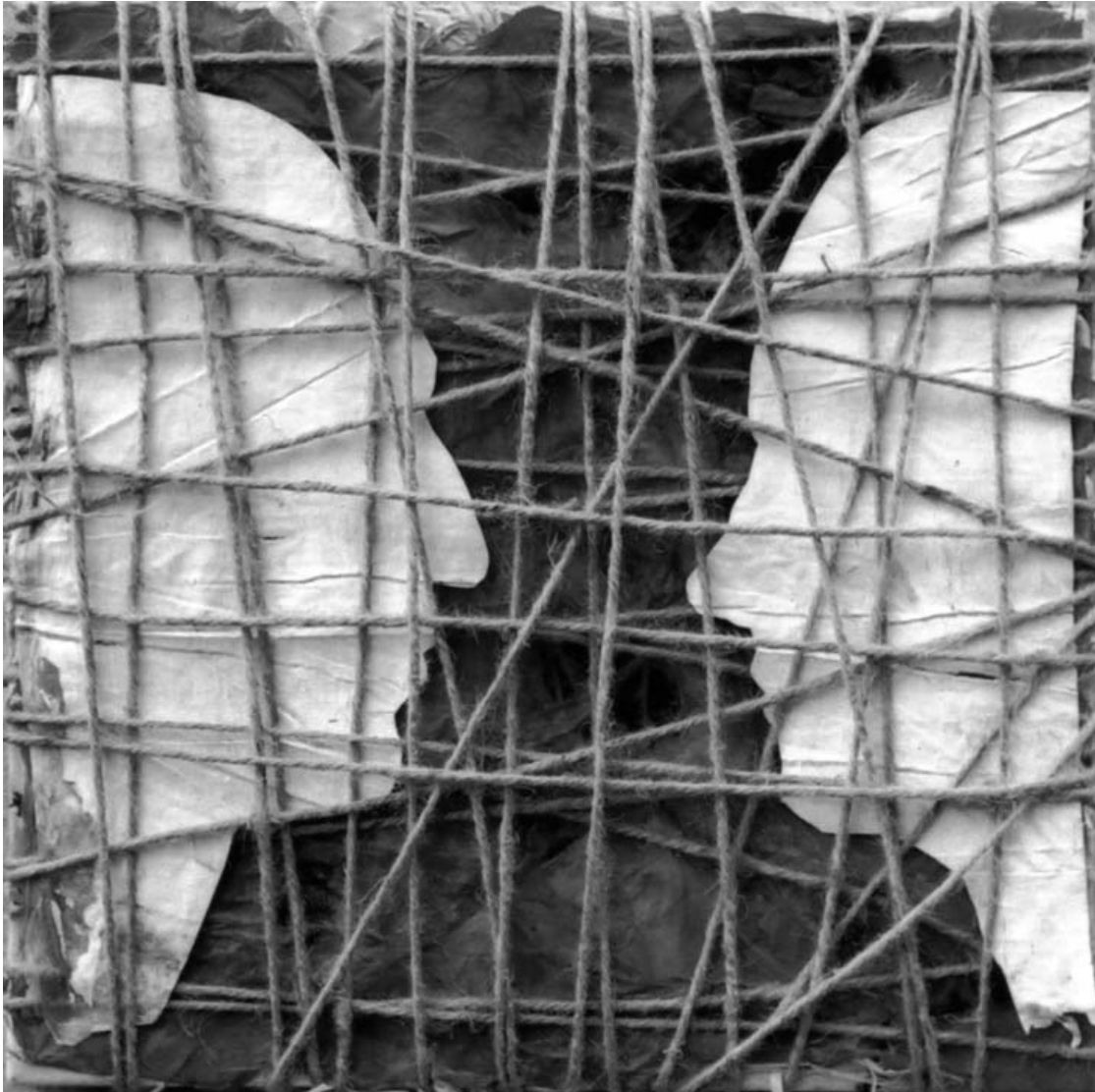
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El meeting, Rodrigo Hernandez

# Embodied Motion in the Modern Metropolis

text and illustrations by Jay Worthing

## Introduction

The modern city – the metropolis – is a site of movement. It is a place of exchange and transfer, of people, vehicles, materials and information, which ebb and flow through its infrastructure. The increasingly mobile dynamics and the use of transient and tensile urban forms, indicate the origins of a distinctly ‘nomadic’ experience of the metropolis.

This paper explores nomadic qualities of the modern city through a consideration of architecture, urban studies and philosophy. The question addressed in this paper is whether the subjective experience of the city, defined in terms of transience, transport, motility, shifting territories, flux, and fluid space, offers a convincing account of the metropolis. In order to answer this question I will discuss three types of architecture arising in the modern city: the arcades in nineteenth-century Paris, shantytowns or ‘favelas’ in the late nineteenth-century to present day Rio de Janeiro, and modern membrane structures in New York. With each the focus is on shifting and subjective experiences of the structures, and the perceptual and visceral relations with movement and space.

## Arcades in Paris



The German- Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin drafted *The Arcades Project* from 1927 until his untimely death in 1940. The encyclopaedic work of quotes and commentary recalls the ‘arcades’, an architectural invention of nineteenth-century Paris. The arcades were gas-lit, glass covered, and vaulted passageways, which served as enclaves for the city’s burgeoning commerce. Benjamin quotes from the *Illustrated Guide to Paris*: “These arcades, a recent invention of industrial luxury, are glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors extending through whole blocks of buildings, whose owners have joined together for such enterprises. Linking both sides of these corridors, which get their light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the arcade is a city, a world in miniature, in which customers will find everything they need.” The arcades

offered not only consumer goods, but also a place to wander throughout the day or to take refuge from the rain. The arcades were, for Benjamin, a magical and mysterious collective dreamscape – an “intoxicating site of the phantasmagoric, the kaleidoscopic and the cacophonous” (Leach 1997: 24).

Benjamin describes a number of characters in *The Arcades Project*, for example: the gambler; the collector; and the prostitute. He views each ‘type’ as a hero or heroine, who while swept up in the tide of capitalism, also gives voice to the fragmented and fleeting passage of modern life. One figure of particular note is the flâneur, a distinguished fellow who roams the arcades and delights in observing the crowd. Despite his desire to be immersed in the crowds the flâneur’s demeanour keeps him distanced from the crowd. He is immersed yet detached. As a roving spectator the flâneur revels in the urban scene, and the sensory delights it has to offer. In his view, the arcades are an ‘open’ terrain, a supreme milieu of modernism, down which to stroll, and absorb the sensual pleasures of its dream-like montage.

The flâneur’s view is typical of a bourgeois male of this period, at liberty to roam and gaze freely, and to take on the role of an urban nomad or a wandering voyeur. As Pollock notes:

The flâneur symbolizes the privilege or freedom to move about the public arenas of the city observing but never interacting, consuming the sights through a controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze, directed as much at other people as at the goods for sale. The flâneur embodies the gaze of modernity which is both covetous and erotic. (Pollock 1988: 67)

There was, however, a more ruinous side to the industrial project, which the flâneur did not experience. Benjamin describes the arcades as the manifestation of a ‘two-faced’ or ‘dialectical’ history. He writes that, “...abject poverty and insolent luxury enter into the most contradictory communication; the commodity intermingles and interbreeds as promiscuously as images in the most tangled of dreams” (Benjamin 1999: 827). In Paris during the nineteenth century, the ‘other face’ was that of the working class, whose families were increasingly forced into the suburbs, often the result of ‘beautifying’ or ‘renewal’ projects of the city streets.

In the mid-nineteenth-century the civic planner, Georges Eugène Haussmann, was hired by Napoleon III to ‘modernize’ Paris. It was a task that in Haussmann’s view required the suppression of an increasingly restless working class, which he described as a “rootless urban population...” (Benjamin 1999: 12). To curb insurrections and eliminate

the construction of barricades by these individuals, Haussmann ordered the destruction of Paris' narrow streets in favour of wide boulevards. Benjamin notes the utility of these paved and widened streets to move troops directly from the barracks to the workers' district, or to various neighbourhoods in the city. The boulevards destroyed the small neighbourhoods of the working class and alienated them from urban space. Benjamin quotes from *L'Ouvrier devant la société* (Paris, 1868):

Hundreds of thousands of families, who work in the center of the capital, sleep in the outskirts. This movement resembles the tide: in the morning the workers stream into Paris, and in the evening the same wave of people flows out. It is a melancholy image. (Benjamin 1999: 137)

The daily migration of the proletariat was a product of Paris' massive change during this period. The industrialization of production was in full effect and had instilled a sense of 'modern' life in its populace. The conditions of this life, however, were far from stable. In one sense, the accession of capital production had set in motion a roving populace: members of both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, who were swept up in a constellation of work, power, and capital, in a city bent on speed and change. The massive population growth, and increase in traffic, were but two pieces of evidence that marked, for Baudelaire the novel state of modernity, which he described as "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal, the immutable" (Baudelaire 1986: 130). Paris had become a kinetic reality defined by movement and flux.

### Favelas in Rio



A salient feature of most major cities is the existence of squatter housing or 'shantytowns'. These settlements entail makeshift construction from scrap materials, such as corrugated metal, plywood, bricks and plastic. Shantytowns are often located on illegally occupied land, either in run down areas of the city or at its peripheries, and often lack basic amenities, electricity and running water.

In Rio de Janeiro, a shantytown is known as a 'favela', a name that originated from a settlement on the Morro de Favela hillside. While the favelas in Rio and the arcades in Paris are vast-

ly different, they were (and are) not entirely independent urban phenomena. Connections existed between the consumer culture that was thriving in 19th-century Paris, dependent on the import of overseas goods (Featherstone 1995: 151), which in the case of Brazilian crops such as sugar, coffee and cotton, were based on slave labour. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the abolition of slavery forced many black immigrants to seek work in urban areas, which led to the establishment of favelas (Oliveira 1996).

While favelas have become a permanent feature of the urban fabric in Rio, the buildings are often short lived. The dwellings are makeshift, constructed from a variety of secondary materials, and as a result, are more easily dismantled easier than their sturdier counterparts in the urban core. In fact, the dismantling of the favelas has not been uncommon, due to the reactions of Rio authorities, which have varied considerably between eradication efforts and new housing projects (Barke *et al.* 2001).

Despite a lack of infrastructure and a high incidence of poverty and crime, the favelas are a hotbed of Afro-Brazilian culture. Many of Brazil's cultural forms find their origins in the favelas, and involve an emotive, motile and visceral expression of the human body. The boys of the favelas for instance are often engaged in football (soccer), and play with dreams of stardom or for the simple pleasures of sport. They play in the streets and knock the ball against buildings and through narrow corridors – which is often noted as the reason for the advanced dribbling skills of Brazilian soccer players!

The evolution of salsa music and dance also has a distinct relationship with the space of the favelas. Barke *et al.* note that:

Early political protest against poverty and marginalisation was expressed and transmuted into the samba... The themes pursued in such songs are concerned with life in the favelas, lack of infrastructural services and the collective suffering of the squatter settlements. (Barke *et al.* 2001: 260-261)

In his discussion of Capoeira, Lewis characterizes it as "...an acrobatic, Afro-Brazilian martial game, played in a circle with musical accompaniment, in which two players try to take each other down, or otherwise dominate each other, while demonstrating mastery of movement" (Lewis 1995: 222). Capoeira, which has been described as the synthesis of fighting, dance and music into a distinct cultural expression, was not simply an effort of black slaves to evade oppression by their white masters, but was rather the embodiment of a general tendency to reclaim or conquer "space through culture" (Capoeira 2002: 140). Capoeira was particularly essential in the promoting community cohesion during the transition phase (and continued oppression) that followed the abolition of slavery in Brazil.

Baiocchi (2002) discusses the relations between Rio and its



favelas, noting the perceptions of the elite and reformers on the one hand, and the innovative culture and unique experiences of its inhabitants on the other. He describes the favelas as places of movement – whether social and political movements (e.g. the “popular pro-democracy movement”), cultural or athletic (e.g. samba, carnaval, capoeira, soccer), or the movement of groups such as migrating families or crime syndicates. Baiocchi highlights the tension between Rio and its shantytowns as follows:

Rio de Janeiro in the late 1970s was characterized by its discursive construction as besieged and surrounded on all sides by ‘belts of poverty’ or ‘belts of insecurity.’ Against a vision of specific places in the city for the poor, as in Haussmann’s plan for Paris, this was a vision of the city choked by these belts, with its poor circulating alarmingly freely throughout it. The movement of the poor into certain areas of the city posed the question of their ‘proper place,’ of where the poor ought to live and circulate, and of their place in society at large. (Baiocchi 2002: 9-10)

A major influence on movement through the favelas – of people resources and drugs – are gangs. As Baiocchi notes, views of the cause of delinquency in Rio are controversial. One view of the raw violence of favela life is offered in the film “City of God” – through the eyes of its narrator Rocket. The film tells a true story of gang life in Rio’s slums. This movie is based on a book of the same title by Paulo Lins. Lin’s book traces the evolution of a housing project in the 1960’s into one of the most notorious and violent places in Brazil. Rocket, a poor black child who is too frightened to pursue the violent gang life (the road most often traveled by his peers), finds redemption by becoming a professional photographer. Rocket offers a powerful lens through which to view the abject conditions of favela life. Director Fernando Meirelles (2002) noted that the “City of God” is not only about a Brazilian issue, but one that involves the whole world... Of the opulence of the first world, a world that is no longer able to see the third or fourth world, on the other side, or deep down in the abyss.”

Favelas and the people who live in them provide an image of temporality - shifting territories, migrations, dance, crime, - and the makeshift dwellings within which people reside. Passage through the variegated and heterogeneous terrain of the favelas is an itinerant affair. Given the complex and often contradictory character of Rio’s urban topography, the favelas are not easily described. As O’Hare *et al.* remind us:

...the spatial and temporal manner in which Rio’s favelas have evolved defy most attempts at convenient generalisation. Rather do we seek to present the favelas as a dynamic phenomenon that is

constantly changing both within itself and in its relationship to the specific character of Rio’s urban structure. In this light, a nomadic approach offers only one among many ways to understand life in the favelas.

(O’Hare *et al.* 2002: 25)

### Membranes in New York



Membrane structures are an enduring solution to the need for human dwelling. The use of animal hides and poles to create shelter in the form of tents dates back millennia, and has evolved amongst nomadic tribes in disparate regions of the globe. In metropolitan regions today, there is a renewed interest in tensile design, due to the need for transportable buildings and flexible organization of urban space. Frei Otto is regarded as a seminal figure in modern architecture, for his vanguard ideas of textile and tensile forms. His work on the German Pavilion at the Expo ‘67 in Montreal and the Stadium for the 1972 Olympics in Munich, are two prominent structures which have influenced modern tensile forms.

What distinguishes membrane designs of the last forty years from their predecessors is the scale of the projects and the efficiency with which they are achieved. Wide-span membrane structures, as a result, are capable of transforming the urban landscape in substantial ways. The result is the introduction of a ‘nomadic spatiality’ into the city. The Carlos Moseley Music Pavilion designed by Future Tents Limited (FTL) is a prime example. FTL was commissioned to design a portable venue for the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic, capable of being erected and disassembled with minimal effort, and without harming the sites (green spaces such as Central Park). Their innovative solution involved the integration of crane technologies into the trailer beds of transport trucks, which in turn, also became part of the final structure. Upon completion, the stage included a “tripod like truss system, a tensile canopy, a folding stage, and a series of collapsible amplification towers” (Kronenburg 1996: 80). The portable and temporal elements of the venue (including the circulation of bodies and the music itself) offered a unique ‘interplay’ between nomadic and permanent features of the city.

FTL has also designed membrane structures – such as the World Financial Center and Staten Island ferry terminals – that are embedded in the dominant urban topography of New York; namely, concrete and large rectilinear buildings. Transport terminals designed to provide a creative place of shelter for transient citizens or tourists of New York, represent a nomadic feature of urban space. Of course, FTL would prefer to see membrane designs recreate the city more ambitiously, perhaps in the form of ‘fabric skyscrapers’. This new type of infrastructure would entail lightweight, flexible components, comprised of scaffolding and a curtain wall. In discussing the proposal, Dalland writes:

We believe that a building’s skin should be made of multiple, lightweight, flexible, doubly curved membranes stressed in tension with as many membranes as are necessary for a particular site and function; each membrane performing a different task – structure, thermal insulation, waterproofing, etc. (Gans 2003: 129)

Membrane and fabric designs however, need not envelop wide expanses of space in order to affect or enhance urban movement. ‘The Gates’, a recent installation in New York’s Central Park by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, demonstrates a completely novel approach to the movement of bodies (and art) in the city. On February 12, 2005, the exhibition was opened to the public. The project consisted of 7500 individual gates, 16 feet tall and varying in width from 5 to 6 inches to 18 feet. Suspended from the horizontal top part of each gate was a free hanging, saffron-coloured fabric panel (Christo and Jeanne-Claude 2005). In total the exhibition spanned 23 miles of Central Park’s walkways.

‘The Gates’ struck an emotional chord with the inhabitants of New York and inspired millions of people to absorb the visual feast and wander through the Park. In the way a nomadic camp might be fixed one day and then gone the next, the ‘The Gates’ exhibition – 16 days after its inception – was removed. What is left now are lasting impressions and a plan to recycle the component parts. Mooney writes in the *New York Times*:

The gates they held up a few days earlier were gone, as workers moved from north to south removing the structures. It has been said that the real impact of the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude comes after it is gone, and indeed the Meer seemed quiet in the absence of all that happy foot traffic.” While the installation lacked an element of shelter, it carried distinctly nomadic connotations of peripatetic movement – ‘all that happy foot traffic’ – through an open terrain. (Mooney March 07, 2005)

Membrane designs such as the Carlos Moseley Music Pavilion,

the World Financial Center and Staten Island Ferry terminals, and ‘The Gates’ demonstrate a unique response to urban space and place. They instill an explicit temporality into built form – an element that is missing from monumental projects. The temporal dimension and the close relation with transport, music and the arts suggest a type of ‘composition’ or ‘choreography’ of space. The London based choreographer Carol Brown is intrigued with this idea. Commenting on the work of architect Daniel Libeskind, she states that “The architects of the future will be the choreographers of the city” (Brown 2002: 12). Brown’s aim though, is quite the reverse: to explore what it means for a dancer to ‘behave like a builder.’ Further, Brown seeks to re-imagine the body in space and to explore its boundaries relative to structural and virtual spaces. “As a choreographer” she suggests, “this involves exploring bodily movement in terms of planes, rotations, convolutions, inflections and torsions, binding the choreography into the built environment at the level of a subtle mechanics. Space, no longer a container for the body, becomes enfolded, amplifying the bodily realm into a kind of kinetic architecture” (Brown 2002: 12).

A significant difference between tensile-membrane designs and their compression-based counterparts is determined by their effect on embodied perception. This is evident most clearly in the contrasts between lightness and weight, and between open and closed space. Indeed the ‘choreography’ of membrane space – often involving curvilinear folds and precocious hints of boundary zones and liminality – elicits an empathetic response from the body. Beesley draws attention to this idea in the work of 19th-century German philosopher Robert Vischer, who writes:

We seem to perceive hints and traces of attitudes, of emotions - a secret, scarcely suppressed twitching of the limbs, a timorous yearning, a gesturing, and a stammering... [W]e thus have the wonderful ability to project and incorporate our own physical form into an objective form... I project my own life into the lifeless form... I am mysteriously transplanted and magically transformed into this Other. (Beesley 2004)

The experience of the body in, or in relation to structures, can be characterized in a similar way. Tensile-membrane systems in particular, offer a distinct opportunity for ‘empathetic’ response. They are typically folded, stretched over cables, or spread over a skeletal frame, in ways that replicate forces and forms in nature. Frei Otto’s works in tensile architecture, particularly his use of soap bubbles and spider webs, are effective analogies to nature in built space. It is a natural extension of living through the body then – an organic system of skin and bones, which is subject to the same physical constraints – to translate a ‘body’ in built forms.

Transformation, or becoming ‘other’ occupies the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The potential of ‘becoming nomad’ is explicit in their discussions of

striated space, for instance, New York's street system and high-rises, and smooth space: "There is...a significant difference between the spaces: sedentary space is striated, by walls, enclosures and roads between enclosures, while nomad space is smooth, marked only by 'traits' that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory" (1986: 51). Nomadic movement, in the formulation of Deleuze and Guattari, entails a trajectory, a vector or a path, and avoids the stasis of fixed centres or points. Wide span membrane designs (or the fluid movements of hanging fabric for that matter) are the architectural equivalent of a smooth and open terrain: architecture as topography on which the vectors of their tensile dynamics take flight. The experience of structural or fabric membranes recalls a similar motion – of the fold or the arc – and the empathetic eye traces the vector of a 'spatial' flight. The regimented grid of New York dissipates in favour of temporal, fluid space.

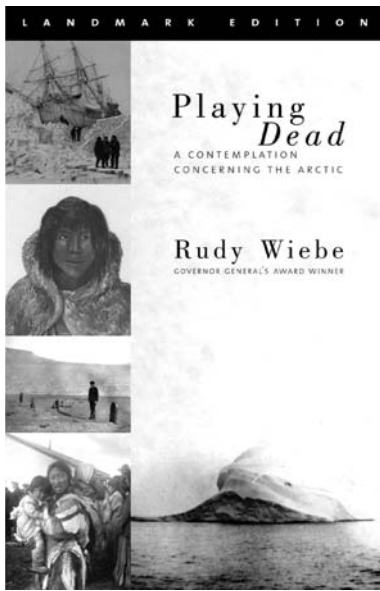
## Conclusion

This paper has discussed three urban phenomena in the modern city, including the arcades of Paris, the favelas in Rio and membrane designs in New York. The aim has been to discuss the embodied experience of these urban structures and spaces as nomadic phenomena, which I have identified in terms of transience, temporality, portability, movement, and motility, territories, flux and smooth and fluid space. The question remains whether a nomadic account offers an effective means to understand the metropolis. Is the modern city nomadic? Relative to interim cities for World Fairs or for events such as the 'Burning Man Festival' in Nevada, the metropolis doesn't come close. And of course, the city won't stand up and walk away any time soon, as Archigram fantasies depict. The metropolis, under its massive weight, somehow seems in a state of immutable stasis.

Considered in another light, however – in terms of the 'permanence' of its movement – the nomadic city is plausible. If we move beyond the dominant spatial discourse of the city into the temporal discourse of movement, we witness the metropolis as a kinetic reality in itself - motile bodies and shifting territories, mobile structures and tensile geometries, dynamic motion and continuous flux, - these offer the origins of understanding a nomadic city. The city is not nomadic in its entirety. But the way bodies and forces translate themselves in space can be characterized as such. Finally, by conceiving the city as a fluid 'cityscape' or as an urban topography in an animated state of variation and flux, we are able to better understand the embodied experiences of a nomadic city – of a 'nomadicity'.

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*Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic*, by Rudy Wiebe. Landmark Edition. NeWest Press: Edmonton, 2003. 149 pages. ISBN 1-896300-67-7. soft cover CAN \$18.95.

Reviewed by Taina Maki Chahal.

The third reincarnation of a series of lectures Rudy Wiebe delivered at Trinity College in 1987, the aptly named *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic*, is the first title in NeWest's Landmark Edition Series. The NeWest series aspires, as Robert Kroetsch notes in the Afterword, "to bring back into print, keep in print, important books by western Canadian writers, books that have become a part of the Canadian canon." Canons, however, can be inherently problematic for their exclusions and role in constructing histories and myths of nationhood, and *Playing Dead* appears inescapably part of the white masculinist colonial mapping of "the Arctic" (despite Wiebe's self-reflexivity and sincere respect for the land and its people). It is nonetheless an important addition for anyone interested in developing a nuanced understanding of the multiple stories that construct the North. Wiebe is an outstanding storyteller, combining myth, memories, and excerpts from early explorers' logbooks, photographs, poetry and prose, but the question of whose stories get told and by whom, and how they are taken up (or not!), is a critical consideration. The story of "Green Stockings," the daughter of Keskarrah, is one such example. This renamed Yellowknife woman is as mute in Wiebe's telling of her story as in the logbooks of the early Arctic adventurers whom he cites.

To this new expanded collection of writings that he originally, and more romantically, called "The Arctic: Landscape of the Spirit," Wiebe adds: a Prelude; a Coda; an Afterword; illustrations; the altered map; and, new bibliographic references that reflect, in his words, "various Arctic changes in the past...years." Whether it is "the Arctic" that changes or it is our/non-Inuit ideas of what we *imagine* as the Arctic change is something Wiebe himself takes up in the book. *Playing Dead* is a re-telling of the stories of the white male interlopers of the Arctic (such as Samuel Hearne, John Richardson, Vilhjalmar Stefansson and Robert Hood, to name just a few) through the inclusion of fragments of Inuit stories and songs such as those of Felix Nuyviak, Anthony Apakark Thrasher, Peter Pitseolak and Higilak, and through Wiebe's experiences and travels in the

Arctic. A reflexive re-writing, however, does not automatically translate into an unproblematic rendering. Wiebe's Arctic, both past and present, is primarily narrated through the words of men - white and Inuit - focusing on re-imagining colonial accounts. Despite his attempts to bring in the shaman Uvavnuq and Fanny Pannigabluk, Wiebe's marginal inclusion of Inuit women results in a particular racialized and gendered fiction of the Arctic.

The choice of Kroetsch, a canonical writer, to comment on Wiebe's book, is short-sighted, as the Arctic that *Playing Dead* narrates remains firmly in familiar and untroubled hands. A much better choice would have been the insights of an Inuit writer such as Rachel Attituk Qitsualik, who speaks of the "breathing archives" found in the stories of contemporary Inuit people. Well versed in the stories of her father, grandfather and grandmother who worked with the likes of Knud Rasmussen and Joseph Bernier, Attituk Qitsualik could have taken Wiebe's book a step further, beyond the map, beyond the Anglo place names littered across "the Arctic" and towards Nuna and Sila - Inuit concepts of the land and the air/environment which do not translate across language. Unlike the landscape that the English descriptor evokes, Nuna and Sila are philosophical ideas of material/cosmological place that are not separate from each other nor outside of the people/the inhabitants. (please see "Shadow of Death: Part Two" and "Sila" at <http://www.nunatsiaq.com/archives/nunavut000331/nunani.html> and <http://www.nunatsiaq.com/archives/nunavut000731/nunani.html>).

As the upside-down map (to those of us schooled in the Western idea of the world) in Wiebe's book infers, when we pivot from the center and shift our perspective, we see from a different standpoint, from behind the 'eyes' of the waters, the land, and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic/Nuna/Sila. Our sense of the world as defined through taken-for-granted notions can change dramatically. Despite continuing problems of voice and representation, *Playing Dead* still has much to offer. Ultimately, Wiebe's introduction to ideas of the linear and areal concepts embedded linguistically in Inuit geography/philosophy hints to the non-Inuit reader of the possibilities of contemplating a truer picture of that unimaginable, awesome "Arctic."

*Mapping Women, Making Politics: Feminist Perspectives on Political Geography.* Edited by Lynn A. Staeheli, Eleonore Kofman and Linda J. Peake. New York: Routledge, 2004. 319 pages, ISBN

Reviewed by Jennifer L. Johnson

In effect, *Mapping Women, Making Politics* is itself a map of the major contributions feminist geographers have made and continue to make in political geography. The editors have brought together new and experienced voices who engage critically with the neo/colonial and masculinist history of political geography and subjects as varied as migration, rape, nationalism, masculinity, development and globalization. Chapters dedicated to methodology and theory round out this collection. A central emphasis on the way feminists are transforming concepts such as ‘the political’, ‘space’ and ‘scale’ define this text.

Collectively, the authors push the boundaries of ‘the political’. Is the home a site of politics? Are storytelling, beer brewing and street theatre political acts? The authors point out that we need not cling to the trinity of the local, the state and the global to engage with geopolitics. For example, creative applications of scale greatly enrich our understandings of concepts like ‘territory’: “from the personal space of an individual to the space controlled by a street gang to the space claimed by a transnational corporation,” (p. 142) these feminist re-readings demonstrate that gendered social relations of power are ever present in geopolitics. Drawing on Marston’s (2000) thesis that scale is socially constructed, these authors call for attention to the global – often neglected by feminists because it has been constructed as an inevitable grinding oppression – as well as to the scales of ‘the home’ and ‘the body’ – often neglected because these are not usually considered sites of the political. “If scale – and specifically the global – is seen in a more contingent and radically open way, then there is room to identify gender at work in all relations, institutions, spaces, and places, be they ordinarily designated global, local, or something else.” (p. 132)

*Mapping Women, Making Politics* is a strong addition to the rich and diverse literature offered by growing numbers of feminist geographers. Among edited collections this text stands out as perhaps the only one to address an entire sub-discipline. Domosh and Seager’s (2001) collection come to mind, as do Jones, Nast and Roberts’ (1997) and McDowell and Sharp’s (1997) surveys of feminist work. Duncan (1996) and McDowell (1999) also offer good footholds, but these texts do not attempt a sub-disciplinary survey. The breadth and detail of this text demonstrates a maturity and considers the embeddedness of geopolitics in feminist inquiry. It is still relevant to note that feminist works are still rarely included in introductory political geography collections, so the inclusion of feminist analyses in recent publications on critical issues such as war, the body and globalization is encouraging (see Flint, 2005). Critical geography has also done much more to integrate a feminist lens, even agreeing that these perspectives require the transformation of central concepts in geopolitics (Klaus &

Atkinson, 2000). But the masculinist bias in a lot of political geography still haunts feminist geographers (Women and Geography Study Group of the Royal Geographical Society, 1997), so it is refreshing to see collections that are taking on more than just a singular theme.

This text is a meticulously researched and engaging entry to the sub-discipline and to feminist geography generally, appealing to anyone who has an interest in contemporary feminist inquiry. Chapters 2-8 provide an excellent introductory overview of feminist political geography for readers new to the subject, while later chapters address more discipline-specific concerns. The reflexive approach of these essays positions the reader in the midst of a lively debate about the direction of feminist political geography and how political geography is slowly being transformed by feminist scholarship.

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**Sarina French** recently completed her 4<sup>th</sup> year in Visual Art and will be receiving her BFA in the fall. She works mostly in print media on textiles and makes clothing from printed fabric. The ‘Cowgirls’ print is an old photograph of actual cowgirls, screenprinted and incorporated into a background.

**Heather Hermant** is a poet, performer, teacher and former journalist currently completing her MES at York University.

**Rodrigo Hernandez** was born in Mexico City. In 1996 he came to Toronto and began creating and exhibiting art until his deportation in early 2004. Married to Canadian dance artist Barbara Pallomina, he now lives in Mexico City. Rodrigo is a founding director of the LCCA (Latino Canadian Cultural Association) a non-profit arts organization based in Toronto that promotes Latin American culture in Canada.

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Given the plurality of ways nature has been mobilized within conflicts and violence, the UnderCurrents Editorial Collective announces a call for submission to Vol 15, MOBILIZING NATURE.

Topics include: Environmental impacts of war and violent conflicts; Spaces of security; Militant activism; Social and/or ecological effects of military intervention; Mixing metaphors of war and weapons in nature; Historical approaches to understanding conflict and nature; Terrorism and the construction of borders.

Electronic submissions preferred. Include name, address, brief bio, email and phone number. Please submit artwork in b&w, at least 5x7, 600 dpi, .tiff files, and text in .doc files to [currents@yorku.ca](mailto:currents@yorku.ca). Deadline for submissions: **October 1, 2005**

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Richard J. Mount, Rusted Barbed Wire, photo

## vol. 15. mobilizing nature

militarism and the environment



A CONSTRUCTION OF IMPLICATING EVENTS

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*Reverie*, Elizabeth Fischer