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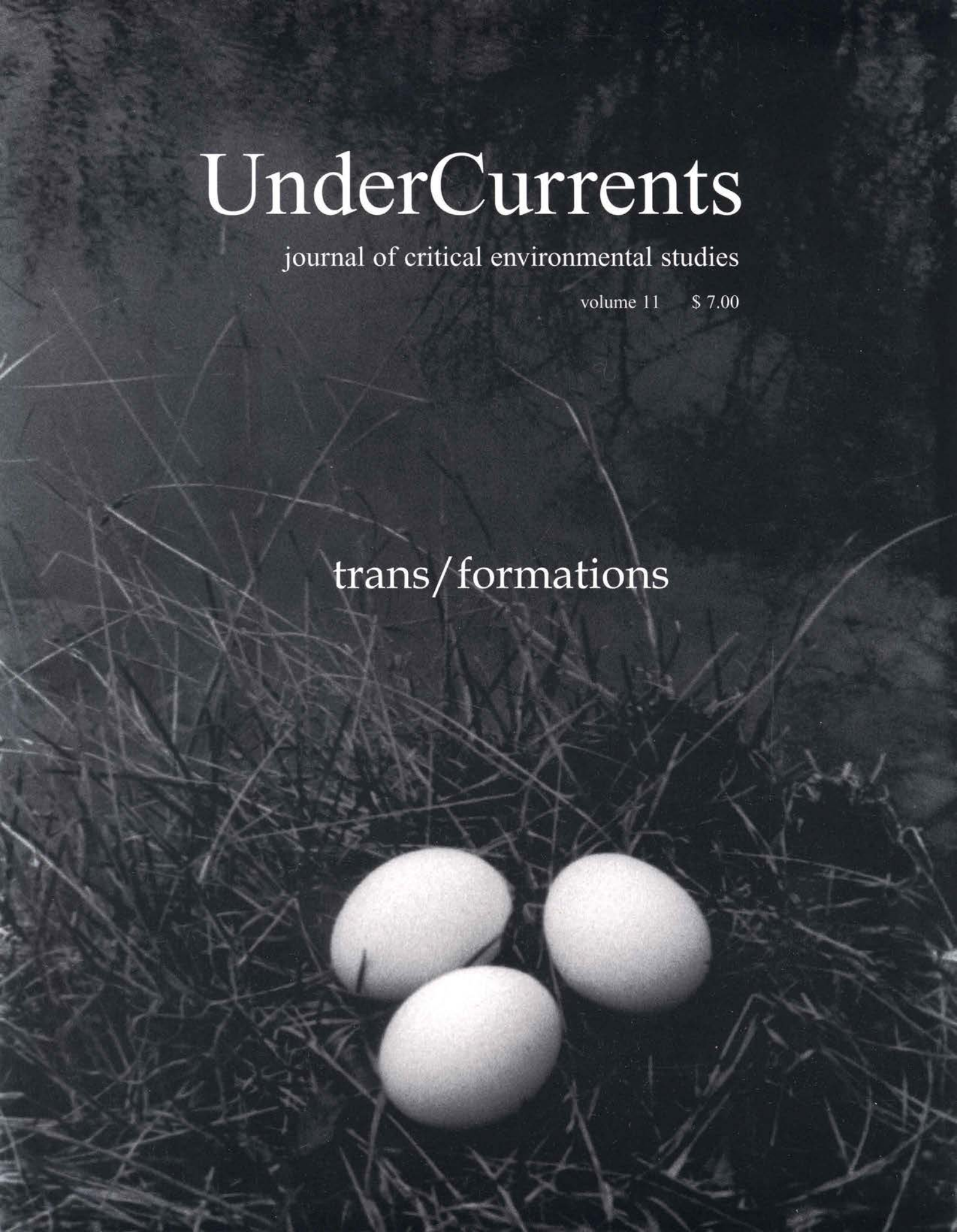
trans/formations



UnderCurrents

journal of critical environmental studies

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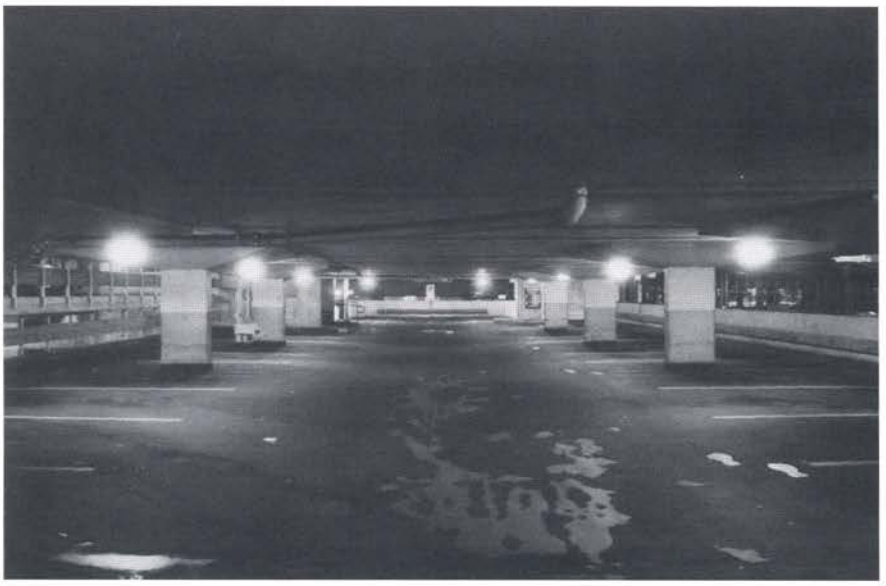


written contents

artwork contents

Webdrops, by James Wilkes

"to speak a true word is to transform the world"
Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

by Pablo Bose and Cheryl Lousley

trans/formations editorial essay

How to write about trans/formations and not mention September 11th and the events that apparently 'changed the world'? How to write about/in the aftermath of 9-11 given the media deluge, given the tendency towards sentimentalism, to ideological grandstanding, to the banal repetition of hollow words?

Back when the *UnderCurrents* Editorial Collective first sat down to decide a theme for its 11th issue—on the cusp of a new millennium—the idea of exploring the word 'transformations' seemed only too suitable for a journal of creative and critical environmental studies. It still does, suggesting transitions, transience, transgenders, trance, trends, new forms (or military formations?)... But the word 'transformation' has taken on a new significance and weight—or vacuity, depending upon one's perspective.

Many of us find that the 'new world order' is all too familiar. National powers—super or otherwise—still commit atrocities against neighbours near and far, and repress internal dissent using brutal means. Poverty, injustice, and inequity still hold the vast majority of the world's population in an unyielding grip. The various leaders of the 'free world' continue to prostrate themselves before the gods of the marketplace. Neo-liberal economic and political agendas are still simply 'common-sense' and capitalism is still the choice of champions (or so we are told).

Is trans/formation but a word game, busywork for activists and artists and all of us dreamers who won't make a difference in the world?

We argue that there is a need for such dreaming and art and criticism and creativity—now, especially, as the possibility for dialogue is increasingly reduced, not only because of the legislative threats to civil liberties, but also due to the disturbing consensus on security. When space is not open to public debate, when minds are not open to argument, art can often find a way in. And that is why *UnderCurrents*, since its inception in 1988, has uniquely pursued a mandate of environmental thought which encompasses multiple forms of writing and art, bringing together the creative and the critical. Environmentalists have been particularly guilty of relying on a few stock—and problematic—narratives to make our arguments: the terror of environmental apocalypse being one of the most common. This is a good time to reconsider that strategy.

The writers and artists in this issue not only discuss, present and reflect environmental and social transformations through prose, poetry, artwork, photography and critical essays, they demonstrate a transformation of the discourse of environmentalism. They intervene in environmentalist approaches, they intervene in the world—some in quite material ways, such as the therapeutic touch intimately photographed by Pariss Garramone. These brief reflections on and moments of transformation that fill the following pages remind us of why we do continue to engage in the clumsy, beautiful, never-ending attempt to trans/form the world we live in.

Trans-composition

Transcomposition: the future is fungal, by Melinda Zytaruk

by Felicity Williams

Truth in the Dark

It is never dark here. We know shadow and grey, but not pitch or black. Sunlight drains from the air; fire on the horizon melts and the flame diffuses into a nebulous twilight. Dusk dies but night, under a Toronto moon, is not dark, is not silent. There is only phosphorescent orange, reflected off the cover of clouds, and the hum of street lamps like a chorus of electric crickets. Night is a bad copy of day; the hydroelectric gods play Ra in the city streets throughout the midnight hours. There are no stars and no wonder in Orion's canopy; the broken skyline is littered with concrete towers, whose fluorescent eyes never blink and never sleep. We are the children of Prometheus; stolen fire lights our way through the inexorable rush of business day to business day. There is never dark and never rest.

Epiphany comes in the middle of the night. When I cannot see my hand in front of my face, flooding furious light rushes my reason. I find the dark in Mana and night in Mali. I receive vision in Africa and light in Mana. The walk from the squat pot to my room is long at three am, the malarial mosquito's witching-hour. I swat at this and that in the obscurity, breathing the fear of my colonial predecessors. I trip over roots in the ground and trowels carelessly abandoned from the day's work. The air is thick with sweat and thin with silence, broken only by the stirring of a kid at his mother's side and the ceaseless croak of frogs in the rice paddies nearby. Here the senses perform an intricate dance, where sight and sound and touch must learn their own steps. There is a new rhythm here, a new balance, a new song; as I negotiate the path back to my room, I am aware of the land's poem.[1] It reveals itself in straw brick buildings and corrugated tin roofs; in tall grandmother trees whose wisdom matches that of the stars; in heat and humidity that trickles in a salty tear down the back; in the gentle and precious breeze that cools the flesh; in the sound of my own footsteps on the earth and through the grass; in the sleepy stalls and animals within; in the wisps of cloud that race between the earth and sky, lit up like ghosts in the moonlight. The moon transforms the lightless land. Where it is not, it is utterly dark. As it rises, it casts shadows on the dirt and the walls, giving enough light to usher me back to my bed. It is as silver as the sun is gold, giving light enough to dream and to sleep. Here there is dark and here there is rest; under my mosquito net I drink deeply of both in the hours before the first flame of dawn.

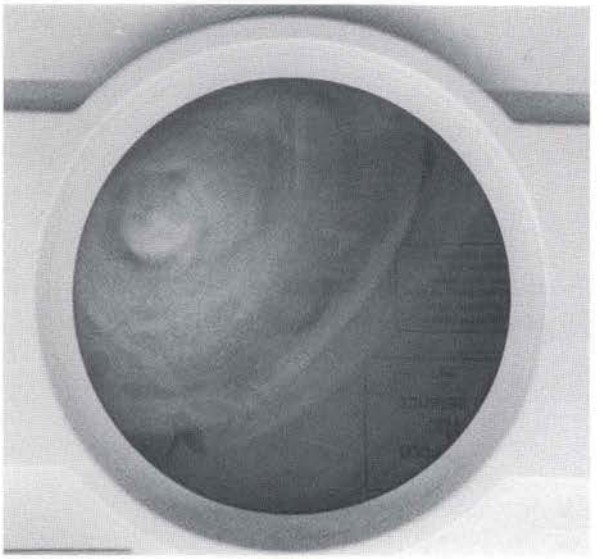
Every Thursday in the village of Mana, the people meet to pray. They gather in a shadowy, lantern-lit church, light sparkling in their eyes and white smiles like each star reflected here on earth. The room fills with the words from the book, the low voice of pastor Damy Traore uttering words from his heart, his struggle, his toil in the fields. Then comes song, cooled down from youthful ecstasy to prayerful murmuring in the sleepy glow of the lantern. Voices ebb and flow in cadence, unity somehow clamoring in dissonance. Turning to prayer, they all speak at once. There is beauty in the microtonality of their prayer, light refracting and flashing off every hope and grief lifted in faith and solidarity. Here there is not one voice, but many voices; there is not one prayer but many prayers. All these are received by one who listens and responds; herein lies cohesion and harmony. I do not understand the words in Bambara, but I can decipher the spirit out of which they flow. It is a privilege to be in their midst.

Night in Mali is a mirror reflecting my own light and darkness. My faith and failure are laid bare before me. Here there is real darkness; here I gain real vision. I come from a place that is built for me to forget the happiness and truth I see here. I come from a place that would rather I believe in the misery of the third world, and the mire of poverty. Visions of despair flash across my television screen, to keep me believing that I am happy because of what I have, rather than who I am. The people of Mana have taught me that my people suffer from the worst kind of poverty. We have neither light nor darkness, only a bad copy of both. We do not even know that our lives are counterfeit, that our spirits are starved for the glow of the church on Thursdays. Compared to the neon streets of Toronto, its dimensions are deep as hope is wide. It is never dark here, nor is it ever really light.

Notes

[1] Al Purdy, "Return Journey", *Naked with Summer in Your Mouth* (McLelland & Stewart Inc., Toronto: 1994).

Opposite page: Pristine, by Adrienne Blattel



by Lilace Mellin Guignard

APOLOGY AND RETRACTION

1.

It's not the sex I miss so much, as the easy way
involvement blinds me to larger problems.
Something in the aftermath of loving
can make *global warming* sound pleasant,
like a gentle promise.

I call my friend in the San Gabriels to say
this one fell through too. She complains
that last night a stranger told her he loved her.
At 1:30 AM, anonymously on the phone. He said
know this to be true and she hung up. I want to know
what's true. I want to know what there is that's worth faith.
I want to trust a lover's silence again and I want

never to. I tell Sue I can't separate real feeling
from nursery-rhymes. I always believed that language
had power. Nothing I said could've changed him.
I believed words must fight for truth and that truth,
not men, should be sacrificed for. Truth is

I hate my waste of words.

2.

I should recite the list of dyings: old-growth,
ivory-cursed rhinos, family farms,
families—instead I use dolphins and wolves
as examples of mismatched lovers. I try and give
my voice over to the earth's eulogy and every time
what's still beautiful and still here
disappears and I'm left
more than lonely. I'm hopeless.

But then comes Sue's voice
saying let's spend tonight on Grass Mountain,
just us, the dogs, and a bottle of tequila
we won't open. And, hanging up, I find a pen
because I have to give thanks for Sue
and friends that help heal, thanks for the rivers we have
and the seasons at any phase, and phrases that lead
my laughing, my crying, my learning
and my thanks. It's the most I can give.

Opposite page: Cycles, by AdrienneBlattel

by Angus Leech

Notes on Etching Heaven:
A Fact and Fiction Expedition to the Cosmogony of the Map

I believe, this is Heaven to no one else but me.

- Sarah McLachlan

Etching Heaven

The map systems of the Western world have their origins in geometric grids developed to chart the Heavens—the starry abode of divine rationality, and of perfect order. When celestial geometry began to be used for charting earth-bound geography, the consequence was transformation. Lines and rectangles of longitude and latitude became roads, property lines, neatly arranged buildings, entire cities planned on the grid. Endless modification of the planet carved the map into its surface, transcending the undulating grain of geology. Thus, it was no longer necessary to worry about building Towers of Babel. The cartographers had devised a way of bringing Heaven down to earth.

The Cosmogony of Pherecydes

Of all that has come from Chaos who was first, these three things only are eternal: *Zeus*, Sky. *Chronos*, Time. *Chthon*, the Earth. When Zeus, whose eyes are lightning but whose spirit is the mind in reason, looked upon Chthon he was consumed. Thunder rove the Heavens and at last she was persuaded into matrimony, but in three days of love-making her face was changed. No longer did she look the virgin, with dark lips parted in fertile exhaustion. Her massive body trickled with awakened lust, and the Sky feared for the sanctity of his marriage.

So Zeus spread his arms to gather the white beams of the stars, then passed a needle through his palm and drew it out into threads of a new thing, which was colour. And with this thread the Sky wove a mantle of lightness and beauty with which to cover his mistress, in order that she would be known in intimacy only to him, whatever the trickeries of Time. And on that veil which billowed and shimmered and shifted were woven in all colours and forms the lands and seas of the world. So it was that Zeus assured that the depths of Chthon would be ever and ever unknowable, and gave her the name of Gaia. So then was created a middle-place of change between the lightened sky and the dark mysteries. And so too was made the place where men would dwell and find the sustenance of life. Here, breathing the exhalations of enduring, hidden Chthon and never ceasing to raise our eyes to the perfect eternity of heaven that is always out of reach.

Thus it is that men's lives know only the seductions of Gaia's face, and must in all forms put up with change and then pass away. Thus the orator speaks his histories with whatever faith he has, that whatever small memory of this passing remains to us may be preserved for our betterment and aid. We speak these histories because we are not made for eternity, because we are powerless without remembrance. We repeat these histories over and over, because only Gods can afford to forget.

Try not to forget. The surface of these things is only a veil.

(Pherecydes the sage philosopher, consumed as he is at his writing desk, does not know that most of those who come after him will read the poems of Hesiod instead.)

Scapulimancy

A woman with ochre skin is there by a fire with a kettle boiling, next to a small pile of clean, white bones, the femurs and ulna and clavicles of deer. Every few moments, she cracks one over her knee, pulling back on her stroke before it is broken in two. From the proliferating fractures she speculates the near future. Where lines intersect she infers decisions of importance. Green meetings, pin-points of caution. Each of her friends and acquaintances approaches, takes a bone, hands it to her, waits. One selects a large scapula which shatters dryly to slivers when the woman brings down a stone round and ridged like a fist.

"Too many pieces," she shrugs, and dusts herself off. *Too many pieces* stares at the stars, the stream of smoke and sparks rising like a translucent cumulus up from the fire.[2]

Climbing the Ladder

"The Heavens never seem to change," said those Greeks. "They have always been good at just being there. And they're so neat and tidy. And as for the

Underworld, well, that's just permanent chaos. But we humans are stuck here on this middle surface, in a garden between perfect lasting order and eternal god-knows-what. The problem is we never know what will become of us. What with all these earthquakes, upheavals, insurrections, and deaths—even just the changing of the seasons—things are a bit unstable. What we wouldn't give for time to relax—it's hard enough just to stay in one place for very long. And the thing with a garden is, you have to take care of it. You either work to maintain order or it all goes to shit. One minute you're doing fine trimming the hedges and maybe building a little pagoda, and everything is looking *divine*. But turn your back for one minute and the Satyrs are jumping the fence and pissing all over your begonias."

As far as most of the Greeks were concerned, change was going to happen whether you liked it or not—you had to live in the middle of the world. Existence on the surface of the Earth was ephemeral, but people did have a choice of which way they wanted to push things: you could work to move society toward the pleasant intellectual orderliness of planetary Heaven (and thus follow Apollo), or you could allow it to degenerate toward the wild unpredictability of the Chthonic realm (walking the path of Dionysus). As for popular opinion: a little ecstatic spontaneity was popular here and there with certain cults, but in general most people preferred the idea of climbing the ladder to that of falling down it.[3]

Arachnae (The Weavers)

Oh, but those Greeks were good with geometry, though you really have to give the Egyptians credit for starting them off with straight lines and angles. The same people who built the Pyramids of Giza also invented a way to survey the land so they could more easily tax it. The Pythagoreans took these few simple mathematical laws and moved on to tackle circles and spheres. As always, their inspiration lay up there in the Heavens, and math and astronomy and philosophy were all the same thing.

The stars were known to be set rigidly in the Sky, which was a transparent sphere that turned from east to west once a day. Because the Sky symbolized perfect order, and it seemed to exist as a geometric sphere, geometry became a model for all intellectual achievement to imitate as the supreme exercise of reason. The Sun and the Moon traveled more slowly across the span of the Heavens, along separate spheres with different axes of motion. The planets traveled in odd elongated spirals which were perpetually hard to explain. (One Greek even suggested that the earth traveled on a sphere around the sun instead of the other way around, which would explain why the planets danced in loops. But he had to lay in a cold grave for seventeen centuries before anyone stopped believing he was crazy.)

With a working knowledge of angles and arcs, all of the different motions of these whirling bodies could be measured relative to one another. To keep track of it all those Ancient Greeks started drawing spider-webs on the Sky. [4]

Erratics

Out on the bald-assed Alberta prairie, on the outskirts of a Provincial Park which shall remain nameless, sits a great pink boulder of granite from the Canadian Shield. This erratic, which has moved many times over the eons, once sat for untold centuries atop a high spot overlooking the plains. Until it was rolled from the path of some dirt-farmer's plough.

On the surface of this rectangular stone has been carved a glyph, as if drilled one pock-mark at a time. A field of shallow holes in the coarse stone; a long undulating line, which might be a river, or a snake because it ends in a circular head. Nobody, not even the Blackfoot Elders at nearby Gliechen, knows exactly what it is about. Yet, as any fool can see, it is almost certainly a map. A map of what, nobody can say, because they forgot to remember which hill it was on, which way it was pointing—details unimportant to the collector.

So now the glyph-stone just sits there, more erratic as ever, under an interpretive sign which seems to shrug its shoulders. Provoking mild interest from wandering tourists, and ever mis-informing ghosts who wander river valley slopes, making wrong turns at Deadlodge Canyon.

Anaximander of Miletus

Anaximander is the first of the Spiders to spin a permanent thread; the first of the Greeks whose written work will survive in detail. He will invent the idea of the *apeiron*, the boundless, imperishable, eternal surrounding which is the fundamental source and substance of all things. Besides this metaphysical leap, his is the first known geometrical map of the universe. Anaximander looks up from his corner in the garden to cast silky filaments across

the Sky, and when he finishes, his labour has woven what we later will think of as the Celestial Grid.

Once someone had come up with the notion of dividing up the sky into equally-spaced equators and meridians—a grid of lines which, like Heaven itself, rotated but never ever changed in relation to one another—astronomers could start filling in the exact positions of the stars, which were permanently fixed, and trace the seasonal paths of the stuff that moved. The whole bewildering vastness could be drawn and captured on a blank page of thick vellum, rolled between the fingers, tacked upon the wall. It was as though you weren't even inside the cosmos anymore, but embracing it from a great distance or height.[5]

Anaximander and the Gnomon

The Spider is in the temple garden again, but now he is thinking about time. The Heavens are an eternal clock, only there is no such word or machine. The rotations of stars measure the days, the sun counts out seasons and years. The moon brings tides, months and the considerations of women. At the temple of Delphos, among the crags and cliffs of Parnassus, is the *omphalos*, the cosmic egg of the world, where two eagles sent flying from opposite poles of the earth met and finally rested. It is here at the geometrical centre of the world, at this place where the vault of Heaven bows closest to Chthon's cool crevices, that the three parts of creation are impaled one upon another by the rotating vertical axis of Time. So it is here, in this garden terrace dedicated to Apollo, that Anaximander pounds his long pole into the dirt.

Sky, Underworld, and middle Earth, pierced and joined by the perpetual axle of Chronos. The Spider imagines himself twirling mid-air as he watches the shadow stretch across the garden's grounds. He has found with his sun-dial the means to measure the length and angle of Apollo's shadow. He has finally measured time, and soon he will use the light of the sun-clock to calculate exact positions and distances on the lands and the oceans. He will trace Gaia's erratic outline using perfect celestial reasoning; write his grid upon the Earth, catch her form upon his page. Each line of ink that he draws will measure an emptiness, bound a space waiting to be filled. A space in which Anaximander can plot whatever he sees or imagines might be there. The whole inhabited world, spread out on a wooden table; the lines at the margins of the page extended even beyond the known realms, into an empty yellow blanket filled with winds and abyss.

When the map is finally finished, Anaximander reaches into Heaven beaded with dew and plucks loose a single strand. The Spider lets his net drop, and wherever it comes to stick it will seem as though the forgetfulness of Heaven has glimmered down and covered everything with a fresh layer of blank parchment. [6]

Maps in Dreams

Oh yes, Indians made maps. You would not take any notice of them. You might say such maps are crazy. But maybe the Indians would say that is what your maps are: the same thing. Different maps from different people—different ways. Old-timers made maps of trails, ornamented them with lots of fancy. The good people.

None of this is easy to understand. But good men, the really good men, could dream of more than animals. Sometimes they saw heaven and its trails. Those trails are hard to see, and few men have had such dreams. Even if they could see dream-trails to heaven, it is hard to explain them...You may laugh at these maps of the trails to heaven, but they were done by the good men who had the heaven dream, who wanted to tell the truth. They worked hard on their truth.

- Jimmy Wolf, Dunne-za, Northeastern BC [7]

We're All Trying to Get to Heaven

Those Greeks found a way to bring Heaven down to Earth: to plot the rational order and the eternal qualities of Heaven onto the ever-changing surface of their lives. By doing that, they laid the theological and mathematical foundation upon which the future of European cartographic science would rest: pure geometry. They created a kind of language which held itself apart from the world, like a person poring over a chart; no longer existing within the universe, this cartographic language became a tool to be applied from outside. Thus, there opened a rift between the map-maker (self) and geography (the material world), fostering the impression of manipulation, objectivity, domination, control.[8] In cartographic maps, the Earth was made to seem as though it were being viewed through a lens that filtered out everything irrational, irrelevant, imperfect. For only the singular, transcendent truths of celestially-sponsored reality could pass through the mathematical membrane of the grid and be represented upon the page.[9]

The preceding account is, of course, an overgeneralization: the process took many hundreds, even thousands of years. And cartographic science was far from the exclusive invention of the Greeks. In fact, the science of cartography as we know it didn't really come together until the Middle Ages, as a synthesis of technical developments from Christian, Arabic, Jewish, and Asian origins. It was actually Jewish and Saracen astronomers, working on contract for Pedro of Castile to more accurately chart the Mediterranean, who constructed the first modern carto-

graphic maps.[10]

Even though Europeans of the Middle Ages had for the most part changed religions since the advent of Greek astronomy, the celestial grid and Anaximander's first maps, many of the same cosmological elements remained in their thinking. Pico della Mirandola, Renaissance humanist and writer, expressed his thoughts on the choices made available by God for the human soul:

He therefore took man as a creature of indeterminate nature and, assigning him a place in the middle of the world, addressed him thus: Neither a fixed abode nor a form that is thine alone nor any function peculiar to thyself have We given thee...thou mayest have and possess what abode, what form and what function thou thyself shall desire.[11]

For Pico, a position in the middle of the world did not suit the destiny of God's best creation—again, there were two options: humankind could labour to rise heaven-ward through self-control and reason, or choose the unbridled bestial instinct of the terrestrial realms. Again, the choice lay between emulating Apollo or Dionysus, and Pico and most other intellectuals clearly preferred the former.[12] Thus, the association of celestial mathematics with divine truth remained strong, and the science of cartography was upheld as a fine example of these principles put into practice.[13]

The origins of Western cartographic science are as much rooted in the theological, cosmological, and spiritual aspects of human consciousness as anything else. Forced to occupy an uncomfortably ephemeral earth, people continued to wish to transcend it: the development of the geometric grid with which the heavens and then the earth could be plotted was tied to the ever-present urge to move toward the comforts and intellectual order of Heaven. As Geoff King suggests, by representing order, society might hope to more closely attain it, and in fact Western cartography became a tool for altering the landscape itself.[14] With the application of other technologies developed in the scientific and industrial revolutions, more and more the land was made to look like the idealized, neatly arranged, even gridded versions on maps. The cartographic science of the period just preceding New World contact was helping to create images of an orderly world, but it was also becoming a tool for controlling it. The map's incredible usefulness was regarded as proof that it presented a superior grasp of reality, and the more the world looked like the map (all rectangles and lines and blank spaces), the more it looked like a divine manifestation.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Europeans continued to openly mix pure geometry with theological and mythic elements. On the margins of every map would be drawn beautiful cartouches of angels blowing trumpets (and sometimes bubbles), Caesars slaying monsters, bizarre sea creatures, and celestial maps. The angels were the most obvious—in addition to their trumpets they would also be depicted playing with compasses, sheafs of paper, theodolites, and cartographic tools of every description.

After a time (mostly following New World contact), these elements were gradually dropped from common usage; no longer did cartographers emphasize the spiritual origins of their art. This is generally ascribed to a dwindling in faith, a replacement of technical values over religious ones, and a general transformation toward atheism in science.[15] At the time of the first New World voyages, and for some time thereafter, maps are obviously steeped in values of religion.[16] Yet at the same time, European intellectual elites (of which most explorers and navigators—i.e. mapmakers—were not a part) were moving away from Christianity, and this trend eventually became manifest in cartographic charts. In short, map-makers stopped drawing so many pretty pictures of angels, and instead either left margins blank or filled them with illustrations of scientific instruments, landscape paintings, battles which their countrymen had won, impressive navies, depictions of savages, or lists of natural resources and tradeable goods or census figures. There was a shift toward secular realism, and yet the theological assumptions which had always favoured the rationality of the grid did not disappear: they were merely dressed anew in secular garments, hidden as invisibly mythic undertones beneath the grid itself. Mythic in a dual sense: because such assumptions had arisen in ancient mythic tales, but also because they had become so much part of Western culture that they existed as unchallenged archetypes, as the deepest of cultural values, taken for granted as part of the mental map by which European culture was operating.[17] No matter what the scientists said about it they were still trying to reach out to an idealized state of being in the world—a state of being once ascribed to Heaven.

Thunder

In olden times, of course, the Ojibwa did not know the real causes of thunder; nor could they conceive of the earth as a tiny satellite in a solar system, itself one of the least of many systems. The earth, insofar as they knew it, was flat and roofed with a flat layer of sky. Man can see only the undersurface of the sky; its upper surface is like this earth, abounding with woods and streams and game, but free from misery and unhappiness....

There are numerous myths... describing the origins of various stars, of sun and moon, of wind and snow, and other phenomena about which the Indians pondered. Many Ojibwa still believe in the historic truth of all these stories; others are frankly skeptical of them, regard-

ing them as pleasant fairy tales. In earlier times sceptics were probably rare, because almost anything could seem possible to people who are ignorant of the physical laws that govern natural phenomena, and who interpret all things spiritually.

- Diamond Jenness, Anthropologist and noted Assimilationist, 1935 [18]

15th Century Contact: The Green Sea of Gloom

In the cabin of the small ship, the captain is reading a passage from Marco Polo's book—the one in which he tells of his second trip to the far Far East to meet with the Great Khan at Shandu. In the passage, Polo speaks of the Gobi Desert, edge of great emptiness, where only demons howl and beat drums. They call out to him, invite him to walk and become lost; to become sand, die of emptiness, die of loneliness in a land fit for Jinns.

Legend has it that the when the Polos returned to Venice, they gathered their families and friends, threw open their cloaks, and a rain of silk lined with gold covered their boots. Ever since Polo, there have been Franciscan monks following the same tracks. They write accounts of the strangest of men: some drinking blood from their own mares, making war upon others with goat hooves like satyrs; or still others gigantic in stature, covered in hair, worshipers of grass.

The captain crosses himself, takes the hat from his little head, scratches his scalp, pinches a louse, wipes the pus upon his trousers. Black cloak, black trousers, black hat like a little bishop's, but much less erect. Every seven seconds he thinks of a woman's nipple, the nub of a pear, or a similar distraction, then crosses himself again. He stays in his cabin for sometimes days at a time, reluctant to walk upon the decks or to gaze out across the Green Sea of Gloom: the span of water upon which the Saracens say it is foolishness—nay, proof of absolute madness—to sail.

In his cabin, this man closes his eyes, imagines his little boat on the water, sees it bobbing on a net of sticky threads that holds it firm on the surface waves. If not for the mesh, the ship would certainly be sucked down into the foamy green ether, or would rise up into the sky, fall off of the world. What a comfort to see those strands spreading outward, billowing forward from the prow of this ship, becoming solid like a crystal of blue sulphate in an alchemist's vial. A net to trap satyrs and giants, aquatic monsters and daemons, Jinns and whatever men with tails are about. A net to keep the ship on top and they on the bottom, suffocating beneath the waters. Good riddance, a happy death for the drowned offspring of Pan, thinks the captain. Then he thinks again of a woman's nipple.

An hour later, the ship's boy will arrive, will have to shout twice at the captain's door about supper and a little reef of islands. But, in his dream, the man is listening intently. What was that he heard knocking about over the creaking of the bilge, as if something soft had bumped against the hull?[19]

Waterdrinker

A Waterdrinker, priest of the Sioux, dreamed that outlandish creatures were weaving a huge spiderweb around his people. He awoke knowing that was how it was going to be and said to his people, *"When this happens, you shall live in square grey houses, in a barren land, and beside those square grey houses you shall starve."*

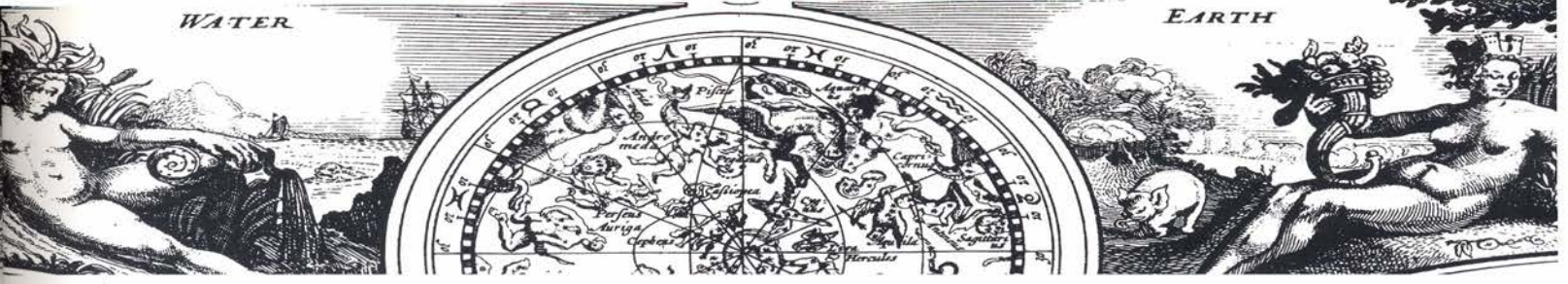
- Eduardo Galeano, Memory of Fire: Genesis[20]

The Petals of Myth

Sailing for Oriental civilizations and unconscious of either true destinations or the motives that drove the sails, Columbus and his successors broke in upon mythic zones wholly unsuspected. It is impossible to overemphasize their error. What soon became known as the "New World" was in fact the old world, the oldest world we know, the world the West had once been. Now the onward press of Christian history brought a civilization into contact with its psychic and spiritual past, and this was a contact for which it was utterly unprepared. The ensuing conflict was so deep that it has yet to be resolved or even understood.[21]

When Europeans first began arriving in the New World as explorers and colonists, they found a landscape that was already full of history. For the most part that history was oral in the Northern latitudes (though even there the indigenous nations had come up with various ways of recording things physically) and the ground literally teemed with the living voices of memory.

No, this New World was not empty. It was off our charts but it was surely there, lying not in darkness, nor in the white color of terror it would assume as the lines of the charts reached out to account for it. It existed in its own light and colors, its own tides, seasons, flocks and flowers...the New World teemed with its native life. It teemed also



with the nature-inspired speculations of its humankind, the spectacular petals of myth.[22]

Within this memory lay distinct understandings of space, time, and cosmology which had grown up like vines around a trunk of local experience. The societies of this New World had as primary technologies, both practical and spiritual, their myths, stories, and also the technology of dreaming.[23] As it happens, they also had maps, very different from the Western versions. But these were technologies which most of the new arrivals chose neither to privilege nor to understand. Instead, these Europeans began immediately to catalogue and map everything according to their own cosmology of geometric grids, saying "History begins here and now, and this is the way it will be recorded, in lines and rectangles and writing." Inky blots. The white colour of terror.

Frederick Turner has suggested that the gridded emptinesses inherent in Western cartography functioned to remove a sense of life from the landscape and overwrite it with the residue of western myths, including, we might suppose, those mythic remnants contained within the methodology of cartography itself. As Geoff King has written, "The Western colonial map is an abstraction that tends to extinguish other dimensions of reality in an act of violent appropriation."[24] This estrangement from 'other' realities included a philosophical negation of any other human perspectives which may have preceded European arrival—especially if they did not mesh with the principal colonial project: ferreting metals, furs, and every other commodity by any means necessary. They laid these grids, blank as bleached wool, across a fresh landscape, and in a wink a million voices became silent to Western consciousness. It was as if they had stuffed the pages of their maps and journals like cotton into their ears.

Epilogue (a choice)

Declension: *A name on the map is often the only tombstone of a murdered people.*[25]

Optimism: *The best way to argue against the world view expressed on one map is to offer a rival projection.*[26]

(But alas, that is a whole other story altogether.)

Notes

1 Thematic material for this essay inspired by: Denis Cosgrove, "Landscape and Myths, Gods and Humans," *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives.* ed. Barbara Bender. (Providence: Berg, 1993).

2 Peter Nabokov, "Orientations from Their Side: Dimensions of Native American Cartographic Discourse," *Cartographic Encounters,* ed. Malcolm Lewis. (Chicago, Ill. : The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

3 See Cosgrove.

4 Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

5 Geoff King, *Mapping Reality: An Exploration of Cultural Cartographies,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) 140.

6 See Cosgrove; also Blackburn.

7 Hugh Brody, *Maps and Dreams,* (1981; Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1989) 45-6.

8 King 140.

9 Ibid 141.

10 Frederick Turner, *Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit Against the Wilderness,* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983) 91.

11 Cosgrove 288.

12 Ibid 288-89.

13 King 141.

14 Ibid 141.

15 Turner 90; King 141.

16 King 141.

17 For a discussion of the idea of myth as invisible, unchallenged cultural archetype, see the introductory chapter of: Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents: The New World through Indian Eyes,* (Canada: Penguin, 1992).

18 Diamond Jenness, "The Ojibwa Indians of Parry Island, Their Religious and Social Life," *Canada Department of Mines Bulletin.* No. 78, Anthropological Series No. 17, 1935. (NP).

19 Turner 86-90.

20 Eduardo Galleano, "Genesis," *Memory of Fire,* trans. Cedric Belfrage, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) 41-2.

21 Turner 95.

22 Ibid 95.

23 Ibid 92.

24 King 145.

25 c.f. Wright Chapter One.

26 King 21.

- lady dancing with the moon woman who sprinkles the night sky with stars -

Last night the sky opened wide to surround me and my soul leapt up to greet it. My body shell watched and waited silently as this earth's brilliance dripped into its cavity, gorging its awareness. It was then that you slipped by, caressing my heart with sweet splendors, and my soul reached out to meet you. We danced above the cedars high, carving light waves into the sky. We settled on rocks cascading into water soft, as the setting sun swallowed us whole. My peace, this is a song for us, sounds which nourish our paths and source: the singing of hump backed whale rocks masquerading as loons who sound like coyotes echoing through watery distances, voice upon voice lifting the call. And the waking night shimmers, its grace surrounds us. We awake renewed, whole, alive—deep breath waiting. We are inspiration.

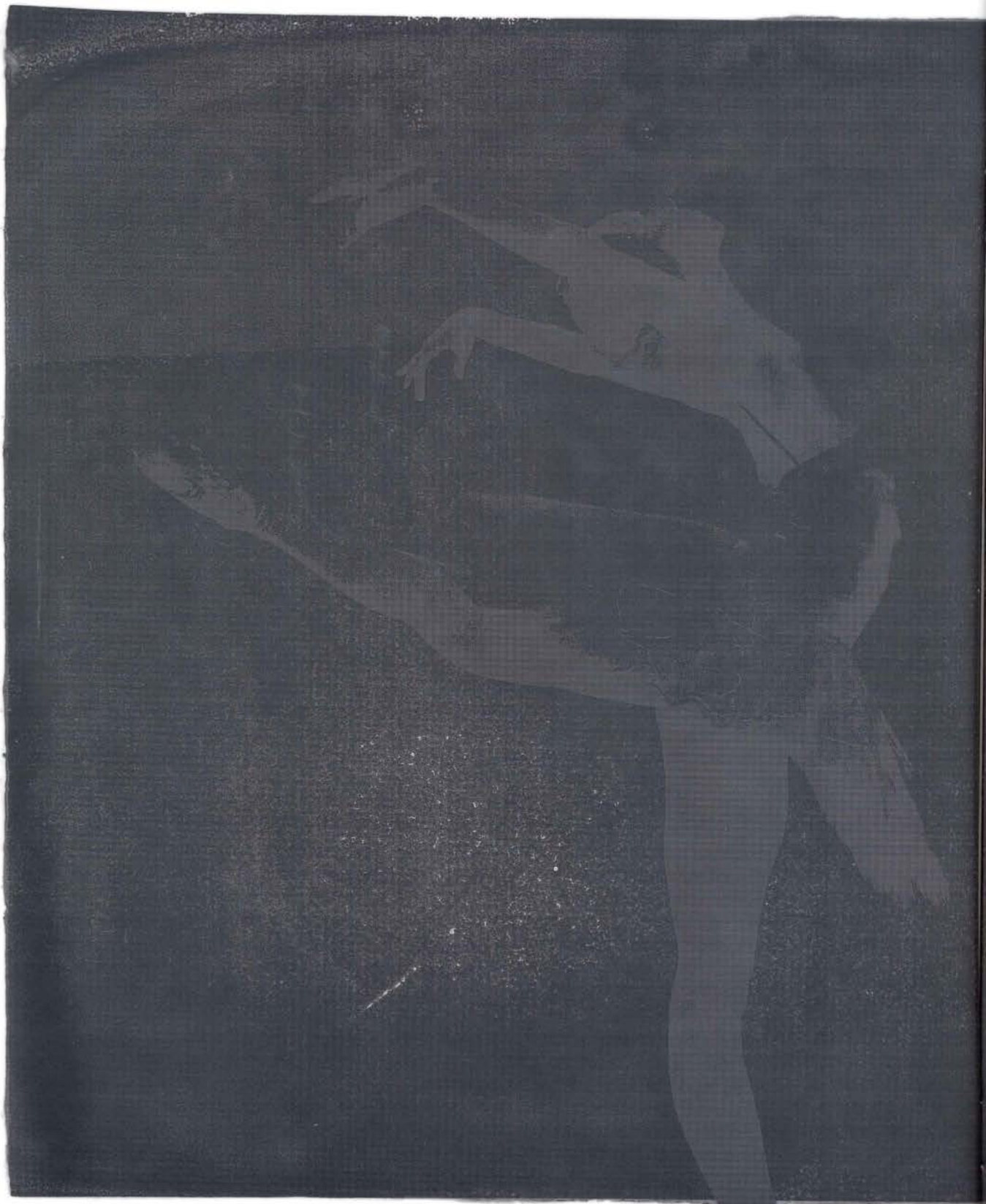
by Majero Bouman

a letter from Quetico Provincial Park

It is the sixth day. We are spending it on the island of bays. The landscape is rich with softly shaped stone which has been braving the elements since Precambrian time. They are scratched and scarred by the passing of glaciers from the last ice age. Black, brown, white, yellow, green. Trees root right into the stone, cracking and splintering it, the bark almost indiscernible from the rock into which it has delved. There is very little soil—just lichen growing thick and bouncy. The leaves of the few deciduous trees are turning color and falling. We've missed the blue and raspberries, but there is juniper about, some daisies, water lilies. When the sun shines it is hot and friendly. Cloud cover is welcome after its presence; the rain, thunder and lightning haven't been violent. The wildlife—the landscape—is incredible. I've never been to lakes so big, dotted with beautiful islands, with no cottages, no motor boats, next to no people. We spend naked days under the sun and in the water, taking up and taking in space which is almost too much to bear. Bald eagles sit upon high crags and on the top-most branches of dead trees, taking great leaps into the air to be caught up on 6 feet of wing span and glide away. Loons—I feel I now understand their call, which is not to be lonely at all but to echo across the waters in chorus with countless more, howling laughing and singing the sun to sleep. Great blue herons soar across the water and tree tops effortlessly. A moose and her calf swam across the narrows coming right toward us, their big ears flapping in communication, to come out just ten meters down stream. Upon the rocks of the islands are fish bones, the remnants of eagle meals. The spine vertebrae are the size of a fox's, the teeth a centimeter long, jaws almost as long as my hand! It's ALIVE here. Even the rocks sigh with the passing of the wind. There is water and land and water and land such that one can no longer be certain of what is surrounding what. The rock I sit on is the very crust of the earth. I feel its age, its weight, the heavy passing of time, the sublime perfection of ever-movement, ever-change. No thing is still here. No, no thing is still except the soul at peace. It is this peace which draws me toward people I love. It is this peace which I experience in embrace: quiet, still, infinite. We are of a piece, we are whole in one another and with we-earth. We are here, created and creating, becoming, reflected and reflecting. I am overwhelmed.

I could be preparing for school, reading course material, learning words and theory with which to arrive well armed. But I am here letting my soul breathe, allowing my feet to walk we-earth in simplicity, for this is what I most need to take with me: simplicity, inspiration and life, instead of grandiose and complex statements constructed such that not many can know what I mean. We deal in communication and exchange sweet sister. These are the riches of this world.

Opposite page: Untitled, by Tema Sarick



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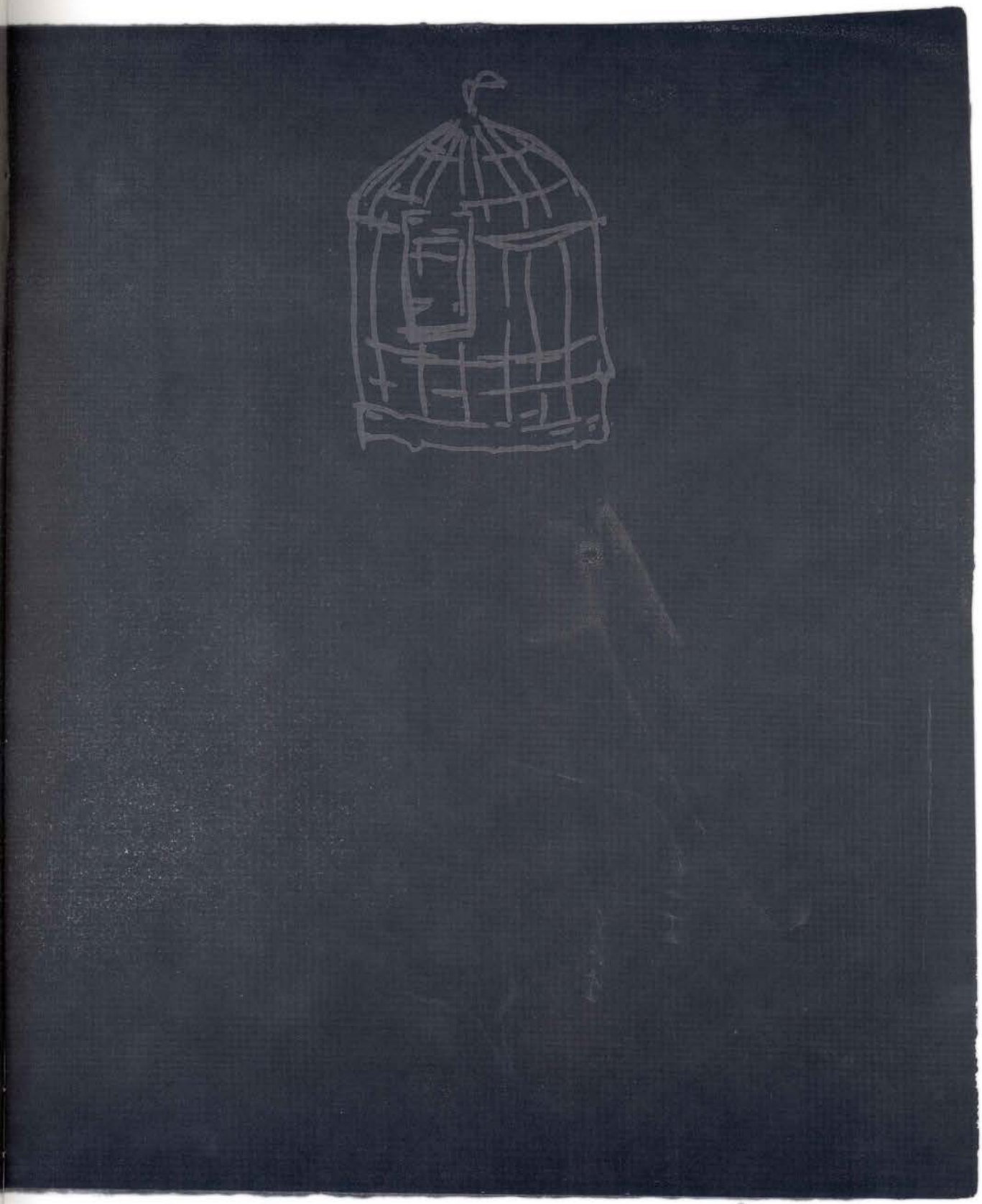
How does a woman



come a bird?

San Wai 2001

Abolish Work!

by Jeff Shantz

The meaning of work is once again on the social agenda and gaining increasing relevance for contemporary political struggles. There are perhaps two principal, but very different, impulses for an emergent transformation of work. First, radical social movements—most significantly ecology—raise concerns about productivism and the coercive character of capitalist jobs. These social activists are rethinking the very character of work, some going so far as to advocate the end of jobs altogether. Second, the cybernetized restructuring of global capital seems to be bringing about a "jobless recovery" with high levels of institutionalized unemployment. Anxiety, desperation, and reactionary politics are increasingly becoming the most common responses to this transformation of work.

I argue that the radical approach of work abolitionism provides an important impetus for rethinking social relations more broadly in this age of global injustice and ecological collapse. Struggles against the imposition of work, whether against workfare, sweatshops or telework, are inseparable from struggles for a world without exploitation. By seeking less rather than more work in our lives, we can offer a defiant alternative to the desperation of futurists who bemoan "the end of work" while never daring to dream the end of capital.

From Work to Jobs to Leisure?

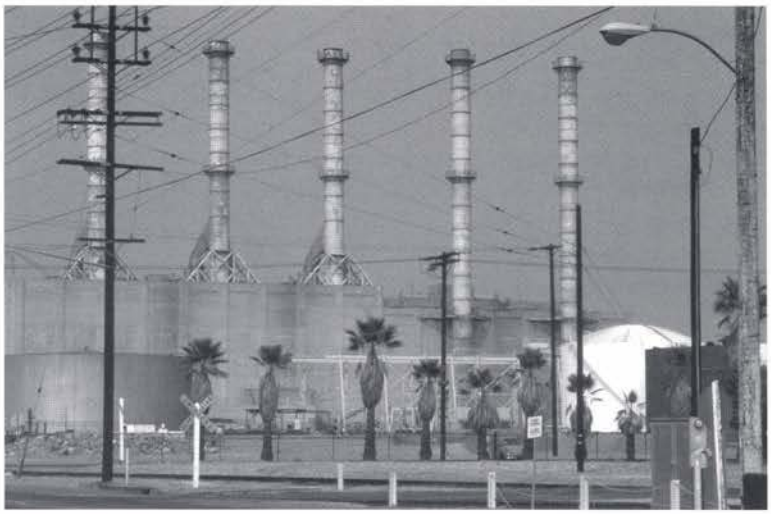
The job is a social artefact, although it is so deeply embedded in our consciousness that most of us have forgotten its artificiality or the fact that, through history, most societies havdone fine without jobs.[1] Through industrialism, work—the act of engaging in specific tasks to meet direct needs—became transformed into jobs, i.e. "to work for wages."[2] Numerous authors have discussed the historic emergence of "jobs," relating this transformation to enclosure of common lands and the separation of home life and work life as people left villages to work in urban factories.[3] They argue the new job-work gradually contributed to the destruction of traditional social relations and served to undermine prior ways of living.

According to futurists such as William Bridges and Jeremy Rifkin, we have recently entered a new period in the transformation of work. Rifkin claims that "the global economy is in the midst of a transformation as significant as the Industrial Revolution."[4] He suggests that we have entered a "new economic era" marked by a declining need for "mass human labour" due to cybernatization. As computers, robots, and telecommunications networks and other cybernetic technologies replace human workers in an increasing range of activities, we enter "the early stages of a shift from 'mass labor' to highly skilled 'elite' labor accompanied by increasing automation in the production of goods and the delivery of services."[5] Bridges suggests that changes in technology and the global market have transformed work relations so extensively that the very idea of "jobs" will soon disappear. He argues that each increase in productivity seems to make jobs redundant; the cybernetization of capital, for example, has already eliminated many jobs. Corresponding to this may be a shift in peoples' perceptions of work. More and more, people are "searching for alternatives to jobs and job descriptions."[6] Rifkin proclaims that the "jobs" question is "likely to be the most explosive issue of the [present] decade."[7]

However, Rifkin's analysis remains productivist, arguing that a shortened work-week could be beneficial for capital in allowing for a doubling or tripling of productivity. Rifkin never questions the legitimacy or the desirability of capitalist relations. Indeed a major reason for his concern over "vanishing jobs" is that the transformation threatens a capitalist collapse through a weakening of consumer demand. Rifkin's main desire is to see an increase in the "purchasing power" of workers so that "[e]mployers, workers, the economy, and the government all benefit."[8] Like the "structural-functionalist" sociologists of old, Rifkin's primary concern is with the possibility of "strain" in the system and the alleviation of any such strain. He worries that the decline of jobs could threaten the foundations of the modern state by destabilizing social relations which previously rested on a shared valuing of labour—what he calls the heart of the social contract. Rifkin even fears that a crisis in jobs will open the door to renewed militancy and to extralegal political action.[9]

In like fashion, Bridges's optimism over possibilities for the transformation of jobs speaks only to the strata of well-skilled, well-paid workers in an increasingly polarised workforce. Bridges never challenges the hegemony of capital in structuring which responses to the "death of the job" are politically possible. He leaves "employee(s)" as an intact category and as a group of workers facing such unsatisfactory and increasingly tenuous options as freelance work, part-time work, or piecework. The so-called "decline of the job" means that those who are working have more work to do; as a result, more and more people are simply not working. But what Bridges fails to consider are questions about what is being produced, how, by whom, and for what purposes. Nor does he discuss what happens to those newly "liberated" from work: the jobless.

Previous page: How does a woman become a bird?, by Rosabella Sau Wai Tai



Furthermore, autonomist Marxists have argued that the cybernetization of capital will not usher in a leisure society, but will instead encourage an enlargement of the work realm. They claim that labour displaced from primary and secondary industries would be reabsorbed by "the tertiary, quaternary, or quinary sectors as farther and farther flung domains of human activity are assimilated within the social factory."[10] Cybernetized capital, through the commodification of expanded and novel realms of human activity, can maintain wage labour, "incessantly recreating its proletariat, unless it is forcibly interrupted by the organised efforts of workers to reclaim their life-time."[11]

Work Abolitionism

More radical than the Marxist futurists are those who advocate the abolition of work. Believing that a "job" signifies a dependency relationship disguised as independence (the "freedom" to consume), work abolitionists call for workers of the world to relax. They gleefully reject what they call the Leftist mantra of full employment, which results in further integration of the working classes into capitalism through preservation of jobs at all costs.[12] Abolitionists draw on traditionally anarchist or libertarian sensibilities that move beyond the reductionist contortion which has equated work with jobs. Instead, they emphasize creativity, self-determination, and conviviality of relations. "Jobs" are seen to restrict peoples' capacities to care for themselves and those within their communal/ecological groupings, and are therefore rejected as a basis for radical activist convergence.

Work abolitionism suggests a movement simultaneously "of class" and "against class", i.e. against the commodification of creativity and performance. The category "jobs" speaks to the compulsory character of involvement in capitalist production—production enforced via relations of economic and political control and power. In order to receive sustenance in a capitalist system, people must sell themselves. This is the imperative of wage labour: work is not done for its own sake but for secondary effects, such as wages, which are not characteristic of or inherent to the work itself. In other words, jobs form a condensation point for complex relations of power around the trading of time for money, or what Zimpel quite poignantly refers to as "a transaction of existential absurdity."[13] Jobs are characterized by an extension of organizational control *over* people: "employees" signify a system of domination practised through forms of discipline which include surveillance and time-management. The regimentation and discipline of the job serves to habituate workers to hierarchy and obedience while also discouraging insubordination and autonomy. Jobs as regimented roles replace direct, creative participation and initiative through arrangements of subservience. Bob Black argues that employment is capital's primary and most direct coercive formation; one that is experienced daily.

Marxists might object that work abolitionism does not necessarily transform capitalism. After all, even some neo-liberal post-industrial theorists write about the "abolition of work" and they see it as the result of the application of innovative technological resources within capitalist relations—not as a destruction of those relations. At its most dramatic, the

neo-liberal "abolition of work" presents a leisure society enabled through the development of artificial intelligence and robotics. These are not acceptable alternatives. Among the prerequisites for ecological change is a reduction both in the amount of work being done and in the character of what work is done. Ecological lifestyles could not be constituted without the outright cessation of capitalist production. Only the end of production can bring about the end of nuclearism, weapons production, clear-cutting, toxic waste production—the variety of harmful applications to which nature is commonly subjected. Moreover, much work is useless. Here I include the defence and reproduction of work relations in political (ownership and control) and economic (circulation and consumption) forms. Radical politics can no longer ignore the question of jobs; indeed, returning to this question must be the starting point for reformulating radicalism, at least along green lines.

Political Movements to Abolish Work

Of course, anti-work themes are not new. They find antecedents in Fourier and Lafargue, and even in Marx's critique of alienated labour.[14] Earlier Wobbly (Industrial Workers of the World) demands for a four-hour-day may be understood as an expression of opposition to the extension of capitalist control over labour and the reduction of workers to one-dimensional class beings. The shortened workday opens up creative time outside of capitalist discipline and command and expands the time available for "frivolous" undertakings (including bringing about the end of industrial capitalism). It is an assertion by labour of its own project, counter to that of capital—much like workplace rebellion and workers' self-determination can be read as reasonable responses to the uncertainty of emerging conditions of (un)employment.

The mythic use of the general strike by Wobblies might also be understood in this. Anarcho-syndicalists have long argued that for co-operative, community-based ways of living to endure, workers will have to stop producing for Capital and State. In other words, class is only abolished through not working. A broad-based withdrawal of labour—the general strike—would force the megamachine to grind to a halt, left to rust.

Historically, unions have responded to technological changes and increases in productivity with demands for a shortened work-week. However, Rifkin reports that the union officials with whom he has spoken are "universally reluctant to deal with the notion that mass labour—the very basis of trade unionism—will continue to decline and may even disappear altogether."[15] Mainstream unionists have been incapable of radically rethinking their politics to address the transformation of jobs. They have offered no alternatives to the neo-liberal perspectives on unemployment, particularly mass retraining—a strategy that simply reinforces dependence upon elites. Such failures to adapt—or to even remember their own radical histories—reveal the challenges workers within traditional unions face in the contemporary context.

In comparison, work abolitionists find the "end of work" to be the start of some truly liberating possibilities based on worker and community self-determination. Abolitionism conceives of work more as craft or play, and a task that is performed through democratic, participatory means. While bosses of all sorts try to convert our labour, and the world's resources, into their value, work abolition holds out a vision of "self-valorization" in which we free our labour to meet our own needs. Self-valorizing acts use time for work and activities which value ourselves and our relationships with each other and with nature. Capitalism, by contrast, encloses us in commodified time. Perhaps more than other activists, work abolitionists have increasingly come to understand jobs, under the guise of work, as the most basic moment of unfreedom. The struggle for new social relations begins with the struggle against capitalist work.

Notes

1 William Bridges, "The Death of the Job," *National Times*. Sept. 1995: 44.

2 Ibid.

3 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958); E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963); Bob Black, *The Abolition of Work and Other Essays*, (Port Townsend: Loompanics Unlimited, 1995); Bridges.

4 Jeremy Rifkin, "Vanishing Jobs," *Mother Jones*, October (1995): 58-64. 60.

5 Ibid.

6 Bridges 46.

7 Rifkin 58.

8 Ibid. 64.

9 Ibid. 60.

10 Nick Witheford, "Autonomist Marxism and the Information Society," *Capital and Class* 52: 85-125. 106.

11 Ibid 108.

12 See Black.

13 Lloyd Zimpel, ed, *Man Against Work*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

14 Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, (New York: Autonomedia, 1991).

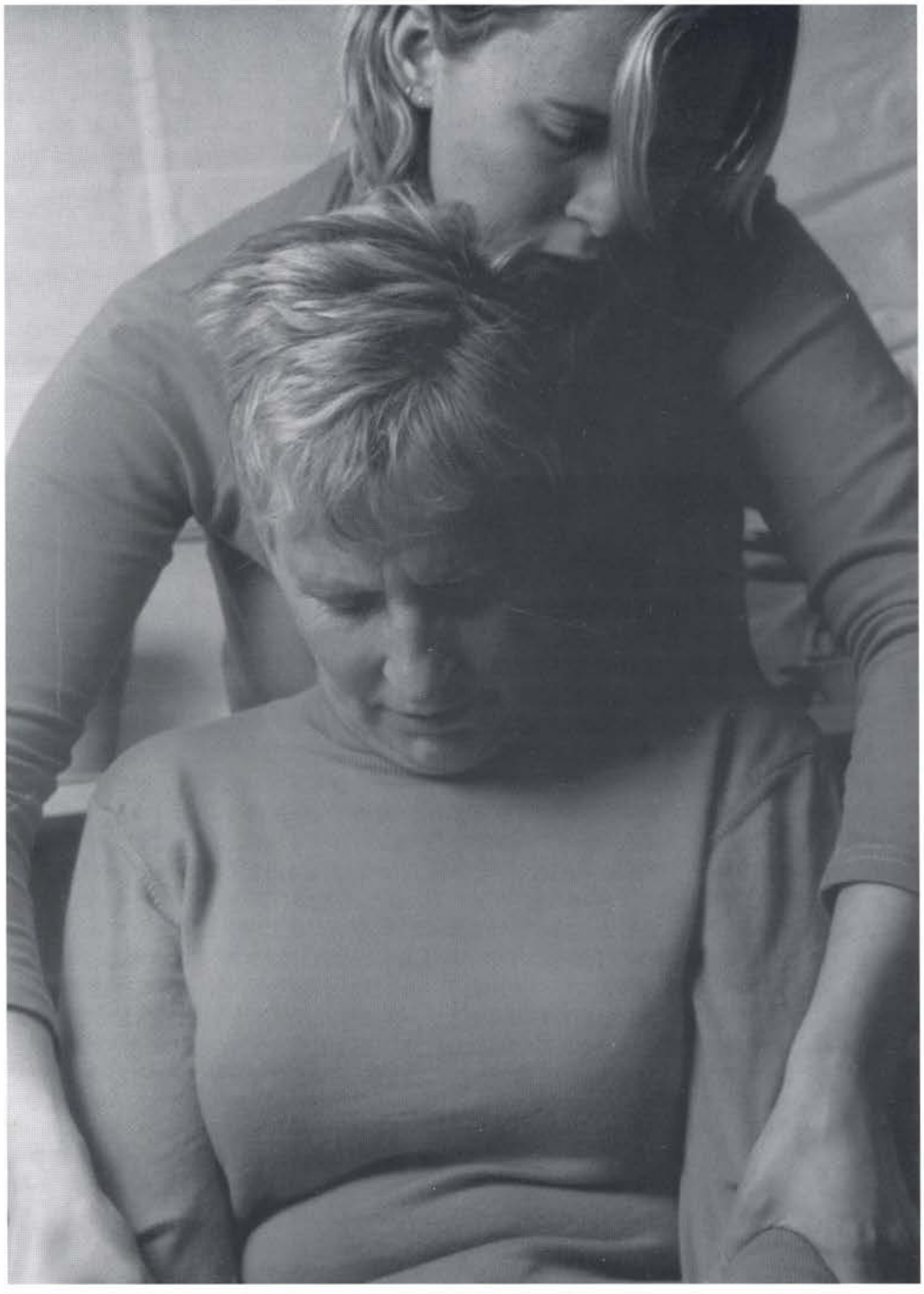
15 Rifkin 64.

by Pariss Garramone

hand made

I see your 'exercising'—all of it—as everyday resistance to stereotypes and ageism.

I don't think its going to prevent me from aging, it just makes me feel better.



I have seen her give lots of treatments, but this is the first one I've had.

I see your work as a practitioner and with the community of other therapeutic touch therapists as an everyday act of resisting traditional Western medicine.

Yeah, that's exactly why I started to do this. Therapeutic touch can release stored emotions.

by Jennie Barron

Miracle on Leslie St.

We left the paved trail of Tommy Thompson Park to find a breezy waterside spot to set down for lunch. Though we didn't recognize it at first, the beach we found ourselves on—like the entire Leslie Street Spit—was an artificial formation, composed of clean fill and other urban detritus: torn asphalt, worn brick of rust red and mustard yellow, boulder-sized chunks of concrete, embedded with steel and gravel, as well as glass, rubber, and wood fragments, all worn round from wind and water, and softened by the passage of time. Out of this unlikely bed, a sea of hardy wildflowers—milkweed, thistles, goldenrod, daisies, white and purple asters, lady slippers—was flourishing. This lakeside meadow, scattered with balsam poplars and willow, was typical of early-stage succession in this bioregion, both ordinary and pretty in its late summer glory.

I picked up a hard black object, its outline reminiscent of a loon's head, cracked in concentric circles around the eye like sun-baked wood. We passed it around and found it to be rubber, and then dropped it again on the beach among "pebbles" of aggregate and glass. Within hand-sized pieces of concrete, barely visible criss-crossed wire forms recalled fossilized fish skeletons; a tangle of rust against the backdrop of an azure lake (I swear, Lake Ontario looked azure that day) made one of us exclaim, "Look at that great *wild thicket* of rebar."

Erik began to play. Using a bent springy rebar as a launching pad, he catapulted a snake-like belt-length of rubber toward the water. It jetted several metres through the air, and we laughed at how it wobbled clumsily in flight. John took off down the beach and we turned to hear him howl as he beat with abandon on an upturned, empty, blue plastic drum. Freed of an adult self-consciousness, we played like kids, visiting the playground of imagination. John declared the Highland Games on as he swung round a concrete "ball" on a rebar "chain"; Susan built "rock" castles, and collected broken ceramics with geometric textures, suitable for pressing into clay. Erik lay face-up dreaming in the sun, beside the lunch remnants of iced lemon tea, pumpkin pie, and ripe home-grown tomatoes. I dare say we were comfortable. In our exploring, we re-arranged the landscape, took souvenirs, left traces. We did not tiptoe gently—what was there to protect? It was novel to shed that bull-in-a-china-shop feeling that I so often carry with me (for good reason) into "pristine" environments. I wished I could feel this harmless in all nature.

For the first time I can remember, faced with a literal mountain of evidence against sustainability, I had the momentary experience of not feeling afraid about our future. I wasn't burying my head or running away from the truth that smokestacks and other dirty artifacts are the props that support the lifestyle I lead: the bike I ride, the water I drink, and the university I attend, where I learn to criticize and construct anew a society where mess and loss are endemic. Face-to-face with a truly urbanized nature, one that I found compelling, intriguing, endlessly fascinating, I could not compartmentalize this experience within moral lines fencing off the "good" from the "bad."

As we left Tommy Thompson Park we ambled past the Leslie Street allotment gardens. One of us wondered aloud, "Why do people plant sunflowers? I don't know anyone who actually *harvests* the seeds." Myself, I'm willing to believe that these gardeners, like educators, are in the business of planting hope. After all, few flowers can transform themselves, in a matter of months and even in marginal soil, from seed to second sun the way this one can. Few plants speak as loudly as the sunflower about the mysterious power in that extra-human seed. And few exemplify better the comic's acceptance of circumstance amidst the earnest reaching for light. It's a metaphor I know I need.

Opposite page: Traces of Leslie St. Spit, by Brent Kulba

by Daryl Keating

Baba's Farm

The blue dry-docked sailboat at the side of Airport Road, just north of Caledon East, has a new coat of paint. The last time you drove by it showed marks of needy resolution. Now it looks more like the sunny picture of warm wind, lapping waves and fluttering sails. Your spirit is buoyed for a moment, but you are melancholic. The boat has been sitting there since the first time you made the trip up to Baba's Farm three years ago.

Airport Road has this effect on you. It is a getaway artery that runs north from the city. Alongside of it, the rolling hills, forests and farmhouses are a refreshing contrast to the big-city concrete. But the sport utility vehicles speeding up behind you impatiently, waiting to pass between hills, are worrisome. You grip the wheel tightly as they veer into the oncoming traffic. You have not escaped everything.

It is further up Airport Road that you arrive. Stepping out of the car you covet the cool and fresh farm air. It smells of such clarity: four parts impending winter mixed with a two parts wood stove and a two parts chicken-coop. The garden has been turned up and the pumpkins are gone. You imagine for a moment the garden flourishing during the summer months. It is as if there were some kind of secret energy field beneath it recharging. You imagine that only its gardeners Baba and Jadz knew of its existence.

> *Existence. She was born a twin in what was once Poland but is now Russia. Her father died of alcohol poisoning while her mother was in her third trimester. Her twin sister did not survive birth. Her mother barely survived her delivery. Three months later her mother died of the winter's cold while riding in a horse-drawn carriage.*

Stumbling through the front door, you breathe in the warm air meshed with cooking onions. Baba greets you with a strong hug. There are loud helicopter and machine gun noises blaring from the television. Someone has hung tinsel and other plastic Christmas decorations from the beam across the ceiling. Jadz is sitting at the kitchen table eating kilbassa while counting coins piled high beside his plate. He nods at you severely through the door in what is at most vague recognition. You stand at the door sheepishly, nodding your head and kicking off your running shoes.

Baba comments on your stupidity for wearing running shoes when it is so cold outside. She walks back into the kitchen and you follow her and sit down across the table from Jadz. You feel calmed by the atmosphere—the warm temperature, the old furniture, the white noise of violence coming from the television, Baba's hyperactivity. She is continually moving around the house doing things. You will soon feel lethargic.

> *Lethargy. After her mother's death, she fell into the care of her four older sisters. Her brother had left home. Her oldest sister, age seventeen, died a few years later after being struck by lightning. A second sister was burned to death in a house fire. The two remaining sisters were not able to look after her. At age six, she was given to a farmer down the road.*

There are plants everywhere. In the kitchen. On every coffee table. On the windowsills. On most areas of the floor that are off the beaten track. There are many types that you do not recognize so you ask Baba about them.

"I don't know what they are," she responds. She explains that one was picked up yesterday on Highway 10 on her way to Orangeville. Another came from the garden outside. Another was a gift. You do recognize the ivy. Apparently the whole constellation came from one single plant. It grows everywhere throughout the house as a dominant feature.

Across from you, Jadz concentrates on his possessions. Behind Jadz's spot at the table is a cupboard where he keeps them: his boxes of cookies, his dinner rolls, his combs, his wristwatch, his pill bottles, his handkerchiefs, his resin, his gloves, his knife, his chocolates, his transistor radio. No one else touches these things. No one else sits in his chair.

Jadz fusses with the tuner on his transistor radio. You are startled as he turns the volume up to offset the sound of the television in the other room. Jadz listens briefly to a rendition of local news, then a polka. He gives the visitor no sign that he is pleased with what he hears. "Argh, I don't care," he says. He turns it off with impatience.

> *Impatience. The farmer down the road allowed her to live in the barn so long as she worked the fields. There she drank milk from the udders of cows when she got hungry at night. There, on cold nights, she soaked her feet in the warmth of the yellow pools beneath them.*

Opposite page: Untitled, by Tema Sarick

Jadz looks up across the table and comments on the weather. It is getting cooler, but it is not as cool as it should be. The birds are confused. There should be snow by now. You sense from experience that Jadz is leading you into a conversation about the amount of work he's done that week. You guess right. He's chopped a great deal of wood. He's sold all three of his turkeys in Stayner. He's bought new insulated rubber boots. "Argh, all I do is work, every day," he says.

You're careful with your response. You encourage his stories, but with Baba present you know better than to let them get out of hand. You know that Baba does the majority of work around the farm. You know that she would laugh at him mockingly, undermining his attempt to boast to you. Even so, you know of no eighty-two year old that is as capable of such hard physical labour. You are in no position to pass judgement about Jadz's work ethic.

Work ethic. She did not spend a single day in a formal school setting.

Baba intervenes further and describes the feebleness of Jadz's efforts to keep up the farm. In the decrepit barn there were rats that she killed with a two-by-four. The chicken Jadz tried to kill remained alive until Baba broke its neck with her bare hands. She was the one who cleaned it. She cut the huge lawn one last time before winter.

"School good?" Baba asks, changing the subject. But words escape you. Explaining your week's accomplishments seems dauntingly convoluted at this point. You know you have done much work, but without a way of showing its relevance to Baba, you are sure to be met with a worried gaze. "Good," you say in response.

Unexpectedly, Jadz grumbles something in Baba's direction. Your presence, it seems, has stirred something in Jadz. Perhaps he too is sensitive to Baba's line of inquiry. Baba yells back at him in Polish. The two eye each other fiercely. Uncle Bob, who appears in the doorway, is laughing. He walks in looking at Baba, then at you. He does not acknowledge Jadz. He translates, "He called her a bedsheet, and she called him a broken dick."

Ever since Jadz's accident while working at Moffat twenty-five years earlier, Baba has referred to him as a "broken dick." A two-ton bail had dropped on his lap. Since then, Baba explains, "he don't touch me."

Bob's delivery is meant to be funny. He knows their anger will not spill over toward him or you. They have been together for 53 years. They are indifferent to the interventions of outsiders.

Interventions. The Nazis arrived in 1938 when she was sixteen years old. They burned her village. They shot her brother in the back for acting mischievously. They shuffled her onto a train to Germany and put a "P" on her lapel.

Baba is now looking at you and laughing. Jadz does not laugh and storms out of the kitchen. Baba snickers at his back. Without turning around, Jadz waves his hand indifferently.

She tells you stories about Jadz's week. Apparently the boots he purchased cost fifty-nine ninety-five. Worse, he owned a pair already. Baba gives you a backhanded poke and a smile as she explains to you Jadz's ignorance. Jadz was caught driving the pick-up truck again. Pausing, she waits for you to acknowledge that Jadz has once again been irresponsible. Instead you gaze ahead, remembering when Jadz lost his licence.

Two years ago, Jadz went for a mandatory licence renewal test. He had been embarrassed about having to go. He had also been afraid. In his truck, Jadz went visiting friends and neighbours. He especially liked to buy or trade for various meats and animals in the area. He loved everything about meat, especially eating it. He would buy kilbassa from the Jew in Stayner. He would find an Italian in Duntroon to buy his rabbits. He had once sold his chickens to a Negro in Shelbourne. This is what seemed to make Jadz happy. Now his family was hiding the keys from him.

You imagine that Jadz regrets opening the letter that came from the Ministry of Transportation that day. Bob had found the opened letter on the kitchen table and informed the rest of the family that Jadz was going for a test. A week later Jadz went to the ministry office in Collingwood. He had not filled out his forms because he could not read English and had not wanted Baba or Bob to intervene. You imagine in his experience that the clerk had been rude and impatient. The clerk had sent Jadz home to get help from his family.

With help from Bob, Jadz returned a week later with the forms completed. But he only got as far as the eye test. The ministry used a large machine to do the test. Bob had recounted to the family the fear in Jadz's face when he had put his eye up to the machine to see the numbers flashing. His voice had staggered as he read them out loud, some in Polish, some in English, at times reading numbers out before any had appeared. Bob made a gallant effort in his translation to make Jadz seem capable. Jadz, in the mean time, claimed he'd brought the wrong spectacles. His efforts were in vain. The confusion was as blinding as Jadz's aging eyes. Jadz lost his license.

License. On the way to work camp, the train crashed breaking both of her legs. She spent eleven months in a hospital somewhere between home and the camp. No longer a mobile person, they removed the "P" from her lapel. She was escorted to a different kind of train that was headed for a different kind of camp.

Baba continues with her stories. Jadz has been banned from the Zellers superstore for stealing. The tube of polygrip he slipped into his pocket set off the security alarms. When the manager came running out to apprehend him, Baba was ashamed and embarrassed. It was the second such encounter that month. The manager said that if he saw Jadz in the store again he would call the police.

Since Jadz had lost his licence they were both stranded on the farm except, of course, when the "dumb shit" found the hidden keys and snuck out for a while. When they did get a chance to go to town—Bob took them periodically—they were increasingly limited to where they could shop. Word of Jadz's stealing had spread as far as Shelbourne. Baba concludes, "He's a big pain in the ass!"

Baba's stories of going to town tell of a living past. For Jadz, you imagine the trip to town as an opportunity to resist boundaries in a rigid anglo society. For Baba, the trip to town represents a kind of frustration you have a harder time imagining. Baba's isolation has deeper roots.

Roots. Minutes before she was to board the new train, an officer pulled her by the arm to the side. He did not say a word. She was taken to the other side of the tracks and put on yet another train. She was reunited with the "P's."

Baba continues to smile at you and you begin to feel uncomfortable. She says with perfect sincerity, "When Jadzie dies, I be free!" You laugh with her nervously. You know she is being serious. At the same time you guess that she will never stop caring for Jadz. You surprise yourself hoping she'll find satisfaction in making Jadz feel small and useless in his few remaining years.

You remember the stories Bob once told you about Baba's past. You want to understand these stories but you fall short. You realize that making assumptions about Baba in this way is much like trying to envision a pumpkin patch by holding a ready-made pumpkin pie mix up to your face. Your understanding of Baba is limited because there is strength and gracefulness in her character you cannot know. At the same time you are grateful you've never had to scrape out the pumpkin seeds.

Apparently, Jadz was a stubborn man from a young age. While in WWII work camp he would sneak out to a nearby town donning stolen German fatigues. There, he would steal food and supplies to bring back to the workers in the camp. You've even heard Baba comment on Jadz's bravery. "Dumb but brave," she had said.

Bravery. Six years in a work camp somewhere in German-occupied Poland—there she smelled the pungent smoke of burning kilns coming from the other camp down the road. There she met Jad and became pregnant with Bob.

Although you don't imagine it was romance that brought Baba and Jadz together. Baba has also been heard commenting that the only reason she pursued Jadz was because of his determination to get out of Europe after the war. You guess Baba would have wanted nothing more than to join Jadz in his escape to anywhere.

You also remember what Bob had told you about their trip out of Germany. You've heard that the challenges they faced after coming to Canada were as treacherous as those of the war. To begin with, they spent two years in a northern Ontario version of a war-time work camp. It wasn't until the mid 1950s that Jadz got stable work in Toronto.

Stable work. Jadz took up fishing every weekend. He drank heavily and had a number of girlfriends on the side. Jadz sold the house in Toronto, telling her only when it was time for her to pack up. They moved to a country life that reminded her of her childhood. She skilfully worked the farm while Jadz took the pick-up truck to visit friends. She never got her driver's licence, though Jadz had owned two cars.

Baba is now staring at you. You recover from your thoughts and return her gaze. You are overwhelmed. You reach over and hug her with a powerful love from deep inside you. Baba is the grandmother of the person you love and depend on most in the world. And though she has been there for you for some time, it is only at this very moment that you know what that means.

What that means. Baba will carefully nurse Jadz until his dying breath. In that breath he will take credit for their lives.

The next morning you wake from a restful sleep and say your goodbyes. Walking to the car you take a deep breath. As you drive away, you honk three times goodbye. Onto Airport Road, busy as usual; a number of cars pass you by. You feel strong nonetheless, a heavier stone at the bottom of a rushing stream.

I — trains

The subway
Crowded subway car
Mass packed humanity
Carefully avoiding human contact while pressed together,
A mockery of an intimate dance.

We sway in rhythm
To the clik clik cliking of the steel tires on rails
A push and surge
The exodus replaced by the inflow
People busy with their day

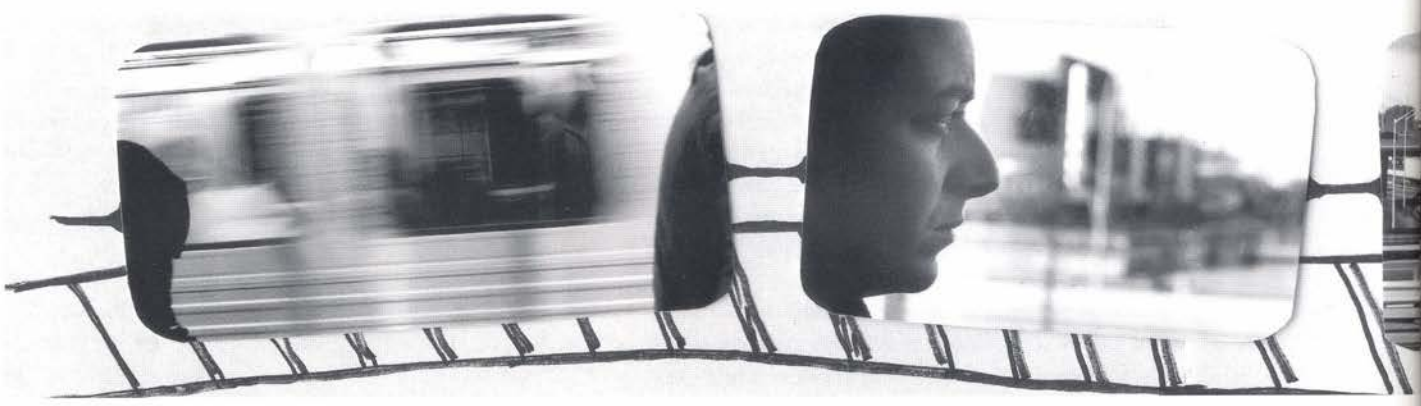
Ironic
The pressed flesh, frantically impersonal
Denying the interconnectedness of all things
Our underground bubble
Tunnelling through the streets of Toronto
Beneath the rapping strides of city dwellers
Pretending they are alone.

I take it as a challenge
To elicit a smile from some passerby
Wonder, beneath my daring act,
How long before I, too, refuse to look up,
Refuse to meet the eyes
Of those who pass me by

I could get lost here, in this city
This Mega-city of 4 million souls.
I could lose myself in the invisibility of being face to face
With a stranger on a subway car
Who doesn't see me.
It would be frighteningly easy to disappear.

Trans itions

by Jackie Kennelly



II — stations

Does it strike anyone else as STRANGE
I want to turn to the person beside me,
Or proclaim to the crowd lining up
Docilely, complacently, for the bus to shuttle them away—
Does it strike ANYONE else as STRANGE
That NO ONE is talking?

All York students, all going to the same place
And no one says a word.
Neither do I, though words burn within me.

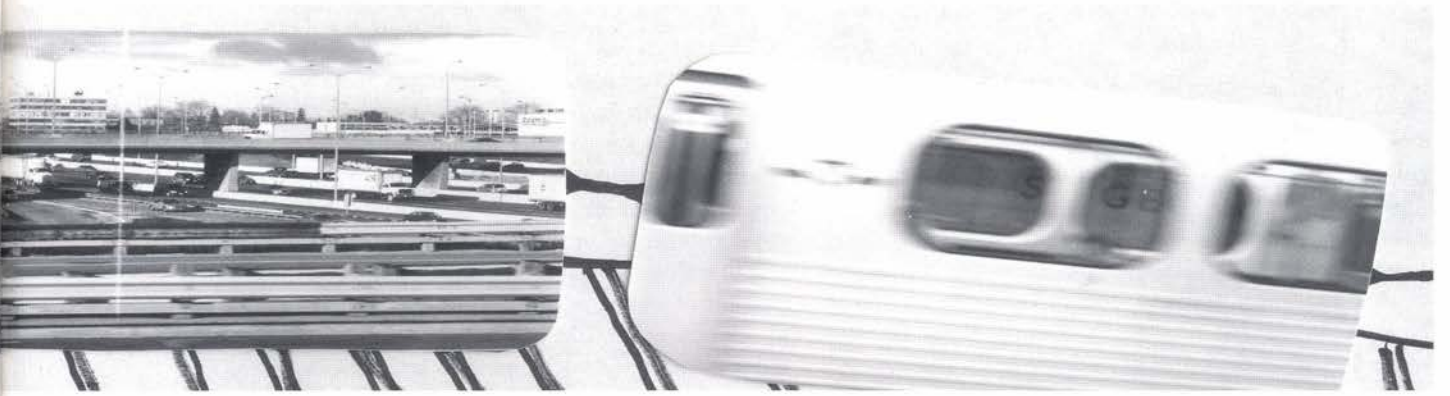
III – locations

The silent bus roars past stretches of strip malls
A sign reads International Women Free Dances Every Night
I ponder this strange mix of words
Free Dances for International Women?
Women-Free Dances for Foreigners?

We arrive on campus: where are all the people?
Vast expanses of blank land,
Devoid of movement.

Plunge into the mall
—yes, there's a mall on campus—
To be accosted by the student body.
The sheer presence,
Buzzing humanity
Fills the artificial commercial space
Designed for consumption.

Can I possibly survive two years of that bus ride
And the presence of that mall
Without losing some essence of myself that presently stands appalled?



Untitled, by Jin Huh

by Rob Newman

Ripples in the Stream:

Social Transition and Self-Organization

As human society struggles to adjust to a growing variety of ongoing changes, understanding how human society adapts to challenges has become a vital avenue of research. New technologies, political situations and an ever-growing list of environmental problems: many people claim their lives have become too chaotic, too complex.

In this paper I provide a brief discussion of the evolution of our understanding of chaos, and discuss a few examples of complexity that can be found within the structure of human society. Strong parallels can be found between social organization and complex structure found in nature; when we consider natural systems, we see that ecosystems evolve and adapt to changes according to the rules of complexity. Ecosystems are said to *self-organize*, a behavior we can also observe in many social systems. Self-organization is the process by which a complex system adapts to change, building order out of the chaos created by disruption. By recognizing complex behavior in human social systems, we can also learn to recognize effective self-organization and design social systems that self-organize more effectively.

The Origins of Chaos

The concept of chaos is surprisingly old. The term chaos was first used by the ancient Greeks to refer to the primordial disorder present before the creation of the universe. The term became associated with disorder in the physical world, describing such varied phenomenon as rugged canyon lands and unsolved mysteries of the natural world. The early Western philosophers attempted to banish intellectual chaos by developing a total understanding of the universe. Many thinkers felt this was an attainable goal; Aristotle, for example, speculated that order was to be found in all things.[1]

Isaac Newton and his contemporaries believed that if one could determine all of the governing rules and the initial conditions of the universe, everything would be predictable. At the peak of this reductionist paradigm the universe was seen as a giant clockwork machine composed of discrete pieces put together in clever but predictable ways.

As exploration in the sciences continued, shadows began to creep over the clockwork universe. Ironically, one of the greatest challenges emerged directly from the physics of Newton. In the late nineteenth century, Henri Poincaré began modeling the orbits of multiple body systems such as the solar system. As it was not possible to find an exact solution to the equations involved, he used an approximation that ignored the effects of very small objects within the system. This method appeared to work at first, but when he decided to add the effects of slightly smaller objects to his equations he discovered that they radically altered the final result. Poincaré was so disturbed by these results that he gave up his research, claiming the implications of his study were simply too bizarre to contemplate.[2]

This unpredictable behaviour reappeared in the study of weather. In the Newtonian model of physics, the weather should be just as predictable as planetary motion, as long as one knows the initial conditions and the rules governing the system. In the early 1960's, George Lorentz began to develop computer models in order to improve forecasting. Lorentz could never know the exact weather conditions at every point on earth, so he made approximations similar to those made by Poincaré. In theory, local fluctuations shouldn't have affected the overall results. Lorentz checked the accuracy of his model by varying the initial conditions, and found that even the smallest variations produced a totally different forecast. Though the equations of atmospheric dynamics are known, they have extreme sensitivity to initial conditions. As one cannot have exact knowledge of current conditions, weather prediction becomes impossible. Like many systems, our climate is complex; the apparent order of the equations hides a deeper layer of chaos.

The discovery of systems that are extremely sensitive to initial conditions revolutionized science in a way comparable to the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. Together these three discoveries totally dismantled the idea of a clockwork universe. These discoveries also had profound implications for social scientists. After all, modernist social theory drew from the rationalist, behaviorist science of Newton, Darwin, and their peers. But are human systems truly chaotic and complex or is their complexity metaphoric rather than concrete?

Do We Live in a Complex System?

There is ample evidence to support the hypothesis that human social systems are complex in nature. Though most people are familiar with effects such as positive reinforcement, which refers to the unpredictable propagation of small-scale effects to the large scale, more compelling evidence of the existence of complexity within human social systems can be found in the lesser known phenomenon of scaling. Scaling is best understood by examining the example of scaling relations in earthquakes: for each magnitude nine earthquake there are ten magnitude eight earthquakes, one hundred magnitude seven earthquakes, one

thousand magnitude six earthquakes, and so on. Earthquake distribution over time is thus said to follow a scaling law where likelihood and magnitude are related by powers of ten. This phenomenon is called scaling because a chart of earthquake magnitudes over time would look the same over a wide range of time scales.[3]

One of the most important things about scaling relations is that they put unusually extreme occurrences into relation with more common ones, a property useful in the study of social systems and economic systems in particular. As an example, financial analysts conventionally try to explain away large stock market movements on a case-by-case basis, and develop a theory that is valid the rest of the time. Mandelbrot showed that financial markets obey a scaling law, and that large movements are an intrinsic part of the structure of the market and cannot and need not be explained away.

Researcher Per Bak feels scaling relations are such a fundamental part of complex systems that we can often recognize self-organized complexity by the presence of scaling relations. His general idea is that nature and society are poised in a complex, organized state where anything can happen. Bak began his exploration of scaling laws by examining many systems, including the lengths of rivers versus the area they drain and the frequency of droughts and floods. He first connected these phenomena to complex systems when he proved mathematically that systems that scale have to be open, which is a property of complex systems by definition.[4] To understand this rather obscure point, we need only consider the Earth's ecosystems. Though the Earth sits alone in space, it is "open" as sunlight enters the system, driving its development. Complex systems must be open as the energy driving their self-organization must come from somewhere if the second law of thermodynamics is to be obeyed.

Bak determined that self-organized behaviour leads to scaling as the system "tunes" itself to a state where a small input can cause any size of "catastrophe," a phenomenon similar to positive reinforcement.[5] However Bak is not the first researcher to note the prevalence of scaling laws within human and natural systems. In the mid-twentieth century, George Zipf showed that the population of cities within a country follows a power law distribution such that about 15 percent of the population lives in the biggest city.[6] The remaining population is spread between small number of mid-size cities and a great number of smaller cities. Known as Zipf's law, this surprising result is direct evidence that human systems scale, and are thus complex. The length of financial recessions also scales, suggesting that large recessions are part of the natural economic cycle of a society.

One might ask why scaling appears in all of these various complex systems. Mandelbrot comments that the answer remains a mystery, though he feels economic systems might scale because inputs into the economy such as resource distribution and long term weather patterns also scale.[7] This, of course, simply bumps the question up a level. The source of scaling in complex systems remains an intriguing mystery.

Self-Organization and Maladaptation

As a complex, self-organizing system, human society has an amazing ability to adjust to change. This fact partly explains why the predictions of material shortages and famines made in landmark works of ecology such as Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* and Donella Meadow's *Limits to Growth* failed to be fully realized; society partially adapted to the environmental threats at hand. Some economists have gone as far as to use the existence of self-organization as an excuse to ignore ecological problems. Economists such as the late Julian Simon go as far as to argue that intelligence is an "ultimate resource" that can substitute for any natural material.

Contrary to thinkers such as Simon, complex systems are also very capable of self-organizing in destructive ways that ultimately lead to the failure of the system. Systems engage in several types of damaging or maladaptive organizational behavior. A very common form of maladaptive behavior is displacement. In a simple social system an acceptable response to many problems is to displace the problem "away" until it is no longer of local concern. As an example, we often displace wastes to other areas or leave them for future generations. However in a complex system these wastes tend to come back to us in the form of long-term environmental damage, often in quite unexpected manners.

When maladaptive societies face rapid change they also tend to overspecialize; as the flow of information and ideas within society grows, "experts" must constantly absorb an ever-increasing flow of knowledge. At some point the new information flows faster than one person can comprehend. The specialist must then narrow their specialty, leading to a society filled with individuals who are experts on tiny slivers of knowledge yet who are incapable of making connections with each other.

Hall of Columns, by Christina Lessels

Thinking Like An Ecosystem

As we search for ways to cope with social transitions, we should look to nature, as it represents a complex, self-organizing system that has functioned well for billions of years. Ecosystems have evolved structures that are able to ride out wild swings in climate, meteor strikes, and volcanic disruptions. The first and most important technique natural systems use to survive in a complex environment is heterarchical structure. A heterarchy is a system in which elements are connected with each other in multiple ways, creating a wide variety of paths from point to point. If one path is disrupted, another can take its place. Unlike the hierarchies found in human society, no one element of a heterarchy is in absolute control. All elements share in the management of the system. In a hierarchy, if one link is severed due to change, the entire structure can become inoperable. In a hierarchy, reorganization is slow and ponderous. A heterarchy is resilient, and can adapt quickly even if some of the elements of the system are damaged.

Natural systems also exhibit diversity. Though change might prove fatal to some elements of natural systems, other elements survive. A species with a diverse diet will not starve if one of its food sources disappears. Western society does not currently employ diversity as a management strategy; we are becoming more and more dependent on economics and technology, two areas that are very vulnerable to complex changes. The rise of monoculture crops is a good example of our ability to alter our environment so as to limit diversity. We cannot rely on technological or economic limitations to prevent large-scale social and ecological damage. We must diversify, setting our limits through the expression of many values including but not limited to technical and financial concerns.

Complexity and the Individual

How can we avoid maladaptive self-organization? As individuals, how can we better manage our lives as we struggle to live within a complex society? Complexity theory suggests a few simple initiatives that individuals can pursue in order to manage rapid change.

Accepting Complexity: We must first accept that we live in a complex world, move forward, and view change as an opportunity for building better social structures rather than as a threat. We must learn to deal with complexity in much the same way physicists learned to deal with complexity thirty years ago; by studying and developing tools for understanding complexity's effects on society.

Rediscovering Generalism and Diversity: We once lived much more general lives, performing a variety of tasks in order to produce the goods and services needed to survive. We have often faced change by adjusting and innovating as needed. By producing some of our own goods and entertainment we become less reliant on large social structures and thus less vulnerable to change. In order to become more diverse, we must move away from a lifestyle entirely controlled by economic forces. Though we must cope with the change within our lives, we can also learn to enjoy community and nature. We can help mitigate the negative effects of consumerism by participating in barter and volunteer communities, and by shifting our consumption into inexhaustible goods, such as the products of human intellect. Human thought does not follow the laws of physics, as thought grows more valuable as it is consumed by a larger group of people. We need to encourage the trading of information within the global village if we are to build strong communities.

Learning from Nature: By studying other natural systems, human societies can learn how to cope with social chaos and complexity. On the individual level we have much to gain by building an awareness of nature. Many of us enjoy exploring this bond with the natural world, even if we only take a walk through the woods or plant a tree. Time spent among natural systems reminds us that there is a larger structure surrounding us, and helps us to reflect on what creates a high quality of life. As Janine Benyus reports in *Biomimicry*, a growing number of people are actively studying natural systems as a source of inspiration.

The complex, interconnected problems facing human society might seem daunting, but our ability to self-organize gives us hope for the future. With the proper tools such as those long used by natural systems we can build a lifestyle that works with change instead of being a constant battle against chaos. From a more whimsical perspective, self-organized behavior in human systems makes the world a more interesting place. Ordered systems are boring and unchanging, and chaotic systems have no links between the past and present. Complexity makes our lives more difficult, but it also makes them more interesting.

Notes

1 John Briggs, David Peat, *Turbulent Mirror: An Illustrated Guide to the Science of Chaos Theory,* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989) 21.

2 Ibid 29.

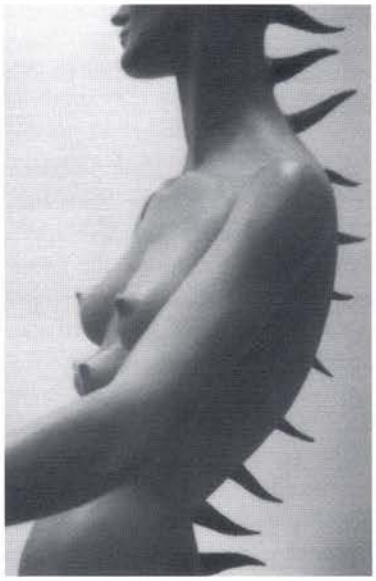
3 Benoit Mandelbrot, *Fractals and Scaling in Finance,* (New York: Springer, 1997) 24.

4 Per Bak, *How Nature Works: The Science of Self-Organized Criticality,* (New York: Copernicus, 1996) 37.

5 Ibid 48.

6 Ibid 57.

7 Mandelbrot 231.



Come Part Mental

Floria Sigismondi

Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto
September 14 - October 28, 2001

Reviewed by Adrienne Blattel

In order to find ourselves we must destroy ourselves. The human race craves the experience.
- Floria Sigismondi

In *Come Part Mental*, an art installation that ran this fall at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (MOCCA), multi-media artist Floria Sigismondi deconstructed bodies, creating new "perfect" mail-order humans inspired by biotechnology and the human-technology interface.

The exhibition mainly consisted of distorted mannequins, each of which represented new combinations of the human body with animal DNA and other genetic-technological manipulations, predicting a grotesque yet not-so-distant future. Sigismondi seemed to taunt me into being shocked from the moment I entered the room: a first sculpture greeted me at the door with her pelvis thrust out like a runway model, but there was a large spike where her clitoris should be. Around the corner was AND-ie, which is DNA backwards. With four breasts designed for "extra pleasure" and decorative fins down her back, she was named after the monkey whose DNA was combined with that of a jellyfish.

Mannequins with hooves, ram's horns, tails, and feather mohawks crossed the human-animal threshold. A woman with a video screen in her womb, and another with a baby dividing her upper and lower body spoke to Sigismondi's horrific vision of a future where "copulation for reproduction will be a distant memory". Mannequins in boxes recalled her Toronto and New York-based inspiration, exploring how we box ourselves in, how we live in boxes. Everywhere she challenged our notion of beauty, predicting that it will change as the hybrid human emerges.

Born in Italy, Floria Sigismondi began her artistic career as a photographer and then a video designer. Recently, she has designed terrifying and provocative videos for Björk, Tricky, Leonard Cohen, David Bowie, and Marilyn Manson. The upper level of the *Come Part Mental* exhibit displayed examples of her photography and ran a few of her music videos and short films. Some of these were sufficiently terrifying to send me back downstairs to contemplate the mannequins one last time. In particular, photographs from the Manson video included "Mouth Piece," a portrait of a patient being tortured by a medical system gone sadistic. I found it exciting knowing she had worked with these music artists but felt alienated by the aesthetics of many of the photographs.

Come Part Mental was Floria's first major art installation. Overall I thought the exhibit was brilliant, and was happily uncomfortable when challenged by Floria's controversial sculptures, with the exception of the upper-level photographs which just made me feel uncomfortable.

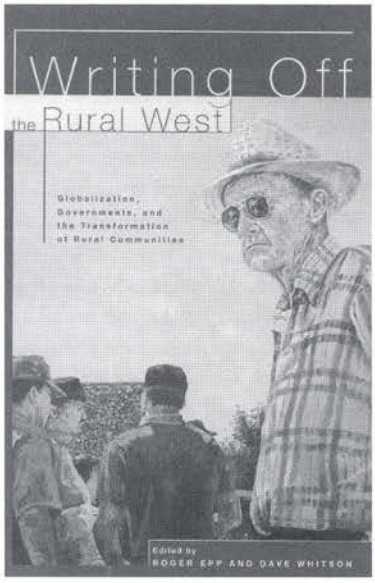
I especially appreciated the mannequins, whose elegance combined with their distortions made them a bit eerie. One mannequin sprouting a feather mohawk and wearing a gas mask even reminded me of last spring's anti-globalization protests in Quebec City.

Come Part Mental was particularly impressive because I happened upon the exhibit randomly, wandering into MOCCA for the first time and not knowing what to expect. What I got was a world-class, provocative and (in my opinion) very hip and avant-garde art experience.

As I was about to leave the exhibit, I noticed a cart full of vials of coloured liquid. It turned out to be urine, because under Floria's vision you can "pick your new eyes, your mouth, — how about no more sweat glands? You can even pick the colour of your urine. Your feces can smell of lavender. It's here: designer shit!"

The perfect designer body lasts forever and fits in a box, all of which fits in our decaying world: "A world that is dying fast, as our bodies grow stronger."

Photo Courtesy of the Musuem of Contemporary Canadian Art



Writing Off the Rural West: Globalization, Governments, and the Transformation of Rural Communities

Roger Epp and Dave Whitson (eds)

University of Alberta Press and Parkland Institute, 2001

Reviewed by Cheryl Lousley

Globalization has been largely treated as an urban phenomenon, with "global cities" positioned as financial, communication, and technological centres driving trade and productivity, and protest movements filling the city streets of Seattle, Prague, Washington, Quebec City, and Genoa. Epp and Whitson's timely collection explores in depth the devastating impacts of trade liberalization on rural communities in Canada, particularly focussing on the western provinces. From industrial hog farms to sour-gas flaring, farm consolidation to recreational development, rural hospital closings to racial and immigration tensions, the picture is not pretty for either the people or the ecology of rural Canada.

One of the strongest papers in *Writing Off the Rural* is Darrin Qualman's "Corporate Hog Farming: The View from the Family Farm." Qualman gives a concise and detailed explanation of the policies and economies which are driving the development of industrial hog production facilities. Until the 1990s, hogs were raised in small numbers (from a few dozen to few hundred animals) on diversified farms across Canada. "These farms avoided problems such as manure leakage into groundwater," Qualman explains, "because hog numbers were small, production was dispersed, and manure was kept dry."

The development of mega hog barn complexes is a result of vertical integration where meat packers and distributors secure a cheap supply through consolidation. Small, independent producers are effectively cut out of the market and face artificially low commodity prices. And the promised benefits for rural communities who attract—often with government help—mega-barns never materialize. "A typical 2400-sow complex employs about 15 people," Qualman observes, and "each of these mega-barns will drive as many as 50 traditional small farmers out of the hog business." In effect, rural areas are becoming the dumping grounds for environmental contaminants, promoted as economic development.

Of particular interest—and perhaps discomfort—to environmentalists are the chapters on recreational development. In "Blind Spots in the Rearview Mirrors," Ian Urquhart picks up the long-standing 'jobs versus the environment' debate and suggests that "environmentalists might learn from the Wise Use movement's attention to livelihood: not merely work but the 'manner of life' lived by people."

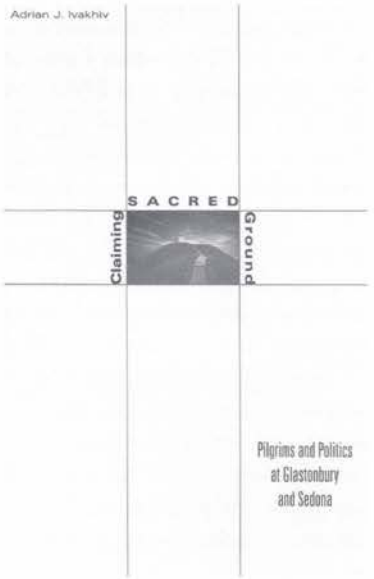
Urquhart analyzes the submissions of the Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) to the joint federal-provincial environmental assessment review panel on the development of a open-pit coal mine in Cheviot, Alberta, and concludes that the environmentalists share with the project proponents a failure to imagine "more sustainable visions of livelihood." Ecotourism was the only alternative employment and economic option the AWA offered in place of the Cheviot mine, neglecting to consider the skills, histories, and desires of the communities which already inhabited this area of the Rockies. Urquhart concedes the AWA received no funding to do any socio-economic research, but forcefully argues that livelihood should take a more prominent place in environmental thinking.

All in all, the papers in this collection are consistently well-written and well-argued, grounded in extensive research and/or personal experience. The chapters frequently overlap in content—the impact of the loss of the Crow rates for shipping grain, for example, is noted in several chapters—but I found this contributed to providing a comprehensive picture of the current situation rather being repetitious. The diversity of disciplinary perspectives, ranging from sociology and political science to gerontology and theology, similarly fleshes out the regional, historical, and demographic specificities of a globalization all too often discussed in overwhelmingly general terms. This collection is well worth reading as a whole. And it should be necessary reading for anti-

corporate globalization and environmental activists in Canada, offering urban protestors a valuable grounding in the political economy of their own country.

But *Writing Off the Rural West* will be most valuable for the rural audience. In their introduction, Epp and Whitson declare their commitment to the survival of rural communities: "An underlying argument of this book is that rural communities should not be 'written off' in the language of bankers and economists."

Instead of giving up on the rural, Epp and Whitson have put together an analysis of "nomad capitalism" which rural communities can use to resist further exploitation and to develop policies and practices which support rural livelihoods. The book diligently exposes the contradictions between many of the conservative governments and policies rural voters support and the consequences of those policies on rural lands and people. My one disappointment was that the reasons for this contradiction were insufficiently addressed, discussed only in a final chapter, "The Political De-Skilling of Rural Communities" by Roger Epp, which presumes too much familiarity with Albertan political history and moves too quickly from the empirical to the theoretical. Epp does better at outlining a theoretical "democratic politics of place" than analyzing why such a vision is not currently popular in rural Alberta, or rural Canada generally.



Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona

Adrian J. Ivakhiv

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001

Reviewed by Rich Oddie

Combining extensive historical research with first-hand observations, *Claiming Sacred Ground* examines how the towns of Glastonbury, England, and Sedona, Arizona, have come to be regarded as "sacred sites" or "power places" by adherents of the New Age movement. The author situates his study within the larger context of cultural and economic globalization, in relation to which New Age spirituality can be seen as one of many competing narratives that attempt to define the purpose and direction of human existence in an age of unprecedented complexity and uncertainty. According to this New Age narrative, we are in the midst of an epochal shift that offers the possibility of a renewed spiritual connection between human and non-human beings; a re-enchantment of reality that will allow us to recover the sense of wonder, joy and reverence that has allegedly been destroyed by the secular, rationalist worldview. Drawing upon real or imagined traditions that predate those of the modern age, New Age spirituality aims to establish a deeper connection with nature and the non-human world, usually understood as spiritual, supernatural or extraterrestrial beings and forces that transcend our everyday experience. Often, this quest for personal transformation is linked to particular places and landscapes that are deemed to be sacred or powerful. *Claiming Sacred Ground* focuses on two of the most well-known of these sacred sites, exploring the ways in which meaning is recreated and renegotiated by the various actors, human and non-human, which inhabit them.

The beginning of the book provides an overview of the various conceptions of nature found within the New Age and "earth spirituality" movement and a brief history of various theoretical approaches to the study of sacred space. Ivakhiv describes his own approach as a form of "critical sympathy" that merges critical social science with direct observation and participation in the object of study; in this case, the New Age communities of Glastonbury and Sedona. This implicitly phenomenological approach emphasizes the cultural, social and historical context of others' beliefs and practices, attempting to under-

stand them from the perspective of the believer while maintaining a "healthy skepticism."[1] From the outset, the author makes it clear that, unlike many other publications on the subject of the New Age movement, he is interested in exploring the conflicting worldviews and cultural practices that have defined these particular places as sacred sites, rather than attempting to support or subvert the truth claims of New Agers and ecospiritualists. As part of the research for this book, Ivakhiv actually lived for a few months in each of these two towns, integrating with the New Age or "alternative" communities and attempting to better understand how these people experience the surrounding landscape as sacred. As a result, this book demonstrates a real sensitivity to the beliefs of those people for whom Glastonbury and Sedona are experienced as powerful, even holy, places.

At the same time, we are provided with a great deal of historical details that demonstrates the extent to which New Age adherents have created the "place-myths" of Glastonbury and Sedona, merging historical facts with creative fictions to create new stories of the sacred nature of the landscape. However, Ivakhiv does not assign a passive role to the landscape itself in this formation of sacred space, maintaining that such spaces are not purely social constructs but rather the historical products of the interaction between humans and "specific extrahuman environments." They are described as "liminal zones" with unique environmental and interpretive features, separated from and largely defined in opposition to the values and meanings of everyday social life. In the case of both of the sites described here, we find that the landscape is historically linked to pre-modern spiritual traditions, containing a wide variety of unusual and impressive geographic features, and inviting multiple interpretations rather than being dominated by a single cultural narrative. These contested spaces or "heterotopias" attract "ecospiritual pilgrims," providing the foundation for a spiritual community that grounds itself through the production of stories about the power and significance of the surrounding landscape, gradually creating a sense of collective identity by means of ritual and communal practices, including regular events and celebrations at these sacred sites. With his use of rich detail, Ivakhiv shows how the spiritual communities of Glastonbury and Sedona have developed over time, continually redefining the surrounding culture, the landscape and themselves in the process. Much emphasis is placed on the political conflicts between the various cultural groups within each town, particularly those between the New Age communities and more conservative residents, both secular and religious, who view these communities as a threat to the local economy and/or traditional ways of life. The chapters on Glastonbury are especially interesting, where the links between the town's "alternative community" and "counterculture" movements throughout Britain, including direct-action environmentalism and various occult traditions, are explored.

Throughout the book, and particularly in the final chapters, the author invites us to consider New Age and ecospirituality as a legitimate manifestation of the desire for a more meaningful relationship with the nonhuman world, a desire that is increasingly evident within modern, technological societies. In his own words, "If the claims made by some of these questers sometimes appear immodest, unsophisticated, or scientifically dismissable, the intuition that lies behind them is certainly worthy of attention: it is that the effort to make sense (and livelihood) of the world can become too forceful in its grasp, squeezing its component parts to the absolute maximum of resource productivity." While recognizing that much of the New Age movement demonstrates the very same ethic of individualism and consumerism in its approach to spirituality and "self-development" that characterizes the technocratic modern world it opposes, Ivakhiv maintains that the notion of sacred space can help to engender respect and even reverence for the non-human world, creating stronger links between local culture, community and the land. His "cultural-hermeneutic" view of sacred places as the product of human interpretations of the non-human world warns against fixed, dogmatic conceptions of sacredness and spirituality, advocating a dialogical approach that attempts to mediate between conflicting cultural interpretations while acknowledging the needs of both human and non-human actors. While such an approach is only briefly sketched out here, *Claiming Sacred Ground* provides a fascinating look at how these two particular natural landscapes have come to be defined as sites of spiritual power and reconnection.

Notes

1. While Ivakhiv briefly outlines his "hermeneutic-phenomenological" methodology, it must be noted that little attempt is made to explain the history and significance of this approach for environmental and cultural studies.

contributors

Jennie Barron completed her masters of environmental studies (MES) degree at York University in 1999. She now lives in Nelson, BC, with her partner, Erik Leslie, and their two-year-old son, Quinn.

Adrienne Blattel likes thinking of apartment buildings, laundromats, and contemporary art as part of our collective heritage. She is currently problematizing the idea of heritage through an MES at York University.

Pablo Bose is a doctoral student in the Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES) at York University. His current research focuses on justice, democracy, and social movements. For the past four years he has worked with the Friends of River Narmada, a North America-based support network for a people's movement in North Western India.

Majero Bouman works part time as contract faculty in the Department of Humanities, York University. Majero is an inspired lover of the outdoors, of language, and of the arts. She does her best to live and breathe all three, allowing them to cross-pollinate her days and research interests.

Caroline Colijn is an amateur photographer and a PhD student at the University of Waterloo. She completed an MES at York University specializing in social change and complexity.

Matthew Didemus is a sound designer and short filmmaker based in Hamilton, Ontario. This photograph was taken in the planning for his second short film with Gary Abugan, which is a work in progress.

Pariss Garramone: woman daughter friend tree-planter student teacher photographer belly-dancer dog lover

Lilace Mellin Guignard holds a masters of fine arts from the University of California at Irvine and writes about women and the outdoors. She is currently pursuing a masters in the Literature and Environment program at the University of Nevada at Reno.

jin huh loves to have fun, make good trouble, take photos, dance and colour with crayons. in her spare time, she is working towards a masters of environmental studies.

Daryl Keating lives in the Toronto area with his partner and two-year old son. He works as a writer and communications consultant for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Roger Keil teaches at FES. His main areas of research and action are urban politics and governance in large internationalized cities and urban ecology. His book *Los Angeles: Globalization, Urbanization and Social Struggles* was published by Wiley in 1998.

Jackie Kennelly is a recent graduate of the MES program at York University, where she did indeed survive two years of that bus ride and the mall. She is presently living in Vancouver.

Brent Kulba is completing an MES degree at York University. He studies decaying, human-made structures and their relationships to natural forces and processes.

Angus Leech is a recent alumnus of both FES and the *UnderCurrents* editorial biomass. He currently lives in Alberta, where he edits cybernetic magazines. This line of work is fun, but days off are a little piece of heaven.

Christina Lessels visited Mitla, where the photo printed here was taken, in September of 1998 during her journey from Vancouver to Costa Rica. She completed MES in the Fall of 2001 with a study of women's lived experience narratives on their bodies, menstruation and health care.

When not on her bike, **Cheryl Lousley** is writing a doctoral dissertation on representations of rurality in contemporary Canadian literature at FES.

Dana Mount is a second-year bachelors student in environmental studies and English. Her current interes is in finding representations of nature in literature.

Rob Newman is a freelance writer, environmental activist, and a PhD candidate at FES at York University. Rob's interests include sustainability, green technology, organic farming, citizenship, and complex social systems. Rob is also an associate at the York Centre for Applied Sustainability.

Rich Oddie is a musician, writer and activist living in Hamilton, Ontario. He is working towards a PhD in environmental studies at York University. He also records and performs electronic music and has recently completed a new audio-visual project for the Canada Council for the Arts.

Tema Sarick is a recent graduate from the MES program at York University with a focus on queerness and concepts of nature. Although she is not generally a photographer, these particular pictures seemed to work; maybe something will come of that, who knows.

Rosabella Sau Wai Tai, a hybrid of east and west, is working towards becoming one of the most disagreeable creatures on earth.

Jeff Shantz is an active member of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) and is involved with the OCAP/CUPE 3903 Anti-Poverty Working Group at York University. He has long been involved in anarchist and ecology movements. In his spare time he is a PhD candidate in sociology at York University.

James Wilkes is completing his BES degree at York University. He is a wildlife photographer studying the role of images in wildlife conservation. His photographs may be viewed on-line at www.visualvoices.ca.

Felicity Williams is a second year environmental studies major. She is hoping to return to West Africa later this year to study music.

Ryan Young is an MES student at York University pursuing research that challenges the dominant Western discourses in conventional environmental education. Originally from Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec, his chief art is making documentary and experimental films but occasionally he also writes poetry and prose with a distinctly local flavour.

Melinda Zytaruk is a masters student in FES at York University with a focus on renewable energy and community organizing. Her artistic passions include photographing the many different forms energy takes, whether solar, human, or fungal.

by Ryan Young

Anned

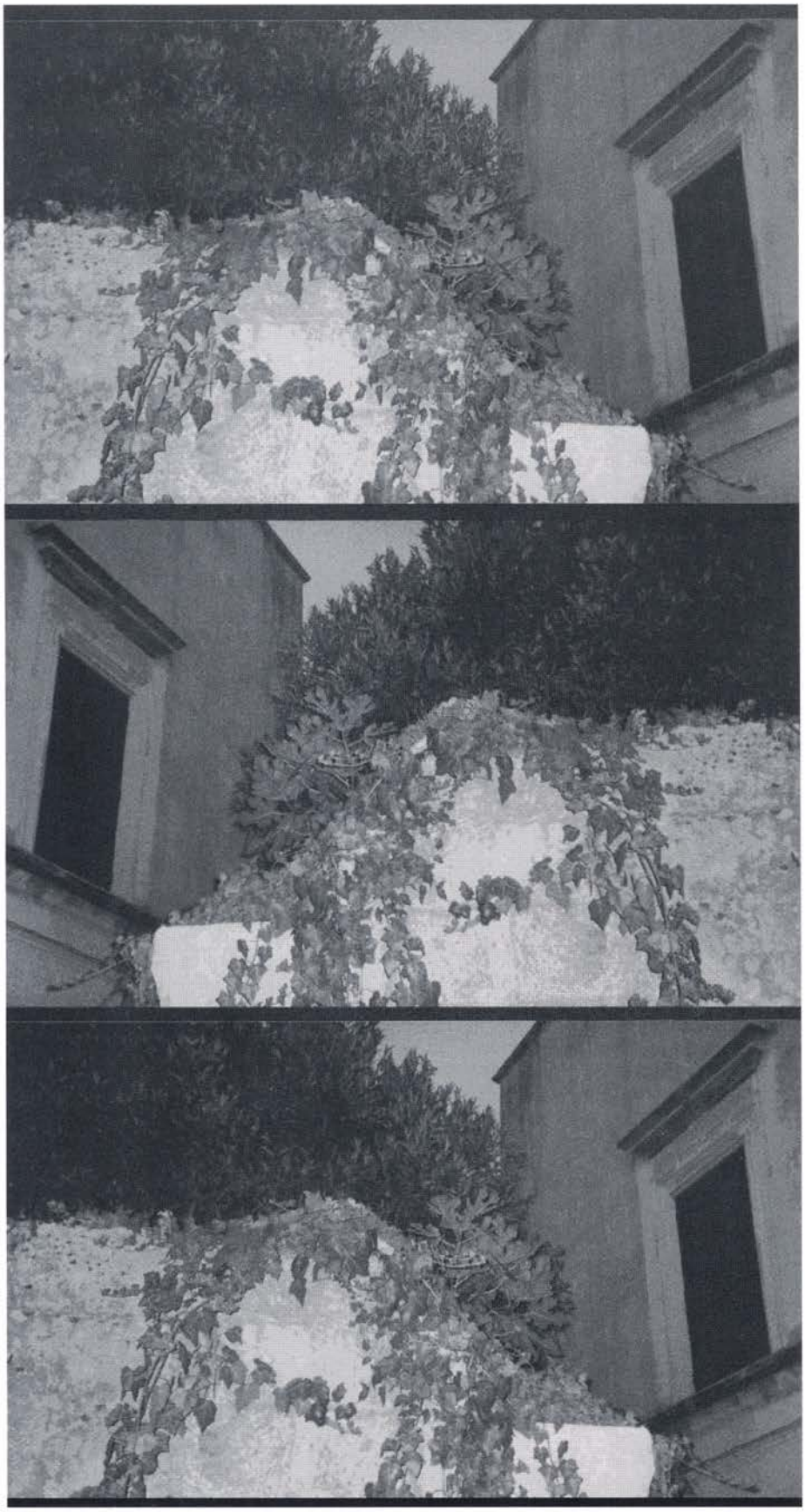
and we waited all summer
for him to arrive
and we smelt blossoms
on the quiet breezes of summer
and we feasted
on yellow zucchinis and bread
and we thought of those in bed
who were dreaming of their destinies unbounded
and still no sign of him

and we spoke to each other
one on one sipping black coffee
underneath a ceiling of Bach
in a cave of violins
reminiscing about fat old loves
examining our awakening sexualities
under mind's eye microscopes
and still no sign of him

and we built a hardwood canopy of poetry
to read by when the light blinded our eyes
and willed our hearts to act
while the crickets spoke to us
through little tunnels in the sand
speaking of icy deaths and celestial events

and we bathed in berry juice and sang
but he never did arrive that summer
that summer in Ste. Annes

Untitled, by Ryan Young



Untitled, by Dana Mount

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Cover: Untitled, by Caroline Colijn