GUEST EDITORS •
ANDRIKO LOZOWY & KYLER ZELENY

Now and Then

The Road to Here

DisAppearances on a Highway

Placing Nostalgia

Recalibrating Intimacy

Seen and Imagined

Fragments of Desire

Seeing Saskatchewan

Poke you in the Heart

Leaving to Return

Photography as Theory in Action

Studies on How to View a Landscape

Wood Grain Elevators

Border Lines and Crossing Points

IMAGINATIONS

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NORTH BY WEST

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We are pleased to launch *North By West*, an issue dedicated to photographic representations of Western Canada. We are particularly pleased that it is appearing in *Imaginations*, as I have a history with the journal. We believe strongly in *Imaginations* as a gold-standard open-access knowledge-democracy project that is free to submit to, publish in, and read. It is the perfect venue to showcase this special issue on Canadian photography because, as an online visual journal, it not only pushes boundaries of what is possible in terms of layout and delivery, but it is also an innovative publication that has allowed us as guest editors to push and pull what it means to think critically about visual identities of place and to create relationships between artists and scholar-critics.

It is this vision for collaborative interdisciplinary work that inspired *North By West*. Core to my approach as a social scientist and photographer is the goal to break down barriers between communities of inquiry and practice. During my PhD, I participated in a SSHRC-funded research project called *Social Landscapes of Fort McMurray* with my PhD supervisors Dr. Rob Shields and Dr. Sara Dorow. While they carried out interviews with city planners, Indigenous leaders, working mothers, and other community members, I conducted participatory-action research with high-school students who were invited to create visual representations as responses to the question *Where is Fort McMurray?* I provided them with cameras and guided them through questions of ethics and composition, asking them to think critically about the places where they live. Young people filmed and mapped aspects of life in Fort McMurray invisible to outsiders. In so doing they became not only photographers but social and cultural ethnographers and critics. Where was the divide? The cameras allowed them to make their cultural knowledge visible to themselves and to their communities. This practice also made obvious the falsity of imagining art as separate from life, the artist as separate from the social critic.

As a photographer-researcher I find that maintaining a practice of photographing with *other* scholars as co-present witnesses and interlocutors in space and time is of great intellectual and social benefit. As a working

method the photographer-researcher is a named action that represents a way for a scholar and visual artist to engage in practices that are multiple and dialectical. What we share while out in the field—or even while cooking food together, as some of our collaborators had the opportunity to do—is the experience of being mutual benefactors. As one of our collaborators adeptly noted, we set out to socially engineer a series of collaborations to prove our point: creating together is better.

As editors, we would like to thank you, our readers, for joining us on this attempt to produce new knowledge around bringing visual research and scholarly inquiry to focus on previously underrepresented landscapes and artworks of northwestern North America. We would like to thank our contributors for the conversations, emails, posted letters, and carefully considered writings that took place within and between our collaborative groupings. We also express deep appreciation to all those who have been a part of *Imaginations* over the years, who have trusted in the potential of an open-access online journal, and who have read, reviewed, cited, endorsed, contributed, and engaged in the critical and creative work herein.

—Andriko Lozowy

Like my co-editor Andriko Lozowy, I completed my undergraduate work at the University of Alberta. In retrospect, I would classify my time there as searching, as I frequently stepped outside the comfort of my chosen discipline. Moving beyond required obligations I embraced transdisciplinarity and became interested in cross-disciplinary conversations. I took notice that Visual Arts and Social Sciences departments were often engaged in similar conversations but were not in dialogue or in conversation over what I call the “discipline ridge.”

Looking for a way to bridge my cross-disciplinary interests I attended Goldsmiths and completed a Master of Arts in Photography and Urban Cultures. Paul Halliday, a practicing photographer and scholar, leads the Goldsmiths program to bring together

an international and transdisciplinary collection of thinkers and practitioners. The process and the outcomes of the MA program were designed to be flexible. I experienced the flexibility of the Goldsmiths program firsthand by the fact its predominant focus was Urban while my dissertation concentrated on Rural communities in Western Canada. As students we were instructed not think of our disciplinary roots as places of retreat and shelter, but rather as opportunities for sharing, learning, and collaboration. The photographers learned how to discuss their work in relation to scholarly Social Sciences dialogues, and the Social Science folks were encouraged to develop a visual practice. Process drove collaboration through mutual exchanges of shared time, often in local taprooms—*The Hobgoblin* with its modestly priced ciders and aromatic Thai green curry offering meeting places to discuss issues of utmost importance.

Through my MA research I questioned facets of photography and rural culture in the Canadian West. I further developed my interests in archival studies, regionalism, and visual representation in the West. I am currently a doctoral student in the Communication and Culture program at York University—a joint program between York and Ryerson universities in Toronto. My current intellectual pursuits focus on the idea of eliciting and nurturing conversations that are separated by the disciplinary ridge. *North By West* engages in cross-disciplinarity as a means to make

active the kinds of experience, learning, and training I have undergone. I am an advocate for *dialogue* between, across, through, and beyond reified disciplines. The collaborations found in *North By West* are presented as a further evolution of ways of working together, but also as theoretical and geographic points of inquiry where temporality gives way to expansion, critique, and possibilities.

I find intellectual and creative fulfillment through collaboration, as I find the academic halls and the process of photography often solitary pursuits. I prefer company. Since my formative time at Goldsmiths, I have pursued collaborative modes of publishing words and images with the independent publishing house *The Velvet Cell* as well as a number of photography projects, most notably my collaboration with Yanina Shevchenko on the project *Georgia Georgia*.

North By West is my first experience as a co-architect and co-editor of a visual and scholarly collaboration. I have had the good fortune to experience the editorial role as well contribute my own work to this collection. Like a proud parent I see this scholar/art project as an entity unto itself, ready to face the praise and scorn it must endure.

—Kyler Zeleny

INTRODUCING NORTH BY WEST

ANDRIKO LOZOWY

In this collection, *North By West* refers to a way of dividing North America. Our grade-school days, with maps hung on walls, provide our initial navigation of real and imagined spaces. Yet in this issue *North By West* signifies more than just a bounded geographical area. Here *North By West* names a series of collaborations between individuals situated in place. We invite the readers of *North By West* to engage in the imaginative work of locating their own spatial assemblages—mentally, physically, topographically, and geographically.

This collection is focused on a large region of Western Canada, rather than on an entire national boundary. This version of *North By West* conducts an inquiry into how visual culture is entwined with ideas of place, identity, and memory. Canadian visual and cultural landscapes are diverse, yet a certain tension exists between national and regional identity in Canada: what Amelia Kalant, in *National Identity and the Conflict at Oka: Native Belonging and Myths of Postcolonial Nationhood in Canada* (2004), describes as an uncertainty linked to our colonial history that leaves us ungrounded:

Image - 03 Vera Saltzman

Joel Garreau's *The Nine Nations of North America*, [The New York Times](#) 3 Jul. 2014. Web. 1 Nov. 2016.

For some, Canada invokes memory or an imaginative drive to picture place. In this collection we have asked image makers to contribute their own representations of *North By West* and invited scholars to write about these images from their own disciplinary perspective. In some cases the photographer-researcher—an embodiment of methodology and considered practice—appears in action throughout the collection. The photographer-researcher undertakes hybrid ways of doing scholarly, creative, and collaborative inquiry. Without presuming a particular method upon our contributors, the point here is to identify one of the theoretical elements at play in this issue: we asked individuals to submit work reflecting their expertise and gave these visual scholars and visual practitioners room to collaborate.

The profusion of colorful landscapes on Canadian dollars, part of an obsession with the production of a Canadian sense of place, suggests that the ‘problem’ of Canadianness is not the soul, but an ingrained consciousness that the place/body of Canada exceeds the capacity to name and claim it...The dilemma of Canadian identity is a product of a metanarrative that makes uncertainty of place foundational to the imagining of the Canadian nation...This occurs as a whole as well as regionally. A nation amongst nations perhaps? Regionally speaking of course. Canada as a whole suffers from a ‘failure of place,’ a narrative of territorial failure, a historically successful one at that. (31, 33)

Naming Place

We borrow the name *North By West* from Joel Garreau's *Nine Nations of North America* (1992). Garreau defines the Northwest as “The Empty Quarter” and “The Prairies.” His map provides a starting point for open-ended dialogue and a place where questions persist: what does The Empty Quarter mean, if it consists of almost half the land-mass of the nation; why does Quebec adhere to geo-political boundaries as a distinct cultural signifier; and, are boundaries actually about demography and culturally productive forces? Rather than taking its delimitation of space literally, we use this map to help us consider some of the more abstract ways in which place is imagined collectively, the ways in which perspective can nurture visions of homogeneity or diversity. *North By West* focuses on the

latter, providing a space the diversity of visual scenes and practices that exists across the 12 million square kilometers of The Empty Quarter.

In *American Nations* (2012) Colin Woodard argues that North America ought to be thought of in the plural. As his title suggests, the nations of America presume a multiplicity, a perspective with unique geographic locations nurturing unique cultures, practices, and customs. Thinkers whose work engages the multiplicity of North American nations will already have the sense that the very concept of the Empty Quarter contains a variant of colonial discourse. Others who have been following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and may have read the final report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* (2015), will know that the *North by West* depicted in this issue is also treaty territory and unceded land—Treaties 1, 2, 4, 5, 6,7,8,10, and 11 to be a little more precise.

American examples of regional photography are plentiful. *Ain't Bad* magazine's (2014) visual series on “The American South” reminds the reader/viewer that returning home to places such as Clayton, Crawfordville or Decatur, Georgia serves as an opportunity to see anew and capture with glass and film or digital sensors the deeply social nature of an individual environment (Goffman 72). What might the Canadian equivalent look like? How might it work? What is Canadian visual culture in Western Canada and can it be thought

of outside or beyond American examples? *North by West* serves as a brief historical and contemporary introduction to and survey of photographers working in the Canadian West.¹ Moreover, we intend this collection to act as a kind of muster point, an affective topoi (see Shields 2013) which others interested in Western Canada and photography can engage with together. As a settler nation, Canadian culture and identity is necessarily multiple. Collectively we wonder if Canadians perceive identity as antithetical, as not-American. This collection aims to offer a sustained focus on Canada on its own terms through visual culture.

Revisiting Place

Returning to a place is a central theme that my co-editor Kyler Zeleny and I shared when we first envisioned *North By West*, and now looking at the collection, we note a cyclical character reflected back by the contributors. We find Woodhard's work useful as he writes about the power of a cycle of revisiting a specific place with camera in hand. In matters of the whole of the North and the West, a more human scale for visual and scholarly consideration might be relatable to walking. For example, walking for one day gives a clear indication to an individual the scale of a possible spatial consideration. How many days a year does one spend walking? If you spend one day a year walking, and perhaps photographing, could there be a benefit to navigating and interpreting an area that is familiar but changing? In this regard we also draw inspiration from photographer Edward Burtynsky, who speaks of growing up in rural Ontario, playing among the trees and lakes (Campbell 2008, 43). Some of his own inspiration for photography comes from capturing still images of changing landscapes that could be easily read as on the verge of being lost to industrial processes, commercialization, housing, and so forth. *North By West* is a working collection that finds common yet fragile ground in considering the vastness of our given territorial focus. At the same time, we recognize the finite limitations on resources. On the one hand, an outsider might see the limitless

expanse and draw a reductive conclusion such as "Saskatchewan is so boring; it's all the same," whereas a local inhabitant might have a more refined way of recognizing and describing in detail landscapes that could easily fool an outsider into thinking subtlety is synonymous with homogeneity.

Yet freedom of physical movement cannot be assumed here. Moreover the North and the West relate specifically to the real cartographic distinctions made over human history wherein borders mean the difference between freedom of movement and violent power. Unlike monetary capital, human capital is often caged by immobility when nation states act in guarded ways. For some, we might acknowledge the relative freedom afforded by the luck of being a Canadian, that movement across and through the vast expanse of Canada is not only taken for granted, but also presumed and encouraged. This project does not focus on the political intersections of human geography but rather on the relationships of memory, photography, rumination, and certain forms of distinctly Canadian identity making. *North By West* strives to occupy a space of serious and critical inquiry between the known and unknown boundaries of real and imagined space.

The Photographer-Researcher

Returning to a place is a specific action, whether mindful or passive. Photographer-researchers document, aestheticize, reveal, and capture the specificities of place, culture, and milieu. The photographer-researcher reflects on multiplicity while considering the visible and the invisible (Lozowy 2014, 393). At the same time the photographer-researcher is methodologically working through registers of the; gaze, glance, focus, depth, exposure and representation (Shields 23-35).

The photographer-researcher works within a methodological set of parameters with which to negotiate fluid dialogisms, such as when a photographer walks with deliberate patience amidst fluctuating intensities of light and shadow, through spaces both real and imagined, and encounters bodies, minds, emotions, and affective spatial milieu. The photographer-research also moves through the mechanical limitations of the given photographic apparatus (Flusser 2000, 76) and makes expletive and discriminatory choices of when to press the shutter.

With the camera in hand, we see things differently. Pausing, perhaps to converse with another person or press the camera shutter, breaks the veneer of the everyday and elevates the moment to a level of engagement that offers an opportunity for theoretical reflexive moments that, yet again, abstract to other bisections of space and time. The act of photography—as well as other modes of knowing, such as painting, audio-recording, video-recording, dictation, and so forth—puts action into a direct relationship with theory because it breaks the expected unconscious moment-to-moment-ness of the everyday. It gives the photographer, or otherwise engaged practitioner, reason to pause, to become aware of the subtle pulse between breaths.

North By West

North By West is organized into three themes: histories, places, and visions. *North by West* is a social experiment where image makers who might use image-making techniques as ways to ask ontological questions are then met by scholars who often ask further ontological questions followed by epistemological ones (see Sontag 1977; Barthes 1981).

Histories

Section one relates to four contributions that revolve around ways in which history, place, and memory work in relation to patterns of settlement, the vocabulary of Canadian landscape, fragile materiality, and return cycles. Elizabeth Cavaliere kindly offered to create a groundwork for the collection by attuning her focus to the power of photography as a technology that shapes cultural discourse. Cavaliere looks to the work of Humpry Lloyd Hime and the heavy, wet, messy, and toxic process of image making in 1839, when expansive prairie lands were being visually surveyed and documented with an eye to resource development. Cavaliere argues that, along with technological shifts in the nature of photography over the last 180 years, pragmatism has been largely displaced by more recent shifts towards photography as a means to know place as reflexive, embodied, and affective.

In “Placing Nostalgia,” Jon Petrychyn meditates on the currents between the photographic work of Vera Saltzman and Valerie Zink. Petrychyn notes that the old pastoral and bucolic Saskatchewan is dead; the new Saskatchewan is on the move, but prosperity is not for everyone. In a province where pumpjacks have replaced combines, both literally and in the imaginary, the change represents progressive visions of acceleration and opportunity at the cost of fearful displacement, the kind that means many people and even places are left outside of the halo of abundance and plenty. Through this reading, Saltzman’s and Zink’s images reverberate with one another while the visual language of Canadian prairie landscapes makes itself apparent: grain elevators stand upright as place markers inscribed with histories unbound by the brief period where rail lines linked grain elevators dotted black across a fertile carpet of green and yellow.

Devotedly touristic and intensely private worlds collide in the contribution by Karen Engle and Trudi Lynn Smith. Smith’s work reimagines what it means to do archival research. There is a sense of fragility in an exchange that saw materials shared, not over online connections, but rather through carefully packaged postings. Engle shared her delight at receiving a package from Smith, not merely from the material artifacts, but also the gesture of trust.

Kyler Zeleny’s contribution “Leaving to Return” projects a pattern of artistic practice and scholarship that plays out on a daily basis for any person of any age who grows up feeling alienated and disenfranchised

amidst the pragmatism of making a living in rural places without artistic communities. Zeleny illustrates connections between notions of settler expansion, pastoralism, identity, and geography, while asking serious questions about what opportunities for even temporary community assemblages are lost when the individualist tendencies of photographers deny any hope of mentorship. His images, presented alongside Thomas Gardiner’s, invite the viewer to tangle with the textual argument he puts forward—where geography coupled with topography defines not only what is seen, but also how place is lived, imagined, guarded, and rooted.

Places

Ali Piwowar offers a detailed consideration of place-making effects in “Wood Grain Elevators,” beginning with a historical and spatial analysis of the organizing principle of farming and harvesting practices tied to distribution through grain elevators and trains carrying grain east to ports such as those found in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Piwowar offers a multifaceted approach to the ways in which wood grain elevators occupy, represent, signify, and command attention to a range of people. Piwowar reveals the political in the prairie sublime—the indigenous farmer recalls standing at the back of the line, forced to wait until the settler famers had finished their grain dealings.

Beyond the standard narratives of boom and bust Michael Granzow and Kevin Jones meditate upon Eamon MacMahon’s photographs that challenge the rhetoric of division between the urban and rural to remind the reader that spatial divisions might fuel animosity; yet a closer look reveals interdependence on micro and macro scales. Under the view of Granzow and Jones, MacMahon’s images refute ruin porn and instead offer a considered view of the ways in which ruination is much more a lived process that bears the trauma of lost prosperity rather than the predatory pathway for contemporary photographers to entice viewership with the promise of salacious decomposition. The notion of uneven relations of place comprise the central argument here where Granzow and Jones describe how sites of ruin now exist as nodes in a network that once bore the livelihoods of extraction. Ruin is a material reality where decomposition anchors signposts to the geographic and symbolic places that are coming up next. Perhaps most unsettling is the sense that, because work camps have become shelter for the long-shift working skilled laborers of late-modern capitalism, the possibility of ruin at multiple registers is just an unlucky hand away.

Lily Cho, in *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada* (2010), expresses her views on the matter of diasporic lives of those who live to meet the demands of hungry customers looking for Canadian-Chinese cuisine. Cho returns to the subject for “Recalibrating Intimacy,” situating Elyse Bouvier’s photographs of Chinese restaurants as an invitation to look repeatedly. Cho invites readers of text and

image to consider not only this article but the entire *North by West* collection as an opportunity to extend critical thinking practices around the body of work that is generated by photographers who argue and ask questions with light, shadow, and colour. Cho and Bouvier engage in a dance of intimacy and publicity through carefully waged narratives and counter-narratives that revolve around the pithy cultural/racial/ethnic/diasporic question, “who has authority to say that egg foo yong is not real Chinese food?”

In dialogue with Stephen Shore’s *Uncommon Places: The Complete Works* (2004), John Conway’s *Saskatchewan: Uncommon Views* (2005) provides visual evidence of the significance, not only of Canadian image making but, more accurately, of prairie landscapes that eschewed aesthetic beauty for the resignification of the weird as iconic. Conway’s contribution to *North By West*, both as image maker and scholarly interlocutor, coalesces around the way in which Saskatchewan, the subject of his 2005 collection, remains burned into his vision. Conway elucidates the metaphor by drawing visual connections to the way that his new surroundings on the West Coast persuade him to seek out the horizontal expanse of the ocean as a surrogate for a big-sky prairie horizon.

By tracing lines through not only the invention of photography but also of the idea of the West, Matt Dyce offers a comparative analysis of the ways in which photographers confront personal ethics and in many cases make decisions based on commercial viability. William Hanson Boorne and George Webber,

a pair of photographers separated by 100 years, are connected by the geographic places they traversed. The 100-year separation is where Dyce has room to contrast relationships of identity, cultural practices, appropriation, and how notions of the spiritual have been underrepresented in Canadian visual cultural studies. Dyce looks carefully at the ways in which Boorne chose to represent the Blood Tribe celebrating/performing a sun dance ceremony, images that we now read as racist and dehumanizing. The second half of this essay contrasts George Webber’s work with Boorne’s. Webber was already an acclaimed photographer by the mid-1990s and his images illustrate not only the shift in relation to the previous 100 years, but also pave the way for photographic styles that push and pull the vastness of prairie landscapes into sharp focus: billowy clouds, pastoral grasses, social or material ruin, and subjects who embody fully fleshed humanity wrought with all manner of suffering, humility, and even spiritual transcendence. Dyce illuminates, as his title suggests, “Photography is theory in action when it becomes a means for people to negotiate the context of both their representation and place in history.”

Visions

Andreas Rutkauskas’s images focus on actual borders as political and spatial lines that were more porous before the spectacle and performance of power and control intensified following 9/11. Karla McManus writes in relation to Rutkauskas’s images; their comradery began in Winnipeg during

childhood. “Border Lines and Crossing Points” brings the images of place to the forefront, each captioned with brief detail. Though readers might have the impulse to skip ahead, these images demand multiple viewings. As McManus writes, we come to know in more affective ways the sensorial spectrum of power relations at play. The brilliance of Rutkauskas’s images emerges as McManus points out the tension between the act of photographing and the social effects of bodies in space in relation to borders.

Erin Ashenhurst offers a playful view through the construct of a toy windshield, where subjectivity meets the mountains and wrestles with contemporary points of cohesion—small towns along winding roads. “DisAppearances on a Highway” locates the viewer safely behind the windscreen of a playmobile car, the view similar to the plastic lens images conjured by Lomo cameras. Forward momentum ensures that the pursuit of the horizon makes for a sense of familiarity for those who face similar geographic expanses, such as those in Australia or Siberia. At the same time, the DisAppearances might also allude to more romantic possibilities of getting lost in land and the self.

“Seen and Imagined” brings visual sociology pioneer Douglas Harper in conversation with Tara Milbrandt, both of whom bring text and images together in deeply personal ways. Together, Harper and Milbrandt invite the viewer/reader along for a walking tour of Edmonton, Alberta. Edmonton is represented here and read as a kind of gritty postmodern frontier, a necessary hub for the far greater expanse of the North and the West, at

all degrees of compass and thermometer. Through the lenses of each photographer and researcher, Edmonton bleeds the themes of settlement patterns and conflict restrained in held breaths. Brutalism stands as an affront to the big skies that offer limitless visions beyond the built utility of a city known for its blue and dirty collars, a city once surrounded by fertile fields bearing wheat and corn but now paved and serviced for the resource industry.

Jenny Gerbrandt’s “Poke you in the Heart” examines the anthropological scholar at the intersection of two photographers, one from outside, read as an ally, and one from inside, read as Indigenous. Aaron Elkaim responded to the initial call for images, which we paired with Gerbrandt because of her geographically specific engagement with the Métis near Fort McMurray, where she connected locally back to Nadia Bouchier of Fort McKay who had worked closely with Elkaim in the first place. In the text by Gerbrandt, Bouchier’s grandmother speaks strikingly of the Athabasca River, wondering how she could take care of the river when the river could no longer take care of her. Gerbrandt’s articulation of the spoken narrative reinforces the

need to make sure that we as academics, scholars, and photographers work together to remember what we might otherwise selectively forget. In the same way, Elkaim the outsider and Bouchier the insider both offer photographs that reveal a part of what is now at least a binocular vision.

Readers will be struck by the candidness that Jessica Auer brings to her photographic vision, one sculpted and shaped by her parents’ divorce when she was 10 years old. Auer joined her father during a summer of travel with a book and a camera. The Auer we meet here is shaped by her traversals across time and by returning to places; in turn she reminds us to return again and again, to gaze, to ruminate, to notice, and to recognize that everything changes—a metaphor for the project of *North By West*.

North By West

When this special issue began to take shape we aspired to create a publication that allowed contributors to think critically and steadily about images, and to work together and to open a space for creative forms of scholarship.

Upon reflection Lily Cho noted, and our editorial team agrees, that this special issue represents a kind of social engineering and could be looked upon as a useful model for combating the dizziness of visual oversaturation.

Thank you to our photographers and interlocutors for contributing to this experiment, and to our readers alike for joining us in this exploration of the North and the West, via the shared virtual space of *Imaginations*.

Notes

¹ Of course this is not a comprehensive list. For instance, it does not focus on historical photographers such as Orest Semchishen or Sandra Semchuck. However, it does provide a range of contemporary work in the region.

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NOW AND THEN: SITUATING CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE CANADIAN WEST INTO A SHARED PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY

ELIZABETH ANNE CAVALIERE

Résumé

La photographie a une place importante, contemporaine et historique, dans les visions de mise en forme, dans l'élaboration de visions, compréhensions, et expériences de l'Ouest canadien. Les utilisations variées des premières photographies de l'Ouest, circulé dans un moment de la conscience nationale provoquée par la Confédération, ont façonné l'imaginaire collectif canadien. Artistes contemporains sont encore influencés par un grand nombre des mêmes idées qui émergent en ce moment au début de l'histoire canadienne, à un moment que le pays et la photographie développer ensemble. Thèmes de l'exploration, l'identité, le colonialisme, le règlement, le tourisme, les ressources naturelles, l'industrie, et l'écologie sont résonnant dans les photographies historiques maintenant continues dans des collections d'archives et de musées comme dans les photographies contemporaines et l'écriture de celui-ci. Cet essai relie des thèmes historiques et œuvres d'archives avec le travail de photographes contemporains travaillant dans l'Ouest du Canada aujourd'hui, et qui est présentée dans ce journal. Cet essai se développe l'histoire qui persiste dans les thèmes que les photographes contemporains explorent dans leur travail, et servir comme un lien entre les artistes présentés dans ce journal dans une histoire visuelle commune.

Abstract

Photography has played an important role, both contemporary and historical, in shaping visions, understandings, and experiences of the Canadian West. The varied uses of early photographs of the West, circulated in a moment of national consciousness brought on by Confederation, shaped the collective Canadian imagination. Contemporary artists and scholars continue to be influenced by many of the same ideas that emerged in this early moment of Canadian history, when both country and medium developed alongside one another. Themes of exploration, identity, colonialism, settlement, tourism, natural resource, industry, and ecology find as much resonance in historical photographs in archival and museological collections as they do in contemporary photography and critical discourse. This essay bridges historical themes and archival pieces with the images of contemporary photographers working in western Canada today, whose photographs are featured in this issue. This essay sets the historical framework that endures in themes that contemporary photographers explore and also links the artists featured in this issue into a shared visual history.

Photography has played an important role, both contemporary and historical, in shaping visions, understandings, and experiences of the Canadian West. Shortly after the rivalrous invention of photography in France and Britain in 1839, explorers and itinerant photographers produced the first photographs of Manitoba and Saskatchewan's expansive prairies and, by the 1850s and 1860s, Alberta and British Columbia's Rocky

Fig. 1. *The Prairie Looking West*, 1858.

Mountain range. This moment in the mid-19th century is a particularly poignant one, bringing together a nascent photographic medium with the exploration and coming together of Canada as a new nation. Both settlers and the colonial government of British North America, soon to be the Canadian government after Confederation in 1867, were keen to tap into the possibilities that lay westwards, motivated by the gold rush and natural resources of the northwest; the potential for colonial expansion and settlement in the prairies; the threat of advancement northward from the United States; a quickly expiring hold on the interior by the Hudson Bay Company; and the British imperialist drive to gain access to the Pacific.

Contemporary artists and scholars continue to be influenced by many of the same ideas that emerged in this early moment of Canadian history, when both country and medium developed alongside one another. Themes of exploration, identity, colonialism, settlement, tourism, natural resource, industry, and ecology—to name only a few—find as much

resonance in the historical photographs now held in archival and museological collections as they do in the contemporary photographs and essays in journals such as *Imaginations*. While by no means a comprehensive history of Canadian photography, this essay will work to bridge historical themes and photographs with the work of contemporary artists photographing the Canadian West. By setting a historical framework, I hope to develop an ongoing dialogue between the historic and the contemporary, as well as to situate the artists featured in this journal into a shared photographic history.

One of the earliest uses of photography in Canada was in the exploration of land. In 1858, Humphrey Lloyd Hime was the first photographer in Canada to be attached to a governmental exploratory survey. Photographs produced during the survey, such as his *Prairie Looking West* (fig. 1), have become iconic early images of the Canadian interior, both in their moment and ours, for their ability to describe the land physically (in this case flat and expansive in every direction) as well as to shape an ideological understanding of the prairie land as empty and ready for settlement.¹ The complexity, bulkiness, and danger of early photographic processes, such as the daguerreotype—made by exposing

a silver-coated copper plate to dangerous mercury vapours producing a singular, highly detailed and sharp image—discouraged the use of photography on survey expeditions for nearly two decades after the medium's invention. However, the collodion wet-plate process used by photographers such as Hime had the advantage of the clarity of a daguerreotype combined with the reproducibility of a calotype—a paper-based process that produced a less crisp but reproducible negative—and a newfound portability in the durable glass plates. Additionally, the exposure times for the collodion wet-plate process were shortened significantly from that of the daguerreotype, broadening the range and clarity of photographic subjects. These technological milestones were paramount in photography's use in the geological and topographical documentation of the Canadian West during the 19th century. Photographs were used by surveyors, scientists, engineers, government officials, and even amateur naturalists as a way to inventory and process the land and its contents visually.² As documentation, photographs contributed to the delineation of physical boundaries between Canada and the United States as well as to the shaping of a concept of national consciousness through the claiming of place.

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The scientific and documentary function of photography continued to grow throughout the 19th and 20th centuries with, for example, developments in aerial photography and photogrammetry. The precision and perceived objective nature of the photograph made it an invaluable tool in the measurement and collection of data about the land. However, the mapping, documenting, and inventorying of the Canadian West is not exclusive to official governmental and military efforts. Artists have found much inspiration in photography's scientific capacities—an interest that often hinges on the technological qualities of photography—in order to map and delineate geographical space in connection to the construction of identity. In his series *Borderline*, Andreas Rutkauskas visually documents the border with the fidelity of the camera while at the same time drawing out the subtle physical and cultural distinctions that define the identities of both Canada and the United States. Further, whereas photography in the 19th century provided a new tool in the documentation of physical space, today digital photographic technologies coupled with the exactitude of satellite mapping provide new conceptions of space that challenge and reinterpret notions about the boundary and frontier. Tara Milbrandt and Doug Harper's *Portrait of a City*, for example, engages the longstanding notion of the frontier as it meets the postmodern through photographs of architectural relationships in Edmonton.

The establishment of borders throughout Canadian history physically defined a nation and at the same time brought the resources contained within those borders under national control. Natural resources, from trees to water to prairie, and infrastructure, notably the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) completed in 1885, transported resources eastward and settlers westward. Logging and mining camps, bridges, railroads, steamships, and machinery are frequent subjects in 19th-century photography, often commissioned as records by the owners, developers, and engineers overseeing the enterprise. Commissions were given to professional photographers, many of whom had their own commercial studios. The Montreal studio of photographer William Notman was one of the most prolific studios in Canada in the 19th century.³ The Geological Survey of Canada in 1871 commissioned Notman's studio to provide a photographer, Benjamin Baltzly, to accompany their survey team through the Rocky Mountains.⁴ Notman's son, William MacFarlane Notman, was commissioned to photograph various mining operations throughout Ontario. In addition, Notman himself received a commission from the engineer of the Victoria Bridge, James Hodges, to document the various stages of its construction—this commission launched Notman's prestigious career. Photographers documenting resources, infrastructure, and enterprise, such as those from the Notman studio, used photography both to catalogue and to glorify. Both industrialists and the broader public understood scenes of industry and accomplishment as symbols of progress and of pride in their new nation. Notman's Victoria Bridge photographs (fig. 2), for example, convey not only the various stages of its construction, but also the magnitude and magnificence of what was then the largest bridge ever built.

Fig. 2. Victoria Bridge under construction, from below North Abutment, 1859.

For 19th-century Canadians, resources seemed infinite, as was the industry that emerged around the cultivation of those resources. Recent attitudes towards the ecological status of the land and its resources, however, have brought into question the impact of industry on the environment and surrounding communities. In the 1970s, photography became more conceptual, critical, and political in critiquing industrialization

and suburbanization.⁵ Contemporary photographers have turned their lenses towards an active questioning of the effects of Canadian resource consumption, now understood to be quickly exhausting and detrimental to the land. Towns that were prosperous and thriving due to resource-based industry now sit abandoned as the primary resource has been harvested, mined, or farmed to extinction. Eamon MacMahon's photographs

of abandoned Uranium City, a once-prominent mining town in northern Saskatchewan, trace the fallout of the collapse of a resource-based, single-industry town. His photographs capture the scars of industry and the vacant buildings of disappearing communities of workers as they are slowly reclaimed by nature. Likewise, George Webber's photographs of aging and abandoned prairie towns both recall the early excitement towards the

Fig. 3. *The Gems of British Columbia Greet You*, 1858.

harnessing of Canadian natural resources and mark the consequences of early progress. Valerie Zink's series *Oxen to Oil* brings a human understanding to the prairie oil economy through photographs of workers and their living environments where natural resources are still being extracted. Aaron Elkaim's series *Sleeping with the Devil* conveys the profound impact of the oil industry on citizens of Fort McKay First Nation in their move away from traditional ways of life.

In addition to inventorying and documenting resource and industry, photographs were used to plan and document the construction of symbols of national unity such as the CPR. The dissemination of images worked both to satiate curiosities about the vast interiors of the country as well as to encourage settlement in the West. The westward movement of settlers upon the completion of the transcontinental railway continued well into the 20th century. Whereas the earliest photographs of the Canadian West were made by explorers or studio photographers from central Canada on commission, the populating of the West brought photographers who resided more permanently in the growing towns and cities of the interior to the Pacific Coast. Itinerant photographers and studio photographers, such as Richard and Hannah Maynard⁶ or Frederick Dally⁷, documented the emergence and development of cities and towns across western Canada as well as growing communities of people. The often playful studio photographs of Hannah Maynard,

for example, not only depict a range of citizens and travellers through Victoria, British Columbia, but also reflect the ways people consumed photography. Her annual *Gems of British Columbia* (fig. 3) provided a composite of all of the baby photographs made in her studio over the course of a year and was sent to clients as a holiday card. These types of photographs were eagerly consumed by local populations and reflect a sense of community and local pride.

Today, scholars and archivists use historical photographs to shed light on local histories of both place and photography. Local histories of place, community, and belonging, however, are no less important to contemporary photographers. Several photographers in this issue explore their own local histories of place, creating biographical studies of the West as home. Thomas Gardiner considers the lived experience of urban centers to rural towns through photographs of sharply contrasting symbols. Through his photographs, Gardiner traces a local history of change and its impact on his own life. In her series *trans.plant*, Vera Saltzman reflects on place as a shared history of human experience. Saltzman uses photographs to connect memories of her childhood home in Cape Breton to the physical realities of her new home in rural Saskatchewan. Likewise, John Conway's series *Sense of Place on the Saskatchewan Prairie* explores the ambiguity of place in relation to memory through photographs of disparate yet visually

similar geographical locations. The movement of people westward was not a fixed event in Canadian history. Immigration and migration continue to bring people from across Canada and the world to the West, creating a nexus of cultures in a shared place. Take, for example, Elyse Bouvier's exploration of the Chinese-Canadian experience in the West through her photographs of restaurants and food in rural Albertan towns. Bouvier draws attention to an experience ripe with telling juxtapositions that is often overlooked in dominant histories of the Canadian West that emphasize European settler history.

While photography was integral to the exploration and settlement of the Canadian West, it was also a central component of a much more leisurely pursuit in the 19th century. A burgeoning industry, tourism was based principally on the spectacular vistas of the Rocky Mountains and made possible with the accessibility of the transcontinental railroad. Photography both now and in the 19th century is a relatively democratized medium, purchased directly from a photographic studio or made by anyone with the advent of the personal Kodak camera. Photographs were inexpensive ways to collect and inventory sites as souvenirs or for potential future travel.⁸ In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, tourist photographs became central components of personal travel albums, travel literature, and collectable memorabilia. Perhaps the most famous example of a tourist's own use of photography is found in the 1893 publication *Through Canada With A Kodak* by the Countess of Aberdeen. Along with the written account of her journey, the book included both the Countess's own photographs taken with a Kodak camera and photographs purchased from photographic studios.⁹

In addition to appealing to the individual, photography in the tourism market was quickly taken advantage of by business and industry. The CPR under the direction of William Cornelius Van Horne, its general manager from 1882 and president from 1888, took advantage of photography's popularity in the creation of illustrated promotional material about the railroad with the intention of attracting both tourists and settlers westwards. Van Horne had a fondness for the arts both as a collector and as an amateur painter; his artists' pass program resulted in a great many paintings and photographs of scenery along the CPR.¹⁰ Widely displayed, published, and collected, these images brought Canadians visually closer to a landscape that was unique to their nation.

The sights of the Canadian West are no less attractive to tourists today and endure as symbols of Canadian national identity. In addition to producing photographs of the landscape, contemporary photographers also explore the ways in which photography is used by tourists and the tourism industry to shape experience and encounters with nature. Bridging the past and present, Trudi Lynn Smith's ongoing project *Finding Aid* explores the re-photographing of popular tourist attractions from the archival record—prominent sites, such as Lake Louise in Banff National Park, that continue to attract visitors from across Canada and the globe. Smith's series questions the ability of tourists to access the past history of a particular site by acknowledging the temporary and ephemeral nature of the tourist industry. Jessica Auer's series *Studies on How to View Landscape* works to understand the act of looking itself by recording tourists in the act and by tracing the dominance of particular sites in which

Photography both now and in the 19th century is a relatively democratized medium, purchased directly from a photographic studio or made by anyone with the advent of the personal Kodak camera.

that act takes place. Conversely, Erin Ashenhurt’s series *Dis/Apearances on a Highway: A Model Drive* develops the artist’s own personal experience as a tourist, photographing grand sites alongside the less appealing roadside motels and attractions during her road trip from Vancouver to Stewart, British Columbia. Nonetheless, her playful challenge on the constructed nature of such experience echoes the legacy of photography’s participation in the construction of the tourist experience.

As people were finding ways to use and consume photography in the 19th century, they were also coming to terms with Canada as a nation. The formative link between photography and Canadian imagination, particularly as it exists in the history of photography of the Canadian West, has endured to this very day. The connection between image making and the making of a Canadian imagination can be attributed at least in part to the institutions that collect and preserve Canadian photographic history—Library and Archives Canada, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, and the many historical societies, archives, galleries and museums.

The photographers featured in this special issue continue this legacy, often using archival photographs, investigating historical themes, and photographing the same prominent sights and small towns in the Canadian West that have been photographed since the medium’s inception. *North by West* offers a collection of contemporary photographers, image makers, and scholars who each contribute their own critical perspective on visual culture. Visual culture does not stand in absentia, but rather works in relation to and problematizes issues of race, colonialism, wealth, territory, industry, politics, ecology, and culture using the dominant communicative form of the day—the visual in relation to our own imaginations.

Image Notes

Figure 1: Humphrey Lloyd Hime. *The Prairie Looking West*. 1858. C-017443. Image courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.

Figure 2: William Notman. *Victoria Bridge under construction, from below North Abutment*. 1859. PA-181445. Image courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.

Figure 3: Hannah Maynard. *The Gems of British Columbia Greet You*. 1889. F-05081. Image courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives.

Notes

¹ For studies of Hime see: Richard Huyda. *Camera in the interior: 1858. H.L. Hime, Photographer The Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition*. Toronto, Ont.: The Coach House Press, 1975; Joan M. Schwartz. “More Than ‘Competent Description of an Intractably Empty Landscape’: A Strategy for Critical Engagement with Historical Photographs.” *Historical Geography* 31 (2003): 105-130.

² Scholar Suzanne Zeller has suggested that the expansionism and unification of Canada relied strongly on human as well as natural resources. For Zeller, the processes of inventorying—equally dependent on those creating the inventory and the resources being counted—and of utilitarianism are definitive in the formation of Victorian Canada and the “natural theology” that she sees as characteristic of Victorian science. Suzanne Zeller. *Land of Promise, Promised Land: The Culture of Victorian Science in Canada*. Ottawa, Ont.: The Canadian Historical Association, 1996.

³ See: Stanley G. Triggs. *William Notman: The Stamp of a Studio*. Toronto, Ont.: Coach House Press and Art Gallery of Ontario, 1985.

⁴ See: Elizabeth Anne Cavaliere. “Benjamin Baltzly: A Photographer’s Expedition Journal.” *Journal of Canadian Art History* 35.1 (Fall 2014): 16-129.

⁵ The critical turning point is often seen to be the 1975 exhibition “New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape” held at the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY.

⁶ See: David Mattison. “The Maynards: A Victoria Photographic Couple.” *New Islander* (October 19, 1980). [is there a page range?]

⁷ See: Joan M. Schwartz. “Frederick Dally.” *Encyclopedia of 19th-Century Photography*. Ed. John Hannavy. New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2007: 377; Andrew J. Birrell. “Frederick Dally: Photo Chronicler of B.C. a Century Ago.” *Canadian Photography* (February 1977): 14–19.

⁸ For further discussion of the photograph as a commodity in tourism, see: John Urry. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London, UK: SAGE Publications, 1990. For a key case study of the relationship between photography and tourism in a Canadian context, see: Keri Cronin. *Manufacturing National Park Nature: Photography, Ecology, and the Wilderness Industry of Jasper Park*. Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press, 2011.

⁹ Ishbel Gordon, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. *Through Canada With A Kodak: By the Countess of Aberdeen*. Edinburgh, UK: W. H. White & Co., 1893.

¹⁰ See: E.J. Hart. *The Selling of Canada: The CPR and the Beginnings of Canadian Tourism*. Banff: Altitude, 1983; Roger Boulet and Terry Fenton. *Vistas: Artists on the Canadian Pacific Railway*. Calgary, Alta.: Glenbow Museum, 2009.

PLACING NOSTALGIA:
AFFECT AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE NEW SASKATCHEWAN

VERA SALTZMAN, VALERIE ZINK & JON PETRYCHYN

Saskatchewan has been reborn into a bustling hub of economic and cultural activity. Saskatchewan is now in motion.

Résumé

L'ancienne Saskatchewan socio-démocrate est morte. A sa place une Saskatchewan néolibérale a pris en main la culture, la politique les émotions et l'économie. Cet article met en contexte les œuvres des photographes saskatchewanaises Valerie Zink et Vera Saltzman au cœur de ce changement vers une économie néolibérale reposant sur l'industrie du pétrole dans cette nouvelle Saskatchewan. J'avance que Zink et Saltzman utilise une approche réparative dans leurs œuvres, contre les stratégies de construction d'espace tournées vers le futur du néolibéralisme et construisent de nouvelles économies affectives à travers un engagement critique avec le concept de nostalgie. Mises côte à côte, les images de Zink et Saltzman nous rappellent la place des peuples autochtones et l'importance de l'eau dans l'épanouissement de la vie. Leurs images développent une économie affective alternative dans laquelle la circulation de la nostalgie en tant qu'affect spatial et temporel ôte tout optimisme au néolibéralisme, chamboule ses téléologies bien nettes, détruit ses distinctions régionales et prend en considération les coûts humains et environnementaux de l'optimisme sans limite de la nouvelle Saskatchewan. En mettant en contexte et en jouant avec la nostalgie, Zink et Saltzman renversent l'orientation vers le futur de la nouvelle Saskatchewan et produisent une économie affective alternative qui portent attention à ceux qui sont laissés de côté.

Abstract

The old social-democratic Saskatchewan has died. In its place, a neoliberal New Saskatchewan has taken hold over culture, politics, emotions, and the economy. This article situates the photography of Saskatchewan-based photographers Valerie Zink and Vera Saltzman within this shift to the oil-based neoliberal economies of the New Saskatchewan. I argue that Zink and Saltzman both work reparatively against the future-oriented place-making strategies of neoliberalism, constructing new affective economies through a critical engagement with nostalgia. Placed side by side, Zink's and Saltzman's photographs remind us of the place of Indigenous peoples and the importance of water to the flourishing of life. Their photographs develop an alternative affective economy in which the circulation of nostalgia as both a spatial and temporal affect unsticks optimism from neoliberalism, scrambles its neat teleologies, collapses regional distinctions, and accounts for the human and environmental cost of the New Saskatchewan's unbridled optimism. By playing with and placing nostalgia, Zink and Saltzman invert the New Saskatchewan's future-orientation, producing an alternative affective economy attentive to those left out of the New Saskatchewan.

Fig. 1. Zink, "Cultivating", Oxen to Oil

The old Saskatchewan has died. The family farms and small towns once scattered across Saskatchewan's grid have been blown away by the wind, with only ghosts and decay remaining. In place of this old Saskatchewan, a New Saskatchewan has taken hold. In this Saskatchewan, oil, potash, and industrial agriculture reign supreme over culture, politics, emotions, and the economy. Once a stagnant, flat, and boring have-not province, Saskatchewan has been reborn into a bustling hub of economic and cultural activity. Saskatchewan is now in motion.

This is the discourse of the New Saskatchewan, which places itself as the dominant term in multiple sets of binaries: old and new, past and future, stagnation and prosperity, socialism and neoliberal capitalism, public and private. The phrase “New Saskatchewan” first appeared in the province as the moniker under which Ross Thatcher’s Liberal Party swept to power in Saskatchewan in the 1960s, but its political and emotional history stretches on both sides of it, from Wilfrid Laurier’s promise of a “last, best West,” to the centre-right Saskatchewan Party’s resurrection of the phrase in 2003, and to current Saskatchewan Premier and Saskatchewan Party leader Brad Wall’s 2016 election slogan Keep Saskatchewan Strong (Enoch 193). In its current formation as a discourse of neoliberalism, the New Saskatchewan situates itself as the hegemonic, logical, obvious, and common-sense solution to the so-called problem of ideological socialism. Any attempts by the left to generate alternatives to social, economic, or cultural problems of neoliberalism are often labelled regressive by neoliberalism’s proponents. Leftist artists and activists often pre-emptively disavow any emotional or

nostalgic connection to the past so as not to be labelled regressive, in part as a reaction to neoliberalism’s critiques, but also as a rejection of an idealized past that erases the severe inequality and genocide of Indigenous peoples that allowed the settlement and development of the province. We can see this leftist rejection clearly in Saskatchewan-based artist and activist Valerie Zink’s photography series’ *Oxen and Oil*. Zink asserts that her critique of effects of oil on Saskatchewan communities is “[m]ore than a didactic lament for a pastoral plains”; it is a call to action (Zink, *Oxen*). Likewise, her series *Ghosts and Daily News* “attempts [...] to examine our susceptibility to nostalgia in the context of demographic upheaval” (Zink, *Ghosts*). As a discourse with such a hold on the emotional and political landscape of the province, the New Saskatchewan’s demand for progress permeates attempts to undermine it. In the New Saskatchewan, new supersedes old and prosperity supersedes stagnation. In the New Saskatchewan, the failures of social democracy are gone. In their place are neoliberal capitalism and the promise of prosperity.

The fact that this promise of prosperity is not offered to everyone is rarely, if ever, mentioned in this discourse, and is used to wash away accusations from activists on the left of an impending environmental or social crisis. In this way, the discourse of the New Saskatchewan differs from other neoliberal discourses, which tend to institute the necessity of neoliberal

policies through the spectre of crisis. Simon Enoch, Director of the Saskatchewan Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, notes that since the publication of Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine* it has become almost fashionable and perhaps cliché to make this observation (Enoch 192). Still, for Enoch, the supposed emphasis on the manufacture of crises under neoliberalism poses an interesting problem for neoliberalism in Saskatchewan specifically. When the Saskatchewan Party—the political offspring of the Saskatchewan Liberals and Progressive Conservatives—came to power in 2007, they were hardly inheriting a crisis, nor would they be able to manufacture one without seriously undermining their credentials with a social democrat-leaning populace. The province was by all accounts beginning to experience a boom brought on by the development of its natural resources oil and potash, growth that would help the Saskatchewan economy weather the 2008 global financial crisis. If there is no crisis, Enoch asks, how can the Saskatchewan Party successfully sell neoliberalism? The answer: through the New Saskatchewan, “a discourse of prosperity that promises to unleash the full economic potential of the province” (Enoch 193).

Yet the New Saskatchewan is hardly new; it has a long genealogy in the cultural and political history of Saskatchewan. The New Saskatchewan is another iteration of what Dale Eisler calls the “myth of

Saskatchewan.” Eisler’s essay, published just a few years before the Saskatchewan Party was first elected into government, describes the myth as the belief that “Saskatchewan was a promised land of abundance and opportunity for all” (71-2). The Saskatchewan myth emerges first during the settlement of the West and shifts and morphs throughout the 20th century as it meets the social gospel of Tommy Douglas and the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), Thatcher’s Liberals, and Grant Devine’s Progressive Conservatives, while still retaining its essential character of believing in the possibility that Saskatchewan can be better. For Eisler, this myth of Saskatchewan is summarized best by former Premier Grant Devine: “There’s so much more we can be” (qtd. in Eisler 83). This sentiment is vague: who is promised abundance and opportunity? What can we be and become? The myth of Saskatchewan is an empty yet overflowing category. It can mean absolutely everything to everyone, an empty container that can be filled with individual fears and desires and picked up by the left and right to suit their cultural, political, and emotional needs.

For Enoch and Eisler, the discourse of the New Saskatchewan and the myth of Saskatchewan circulate most apparently and readily through successive governments. However, to paraphrase Devine, there is so much more to the New Saskatchewan. This mythological and discursive shift from old to new, stillness and stagnation to movement and growth, dead

and dying to vibrantly living is as much a material, political, and economic shift as it is an emotional and affective shift. The discourse of the New Saskatchewan and the myth of Saskatchewan circulate not simply as discourse, thoughts, ideas, and policies, but as *affects* and *emotions*.

Eisler recognizes the importance of emotion to the myth of Saskatchewan and tries to capture the ineffable aspects of Saskatchewan that are so hard to represent in language:

There can be no denying the strength of this attachment Saskatchewan people feel towards their province. It has an emotional, almost spiritual dimension to it. No other western province has the same sway over its people. [...]. It is this notion of Saskatchewan on an abstract, emotional level that is the most fascinating. Frankly, it is not a consistently conscious sort of thing. It manifests itself as more a kind of underlying awareness of the special bond between the people and the community we call Saskatchewan. It is expressed in various ways: pride in the province; a deep attachment to the land; a strong sense of community; and, a powerful belief in the potential for a better future. (Eisler 67-8)

What Eisler calls the “spiritual” or “not conscious,” I would instead call *affect*: the emotions that circulate between people, the attachments we have to others and to objects, and the unconscious and physiological intensities between bodies. The New Saskatchewan is more than simply a “way of making sense of a senseless world” (May qtd. in Eisler 70). The New Saskatchewan is embodied in the circulation of emotions and affects and their stickiness to bodies and signs, what Sara Ahmed calls “affective economies.” In an affective economy, emotions and signs are “sticky,” adhering to and sliding off each other as they circulate (Ahmed 46). Affects are not essential features of objects—that is, certain objects are not essentially optimistic or essentially hopeful—but instead emerge through their circulation between objects, here conceived of broadly as political ideologies, signs, bodies, governments, and photographs. As such, the stickiness and form of affects are contingent both on the objects encountered and the historical context (Ahmed 18n13). In the New Saskatchewan, optimism and hope circulate between objects, sticking to neoliberalism and sliding off social democracy. In Douglas’s Saskatchewan the reverse was true: optimism stuck to social democracy and slid off capitalism.

Affects can emerge from and stick to more than the objects of governance, policy, and economics discussed by Enoch and Eisler: the circulation of photography provides its own affective economy, one that speaks back to the New Saskatchewan and develops alternatives to its neoliberal feelings. As Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu note, photography has always had a close relationship to affect theory, providing a fruitful ground from which much of the literature on emotion and affect emerges (Brown and Phu 8). Inspired by Eve Sedgwick's turn to photography in her theorization of touching and feeling, I hope to enact what she calls a "reparative reading" of some recent photography produced within the New Saskatchewan. By reading reparatively I am reading locally, conducting close readings of the photographs in an aim to counter the "paranoid" deconstructive

Nostalgia in the New Saskatchewan
is not a longing for a better past,
but rather instead the longing for
the feeling of a better future.

gesture of exposure enacted by much cultural criticism where everything is connected to everything (Sedgwick 145). This does not mean that my readings will not connect the photographs to the larger project of neoliberalism in Saskatchewan. Rather, I want to position these photographs as objects that critique neoliberalism's affective economies by imagining another perspective on Saskatchewan, feeling their way toward another future outside of neoliberal capitalism (Sedgwick 146). If at times a photograph begins to slip into a paranoid position—that is, if it attempts to critique without posing alternative futures—I attempt to reposition the photograph reparatively, to look for other futures and other possibilities. I hope that in photography we can begin to feel another Saskatchewan.

For the remainder of this article, I want to focus on the work of two Saskatchewan photographers: Valerie Zink and Vera Saltzman. Their photographs develop an alternative affective economy in which the circulation of nostalgia as both a spatial and temporal affect unsticks optimism from neoliberalism, scrambles its neat teleologies, collapses regional distinctions, and accounts for the human and environmental cost of the New Saskatchewan's unbridled optimism. That is to say, if the New Saskatchewan depends not only on the discursive form of a better and more lively future but also on a future that necessarily exists in Saskatchewan, then nostalgia explodes the New Saskatchewan's narrative of exceptionalism. By playing with and placing nostalgia, Zink and Saltzman invert the New Saskatchewan's future-orientation, producing an alternative affective economy attentive to those left out of the New Saskatchewan.

Feeling Saskatchewan

In the government rhetoric analyzed by Enoch and Eisler, the primary affects that circulate are optimism and hope. These affects are produced by evoking the potential of a better future, a Saskatchewan that can "be so much more." Valerie Zink's photographs in *Oxen to Oil* point towards the human and environmental effects of such an affective economy and to an alternative affective economy all together.

Across all of Zink's photos is an attempt to grapple with nostalgia without becoming "a didactic lament for a pastoral plains" (Zink, *Oxen*). Engaging with feelings in Saskatchewan can quickly and very easily become a nostalgic longing for a pastoral, pre-industrial, agricultural past. This longing emerges not only on the anti-capitalist left, whose longing we can perhaps intuitively understand as a longing for the social democracy of Douglas's CCF, but also on the popular and populist right—consider the popularity of the television program *Corner Gas*, a show that traffics heavily in a nostalgia for rural small-town life and the way it has been commemorated and institutionalized by the Saskatchewan Party government ("Premier Brad Wall"). Yet this longing for the past is absent in the discourse of the New Saskatchewan, where the agrarian past is dead and gone while the future built on oil is just around the corner. This temporality is the key spatial, political, cultural, and affective conflict of the New Saskatchewan: the simultaneous rejection of and longing for an agrarian socialist and communal past within the industrial capitalist present and coming oil future.

This tension is clear in Zink's photograph "Cultivating" (fig. 1) and its visual juxtaposition of the oil and oxen of Zink's title. In the foreground are two nearly identical half-tonne trucks, while the background is dominated by a mural of horses plowing and cultivating a field of wheat. However, the photo evokes more than the literal

foregrounding of oil over oxen and the overtaking of the past by a present directed toward an oily future. The mural also traffics in a nostalgic mode in this small oil town as a commemoration of the pre-industrial past. The openness of the field contrasts the brick wall, which fills the frame and blocks out Saskatchewan's landscape. Within this juxtaposition, optimism and nostalgia circulate within the photograph between mural and truck. Optimism is not just the domain of oil futures but, as the mural reminds us, was also the key motivator of the first wave of immigrants and homesteaders who came to "the last, best West" on Laurier's promise of land and prosperity. Nostalgia operates here in service of the optimism that circulates within the affective economy of the New Saskatchewan. Nostalgia in the New Saskatchewan is not a longing for a better past, but rather instead the longing for the feeling of a better future. Nostalgia and optimism feed into each other. We long for optimism.

The circulation of the future-oriented optimism is gradually unstuck from the New Saskatchewan as the past-oriented nostalgia overtakes the affective economies of the photographs. “Adrian’s Trailer” (fig. 2) inverts “Cultivating,” as the horse appears as the only object in focus. “The Crush Kitchen” (fig. 3) could be mistaken as an archival photo of the quintessential mid-century prairie kitchen if not for the inclusion of contemporary fluorescent bulbs hanging above the kitchen sink. “Drilling Rig” (fig. 4) reimagines the horses plowing the surface of the fields in “Cultivating” as huge mechanical pumpjacks drilling deep below the surface. These photos do not merely depict the clean and easy movement from old Saskatchewan to New Saskatchewan, from agricultural dust bowl stagnation to industrial oil prosperity. In both the visual framing and the affective circulation, *Oxen to Oil* reminds us of the old cliché that as much as things may change, they still seem to stay the same.

Zink’s photographs remind us of the stagnation that underpins the New Saskatchewan and its oil economies. *Oxen to Oil* unsticks optimism from the New Saskatchewan and in its place re-sticks that which it tries to avoid: nostalgia. The black-and-white colour of *Oxen to Oil* casts an almost deathly pallor over the whole series, as if the lives depicted there have been drained of the optimistic promise of the New Saskatchewan. Here the New Saskatchewan begins to

Fig. 2. Zink, “Adrian’s Trailer”, *Oxen to Oil*

Fig. 4. Zink, “Drilling Rig”, *Oxen to Oil*

Fig. 3. Zink, “The Crush Kitchen”, *Oxen to Oil*

almost take on a *Pleasantville*-esque aesthetic: while the promise of colour in that film suggested a kind of modernisation of 1950s middle America, the draining of colour—from the typically vibrant skies, the lush green of the grass, and the vibrant colors of the kitchen magnets in Zink’s photographs—suggests almost a turn backward, that the promise of prosperity by neoliberal capitalism, instead of providing life, provides the slow death of prairie culture. Nostalgia drains the New Saskatchewan of life. *Oxen to Oil* thus does not wax nostalgic about the loss of an idealized past that never was, but instead mobilizes nostalgia, as Zink writes, to “urge [...] viewers to consider the complexities of rural communities’ entanglement with the oil industry, and the form and consequences of place-making in the oil economy” (Zink, *Oxen*). In the oil and affective economies of the New Saskatchewan, this optimistic and oily place-making is not without consequences: the price of oil is notoriously volatile and economies built on oil revenues boom and bust with frightening frequency. These busts do more than wreak havoc on the economy; they affect the very people that oily place-making is supposed to help.

Oily place-making and unfettered optimism has human costs. In “Hunger Strike,” (fig. 5) Zink is interested specifically in its effects on Indigenous populations and cultures in Saskatchewan. “Hunger Strike” documents the physical resistance of Charmaine Stick, a woman from Onion Lake Cree Nation, to the re-election of Chief Wallace Fox and the effects of oil on her community (CTV Saskatoon). According to one report, Stick believes not only that the election was fixed, but that under Chief Fox’s leadership, over \$500 million in oil revenues were mismanaged while the members of the band lived in poverty (Sperling). Stick’s hunger strike is an affective reminder of Canada’s policy of the forced starvation of Indigenous peoples during the settlement of the West, documented recently by James Daschuk in *Clearing the Plains*. Only now instead of being forced to starve because of agricultural settlement, Stick’s starvation occurs because of the effects of oil. While such a demonstration obviously inspires feelings of anger, sadness, and perhaps even pity, it reminds us of the complex and contested relationship that settlers and Indigenous populations have with the land. Onion Lake is only a 30-minute drive north of Lloydminster in Treaty 6 territory, where the agriculture-themed refrigerator magnets of “Elaine and Terry” (fig. 6) place the photograph. This is not a merely a story of European settlers coming to the West and colonizing Indigenous peoples, but moreover a commentary on the complex relationship between oil and agriculture and the high emotional and material stakes when oil is allowed to govern the cultural and affective economies of a place.

Fig. 5. Zink, “Hunger Strike”, *Oxen to Oil*

Bulges

Grandpa & Grandma's House

Old Gaelic Blessing
May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face.
May the rains fall soft upon your fields and, until we meet again
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

What is a Grandma?
A grandma is someone special
Who kisses tears away.
Who always has some special treat.
At the end of a hard day.
Who knows a thousand stories
And makes tricks and rhymes
Of which her listeners never tire
Although heard a hundred times.
Yes, a grandma is real special
And there are very, very few
As loving, kind and precious
Or as special, Grandma as You.

Responsible Position
AROUND HERE
I HAVE A VERY
RESPONSIBLE POSITION.
EVERY TIME SOMETHING
GOES WRONG,
I'M RESPONSIBLE.

EAT CHICKEN

provincial bird
the Mosquito
(under viruses)

Tell me what to do, but please don't tell me how to do it.

Merry Wishes
Love & Cheer

Kitchen Closed Due to Illness
I'M SICK OF COOKIN'

Happy Holidays
The Janki Family
Ryan, Carla, &

100% farm BOY

Proud AGvocate
Agriculture

100% farm GIRL

Merry Christmas
from the Thieses
WAI-ING SURE TAKES A LOT OF PATIENCE!

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

By suggesting that Saltzman's photographs connect Saskatchewan and Cape Breton, I am bringing her photographs into dialogue with Elspeth Probyn's work on space and nostalgia. Perhaps more than any other affect within the New Saskatchewan, nostalgia is particularly adept not only at circulating feelings across time but across space as well. As Probyn reminds us, nostalgia is not just simply a longing for any past, but, as its Greek etymology suggests, is also "a painful yearning to return home" (Hofer qtd. in Probyn 114). Probyn traces the genealogy of nostalgia as a term that "begins its conceptual career as a discrete objective state, is [then] pathologized, and then falls under the scrutiny of psychology and psychoanalysis to be interiorized as a form of neurosis" (115-6). No longer restricted to psychological discourses, nostalgia, she notes, is free to circulate in new cultural economies. In these cultural economies, nostalgia allows us to reconfigure the lines that move from memory to culture and past to present, spatializing a given economy's affects:

Nostalgia [reconfigured] not as a guarantee of memory but precisely as an errant logic that always goes astray. Nostalgia performed in that empty dimension of childhood freed of its moorings in time. Nostalgia as the impossibility of placing true origins; nostalgia for an irretrievable childhood. A perfidious use that theoretically and affectively constructs a space of experimentation and upsets the space and time of childhood, the naturalness of heterosexual and generational ordering. (103)

Probyn's reimagining of nostalgia as an affect that can unsettle space and time runs counter to the distrust Zink has for nostalgia in her own photographs. This articulation of nostalgia not as something to be avoided because of its apoliticization, but rather as a structure of feeling to be embraced that scrambles chronology and produces its object, gives us the possibility of opening up an object to imagine better presents and futures. When the present is no longer beholden to a simple chronology it can shift and change and be reimagined (117-8). The past and present do not occur chronologically but instead are placed spatially beside each other on the surface.

Perhaps unexpectedly then, Saltzman's photographs, in their attempt to spatialize her childhood home in Cape Breton within the Saskatchewan landscape, may point the way towards the open-ended politics that Zink searches for in her photography, a politics that scrambles the neat teleologies of the New Saskatchewan and its oily affective economies. In her search for what she calls her "primal landscape," an attempt to produce photographs of Saskatchewan that remind her of Cape Breton, Saltzman produces photographs that are remarkable in their ability to collapse spatialities and temporalities (Saltzman). In Photo 09 (fig. 7) she reimagines a grain elevator as a "prairie lighthouse" and in Photo 10 (fig. 8) she turns a lake into an ocean vista (Saltzman). Though the province does have a single lighthouse in the small town of Cochin, there are no oceans in

Fig. 8. Saltzman, "Photo 10", trans.plant

Fig. 7. Saltzman, "Photo 9", trans.plant

Saskatchewan. We are the only province with no natural borders, and with Alberta one of Canada's only land-locked provinces. As the horizon of the water in Photo 10 recedes, it meets up with clouds. Or are they the shadow of hills? The narrow depth of field makes it impossible to tell. The photo shifts. Saltzman's photo moves. At one moment we are in Saskatchewan, the hills on the other side of the water likely the hills of the Qu'Appelle Valley where Saltzman lives. The next, we are transplanted back to Cape Breton, to Saltzman's home, the clouds obscuring what should have been an infinite ocean horizon. Saltzman's

narrow depth of field upsets the clear lines of spatiality and temporality between Saskatchewan now and Cape Breton in Saltzman's past. We are not quite sure where or even when we are. Are we still in the New Saskatchewan, or are we somewhere else entirely?

The placelessness of water in Saltzman's photographs challenges the narrative of oil-based exceptionalism that runs through the New Saskatchewan. If oil is the signifier of neoliberal progress within the New Saskatchewan, then is it really so surprising that

its cultural and political other, the object that challenges the hegemony of oil, may indeed be something as simple and common as water? There is political possibility in taking seriously this kind of aphoristic claim. Like the interdigitating of Sedgwick's paranoid and reparative positions, oil and water intermingle in the cultural, political, and economic landscapes of the New Saskatchewan without ever truly emulsifying. In Saltzman's photographs, water collapses space and scrambles temporalities. In searching for places that

remind her of her childhood home, Saltzman is often drawn to water—to lakes, streams, sloughs, puddles, and snow. She is drawn to these locations because they remind her of home. Water has no teleology; its value is in its cycling and recycling whereas oil's value is in its ability to be burned. Oil ends. Water does not, unless oil makes it unusable. Water is a place of departure, a place that transplants Saltzman and her viewers elsewhere, to another place, another time. Water is nostalgic, a site of longing, the place of what Probyn might call Saltzman's

irretrievable childhood. If, as Probyn argues, nostalgia can reconfigure temporalities, then the nostalgic impulse toward water in Saltzman's photographs has the potential to scramble and move past the progress that underpins so much of the rhetoric of the New Saskatchewan.

left to right:

Fig. 9. Saltzman, "Photo 4", trans.plant

Fig. 10. Saltzman, "Photo 5", trans.plant

Fig. 11. Saltzman, "Photo 6", trans.plant

Fig. 12. Saltzman, "Photo 7", trans.plant

Fig. 13. Saltzman, "Photo 8", trans.plant

Water is also the site of environmental activism in Saskatchewan, Western Canada, and elsewhere in the world. The danger that oil poses to water mobilizes actions against off-shore drilling. The devastating effects to the environment catalyze public outrage when oil tankers spill their cargo into the ocean. The profoundly unwatery nature of the tailings ponds and tar sands developments that fill northern Alberta, captured by photographers such as Edward Burtynsky, mobilize us to act against the human damage they have done to Indigenous communities' water supplies. Water, a substance that is necessary to life, is actively corrupted by oil. That Saltzman returns to water in her attempts at place-making is no simple act; her work is a reminder of the necessity of water to the flourishing of communities and publics, a reminder that water sustained the crops of our agrarian socialist past, and a reminder that oil is not the only technology that connects people. In Photo 09, her prairie lighthouse looks over a railway track instead of over an ocean, a reminder that the small towns that pepper the Saskatchewan landscape are located not just at sites where oil flows, but also where rivers flow and where the railway bends. When considered alongside Zink's *Oxen to Oil*, Saltzman's photos remind us that we can make a home without oil. Beyond the politics of oil, of oily affective economies, of neoliberal capitalism and the New Saskatchewan, is water.

The Affective Politics of Water

Is Saskatchewan really moving toward the future or is it receding quietly into the past? Saltzman's photos make such a question difficult to answer. When Saltzman turns her gaze towards objects—cars, houses, buildings, play structures—they are worn and ragged (figs. 9-13). Paint chips off the siding. The car's tires are flat, its body rusted, abandoned somewhere in a field. Zink's series *Ghosts and Daily News* (fig. 14) suggests the same decay: the paint is wearing off the buildings; the only signs of human life in the photographs are found in the memories of Carl Olson, the 1947 world champion saddle bronc, and Mark Roy, the 1992 world champion steer wrestler. These signs assert, as Zink suggests, that things do happen in Saskatchewan, that these small towns that pepper the landscape contribute to the world, not just in the relatively recent past of these sports triumphs but in the ongoing present (Zink, *Ghosts*). These signs are metonymic of communities that continue to make homes in Saskatchewan, communities that are affected by the boom-and-bust cycles of oil economies and their environmental costs. Despite the rhetoric that things can be better in a New Saskatchewan that runs on oil, the increased speed of oil economies and the demands that we must always progress into a prosperous future built of oil often forget the human and environmental costs that such a future holds.

In the hegemonic affective economies of the New Saskatchewan the future under oil is cast as prosperous and optimistic while our agrarian socialist past is remembered, at best, through a naïve nostalgia that leads to cultural, economic, and political stagnation. Yet, as I have tried to show here through a discussion of the affective economies of Zink's and Saltzman's photographs, nostalgia need not necessary be naïve and regressive. Nostalgia, freed from its pathological and psychological origins, circulates and wanders within the New Saskatchewan, unsticking the optimism from oil, reminding us of its human and environmental costs, and mobilizing a watery affective politics embedded within environmental and social activism. The rain that falls down on Charmaine Stick in her hunger strike against the effects of oil on her community falls too on ponds and lakes that remind Saltzman of her ocean-side home and on the grain fields that were once the defining feature of Saskatchewan's culture and economy. In considering the affective politics of water, I advocate here not for a regressive return to the past, but rather for a future that remembers the aphoristic opposition water has to oil and the necessity of water to a flourishing physical, historical, and affective life.

Fig. 14. Zink, "World Champs", *Ghosts and Daily News*

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Image Notes

- Figure 1. Zink, Valerie. "Cultivating." *Oxen to Oil*.
- Figure 2. Zink. "Adrian's Trailer." *Oxen to Oil*.
- Figure 3. Zink. "Crush Kitchen." *Oxen to Oil*.
- Figure 4. Zink. "Drilling Rig." *Oxen to Oil*.
- Figure 5. Zink. "Hunger Strike." *Oxen to Oil*.
- Figure 6. Zink. "Elaine and Terry." *Oxen to Oil*.
- Figure 7. Saltzman, Vera. "Photo 9." *trans.plant*.
- Figure 8. Saltzman. "Photo 10." *trans.plant*.
- Figure 9. Saltzman. "Photo 04." *trans.plant*.
- Figure 10. Saltzman. "Photo 05." *trans.plant*.
- Figure 11. Saltzman. "Photo 06." *trans.plant*.
- Figure 12. Saltzman. "Photo 07." *trans.plant*.
- Figure 13. Saltzman. "Photo 08." *trans.plant*.
- Figure 14. Zink. "World Champs." *Ghosts and Daily News*.

Résumé

L'essai de Karen Engle « Fragments de désir » et le reportage photo de Trudi Lynn Smith forment une conversation ayant pour but d'explorer la connexion entre photographie, vérité, impossible et échec dans la photographie contemporaine du parc national Waterton Lakes. En réponse au défi posé par cette édition spéciale, Smith a sélectionné des images de son œuvre archivistique *Finding Aid* puis les a envoyées à Engle qui a écrit son essai à partir de son interaction avec ces documents d'archives. Suite à la réception de l'essai, Smith a créé le reportage photo à partir des archives en réponse au texte d'Engle.

Abstract

The text-essay by Karen Engle, "Fragments of Desire," and photo-essay by Trudi Lynn Smith, "Finding Aid: NxW," together form a conversation intended to explore connections between photography, truth, impossibility, and failure within photography in present-day Waterton Lakes National Park, Canada. In response to the provocation of this special issue, Smith selected pieces from her archival artwork *Finding Aid* and mailed it to Engle, who wrote the essay in response to her encounter with the archive. When Smith received the essay, she created a photo-essay from the archive in response to Engle's text.

As soon as the idea of a debt to the dead, to people of flesh and blood to whom something really happened in the past, stops giving documentary research its highest end, history loses its meaning. – Paul Ricoeur (qtd. in Merewether 68)

F. H. "Bert" Riggall (1884–1959) took photographs. He was also a "mountain guide, outfitter, hunter, trapper, rancher, naturalist...writer and gunsmith/loader in southern Alberta" (Fonds Whyte). Sometime in the early 1900s, Riggall photographed Waterton Lake from the Prince of Wales Hotel. He used a Kodak Panoram No. 1 to record this serene view of a lake bounded on either side by mountains, thus producing a now-classic picturesque vision of the Canadian landscape as uninhabited and majestic.³ Grazing horses on the far left—presumably members of Riggall's party—constitute the only sign of life here beyond the vegetal. The copy of Russell's image in Trudi Lynn Smith's archive is in the form of a postcard—that classic structure perfecting the miniaturization of experience.

Picture postcards were at the height of their popularity in the early-20th century. For an imperial power such as Britain (and Canada as inheritor of its visual traditions), the picture postcard functioned as a carrier of national mythology (see Engle; Wollaeger; Wong).

Smith found the picture postcard in the archives of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.⁴ She placed the card, all alone, in a file labeled "Waterton Lakes National Park (1895 – 2015) – early 20th century photographs – FH (Bert) Riggall – Kodak Panoram No 1." She must have seen so many images in these Whyte archives, but somehow all manner of things converged for her with "Bert"—the shape of the clouds that day, her fatigue, the sound of the wind through the trees...—and she chose his vision as her object.⁵ She becomes Riggall's ghost, haunting his process in a quest to reproduce the photograph he made over 100 years before.⁶

Fig. 1. *Panoram* by Frederick Herbert (Bert) Riggall, in collection/courtesy Trudi Lynn Smith

clouds

erasure

The file folder is labeled with these words—clouds erasure—on an index card paper-clipped to the folder. Inside this file, I find a piece of tracing paper made to look like a postcard, several photographs of varying sizes made from different cameras, and four pieces of photographs that have been cut and orphaned from their contexts—tiny fragments sliced from one environment and laid into this one.⁷ Among the ephemera, an index card is paper-clipped to a small, square image consisting almost entirely of an inky, interior darkness. Details of the room are vague at best, but in the centre of the photograph, seemingly very far away from the camera, a rectangular window beckons. Yet the window does not open onto any discernible vista—it is backlit by a light so opaque it may as well be black. The light refuses its essential function and shuts out all clues to the outside. Shooting from an impalpable interior, the photographer directs her focus outward to a window that appears too distant to reach, almost like a portal to another time that eternally recedes. Trapped inside the darkness of the present moment, she cannot get close enough to see beyond this stain of light.

Typed on the index card to the right of the image is the following text: “Waterton Lakes was first ‘set aside for future generations’ on May 30, 1895 when official recommendations were made to parliament.” The caption invokes time. Past and future intermingle in text generated by an actual typewriter, a technology now distant enough to appear archaic. Having all but vanished from contemporary practice, the typewriter is entirely foreign to my students. If a machine I used 30 years ago is too distant for memory, what is 1895 to the future-nows?

Fig. 2. Trudi Lynn Smith, interior

Fig. 3. Trudi Lynn Smith, files

Fig. 4. Trudi Lynn Smith, files

Fragility

I think of W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2001), in which photographs appear amidst narrative without any explicit connections made between them. They sit as silent interruptions in Austerlitz’s quest to retrace history. The images are suggestive, but in the end they give up nothing to the reader who is destined to remain just outside the narrator’s experience. What does the establishment of Waterton Lake National Park have to do with this inky room?

At first I think that light is the aim of this image, that the photographer evokes the struggle to escape the blackness of the interior through the “light-writing” of technological reproduction. Yet as I continue to look back and forth between window and caption, I begin to picture the photographer setting up camp for an extended stay inside this darkened room. She is not trying to escape into the light; she knows that light is blinding and deceptive. She has learned, as Walter Benjamin learned, that light is a trickster (Benjamin, “Little History”).⁸

She sent it by post. I came home one day to find a box hand-delivered, containing a selection of 10 files from her archive. On the front of each file she has attached, with a paperclip, an index card containing a few typed phrases guiding the viewer as to each file’s contents. These indexical phrases are more or less concrete. For example, “FH (Bert) Riggall – attempts to replicate view – the darkroom –” reproduces a conventional labeling system in which the index refers quite literally to the file’s contents, copies of her multiple attempts to reproduce Riggall’s photograph. Other titles follow a less linear logic. “Waterton – the Nondescript” provides no semantic clues to the images and ephemera contained within: photographs of photographs, a piece of tracing paper with what seems to be an impression of the mountains surrounding Waterton Lake, and all manner of index cards attached to small photographs marking different moments from her quest and her haunting of his trajectory. To say that she has sent me multiple narratives is insufficient, for she has done much more with this box. She has generated an infinite number of ways this story can be told, for each folder opens up to a different starting point and branches off into any number of histories, memories, and musings. I start to think of the box as a shell for a living nervous system, one that can generate new synaptic connections with each combination and recombination of its elements. As in Chris Ware’s *Building Stories*, the brilliant box of

Fig. 5. Trudi Lynn Smith, detail

multiple individual fragments of stories that combine and recombine to form related but unique narratives, one chooses a starting point in Smith’s archive without any context for the implications of that choice.⁹ The stories that different readers begin to assemble contain the same elements but differ in focus and perspective. These are not puzzle pieces that fit together, but rather fragments of an unfulfilled desire that, in its failure to be realized, indicates the pure contingency of a moment archived as history.

... each folder opens up to a different starting point and branches off into any number of histories, memories, and musings.

Fig. 6. Trudi Lynn Smith, postcard

Postcard

Inside the file

clouds

erasure

I find a piece of tracing paper she has turned into a postcard. She has inscribed with pencil all the usual elements: a dividing line between address and message spaces; the word POSTCARD (which reminds me of Magritte’s insistence that *ceci n’est pas un pipe*¹⁰); a small rectangle in the upper right-hand corner indicating the place for a stamp; and a tiny caption printed neatly along the side that refers to an absent image. The sender’s message reads: “note little town at right colour of mts in early morning is marvellous [sic] a small lake – Linnett – is near – [indiscernible] me – fed by springs many birds around it.”

Two observations about this gossamer object: the absence of the traditional recto/verso structure—she has superimposed the verso on to the recto—and the neatly printed caption, CANADIAN ROCKIES HOTEL CO., references a non-existent photograph, a sign with no referent. The superimposition of front and back shows the entanglement of public with private, national visions with personal messages, and mass production with singular experience (see Derrida, “The Post Card”; Engle 54). The absent image implies a process of abstraction: something material and tangible has been taken away. This blank square on the tracing paper is not merely empty space; it marks a removal so apparently complete as to leave nothing but a ghostly whiteness behind. The caption suggests that the missing image is most likely a reproduction of a devotedly touristic space, the Prince of Wales Hotel on Waterton Lake, since this hotel sits on the same hill as Riggall’s and Smith’s photographs. The hotel promises an experience of the classically picturesque:

A true historic icon, the Prince of Wales Hotel offers an experience like no other. Views from the hotel lobby and lawn are magnificent panoramas of Waterton Lake and the surrounding mountains. The Prince of Wales Hotel is the perfect place to escape the everyday and immerse yourself in the magic of the mountains and the history of Waterton Lakes National Park. (“Prince of Wales Hotel”)¹¹

Beyond the observation that these views seem to exist to be consumed, the everyday is also pictured as alien to this lovely scene. The deep irony in the hotel’s ad copy—that tourists can experience history here while leaving behind their ordinary everyday—is of course the fact that this place had been a location for an indigenous everyday for at least 10,000 years before contact (Reeves, “Native Peoples” 39). The hotel’s existence is premised upon the abstraction of all this ordinary business of survival.

Did Riggall travel with the Niitsitapi?¹² Did he ask them to step aside so they were outside of the frame, or did he just not see them as part of the world he was recording? The orphaned caption forces us to confront the absence of what we expect and know to be present. It asks us to imagine a different picture of the national landscape.¹³

Dis-orientation

I count at least 31 attempts at replication in this selection of files, though she notes on the back of one of these Polaroids that she had, by August 3rd, 2008, made 49 photographs. She keeps a record for most of these pictures, sometimes noting only the date and other times listing weather conditions, exposure number, siting clues, and the occasional feelings of frustration, despair, and tedium. On August 3rd, 2008, she writes on the back of exposure 10:

Here is the thing. There's no viewfinder on the camera, really, so I've been learning about it—moving, pointing, exposing the film, walking to the research house, developing the film, going for coffee while it dries, scanning it, overlaying it with a scan of the original, making calculations, going back, walking up the hill, shooting more photos. They all look like it, none look like it. Riggall apparently had a tripod threading for the camera on his saddle horn. Failure provides openings, all the otherwise begin to take shape.

She follows him—obsessively, compulsively. She uses parallax to stand in his shadow and see through his eyes, but what she learns from parallax is impossibility.¹⁴ The reasons for this are both concrete and abstract. First, the concrete: the town has grown in size; the snow in Riggall's picture has melted away; erosion has altered the shape of the hill; and trees have come and gone.¹⁵ As markers of climate change and human

Fig. 7. Trudi Lynn Smith, interior

intervention, the environmental shifts are significant clues for measuring all the material reasons she will never replicate Riggall's photograph. Philosophically, however, Slavoj Žižek reminds us that with parallax, “the observed difference is not simply ‘subjective,’ due to the fact that the same object which exists ‘out there’ is seen from two different stations, or points of view. It is rather that...subject and object are inherently

‘mediated,’ so that an ‘epistemological’ shift in the subject’s point of view always reflects an ‘ontological’ shift in the object itself” (17). She cannot see through his eyes. Riggall saw himself in every picture he made, just as she sees herself in each attempt at replication. In her eyes, he will always be spectral and her Waterton will vibrate with all of the histories that he could not picture.¹⁶

Notes

¹ I write this during a transitional moment in Canadian political history. Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party have just been elected to a majority government, ousting Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party of Canada from over 8 years of governing. While this election is seemingly unrelated to the essay I am writing here, the issues addressed here regarding the history of photography and the colonial imagination in Canada have become inextricably entwined with the former Harper government’s practices of information management. As Anne Kingston details in her Maclean’s article, “Vanishing Canada: Why We’re All Losers in Ottawa’s War on Data,” the Harper government’s commitment to destroying data and historical records has produced an utterly bizarre contemporary situation in which entire communities are no longer represented—a disaster for policy-making—and researchers will be unable to undertake comparative, longitudinal studies (September 18, 2015). Repeat photography, the method undertaken by Smith in this project, is only possible so long as archives are preserved. Despite the selective and exclusionary nature of any archive, they are a crucial resource through which writers and artists can re-imagine history. I write today with a tentative sense of hope, and while the future may prove me naïve, this hope has also inflected the way I understand Trudi Lynn Smith’s project of using photography to show us a different view of Waterton National Park.

² Throughout this essay, “her” and “she” refer to Trudi Smith, visual anthropologist and artist. See: <http://trudilynnsmith.com/> for more information on her work.

³ The convention of picturing Canada as so many “landscape paintings” comes from English imperial traditions and must be understood in the context of the emergence of national parks as supposed zones of protection (Smith, “The Anthropology” 125). As so many scholars have noted, the identity of national parks relies upon a colonial and racist notion of the land as pristine and uninhabited. The pictures generated by 19th- and early-20th-century explorers of the land were fundamental to solidifying this myth and its dissemination through generations of settler Canadians (Smith, “The Anthropology” 125).

⁴ Smith first saw the image at the Whyte Museum and again, later, at the Pincher Museum. A friend, however, sent the postcard copy that is in her archive. Thanks to Smith for this clarifying detail.

⁵ See Kathleen Stewart’s discussion of ordinary affects as “*Something* throws itself together in a moment as an event and a sensation; a something both animated and inhabitable.... [They are] moving things—things that are in motion and that are defined by their capacity to affect and to be affected—they have to be mapped through different, coexisting forms of composition, habituation, and event” (1, 4; original emphasis).

⁶ The reproduction includes the equipment she uses: “I arrange with his grandson to use the exact camera that Riggall shot this photograph with, the Kodak Panoram No. 1” (Smith, “Field Notes 2008”). The irony of being unable to reproduce a photograph she finds on a picture postcard (an item of mass reproduction) with technology designed for reproduction is noteworthy.

⁷ As Derrida writes, “This structural possibility of being severed from its referent or signified...seems to me to make of every mark...the nonpresent remaining of a differential mark cut off from its alleged ‘production of origins’” (“Signature Event Context” 318). These tiny fragments perform heavy labour for the archive. They are visual indicators of what I understand as a complex critique of origins. Using photography—that technology of reproduction that dissolves the notion of an original—Smith severs fragments from an unknown set of lost originals that began their life as copies (Benjamin, “The Work of Art”). Moreover, she does not provide us with pieces that can be put back together to make a clear picture. Instead, we are left with nothing but shards that look like nothing at all, the remains of one (or several) original copy (or copies). These four tiny pieces generate an aporia through which we must travel in order to assemble any picture of history.

⁸ Smith’s inky interior is akin to the only colour photograph Barthes uses in *Camera Lucida* (1980), Daniel Boudinet’s *Polaroid* (1979)—an image that asks us to meditate on darkened interiors and what the light may or may not reveal.

⁹ As Douglas Wolk describes in his review of *Building Stories*, “You will never be able to read ‘Building Stories’ on a digital tablet, by design. It is a physical object, printed on wood pulp, darn it. It’s a big, sturdy box, containing 14 different ‘easily misplaced elements’—a hard-bound volume or two, pamphlets and leaflets of various dimensions, a monstrosity huge tabloid à la century-old Sunday newspaper comics sections and a folded board of the sort that might once have come with a fancy game. In which order should one read them? Whatever, Ware shrugs, uncharacteristically relinquishing his customary absolute control. In the world of ‘Building Stories,’ linearity leads only to decay and death” (“Inside the Box”).

¹⁰ Magritte’s infamous semiotic joke shows us how reproductions never give access to the thing itself. Smith’s pseudo postcard, rendered on the most delicate of tracing paper, suggests the fragility of her quest to reproduce Riggall’s photograph and the ultimate impossibility of occupying his exact position. It is a wonderful miniaturization of the challenges involved in historiographic work.

¹¹ Since the initial writing of this essay, the website text has been modified.

¹² As Reeves details: “Intensive archaeological research in Waterton Lakes National Park has demonstrated a long and essentially continuous record of Native occupation extending back some 10,000 years” (“Ninaistákis” 291).

¹³ Smith reminds us that “Absences count as much as presences...Survey photography is not close-up views of geological detail, portraits of people you know, indigenous guides or existing pathways. While their photography denied these possibilities through omission, the surveyors encountered more than they recorded...These political implications of photographic visuality deny the very access points that made the views possible” (The Anthropology of Historical Photography” 126-27).

¹⁴ Smith explains: “Most repeat photographers take advantage of parallax, the apparent motion of an object against a background due to a change in observer position, in order to site their cameras” (“Repeat Photography” 197-98).

¹⁵ These are all penciled notations on top of an exposure from July 29th, 2008.

¹⁶ This relation of spectrality is analogous to Derrida’s description of the archive: “the structure of the archive is spectral...neither present nor absent ‘in the flesh’...a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never be met...” (“Archive Fever” 89). The methodology of this essay is intended to reflect both the fragmentary and spectral structure of Smith’s project.

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All images Trudi LynnSmith.

LEAVING TO RETURN: A PHOTOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY IN WESTERN CANADA

THOMAS GARDINER & KYLER ZELENY

Résumé

À travers un cadre collaboratif, cet article aborde le projet *Western Canada* (2005-2010) de Thomas Gardiner comme un catalyseur afin d'explorer le concept de communauté photographique dans l'Ouest canadien. Y est examiné l'impact de l'appropriation des paysages de l'Ouest du Canada par les productions filmiques hollywoodiennes en quête d'un cadre américain à rabais. À ce titre, l'article questionne également l'absence d'un canon photographique établi lié à l'Ouest canadien et la rareté des ouvertures institutionnelles apte à créer une tradition ou à tout le moins une communauté de praticiens dans cette aire géographique. Les travaux de Thomas Gardiner et de Kyler Zeleny sont ainsi examinés en lien avec leurs méthodes de « multi-localisation », méthodes qui incluent un entraînement formel et le développement d'aptitudes relationnelles, et qui prennent place surtout à l'extérieur des centres ruraux. Enfin, le concept de regard photographique renouvelé est exploré dans l'article à travers la lorgnette de l'attachement affectif au lieu et son influence sur les photographes ayant quitté le Canada dans le passé et y revenant pour mettre en scène des lieux qui leur furent familiers. À la place d'une conclusion traditionnelle, l'article offre une séquence d'images produites collectivement par Gardiner et Zeleny et qui servent en quelque sorte d'exercice dialogique afin d'attirer l'attention du lecteur sur le pouvoir d'évocation de la construction du lieu en photographie.

Abstract

Adopting a collaborative framework, this paper utilizes Thomas Gardiner's project *Western Canada* (2005-2010) as a catalyst for exploring the concept of a photographic community in the Canadian West. The article considers how Hollywood's production of feature films has appropriated landscapes in Western Canada to represent American spaces. Furthermore, the article discusses how the absence of an established photographic canon in the Canadian West and the lack of institutional opportunities to assist in fostering a photographic community create particular conditions for photographic practitioners in the region. Thomas Gardiner and Kyler Zeleny's work is discussed in relation to their multi-locational working methods. These methods include formal training and relationship building that primarily takes place outside of rural centres. The concept of a renewed photographic vision is discussed through the frame of place attachment and its relation to photographers who leave the Canadian West only to return to document once familiar spaces. In lieu of a textual conclusion, a collaboratively negotiated sequence of images between Gardiner and Zeleny serves as a dialogical exercise that is intended to draw the reader towards the imaginative work of place-making.

Welcome to the West

As son of the Prairies, photographer Thomas Gardiner was born and raised in Western Canada. After a few years abroad, Gardiner returned to the prairies with a fresh perspective and began documenting his origins—the landscape and its inhabitants that had once been so familiar. As a photographer and researcher I followed a similar developmental path: I was raised in rural Western Canada, spent time abroad, and ultimately felt the pull to return to document the region—the end result of which was a book titled *Out West* (2014). What Gardiner and I are both enacting through this process is the motif of the ru-

ralite leaving only to return. The following sections will explore why the motif of “returning home” and the concept of a renewed photographic vision is important to understanding documentary photographers operating in Western Canada. Adopting a collaborative framework, this paper reads Thomas Gardiner's project *Western Canada* (2005-2010) as a catalyst for exploring concepts and ideas related to photography and the photographic community in the Canadian West. The analysis culminates in a collaboratively negotiated sequence of images between Gardiner and myself, serving as a dialogical exercise designed to immerse the reader in the imaginative art of regional placemaking.

Appraising Gardiner's work beyond pure aestheticism can illuminate how the images empower a narrative of expansion and pastoralism that is particular to the Canadian West. Similar to other work that explores Canadian identity and environs, Gardiner's work raises questions about the relationship between the land and its inhabitants. In other words, Gardiner's lens operates as a conduit allowing us to question our conceptions of landscape, place, and identity in the region.

Western Canada raises a set of broad questions: What is Western Canada? Who is representing it? And echoing Northrop Frye's famous "where is here" inquiry, where is Western Canada? Geographically speaking, we know the lines that demarcate Western Canada. We can identify them on a map and for most of us those very lines also limit our probing. Yet the question remains, how is Western Canada signified spatially? That is, what spaces are used to represent it? What are the signs and symbols that trigger the awareness of being in its bounds? Examining Gardiner's provocative large-format images, one can begin to problematize what is often taken for granted in this region—its photographic identity. Primarily captured in the southern regions of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, Gardiner's images contribute to an underdeveloped documentary form—colour photography in Western Canada. In a similar manner, five years after Gardiner completed *Western Canada*, my project *Out West* (2014) aimed to create an expansive visual account of rural Western Canada, operating as a critical response to the lack of widely exulted image-makers photographing the region (Zeleny).

Acclaimed photographers have photographed in the region. For instance, American-born New Topographic photographer Stephen Shore photographed in Saskatchewan in the 1970s. However, his images do not include typical Canadian identifiers—Canadians flags, Royal Mounted Canadian Police uniforms, or granaries with "Wheat Pool" insignia—and are not clearly marked as Canadian, nor are they are quintessential representations of Canadian spaces. Through a textual silence, they easily become subsumed under the banner of American life and American space. Shore's Canadian photographs then become an unknown simulacrum for representations of American space. Much in the same way, many films and shows are produced in the landscape of the Canadian West but are used to represent American spaces. For instance, the following titles were filmed in Alberta with dialogue and set modifications (including American flags or signage changes) that obscure the locational nature of the film: *Days of Heaven* (1978), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), *The Assassination of Jesse James* by the Coward Robert Ford (2007), *Interstellar* (2014), *The Revenant* (2015), *Cut Bank* (2014), and *Fargo* (2014-2016). As a result of what communication theorist Will Straw calls a "shared visual space" (24) and some cinematic imagination, the average viewer registers these settings as American. This is an international affair and speaks to the complex transnational relationship we have with film and disjointed imagery, or what the diaspora theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff calls Intervisuality (Straw 28). This process is largely driven by the economics of film production (production costs), where it is often more cost effective to shoot films in Canada than it is

to produce them in American studios or environments. However, in the past (particularly in the 1920s and 1930s) the opposite was true. American writer James Oliver Curwood's film *God's Country and the Woman* (1937) represents a Canadian logging community while the film's principle photography was shot exclusively in Washington State (Francis 155). Similar films about Mounties and the Canadian frontier were filmed in Hollywood studios.

When I began photography for *Out West* in 2012, I had had no previous exposure to Gardiner's work; it was only in 2015 that I came across an online news article that discussed his photography. Realizing that we were photographing the same region contemporarily and given the difficulty in locating likeminded photographers, I was excited to discover another documentarian photographer operating in the area (although Gardiner self identifies as a fine-art photographer, I view his work as belonging to the documentary tradition). This personal reflection underlines the issue of support and promotion of photographic culture in the Canadian West, where aspiring documentarians have difficulty finding access to inspiration and mentorship.

In the spirit of this special issue of the *Imaginations Journal*—a largely collaborative effort between artists and academics—I will be responding to Gardiner's *Western Canada* series through text as well as a series of images. The included images from Gardiner's and my own work have been chosen and sequenced collaboratively and viewers are invited to read them

complementarily, together creating an imaginative space through a shared familiarity. Gardiner's images illuminate the anxieties and topics (issues of representation, changes to rural culture, and the Western inhabitant) I was working with when conducting my own visual work. Furthermore, our respective works do not exist in a creative vacuum. As a contemporary of mine, I use Gardiner's images—from his projects *Untitled USA* (2011-2012) and *Western Canada* (2005-2010)—as a visual starting point. Thus, some of the imagery for my most recent project *Crown Ditch & the Prairie Castle* (2015-ongoing) has been influenced by Gardiner's work. Our intention for a collaborative sequences is to acknowledge that each project represents its own reading of the Canadian West while also lending a complementary nature to the other when read together as a form of cooperation or synergy. The case for a visual synergy is favourable for a number of reasons. Both projects employ the journey as a performative method of research-creation (Adler). In the North American context, the car journey is the quintessential emblem of narrative-based road culture. In rural Canada, the autonomous movement afforded by the automobile is central to reconciling its sparse population with its topographical vastness.

Furthermore, both *Western Canada* and *Crown Ditch & the Prairie Castle* (*Crown Ditch* for short) focus on the Canadian West and, through the application of self-imposed boundaries, are geographically specific projects while also spatially unspecific, given the vastness of the boundaries. Robert Adam's geographically specific work uses much the same

process. Adam's space-specific approach is signified in his book titles—*The New West* (2008), *Photographs of the American West* (2010), and *Prairie* (2011). Contemporary documentary photography reflects a particular resurgence of regionalism. A number of recent projects establish visual expressions of regionalism: *Looking at Appalachia* (2014), "The United States" issue of *Mossless* (2013), "The American South" issue of *Ain't Bad Magazine* (2014), "Notes From the Foundry" in *Spaces Corners* (2013), as well as this current issue of *Imaginations Journal*.

Both Gardiner and I were raised in the Canadian West, spent time abroad learning photography, and then returned to reflect photographically on the region. Our regional consciousness, modified by a cosmopolitan reading of rural space, further binds our approaches. This peculiar familiarity has afforded us an intimate level of engagement coupled with a renewed vision of the space. This idea of understanding landscape echoes Jacques Derrida's concept of ontopology: "a way of thinking about claims to belonging that posit a connection between behaviour and landscape" (17). Gardiner's shooting style, through which familiarity of space presents itself with a renewed sense of vision, demonstrates this relation between learned behaviour and lived experience. Leaving one's home and returning to it anew facilitates this particular sense of vision.

"... a way of thinking about claims to belonging that posit a connection between behaviour and landscape"

Geography as Experience

Defined here, Western Canada is an amalgamation of the prairie regions (with varying prairie climates) of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Cordillera region of British Columbia—mountains and prairie grass juxtaposed. However mundane, landscapes are nonetheless monumental, exerting a place-specific vision upon its inhabitants. From a phenomenological perspective, one “unself-consciously and self-consciously accepts and recognizes the place as integral to his or her personal and communal identity and self-worth” (Seamon 17). That is to say, the landscape and place-attachment produces a particular way of seeing and understanding the land based on prolonged interaction. An Albertan ranch-hand once shared an anecdote with me that captures the contradictions in holding different perspectives of the land. A lumberjack and a farmer stand shoulder to shoulder facing East towards the Rocky Mountains. The lumberjack says, “Now isn’t this something to look at?” The farmer replies “But it’s blocking the view.” The Rocky Mountains act as a natural barrier between the boreal forest and the prairies, a formation to be breached by pickaxe and dynamite, and although passages between the two have been established, the differing geography poses more than a symbolic rift. Geography extends beyond a way of seeing and becomes a way of living. Distance has the ability to breed difference (cultural, economic, and social). As Author Brian Moore observes in *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, geography is the enemy and the battle over it has yet to be won. Modifying Moore’s claim that

geography is the enemy, we can interpret the enemy not simply as geography but as distance—nowhere else is this more observable than in studies of Canadian space (the Far North as well as the Canadian West). Viewed at a distance, the differences in geography and climate of the West become obscured and the specificities of the Canadian West become invisible—the mountains, plains and prairie fold into each other and come to represent a unified space. How Western Canada is defined is often debated. Gardiner classifies Western Canada as extending from the West Coast to the Manitoba-Ontario border with the upper boarder being the northern territories. I myself classify it similarly, however I exclude the Vancouver metropolitan area (as it belongs to the Vancouver school of photography). The North-to-South formations of the Prairies and Rockies arguably bind the Canadian West more to its southern neighbour than to Eastern Canada. The East to West split in the United States is often defined as the 100th Meridian. The 100th Meridian acts as a geographical (western boundary of moisture from the Gulf of Mexico) and a cultural border (settlement patterns change west of the demarcation) that both create a clear demarcation for the American West. Comparatively, Canada is without a geographically or culturally constituted east/west claim. As the French geographer Andre Siegfried postulated, America is Western Canada’s geographical centre (1937). As much as the Rocky Mountains operate as a barrier, they also operate as a spine, one that binds the two into a unified sense of Western Canada. Once we view this formation as a spine, opposed to

a barrier, the space becomes conflated. As an issue of visual representation, this topic requires more critical attention, beyond the scope of this article or Gardiner’s imagery. Geographers and Canadian Studies scholars have yet to address the shortage of viable examples of long-term space-orientated projects in Western Canada. Through this interrogation, the community may unearth knowledge of a new photographer, perhaps Canada’s version of Vivian Maier, who bears witness to the visual historicity of the West.

Visually underrepresented and compounded by other forms of marginalization, the rural parts of the Canadian West are placed in a position of the Other (Krause). This sense of othering stems from two sources and is therefore compounded—Eastern Canadian urban centers and American imperialism, which often diminish the existence of Canada’s West. Through these two factors we often forget that at least two Wests exist in North America. When represented photographically, communities in Western Canada are often fetishized for their pastoral, unproven, and open-range qualities. Lacking a strong photographic history, the Canadian west can be viewed as a space unsure as to how to construct its historical narrative. As Amelia Kalant argues, “...Canada continues to create its identity through the quandary of doubting its own existence” (86).

Creative Exodus

Commenting on the early state of the arts in Western Canada, a journalist from the *Globe and Mail* once remarked, “*no wonder young Canadian artists go abroad whenever they can earn passage money*” (Francis 27; original emphasis). Although this comment was made over a century ago with regards to the Ontario Government’s decision not to extend the commission of Canadian painter Edmund Morris, the phenomena still persists as documentary photographers frequently search elsewhere for community, training, and commissions. The Vancouver School of Photography (comprised of Fred Herzog, Jeff Wall, Greg Girard, among others) belongs to what Joel Garreau calls the region of “Ecotopia” (1981)—the coastal region of British Columbia, rather than Western Canada. Vancouverites do not experience the cold and extended winters that fall over Western Canada. They do not photograph the anxiety of seclusion and the serenity of a never-ending sky offered by the open prairies and plains. Because the West was so recently settled, it arguably lacks a strong photographic identity. Small Western towns illustrate this claim. Only recently have a majority of rural communities celebrated their centennials; Alberta and Saskatchewan became official provinces in 1905 and Manitoba extended to its current boundaries only in 1912. Historically speaking, from the time of colonial settlement, the West has been a region of raw-material resource extraction. The process continues today with most of the West’s industries focused around primary resources (energy, grain, and lumber-based industries) rather than

tertiary industries. The nuanced process of industry creation and factors of assembly are outside the scope of this paper, but it should be noted that this economic condition is bound by present demographics. A small population in a vast geographical space does not yield the same creative specialization as high-density areas (Knudsen, et al. 462). However, the concept of *creative density* is a modernist perspective and loses potency in post-industrialist economies through the proliferation of information communication technologies (ICTs) and an increase in global connectivity where the local meets the global (see Bathelt; Malmberg; Maskell). That is not to say that photographic-artists (documentarian and fine-art photographers rather than commercial photographers) did not historically operate in the Canadian West. The point worth stressing is that photographic-artists are forced to chose one of two mutually exclusive options: move elsewhere to seek training and access to community resources, or remain in the West and stagnate.

There are a number of striking examples of painters and photographers who chose to relocate in order to further their training, develop their skills, and find a community before returning to immortalize the area in pigment and silver gelatin. Emily Carr trained in San Francisco, London, and Paris (Francis 31) before returning home to British Columbia. Paul Kane, a self-taught painter who depicted scenes of Western Canada, was raised in Toronto and visited Europe in 1841 on the basis of a “painting study trip.” The painter Frederick Verner was born in Sheridan, Ontario and trained at Heatherly’s

Art School in London. Verner was renowned for painting images of Western Canada, including striking landscapes that depicted grazing bison. However, by some accounts, Verner had never seen a bison, further problematizing authentic representations of Western Canada. Photographer Geoffrey James, in a similar vein, operates as an outsider from Toronto. In 1988 James was invited by the Southern Alberta Art Gallery to create imagery of the community of Lethbridge as it underwent a period of accelerated expansion. James’ images, published in an artist monograph titled *Place: Lethbridge, City on the Prairie* (2003), provide a well-executed surface understanding of the community and its connection with its sub-plain landscape. To assert that James’ project provides a surface understanding is not to denigrate the work, but rather to describe his interpretation of that space from an outside perspective. James acknowledges this perspective when he states:

I worked over the period of a year, with four visits to the city, and had the luxury of time to reflect on what I was doing. In a sense, most of the photographic projects I embark upon are the same, in that, at their conclusion, I have accumulated almost enough knowledge to begin. (9)

James was not a native of Lethbridge, and no native of Lethbridge enjoyed the same prestige as the established Toronto artist. Similar to James' commission, the *Keepsafe* (1980) project, coordinated and conceptualized by Douglas Clark and Linda Wedman to document a variety of Albertan communities, also relied heavily on photographers either trained or originally from somewhere other than Alberta. The project was intended to "create statements about people and their environments by collecting photographs which represented a broad range of social and aesthetic sensibilities" (Clark and Wedman 11), and was accomplished by ten documentary photographers in conjunction with seven researchers. Each photographer was tasked with documenting a particular community or region. The purpose of the data collected by the researcher was to inform the photographers of the particularities of each community. Given the expansive scope of the project, photographers with varying training backgrounds and from a diverse set of locations were invited to participate. How photographers were chosen for the project is not discussed in the book; however, a review of the historical record of Albertan photographers active at this time indicates that the decision was partly based on a dearth of proficient documentary photographers residing in the province. Of the ten invited photographers, six were trained either fully or partially outside of the province (Gabor Szilasi, Ronnie Tessler, Mark Arneson, Douglas Curran, Hubert Hohn, and Lauren Dale), with the remaining four photographers either Alberta trained or self-taught.

Nowadays, given the limited availability of post-secondary photography courses in Alberta, aspiring photography students can either embark on a program of self-training, leave the province to train formally elsewhere, or some combination of the two. These examples highlight the precarious position not only of the photographic arts in Western Canada but also in the nation as a whole. This trend is still persistent, as the Fall 2016 edition of *Canadian Art* magazine featured 12 international artists with Canadian ties. In a section titled "Spotlight," the term "Satellites" is used to describe Canadian artists working abroad. Editor-in-Chief David Balzer describes the term as a way to "describe Canadian artists working abroad, and non-Canadian artists whose practices do or have orbited around this country" (par. 2). On a personal note, when I had reached the limit of self-taught photography, I left the west for London to pursue graduate work at Goldsmiths University in visual sociology. Gardiner also left for New York to train and to be part of a photography community:

Aside from really wanting to live in New York, I also felt the experience I had there with regards to the art and artists I was interested in, and everything that came with that... I suppose it is true that it was an education I could not get while I was going to school in Western Canada, but it was more that I was excited to go to a new place and live in another country and be in a city, which to me, while I was there, seemed like the center of the world. (Personal Correspondence, 4.1.2016)

A photographer gravitating towards larger centers is not strictly a Canadian phenomenon but represents a larger movement in art communities in North America. For instance, North Dakota raised photographer Sarah Christianson moved away to do "what a lot of young artists feel they must do, and I moved to New York City" (Personal Correspondence, 20.9.2016). Echoing Gardiner and Christianson's concerns, my interests aligned with developing my visual practice and relocating to a vibrant photographic culture milieu, something more easily obtained in the cultural powerhouses of World Cities than in the Canadian west (Soja & Kanai). The desire to be located at the epicenter of an emerging or established artistic community is particularly attractive. For instance, anecdotally, it is harder to cross paths with a Londoner, or a Berliner in Winnipeg, Manitoba, or Elbow, Saskatchewan, than in other international culture and art hubs, like New York, which is home to a vibrant international arts community.

On The Return

Writing in *Four Quartets*, T.S. Eliot remarked, "...the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time" (38). Eliot describes the psyche's ability to interpret events experienced afar and how these events are carried back home and leveraged to create new meaning in a once familiar space. The journey changes the individual and their understanding of their once familiar environments. These environments operate as sites of reflection, both for the self and the community. Often an underexplored topic, the narrative of return is a constant refrain in photography. For instance, photographer Raymond Jones, speaking about her project *Deep South Paradise*, stated, "It wasn't until I paid my dues in New York City and moved back to the South that I came to understand the rich, complicated cultural melting pot that is Southern culture. And I fell in love with all of it" (Jones). Lesser-known photographer Maryanne Gobble, commenting on her return to Brooking, Oregon, said she "moved away because it offered nothing. I continue to come back because it offers everything" (Gobble). Sarah Christianson, returning from New York, felt a renewed sense of place. She began to work on her project *Homeplace* (2013) and was able to tap into a perspective that leaving had afforded her:

I saw my home with a fresh perspective. It was suddenly clear to me that our family heritage was crumbling: my grandmother had sold her farmhouse and moved to town, my siblings had also moved away for jobs, and my parents were the only ones left out there. (Personal Correspondence, 20.9.2016)

A project that relies on a combination of archives and creative practice, Christianson's *Homeplace* is a deeply sentimental work produced from the perspective of a long-time insider. Gardiner's work echoes similar sentiments with his photographs expressing a level of intimacy typical of photographers with a long and sustained familiarity with a space. Expressed throughout Gardiner's work are questions of space, perceived normalcy, and built environment. Gardiner's *Western Canada* and my own *Out West* both evoke notions of the delicate relations between landscape, heritage, and built environment, balanced between a proud rural history and an uncertain future. Both works are as much about the past as they are about the future, and certainly they are as much about understanding these temporalities as they are about understanding our own place within them as photographers local to the region. As Gerald McMaster writes, "'returning home' means contributing and reconnecting to local culture. Living and working in a changing world while maintaining a sense of identity is to recognize the importance of preserving fundamental philosophies and principles" (29). To the local photographer, the perseveration of fundamental philosophies and ideas occurs through their visual documentation. Through documentation, an avenue for critique and reflection

emerges, for the self as well as the community. For the photographer, this process operates as exposing the residue of lived memories and, like silver halide, these events cling to the negative, creating attachment. This creates a form of "place attachment," a cognitive process in which emotional bonds are formed between the landscape and its inhabitants (see Manzo & Devine-Wright). This process establishes "powerful aspects of human life that inform our sense of identity, create meaning in our lives, facilitate community and influence action" (Manzo & Devine-Wright). The process of place attachment is frequently visualized through landscape or environmental portraiture or through photo-elicitation and resident-employed photography by researchers (see Stedman, et al.). Photography of landscapes operates on a number of levels—personal, local, regional, national, and global. The Western Canadian image of Banff, Alberta will hold a multiplicity of meanings for different groups (residents versus tourists, for example). Rachel Sailor, author of *Meaningful Places* (2014), explains that "the stories that follow do more than just shed light on how western settlers used the photographic image as a settlement tool; they also illustrate how local and regional understandings of places have a fundamental impact on those places now, and how, taken as a whole, they shape modern concepts of the West" (xix-xx). A common theme in *Meaningful Places* is the process of place attachment and place creation through photography. Imbedded in this process is the destruction of Aboriginal place attachments for the place creation and subsequent attachment of

Euro-American settlers. Photography helped write the land as empty and by extension created a culture of ownership, plenitude, and expanse that becomes increasingly interrogated in the later decades of the 20th century, as discussed briefly in Liz Wells’ *Land Matter* (2011) and Rod Giblett and Juha Tolonen’s *Photography and Landscape* (2012).

Following Manzo & Devine-Wright’s definition of place attachment, Svetlana Boym’s concept of restorative nostalgia specifies how bonds are established between an individual and a place. In *Future of Nostalgia*, Boym builds upon this attachment by discussing how the emphasis is placed on nostos (the return home) with a purpose of rebuilding the lost home—in other words, to “patch up the memory gaps.... [This] category of nostalgics do not think of themselves as nostalgic; they believe that their project is about truth” (154). Framing nostalgia as the pursuit of truth rebinds it to the local documentary photographer who pursues an authentic visual representation through their lens—an authenticity that can be arguably found in *Western Canada*, *Crown Ditch*, as well as *Out West* due to the photographer’s familiarity with the region. The photographer in search of truth often finds a tension between the past and the present. For the restorative nostalgic, “the past is not a duration but a perfect snapshot” (Boym 49). For the photographer, the past is something that must be interrogated through a series of snapshots. Here lies the importance of the returning photographer. Taking Gardiner’s images for example, we can detect an element of intimacy and knowing within them. It can be argued that Gardiner

is an informed insider, that this is his landscape and therefore he commands a particular expertise, and that a “visual weightiness” is implied in his imagery. “Visual weightiness” here means not visual composition but the elements within the frame that extend the meaning of the image. These are subtle but ultimately very important details for understanding rural space. In one of Gardiner’s portraits (image 4) we see a man posing outside a community hall. Community halls are ubiquitous in rural and urban spaces in Canada; however, in rural communities they act as particularly significant points of meeting—dating back to weddings and dances where the rural community would walk or drive (by horse and later by car) for kilometres to attend a community event. In another one of Gardiner’s images we see a house with a rusted carcass of an automobile (image 8), the strong composition strengthened by the knowledge that the rural is often home to car graveyards (Zeleny).

This level of expertise lay fallow in each inhabitant, and may become recruited by an individual’s return with the intent to interpret the space with a renewed vision. In the case of both *Western Canada* and *Out West* this operation is twofold. First, both Gardiner and I return from abroad to photograph and, through this return, we acknowledge our new appreciation of the space, setting out to capture it. Second, as our photographic journeys end, we return home and once again arrive renewed, our understanding of home transformed. Gardiner’s images express the ability to forage for a series of ideal images representing space. His ability to capture these moments is his cultural familiarity (internal element)

coupled with his technical proficiency (external element). Through this pairing Gardiner is able to photograph with familiarity and visual potency what a stranger would find difficult to observe. Gardiner expresses this relation when he writes:

A place that had been so familiar to me never appeared to be so sparse, quiet and vast and at the same time I thought it was extremely beautiful, which I had never acknowledged in that way before. Instead of the feeling that I always had growing up, wanting to leave, I returned actually valuing the experiences I had of where I grew up. (Personal Correspondence, 4.1.2016)

The above passage foregrounds Gardiner’s appreciation of his prairie upbringing. Through *nostos*, Gardiner finds pride in his roots and this process reaffirms his attachment to the Canadian West. My own project *Out West* was particularly propelled by a nostalgic drive to reconcile memory with the contemporary—a project that was as occupied with “excavating the past as it is with recoding the present” (Coverley 14). Gardiner’s work undertakes a similar conversation between the past and present and, because of his personal history in the area, he is able to bring both temporalities into visual dialogue. This is further coupled with his “renewed vision,” established by taking a leave and returning, along with the skills he gained elsewhere to realize this vision for others. For in the end, photography is not simply about rendering a space in a visual manner, but sharing a unique vision with a community.

Ending With Images

The following is a selection of images from Gardiner’s *Western Canada* and my ongoing project *Crown Ditch*. The images have been selected and sequenced collaboratively by Gardiner and myself and represent a mutual reading of the Canadian West. The images are curated in such a way that the narrative space operates between and across the images—with each photographer’s images speaking to others in the selection. The credits for each image are listed at the end of the paper. We urge readers to view the images as a narrative of Western Canada that operates as a dialogical exercise, intended to draw the reader into the imaginative work of placemaking.

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Image 4

Image 5

Image 6

Image 7

Image 8

Image 9

Image 10

Image 11

Image 12

Image 13

GARDINER & ZELENY

Image 14

Image 15

Image 16

Image 17

Image 18

Image 19

Image 20

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Image List

Image 1: Thomas Gardiner, *Western Canada*, Untitled, 2015

Image 2: Kyler Zeleny, *Crown Ditch & The Prairie Castle*, Untitled, 2015

Image 3: Thomas Gardiner, *Western Canada*, Untitled,

Image 4: Thomas Gardiner, *Western Canada*, Untitled,

Image 5: Kyler Zeleny, *Crown Ditch & The Prairie Castle*, Untitled, 2015

Image 6: Kyler Zeleny, *Crown Ditch & The Prairie Castle*, Untitled, 2015

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Image 8: Thomas Gardiner, *Western Canada*, Untitled,

Image 9: Thomas Gardiner, *Western Canada*, Untitled,

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Image 16: Thomas Gardiner, *Western Canada*, Untitled,

Image 17: Thomas Gardiner, *Western Canada*, Untitled,

Image 18: Thomas Gardiner, *Western Canada*, Untitled,

Image 19: Kyler Zeleny, *Crown Ditch & The Prairie Castle*, Untitled, 2015

Image 20: Kyler Zeleny, *Crown Ditch & The Prairie Castle*, Untitled, 2015

WOOD GRAIN ELEVATORS: ARCHITECTURE ENGRAINED ON THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

ALIXANDRA PIWOWAR

Résumé

Cet essai explore l'héritage concret et abstrait des ascenseurs à grain en bois au travers de la région des Prairies. Au fur et à mesure que ces ascenseurs devinrent obsolètes, un résultat des changements dans la technologie agricole, ils furent négligés, abandonnés et détruits. Bien que ces ascenseurs fussent autrefois des structures à but purement fonctionnel, leur stature monumentale par inadvertance a influencé les relations que les habitants des Prairies entretiennent avec ces derniers, encourageant une identité individuelle et communautaire. Le passé, le présent et le futur de ces ascenseurs ont été étudiés par le biais de recherches d'archives, de visites de sites et d'entretiens. La ville d'Indian Head, SK est une étude de cas. La micro-histoire d'Indian Head permet de comprendre la relation entre ces ascenseurs et les habitants de villes des Prairies. Le concept d'héritage vivant est utilisé pour examiner l'héritage culturel concret et abstrait qui est associé aux ascenseurs à grains dans un cadre temporel. L'héritage vivant est à la fois un acte et une théorie ; une manière de penser et de se comporter envers le passé, qui ouvre la porte à une discussion complexe sur l'espace, le temps et les gens en lien avec les ascenseurs à grain en bois dans la région des Prairies. Cet essai fournit des preuves sur l'importance de ces ascenseurs pour les habitants des Prairies et propose une solution architecturale pour une réutilisation adaptée.

Abstract

This essay examines the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the wooden grain elevators across the prairies. As wooden elevators become obsolete as a result of changing agricultural technology, they are facing neglect, abandonment, and demolition. While these elevators were once purely functional structures, their unintentional monumentality has contributed to their relationship with prairie people, fostering individual and communal identity. The wooden elevators are explored in the context of the past, present, and future using archival research, site visits, and interviews. The town of Indian Head, SK is a case study. The micro-history of Indian Head permits an understanding of the relationship between elevators and other prairie towns. The concept of living heritage is employed to investigate the tangible and intangible cultural heritage associated with grain elevators using a temporal framework. Living heritage is both an action and theory—a way of thinking and acting towards the past—which sets the stage for a multifaceted discourse concerning place, time, and people relating to the wooden grain elevators across the prairie provinces. This essay substantiates the importance of the wooden grain elevators to prairie people and prescribes an architectural response for adaptive reuse.

Wooden crib grain elevators across Western Canada define the prairie landscape as a representation of both place and time. The cultural heritage—tangible and intangible—of the elevators exposes their importance within the evolving prairie culture. While wooden elevators were also constructed throughout the mid-western United States, the scale and volume of the elevator network in Canada contributed immensely to the development of rural prairie communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The grain trade industry produced numerous grain ports on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Canada, fed by rail from elevators in the middle of the country (Clark 2)¹. For many prairie communities, the wooden elevators evolved from mere functional structures into monuments that fostered individual and collective identities. The intangible cultural heritage—events, actions, emotions—associated with the elevators expose the memories and nostalgia that have contributed to transforming these structures into icons and place markers.

This essay first introduces the wooden grain elevators in a historical context focusing on the larger networks associated with the elevators at a macro scale. Building on this examination of history, I introduce the concept of living heritage: the intangible role that the elevators play to prompt a microanalysis of various perspectives of people between past and present. The final section provides an architectural response that reimagines grain elevators as places for people, ultimately revitalizing rural prairie communities.

The essay specifically focuses on the province of Saskatchewan, given that more grain elevators were built there than in Alberta or Manitoba. The town of Indian Head and its Saskatchewan Wheat Pool elevator serve as a case study to define specific tangible and intangible traits and is the site for the proposed adaptive reuse project that imagines the grain elevator as new spaces for the community. The essay also includes photographs and drawings that gesture in style and image to the intricate relationships between place, time, and people.

ALIXANDRA PIWOWAR

Historic Framework—the Rise of the Wooden Grain Elevator

“There is little in Canadian Architecture that has not been imported from elsewhere. The grain elevator, however, is one of the few building types that was developed in North America and proliferated in both Canada and the United States” (Flaman 2).

The first wooden grain elevators in Canada began to appear across the prairie provinces in the late 1880s following the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The rail network had a significant impact on the construction of the grain elevators and the subsequent development of rural communities in Western Canada. Elevators were built along the railway at 8- to 10-mile intervals—the distance a farmer with a horse-pulled grain cart could travel from the family farm to an elevator and back in one day. The national grain trade operation depended on the wooden elevators as the initial point of grain handling and on the railway for national transportation. The prosperity of the agricultural economy in Western Canada was contingent on the ability to move grain by rail². The Canadian Pacific Railway also influenced the design and implementation of the “standard” grain elevator—its crib construction, size and height, and installed mechanical equipment (Flaman 3).

The simple monolithic form of the wooden elevator is derived strictly from its function. The elevator weighs, cleans, and stores grain until it is ready to be shipped by train or truck. The use of gravity to facilitate grain processing stipulated the sheer height and verticality of the elevators. The 2x6 and 2x8 wood timbers were stacked together with the ends overlapping to create the “cribbed” structure recognized for its strength and durability. Only slight variations of the wooden elevator design, mostly visible in the roof/cupola structure, have been made over the past 100 years. Many wooden elevators appear almost identical in form and massing, which has also contributed to the town planning of prairie communities: “A town’s Railway Avenue boasted an architectural landscape that included a row of elevators, railway stations, water towers... all were indicative of a way of life that revolved around prairie rail transportation. The first of these structures, the elevator; is the last to have survived” (Ross).

The Polaroid photographs in Part 1 illustrate a degree of honesty through their blemished reality. They portray the “way of the past” and, in a sense, are tributes to the “glory days” of the elevators. Like the grain elevators, the Polaroid photos themselves are vestiges of outdated technology.

Part 1: Polaroid Photographs by Kyler Zeleny

The extensive agricultural heritage across the Canadian prairie was built from an economy grounded in wheat as a staple crop (Government of Saskatchewan). Around 1940, the agriculture-based economy of Saskatchewan began to be supplanted by mining and forestry (Phillips). This economic shift led to the replacement of the wooden elevators with concrete inland terminals. However, “[r]egarded positively or negatively, the elevator still represented the essence of an agricultural existence. Thus, when western writers and artists became interested in local concerns, the elevator started its ascension into the realm of the symbolic” (Dommasch 11). As Saskatchewan conservation architect Bernard Flaman states, “from an architectural viewpoint, it is the grain elevator that best symbolized this important point in the social, economic and cultural development of the region, and possesses wider significance through its influence and iconic form” (3).

A key social development in the early years of Western Canada’s grain industry was the founding of the Territorial Grain Growers Association in Indian Head, Saskatchewan in 1901. The Association developed out of farmers’ anger over the unfair marketing and unequal valuation of their grain (Gray 71). Its founding marked the beginning of farmer-owned and operated elevators with standardized grain value and the establishment of grain cooperatives in the prairie provinces.³ “In no other country in the world have the grain growers done so much to solve their own problems as in our Canadian West” (Clark 22). The harsh prairie conditions produced cooperation, relentlessness, and pride in prairie pioneers who worked both with the land and with their neighbours. These cooperative traits continue to be a characteristic of everyday life in Saskatchewan today.

Concrete inland terminals and steel silos have gradually replaced the wooden elevators, given outdated mechanical functionality, reduction in rail transportation, and the changing agricultural economy (Banham 113). Additionally, the amplified capacities in the concrete terminals resulted in an increased service range for farmers in the area: “great grain ‘terminals’ made of concrete, without beauty, or mystery, signifying only industrialization of agriculture, began to appear by the side of major highways. The old ‘ten miles to the nearest elevator’ was becoming a thing of the past” (Butala xv).

The number of wooden elevators peaked in 1938, with over 6,000 elevators with a combined capacity of 190 million bushels across the three prairie provinces (Vervoort 182; Butala xiii).⁴ Wooden grain elevators continued to be constructed until 1980. However, fewer than 450 wooden elevators remain standing in Saskatchewan and no more than 100 are in active use.

At a large scale, the agricultural industry, national rail network, and cooperative grain trade businesses that collectively promote the development of wooden grain elevators have produced a tangible connection between prairie people and the land. This tangible cultural heritage is instrumental in shaping the intangible cultural heritage associated with the elevators. Within a more intimate context, the large trends presented here are developed through personal perspectives and related values in the following section on living heritage.

Living Heritage—Exploring the Intangible

“The elevator was more than just a tall building, important for the marketing of grain. There was an atmosphere, an intangible feeling attached to it, a feeling that is was a meaningful structure in which meaningful work was being done. Even when not selling grain, farmers tended to loiter at the elevator, sensing from its operation their role in the overall scheme of prairie life. It appealed on many levels and to almost all the senses: sight, sound, touch, and smell” (Dommasch 10).

Living heritage reveals tangible and intangible cultural heritage. While the term “living heritage” has been used by various entities with differing meanings and have interdisciplinary uses,⁵ this essay focuses on the concept as explored by Sandra Massey in *Living Heritage and Quality of Life*. The framework of living heritage exposes the transition of the grain elevator from its primarily functional role decades ago to its current iconic, monumental condition.

As a contemporary framework for exploring tangible and intangible cultural heritage, living heritage bridges the gap between the cultural traditions of the past, cultural identity of the present, and cultural aspirations of the future. Living heritage is unique in that it ultimately focuses on the *creation* instead of *protection* of heritage value over time. Living heritage is both a methodology for a vigilant evaluation of the past as well as a catalyst for imagining historic structures for the future.

The number of wooden elevators peaked in 1938, with over 6,000 elevators with a combined capacity of 190 million bushels across the three prairie provinces.

Figure 2: Hybrid Drawings by Alixandra Piwowar

Massey's work on living heritage identifies five key themes: change, memory, narrative, identity, and value. Exploring each theme furthers our understanding of the importance of grain elevators. Value in heritage is a complex question, primarily because value is gained through personal or collective perspectives.⁶ As such, heritage values have overlapping and contradictory values for any given site. Table 1.0 below maps instrumental values and personal and collective sentiments from various perspectives pertaining to the wooden crib grain elevators. In heritage, instrumental values are the platform on which the significance of an act or object (tangible or intangible) is built and sustained. If something does not have instrumental value, it is not heritage. The instrumental values of grain elevators generate purpose and significance

for the individual, the community, the province, and Canada. The individual and collective sentiments that stem from instrumental value contribute to an understanding that the importance of the grain elevators is fundamentally rooted in one's perspectives and relationships with the elevators on an emotional level. These six perspectives were derived from interviews, archival data, and published material. Further, the identification of the instrumental values and personal and collective sentiments were identified as topics of common recognition. The table compares and contrasts people, values, and sentiments as they relate to grain elevators in general terms; it is by no means intended to be exhaustive.

The hybrid drawings in Part 2 use hand sketches overlaid on black and white landscape photographs begin to interpret the transformative relationship between the elevators and the prairie landscape. They present a condition of "delicateness" alluding to the way the elevators could blow away in the wind at any moment.

Perspective	Instrumental Values		Personal & Collective Sentiments	
	Past	Present	Past	Present
Farmer ⁷	Economic Purpose Gathering Place Place Marker	Monumentality	Sense of Financial Security Sense of Community Sense of Identity and Belonging	Sense of Loss/ Abandonment Sense of Sadness of a Bygone Era
Elevator Operator ⁸	Economic Purpose Place of Employment Hazardous Environment Industrialization Gathering Place	Place Marker Useless Structure	Sense of Financial Security Sense of Familiarity and Identity Sense of Fear Sense of Accomplishment/Progress Sense of Community	Sense of Familiarity and Pride Sense of Annoyance at Dated Technology
Townsperson ⁹	Economic Purpose Place Marker Gathering Place Economic Purpose	Monumentality Commonplace Gathering Place	Sense of Prosperity Sense of Identity and Belonging Sense of Community Sense of Hope for Financial Security	Sense of Belonging and Pride Indifference Sense of Loss/Abandonment
Aboriginal Peoples ^{10 11}	Symbol of Colonialism	Monumentality	Sense of Oppression and Inequity	Sense of Oppression and Inequity
Passerby/Tourist ¹²	 Hazardous Environment	Iconic Form Place Marker Hazardous Environment	 Sense of Fear	Sense of Excitement Sense of Location and Dis-tance Sense of Fear
Friends/Family of Individuals who Died in an Elevator ¹³	Grave Site	Grave Site	Sense of Grief	Sense of Grief

Table 1.0: Mapping Instrumental Values and Personal and Collective Sentiments (Piwowar)

Exposing varying perspectives and experiences illustrates the change of intangible cultural heritage of the elevators over time, a theme in Massey’s concept of living heritage. Change affects heritage through its threat of loss (Massey 6); however, living heritage recognizes change as inevitable and emphasizes how the past is used in a contemporary context (Massey 6). Change permits the realization of passing time and creates an awareness of temporality in tangible and intangible aspects of life. While the change in technology and economy leads to the disappearance of the grain elevator, its cultural value compels a response that enables the elevators to transform with time and persevere—to change and adapt.

In the context of living heritage, the act of remembering “construct[s] identity for ourselves and our communities” while “re-remembering construct[s] new narratives that underscore mutual obligations” (Massey 6).¹⁴ Memory is activated when elevators are observed in the landscape, photographs, paintings, and models, allowing history to become part of the present. Each observer will incur memories based on their individual relationship with the elevators. For example, an elevator operator may remember details of mechanical equipment or near-death experiences, while a villager may remember the sound and flurry of activity resonating from the elevator. A farmer may remember positive and negative grain-trading experiences, a First Nations

Farmer may remember having to wait at the back of the line until the other farmers have had their grain processed, while a tourist may remember the replicated shape and prominent vertical position of the elevator within the prairie landscape. Memories of wooden elevators are imperative in defining their value.

Living heritage uses narratives shared between people to animate the present with the past, largely through remembering. The diversity in perspective generates countless narratives. For many Canadians, the iconic form of the wooden grain elevator represents Canadian agricultural heritage even without personal experiences; the wooden structures have been elevated to the realm of public awareness.¹⁵

Sharing stories leads to increased awareness of one’s identity and belonging. Living heritage encourages value in the past that cultivates identity. While the wooden elevators were originally private structures owned by grain companies, their architecture in the public realm embraces the collective identity of each prairie town, presenting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Grain elevators are also indicative of the towns’ degree of economic prosperity. Prairie people identify with the grain elevators: they “built them, ran them, relied on them, lived in them, and died in them” (McLachlan 6). They are examples of cultural infrastructure that anchor local identities.

Grain to People—Re-imagining Grain Elevators

“Elevators mark ‘our place’ in the vastness of the prairie landscape. Many of these elevators have already been demolished. We need an opportunity to mourn the passing of the way of life, they once represented... So, too, must we redefine our ‘sense of place’ and our self-definition in response to our changing environment” (Cole).

While architecture is the physical manifestation of ideas, built form also presents a story—remembered or imagined—to its users through spatial experience. In this way, the architecture of the grain elevator tells many stories. The character-defining elements trigger these stories.¹⁶ Living heritage requires community involvement and community-generated ideas to negotiate the past in the present and future (Massey 7), as took place in Indian Head, Saskatchewan. New programs for the adaptive reuse of the grain elevator were generated for the historic Saskatchewan Wheat Pool grain elevator in Indian Head. Ultimately, this project proves that any standard grain elevator, with the support and involvement of the community, has the potential to be re-imagined as a space for people.

The computer-generated renderings in Part 3 pointedly introduce imagined spaces. Perhaps rather aggressively, this final series of images juxtaposes the two previous sets in both style and idea. The architecture is rooted in the historic tangible fabric of the elevator, while the portrayal of the human interaction subconsciously introduces a continuum of the elevator’s narrative (the intangible).

Figure 3: “Imagined Spaces” Renderings by Alixandra Piwowar

Within the expansive setting of the open prairies, the location of the grain elevator adjacent to the railway and on the edge of town is an additional character-defining element. Elevators are rarely farther than seven meters away from a rail line, most often on a siding to permit through traffic on the main line while rail cars are being loaded with grain. The wooden elevators typically sit between the railway and Railway Avenue (a common street name in rural prairie towns). As the tallest structure, the physical relationship with the town gives a sense of permanence. While only southern portions of the prairie provinces are flat, the image of the wooden crib grain elevator connecting land and sky is dominant in prairie art and media.

The primary character-defining element of the exterior fabric of the grain elevator is its simple geometric form and featureless façades. The modular shape of the elevator is derived from form adhering to function. The typical sloped-shoulder roof (a design based on the spatial organization of the grain cribs within) creates two different elevations; however, the shoulders of the elevator always face incoming and outgoing trains. The name of the town was also printed on the elevations so train drivers could identify their location. The name of the grain company was painted on the opposite two elevations for farmers to reference when trading grain. As the form is the most identifiable element of the grain elevator, it is critical that it remains predominantly intact during the adaptation.

The interior fabric, the composition of the grain bins through cribbed construction, and the grain elevating mechanical system gives form to the elevator. The unique texture of the staked wood members and overlapping corners of the distinctive cribbed construction reveals the structural integrity of the building. The grain bins—vertical voids reaching six to eight stories into the air—contrast with the vast horizontal landscape. Removing pieces of the cribbed structure to create long horizontal slits creates new openings for windows; they mimic the horizontal wood siding on the exterior as well as emphasize the perspective of the surrounding prairie and the horizon as one ascends to the top.

For the purpose of this research, the citizens from the community of Indian Head were asked to re-imagine their elevator. A series of conversations with residents identified a variety of programs: hotel suites, a tourist information centre, community space(s), and a coffee shop. The proposal places two hotel suites in the shoulder of the elevator with a coffee shop occupying the cupola at the top. The adaptive reuse also proposes interstitial spaces within the grain cribs—spaces rarely experienced by people. Community gardens and a community kitchen are also designed on the site, creating a social and physical connection between the town and the site. Placing the tourist information centre adjacent to the community garden and community kitchen facilitates the opportunity for

residents to interact with visitors. Through memories and narratives, residents inform the experience of the visitor, thereby reinforcing identity and belonging.

Re-imagining the grain elevator as a place for people ensures that the character-defining elements are sustained. The elevator’s dramatic wooden atmosphere creates an innovative spatial experience through the addition of floor plates and circulation in the grain bins. The re-imagined elevator will be an important public space for the townspeople, establishing a reminder of the past. The elevator’s living heritage will continue to connect prairie people to the land. Most importantly, the adapted architecture will generate social interaction and strengthen community.

Monumental Canadian Architecture

Referred to as the most Canadian of architectural forms, the grain elevator is an iconic monument on the prairies. Its prominent verticality stands in stark contrast to the vast horizontal landscape, inspiring references such as “prairie sentinels,” “prairie skyscrapers,” and “lighthouses of the prairies.” Famous modern architect Le Corbusier referred to the elevators as “the cathedrals of the plains,” while others simply call them “vators.”

With time, the shift from functionality to monumentality has contributed to the consciousness of the wooden elevator at a national and international level. The tangible and intangible heritage of the wooden crib grain elevator to Western Canada points to its cultural importance. On a large scale, grain elevators are a product of the cooperative agricultural economy and national rail network that shaped the province of Saskatchewan and Canada as a nation. On a small scale, living heritage illustrates the evolution of the elevators from functionality to monumentality through change, memory, narrative, identity, and value—all deeply rooted in prairie communities and their people.

Re-imagining grain elevators as places for people does far more than save the elevator from demolition; the re-imagined architecture generates old as well as new interpersonal relationships, economic opportunities, and a sense of community. Engaging communities in identifying their unique perspectives on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the grain elevators allows for the realization and development of pride, identity, and place-making in translating and articulating their stories from the past to the future. Re-imagining wooden grain elevators can ultimately revitalize prairie places.

Notes

- ¹ “The grain elevator is one of the by-products of the expansion of the wheat market from a local to a world basis” (Clark 2).
- ² Wheat congestion occurred when wooden elevators storage bins were full and grain cars were not available to ship grain (Indian Head, “Town History”).
- ³ Alberta Wheat Pool, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and Manitoba Wheat Pool.
- ⁴ Refer to “*Towers of Silence*”: *The Rise and Fall of the Grain Elevator as a Canadian Symbol* for further information on the count of wooden elevators at relative dates (Vervoort).
- ⁵ The concept of living heritage was originally introduced at UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage held in 2003 in Paris. Living heritage has also been active in Newfoundland and Labrador in research and teachings at Memorial University and in initiatives by the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador).
- ⁶ For more on values-based heritage, see Randall Mason’s *Assessing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodological Issues and Choices*, published by the Getty Conservation Institute in 2002.
- ⁷ Formulated based on archival research using *Indian Head and District History Book* and grain elevator publications at the Saskatchewan Legislative Library.
- ⁸ Formulated based on interviews with Robert Sepke and Brad Kinchen.

- ⁹ Formulated based on interviews with Tara-Leigh Heslip, Linda Kort, Brad Kinchen, and Bruce Neill, as well as numerous publications.
- ¹⁰ Formulated based on personal correspondences with Dr. Shauneen Pete and Tara-Leigh Heslip of Indian Head.
- ¹¹ “The elevator was the physical reminder that meritocracy was limited to only certain groups (with access to power) and that the structural barriers to fuller participation in the economy were very real for First Nations Peoples” (Pete).
- ¹² Formulated based on interviews with Kyle Franz and Bruce Neill.
- ¹³ Formulated based on interviews with Brad Kinchen and consulting *Gone but Not Forgotten* by Elizabeth McLachlan.
- ¹⁴ See also *A Place to Remember: Using Heritage to Build Community* by Robert Archibald for a discussion on the consciousness of the past through remembering and re-remembering.
- ¹⁵ Patricia Vervoort distinguishes the “Canadian grain elevator’ as part of Canadian History because of its extensive use” (Vervoort 188).
- ¹⁶ *The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* provides a complete definition and explanation of character-defining elements.

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THE ROAD TO HERE: PLACING COMMUNITY WITHIN WESTERN CANADA'S RESOURCE LANDSCAPE

EAMON MACMAHON, MICHAEL GRANZOW & KEVIN JONES

Résumé

Le paysage de l'ouest canadien a été grandement façonné au niveau économique, culturel et social par son rapport à l'extraction des ressources. Dans ce court essai, l'œuvre photographique du photographe canadien Eamon Mac Mahon est employée afin d'explorer la façon dont les changements dans le bassin de ressources de l'ouest ont reconfiguré les relations entre les communautés et leur environnement. Les images de Mac Mahon soulignent la tension entre l'économie changeante et le concept de communauté en comparant les pensées nostalgiques et idéalisées des communautés éloignées, expliquées par l'extraction de ressources, avec les réseaux d'infrastructures mondiaux. Lu comme palimpsestes de lieux, nous estimons que l'ensemble des photographies de Mac Mahon suggère une ambivalence importante, perturbant les interprétations traditionnelles d'expansion et de récession. Dans un contexte de bouleversement et de changement continu, nous interprétons les photographies de Mac Mahon comme témoin du changement dans les relations entre les communautés de l'ouest canadien et leur environnement.

Abstract

The western-Canadian landscape has been deeply shaped by its intimate economic, cultural, and social ties to resource extraction. In this short essay we use the photography of Canadian photographer Eamon Mac Mahon to explore how the West's shifting resource landscape has reconfigured relationships between community and place. Contrasting nostalgic and idealized visions of remote place-based resource communities with scenes of globally linked infrastructure networks, Mac Mahon's photographs highlight tensions between shifting economies and ideas of community. Read as palimpsests of place, we argue that, when considered together, Mac Mahon's photographs offer an important ambivalence, unsettling straightforward readings of boom and bust. In a context of continual upheaval and change, we read Mac Mahon's photographs as signposts on the road to emergent constellations of place and community in the Canadian West.

opposite: Cutline, Northern Alberta

In this short essay we explore understandings of place, community, and landscape within the context of western Canada's resource economy. We are particularly interested in resource towns, settlements commonly characterized as boom-and-bust towns within narratives of development and nation-building. The photography of Eamon Mac Mahon provides a lens into these contexts. We address four of Mac Mahon's photographs, chosen from a much wider portfolio,¹ that demarcate tensions in development narratives of boom-and-bust towns and speak to uncertainties within our own evolving perspectives.² As researchers we have approached this project as a unique opportunity to read Mac Mahon's photos as a series of prompts that help us go beyond expected readings of boom and bust and open up interesting discussions around place and community within the western Canadian resource landscape.

Despite trends of deindustrialization, globalization, and economic diversification, the Canadian economy remains significantly oriented towards natural-resource extraction (Natural Resources Canada). This is especially the case in the West, where the Alberta tar sands are a centerpiece of regional and national economic growth. Since OPEC's 2014 decision not to restrict oil production and with the recent economic downturn, the price of oil has fallen drastically to less than 30 dollars per barrel, taking thousands of jobs and the Canadian dollar down with it. The effects of the downturn are particularly strong in Fort McMurray, the urban service area of the tar sands. As one local business owner described in a recent newspaper article, "it's like the place has gone dead" (*The Globe and Mail*). This is only the most recent moment in a long drama of boom and bust that extends beyond oil to logging, mining, and fishing, and that has defined much of Canada's history, culture, and geography.

Imagining Resource Communities

The resource town holds a strong place in the Canadian social imaginary. Resource communities are often seen as socially cohesive, supported by honest work, and virtuous in their proximity to nature. They are perceived as *resourceful*, not simply resource dependent. As Elizabeth Furniss argues in her study of small-town British Columbia, the cultural narratives of these places evoke rhetorics that place rural communities in opposition to urban experiences and promote frontier histories and identities rooted in the modernist experience of colonial expansion and the westward march of progress in North America (83-85).

Intimately connected to the myth of the resource town, the haunting image of the ghost town is equally a part of the western Canadian landscape. The resource town appears immutable when viewed from the perspective of Canadian nationalism, but is equally fragile in its capricious relationship with resource economies governed by markets, demands, and values that exist across networks sprawling far from the frontier. Busts are routine and carry with them a sense of loss that reflects something more than the experience of individual communities. They attract wider social curiosity and the stories and images that document their decline are equally essential to frontier narratives. As a dominant spatialisation of bust, the ghost town performs complex and selected narratives of Canadian experience and presents a particular placing of community within the natural world.

Place, Community, and the Ghost Town

Over the last century, Canada's resource economies have seen a pattern of shifts in space and time that reconfigure how we understand place and community. Relations of place have become stretched and mobile as technological and organizational innovations overcome spatial and temporal barriers—a process originally theorized by human geographers as time-space compression (Harvey 260). These ideas emerged in the latter part of the last century as a way to attend to the spatial, temporal, and phenomenological effects brought about by ever-shifting forms of capital accumulation. Associated with the advancement and speeding up of transportation and communication technologies and the resulting shrinking of global geographies, time-space compression has potentially major implications for how we conceive of the relationship between place and community. In her book *Space, Place, and Gender*, Doreen Massey asks, “[h]ow, in the face of all this movement and intermixing, can we retain any sense of a local place and its particularity? An (idealized) notion of an era when places were (supposedly) inhabited by coherent and homogeneous communities is set against the current fragmentation and disruption” (146). Massey's use of parentheses signifies a skepticism towards the supposedly natural relationship between community and place. The decline of place-based resource communities in Canada offers a striking

example of the changing relations between community and place. Once central to the national economy, these places are increasingly rendered impermanent and fragmented as corporations are better able to move around the globe in search of more profitable time-space configurations. It is not that Canada's resource economy is disappearing; rather, we see a radical transformation of a particular spatialisation of extraction that for a moment supported the old resource-town model. Mac Mahon's photographs provide a narrative for this transformation through scenes of ruination and decline, evoking a sense of loss and nostalgia for places left behind. In the following analysis we use a selection of Mac Mahon's photographs to both illustrate and conceptualize shifting place-community relationships in the Canadian West. We treat these photos, not as authoritative or realist depictions, but as important constructions—poetic fragments or palimpsests that shed light on the nature of place in western Canada's resource landscape. Recent developments of the concept of the palimpsest in literary and cultural studies (see Dillon) are particularly helpful in attending to the competing discourses and imagery in Mac Mahon's photographs. Considered as palimpsests of place, the photographs provide an opportunity to consider tensions between shifting economies and communities in the Canadian West.

The depictions of Uranium City and Gunnar Mine in particular illustrate an example of a once-booming community left behind by the uneven flows of capital. In “Yellow Truck” (Fig. 1) we see the ruins of the Gunnar Mine's sudden and dramatic collapse. An old pickup truck propped up on concrete supports stands over scattered debris. The walls of the building that once enclosed it have crumbled, leaving only a flat concrete foundation. Up on blocks with the hood up, the weatherworn truck appears frozen in time, as if its mechanic left mid-repair. The faded yellow body is camouflaged by encroaching autumn overgrowth, emphasizing what Georg Simmel saw as the dialectical form of the ruin. Caught “between the not-yet and the no-longer” (Simmel 382), ruins represent the struggle between spirit and nature. This ruin-drama has long captured the imagination of writers and artists, most recently finding expression in the proliferation of images of Detroit and other post-industrial landscapes.³ This recent bout of “ruin lust” (Dillon) coincides with a wave of academic interest, as sociologists and cultural studies scholars in particular turn to studying places left behind (DeSilvey and Edensor 2014; Mah 2012; Lorimer and Murray).

We treat these photos, not as authoritative or realist depictions, but as important constructions—poetic fragments or palimpsests that shed light on the nature of place in western Canada's resource landscape.

Figure 1. *Yellow Truck* - Abandoned truck left at the former Gunnar Mine site near Uranium City, Saskatchewan

Picket Fence, Uranium City, Saskatchewan.

Mac Mahon's "Yellow Truck" draws on the ruin trope, conjuring feelings of loss and abandonment. We do not need to be familiar with the particulars of Gunnar Mine's collapse to be moved by the image. The power of the ruin is primarily allegorical, transcending the parochialism of locality and place to draw on a poetics and politics of destruction and loss. In his ruminations on Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, Walter Benjamin sees capitalism as the angel of history, the "single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet" (257). In this view, modern ruins such as ghost towns become a kind of space of critique, haunting the optimism of innovation, development, and growth and reminding us of what gets lost in the name of progress.

"Yellow Truck" evokes a sense of nostalgia and opens up a space to question the historical processes that continue to shape the western Canadian landscape. For the critical economic geographer, these processes are primarily driven by the needs of capital. In an epoch of continual upheaval and change, the resource town is a microcosm of the capricious and uneven effects of global capitalism (see Smith, Harvey). "Yellow Truck" presents a classic image of the ghost town, a genre of ruins intimately connected to imaginings of small-town life. Signifying the ghost town, "Yellow Truck" produces a nostalgia for the past, evoking an idealized version of formerly naturalized relationships between identity, community, and place. The power of "Yellow Truck" is in the second-order of signification that Barthes (1972) calls myth. It is not the historical reality of the decline of Gunnar Mine that is the primary subject of the photo; rather, the image is constructed to bind with a larger myth of a lost western Canadian landscape of

place-based resource communities. Through this image we long, not for Gunnar Mine, but for "a place called home" (Massey), an imagined refuge from the disorienting and dislocating effects of modern life.⁴

Figure 2. *JJ's Cabin* - Traces of Everyday life in Uranium City

In contrast to the more archetypical ghost-town scene of “Yellow Truck,” “JJ’s Cabin” (Fig. 2) hints at the afterlife of resource communities. Traces of social life are visible; an almost-empty liquor bottle, an overflowing ashtray, and a beer can lay strewn across a coffee table. In her book *Industrial Ruination, Community and Place*, Alice Mah foregrounds the messiness and contingency of the everyday lives of those who continue to live in contexts of decline and ruin. While influenced by critical geography, Mah argues that “the distinctiveness and complexity of landscapes and legacies of industrial ruination cannot be accounted for by the binaries of success and failure, creation and destruction, or consumption and devastation” (8). Mac Mahon’s photograph makes visible the edges of this distinctiveness and complexity. The scattered signs of everyday life illuminated in “JJ’s Cabin” tell of a persisting community. Indeed, the heavy tools of the political economists and critical geographers might easily miss the quiet communities that persist, struggle, and even prosper in ruins such as Uranium City. While the local mining industry is long gone, Uranium City is a ghost town that continues to support a small community of about 200 people.⁵ In addition, less obvious communities might exist at a distance, through shared experiences and memories, as the interactive web documentary *Welcome to Pine Point* (Shoebridge and Simons) beautifully depicts.

“JJ’s Cabin” compliments Mah’s idea of “industrial ruination as lived process” (131), pointing us to cultural geographies of bust and the continued presence of place-based community. Framing western Canadian resource landscapes in this way unsettles purely symbolic readings of ruins, emphasizing the ways these places and communities are continually practiced and lived.

Figure 3. *Eagle Plains* - Semi-truck along the Dempster Highway, Yukon

Unsettling the Resource Landscape

The semi-truck is an ever-present object within the Canadian North, racing across vast landscapes, connecting far flung places, and carrying with them the momentum of economic activity. For many motorists the oversized vehicles are a bane, either slogging uphill or racing over roads of all (and in all) conditions to fulfill delivery schedules and get their drivers paid. For frontier resource communities, the trucks have been the essential means of bringing in all manner of products for local consumption while also hauling resource wealth away. Mac Mahon’s “Eagle Plains” (Fig. 3) captures a truck during a momentary stop, between destinations but already caked with mud from long hours on the Dempster’s gravel roadway. The truck, its vibrant colour and inevitable momentum, contrast against a backdrop of a northern wilderness shrouded by fog and rain.

We might readily read “Eagle Plains” as indicative of the frontier, with roads probing into the wilderness at the edge of Canadian expansion. Such narratives relate common themes not only of colonial progress but also of the separation of nature from society and civilization. Yet the familiarity of the scene and the ubiquity of this experience suggest alternate readings as well. Resource town may be geographically distant, but they are usually highly integrated, connected not only by vast networks of roads and highways, but by complex networks of supply and demand with interlinkages around the world.

Resource extraction in Canada has always been a global enterprise, from the Hudson’s Bay Company to the current tar-sand operations of northern Alberta. Resource towns are not outposts, but rather hubs within complex social and economic networks. In the context of such complexity we cannot easily configure the rhetorical boundaries between wilderness and society, periphery and centre, and rural and urban (see Brenner). Through this photo of an everyday situation, “Eagle Plains” challenges the viewer to explore tensions between the trope of the isolated, frontier resource town and the advancing forms of mobility that make these places possible.

Figure 4. *Cut Lines* - Aerial view of seismic cutting through boreal forest near Edson, Alberta.

In “Cut Lines” Mac Mahon provides a second articulation of the mobility of resources and the mutability of frontier dualisms. The photo relates the juxtaposition of the straight cut-lines of industrial oil and gas development against the sinuous flow of a creek. We can read the photo as environmental critique, drawing attention to the routine risk (see Perrow) of pipeline failure and looming ecological disaster or highlighting the ways in which linear development transects landscapes, creating barriers for the movement of wildlife. Moreover, in relation to histories of boom and bust, the photo also prompts thinking about pipeline economies or, more specifically, the mobility of those economies, as well as the relative configuration of resource communities and development.

Dominant economic discourse promote pipelines as the source of economic sustainability and growth for western Canada. The Calgary-based energy company Enbridge argues that the Northern Gateway pipeline will provide benefits, not only for Alberta, but for resource communities in British Columbia as well. In the face of opposition from resource communities, Enbridge's proclaims promises of jobs, tax revenues, and increased property values.⁶ It is not that such benefits would be unappreciated, but rather that communities have met such promises with a lack of trust and skepticism. Who gets paid and how much for accommodating the risks of an accident within

BC's highly valued river and marine ecosystems? How can communities leverage tax dollars directly from development as opposed to the central purse of the Provincial Government? What kinds of jobs will be provided, for how long? How do the benefits of development remain within communities, as opposed to being transported elsewhere? We have repeatedly heard these types of questions in our research conversations across northern BC.

These uncertainties are indicative of wider skepticism about the future of resource communities and the viability of possible future booms. The mobility of resources, labour, and capital challenge the permanence of community and our understanding of northern communities. Work camps replace neighbourhoods, labour moves in and out fluidly, and resource jobs become temporary service jobs—all of which is exacerbated as secondary processing moves further and further afield. Thus Mac Mahon's photo series not only points to pipeline politics, but signifies a shift in the ways in which communities relate to landscape and resources. The images depict a landscape in which locality is becoming less permanent and local benefits of resource wealth ever more tenuous.

(Re)placing Boom and Bust

Mac Mahon's photographs evoke an ambivalence that undermines any straightforward narrative with which to interpret the shifting resource landscape of western Canada. This ambivalence is constructed through a juxtaposition of archetypal scenes of bounded ruin (Figs. 1, 2) with images of mobility, interconnection, and flow (Figs. 2, 3). Considered a ruin as political allegory (see Benjamin), the ghost town signifies both the annihilation of community by capital and a longing for a firmly rooted sense of self, community, and place. However, as we have attempted to illustrate, Mac Mahon's depictions of infrastructures of mobility immediately complicate a romanticized view of ruins, pulling us out of the realm of myth and into the actually existing and uneven relations of place and community. In this way, the photographs act as palimpsests of place that unsettle linear narratives of the corresponding decline of resource towns and community, offering a far messier and contradictory picture of western Canada's shifting resource landscape. Resource towns have always been enmeshed in regional, national, and global relations of production, and the last several decades have seen an extending and intensifying of such relations so as to render the myth of the isolated, authentic mining town increasingly implausible.

Barrel Dump, Northern Saskatchewan

As Henri Lefebvre (1970) pointed out almost half a century ago, even seemingly peripheral and rural locales are often (and increasingly) deeply enmeshed in the urban fabric. For Lefebvre, “[t]his expression, ‘urban fabric,’ does not narrowly define the built world of cities but all manifestations of the dominance of the city over the country. In this sense, a vacation home, a highway, a supermarket in the countryside are all part of the urban fabric” (4)—a sentiment true of the hundreds of industrial resource operations scattered across the western Canadian hinterland. Technological advancements in materials and transportation have contributed to the proliferation of fly-in/fly-out work camps (Storey)—highly provisional places that, while geographically remote and surrounded by wilderness, are hyper-connected on regional, national, and international scales. As the perfect spatialisation of boom and bust, the work camp fully embraces mobility, impermanence, and precarity in pursuit of the most efficient modes of capital accumulation. When economic conditions turn unfavourable, camps can be quickly and easily dismantled and relocated to more desirable locales. Beyond their mobility, modern resource camps are permeated by corporeal, imaginative, and virtual mobilities (see Urry). A far cry from the relatively remote resource camps of the previous century, modern camps are serviced by airports, connected to high-speed internet, and sometimes even include luxury amenities.

Considered in light of Lefebvre’s ideas of the urban as well as more recent discussions around planetary urbanism (Brenner and Schmid), Mac Mahon’s depictions of resource ruins and the afterlives of remote communities seem less about a nostalgia for the past than a meditation on the future of the western Canadian resource landscape and a re-imagining of the relationship between community and place. As Svetlana Boym notes, “[t]he ruins of modernity as viewed from a 21st-century perspective point at possible futures that never came to be” (1). As flexible transportation networks, extraction methods, and communication technologies erode the myth of the western resource frontier, we are ushered into the Anthropocene—a geological era defined by human beings’ impact on the Earth. By unsettling static understandings of place and community, Mac Mahon’s photographs offer a starting point to interrogate and re-imagine these ideas across ever-widening scales in relation to Canada’s continued reliance on resource extraction.

Notes

¹ For a look at Mac Mahon’s broader catalogue of photographs visit his website: <http://www.eamonmacmahon.com>

² Over the past year both authors have been part of a team of interdisciplinary scholars who have been exploring governance innovations in response to the challenges of boom-and-bust communities in both British Columbia and Alberta. This research, including a series of qualitative research engagements spanning both provinces, provides a backdrop for many of the thoughts elicited in this essay. Further information about this research can be found at <http://www.crsc.ualberta.ca/en/What%20We%20Do/GoverningBoomBustCommunities.aspx>

³ A prominent example of this aestheticization of the decline of Detroit is Marchand and Meffre’s “Ruins of Detroit” (<http://www.marchandmeffre.com/detroit>).

⁴ Rather than framing this nostalgia as regressive or anti-modern, we might consider it a fundamental aspect of modernism—part of the “struggle to make ourselves at home in a constantly changing world” (Berman 6).

⁵ <http://www.mds.gov.sk.ca/apps/Pub/MDS/muniDetails.aspx?cat=5&mun=2810%3E>

⁶ See <http://www.gatewayfacts.ca/Benefits/Benefits-To-BC.aspx>

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RECALIBRATING INTIMACY: TEMPORALITIES OF THE RURAL IN ELYSE BOUVIER'S CHINESE RESTAURANT PHOTOGRAPHS

ELYSE BOUVIER & LILY CHO

Résumé

Dans son documentaire photographique sur les restaurants chinois des petites villes rurales albertaines, Elyse Bouvier réévalue l'intime. Ses images arrachent l'intime de la sphère domestique et privée et l'intègre à l'espace communautaire et publique. Ces images nous offrent une vision du genre de relation intense qui peut exister entre inconnus- intimité étrange. De plus, les images affirment une temporalité nécessaire à cette réévaluation. L'intime n'existe pas en-dehors du temps. Ces images demandent et insistent sur une certaine compréhension de l'intime qui est non seulement étrange mais aussi profondément construit par une temporalité complexe ; une sorte de temps d'arrêt troublant ou de déjà-vu. Les images de Bouvier exigent que le spectateur s'arrête et s'attarde sur le sentiment de déjà-vu produit.

Abstract

In her documentary photographs of Chinese restaurants in small-town Alberta, Elyse Bouvier recalibrates intimacy. Her photographs wrench the intimate out of the sphere of the domestic and the private and insert it into the realm of the communal and the public. They offer us a vision of the kind of intense relation that can exist between strangers—stranger intimacy. Moreover, the images assert a temporality that is necessary for this recalibration. Intimacy does not exist outside of time. These photographs insist upon, and demand, an understanding of intimacy that is not only strange, but also deeply structured by a complex temporality—a kind of uncanny double take or déjà vu. Bouvier's photographs demand that the viewer pause and dwell in the déjà vu that they produce.

Look at Elyse Bouvier's photographs of Chinese restaurants and look again. Look at the photographs of every ginger beef dish she ate while documenting Chinese restaurants in small towns across Alberta (you have a small sample in "Plate #1, #2, #3, and #4"). When you look at them, you may not see the more than 4000 kilometres she drove, nor the nights she spent sleeping in her car, nor the days she spent staring down a highway that never seems to end. You may not see the way in which these photographs connect a vast and disparate geography. But you will look again, not least because they are terribly familiar and, mingled with that familiarity, also strange. Bouvier's photographs

recalibrate intimacy. They wrench the intimate out of the sphere of the domestic and the private and insert it into the realm of the communal and the public. They offer us a vision of what Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips explore as the intimacy between strangers—stranger intimacy.¹ Moreover, they assert a temporality that is necessary for this recalibration. Intimacy does not exist outside of time. These photographs insist upon, and demand, an understanding of intimacy that is not only strange, but also deeply structured by a complex temporality—a kind of uncanny double take or déjà vu. Bouvier's photographs demand that the viewer pause and dwell in the déjà vu that they produce.

Plate #1, #2, #3 and #4

ELYSE BOUVIER & LILY CHO

This experience of the déjà vu captures something of the temporality of stranger intimacy. To experience it is to recognize something, to know that one has seen this thing before. But it is also to doubt that knowledge. It is to wonder about the accuracy of this experience of seeing again. And it is an experience of disquiet and discreet terror. This terror is not that of bombs and threats from unknown assailants. It is, as Homi Bhabha recognizes, the terror of the uncanny, or *unheimlich*, which, as he notes, is also that of the unhomely:

The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you find yourself with Henry James's Isabel Archer, in The Portrait of a Lady, taking in the measure of your dwelling in a state of "incredulous terror"... The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and the world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting. (9)

Bhabha identifies the experience of the unhomely as having "a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of transhistorical sites" (9). While Bhabha writes about literature, his argument for attending to the disquieting possibilities of the terribly familiar offers an important route into understanding the stranger intimacy of Bouvier's photographs.

Clockwise from top left: *Morning in St. Paul*; *Breakfast with Louis*; *Jeff's Daughters*; *Lucky Dragon*

These photographs chart the disquiet of the familiar by breaking down the divide between private and public experience. Specifically, the images break down the supposedly private trauma of displacement with the public one of living in diaspora. Bouvier documents the displacement of communities in diaspora: Chinese and Vietnamese families working and living in places that are far removed from the places that were, in another time, home. Yet there are other displacements at work here too. There are the men who come in for coffee in search of a sense of community that cannot be found in the space of the private home (“Morning in St. Paul” and “Breakfast with Louis”). There are the children playing and doing homework at the back of the restaurant (“Jeff’s Daughters”). There is the persistence of the *menaki-neko*, the Japanese cat with its paw raised in a perpetual gesture towards the hope for good luck (“Lucky Dragon”).

Take, for example, the intricate invasions of history of just the *menaki-neko*. Consider the strange familiarity of a Japanese cat in a Chinese restaurant operated by Vietnamese people in a town largely devoid of Japanese, Chinese, or Vietnamese people. Chinese immigrants of my father’s generation experienced the terror of the Japanese assault on China in the 1930s. China invades Vietnam in 1979. In Canada, Chinese immigrants who were early restaurant owners and workers would have been subjected to a head tax as well as outright exclusion from 1923-1947. These intricate histories of violence resonate in the innocuous wave of one purportedly lucky and luck-bearing cat.

Yet this symbolic object is not merely one cat, but a repetition of cats in every restaurant. This repetition functions, in Bhabha’s terms, as the terror of the *déjà vu*, of the unhomely moment, how it uncovers the public secrets that secure the ordering of civil society. Thus, for example, feminism makes visible an unhomely moment in civil society by specifying its gendered and patriarchal nature and disturbing easy distinctions between private and public life (Bhabha 11). In so doing, the “unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (Bhabha 11). The terror of the *déjà vu* is not quite that of being haunted by a history one cannot rightly place, but rather that of being given a flash of insight into a secret, intimate knowledge that has always been open but open in such a way that it seems to be discreet, separated from other knowledges and other spheres of life.

Bouvier’s photographs insist on uncovering these knowledges and articulating the connections between people, communities, and histories of displacement. If the history of Chineseness in Canada has been marked by systemic, legislated racism (for example, the *Chinese Immigration Act* 1885, 1905, 1923) and forms of unofficial, subtle, and unsubtle racism, then the place of the Chinese restaurant in small-town Canada attests to the ways in which this history is hidden away, suppressed, and overridden by the power of what it means to live in disjunction. That is, these photographs show how these histories of division and discrimination exist, with a kind of uncomplicated ease, alongside the unfolding of daily lives that are

concerned with connection and comfort. In “Morning in St. Paul,” three men experience the conviviality of a Chinese restaurant’s hospitality. Away from home, they are also at home.

“Morning in St. Paul” reveals much about the stranger intimacy of small-town Chinese restaurants. The men in this photograph are regulars. They know this place. Here, for them, there is ease. There is the deep comfort and familiarity of scrambled eggs and toast and coffee. There is a moment of leisure, of leaning back with an elbow on the table and another on the back of the chair. Yet there is also a disturbance here. Peering out over a corner of the table, just slightly right of the center of our photograph, behind the napkin dispenser, there is a disquietingly comedic figure. He wears a red cap and smile so wide that it drags the eyebrows upward. He is jolly and fat with a double chin. If he were real, that chin would move with every guffaw. He might be Chinese but it is hard to tell. Even this vagueness is part of the disturbance. He is decidedly foreign. He is not like these men at the table. His laughter is decorative. His smile is frozen in time and the atemporality of his joy haunts the real pleasures at this table. He enacts an intimate invasion. He is both a fixture and affixed to the histories of displacement that make that other ease possible.

In order for this morning in St. Paul to unfold, in order for this public comfort and this ease to exist, a series of private traumas of displacement and isolation must also be present. Someone left home to make this other home. Someone gave up family in order to carve out

this other space of familiarity. My point is not just that Asian immigration—and all of the sadnesses attendant upon the process of immigration, no matter how desirable—makes possible the public sphere of the small-town Chinese restaurant. Rather, I want to stress the intricacy of these restaurants as transhistorical sites that contain multiple registers of loss and displacement. The dissolution of the boundaries between private pain and public joy offers a way into the discrete terror of the *déjà vu*, of looking again to see the haunting of histories that will not stay put, that refuse to be outside of the frame.

Bouvier makes visible the uneasy distinctions between private and public life in communities defined both by the intimacy of their demographic scale (population of St. Paul, Alberta, 5400; Wainwright, Alberta, 5925; Bonnyville, Alberta, 6216; Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, 6933; Consort, Alberta, 689; Stavely, Alberta, 505; Turner Valley, Alberta, 2167; Trochu, Alberta, 1172) and by the vastness of their geographical locations. “To think of the West in Canada is to think of great distances and the machines for traversing them,” writes Craig Campbell of the “rural scene” in Kyler Zeleny’s photographs of communities of fewer than 1000 inhabitants in the Canadian West. The distances that Campbell evokes, distances that are very real, do not appear in the images collected in Zeleny’s *Out West*. Almost without exception, Zeleny’s photographs are tightly cropped and focused on specific objects—road signs, a lone building, and, more than anything, the carcasses of abandoned cars.

In *Out West* and in Bouvier's photographs, there is a tension between emptiness and inhabitation. Take, for example, Bouvier's "Ng's Café" and "The Diana." There are tables, chairs, and napkin dispensers. No one is sitting in the chairs; no one is at the tables. Further emphasizing emptiness through signs of presence, in "Ng's Café" the table is set for one; there is an empty water glass and the fortune cookie remains unwrapped. "Ng's Café" and "The Diana" show the possibility of habitation while maintaining the emptiness of these spaces—a tension that plays out with particular acuity in the surfaces of both images. There is a shiny quality to everything: the green wall in "The Diana," the vinyl of the chairs, the tabletops, the metal of the napkin dispensers. These spaces are not simply empty; they gleam with emptiness. No patron could sit at those tables without marring this gleam. This emptiness is not that of dust and tumbleweeds, but rather an aggressively glossy emptiness. It is not passive, but comes out of hard work. There is something untouchable here. Bouvier's images capture a loneliness that is not a product of neglect and abandonment. It is a loneliness that functions at the nexus of the tension between emptiness and inhabitation. It is the loneliness of the unoccupied table.

from left: *Ng's Cafe*; *The Dianna*

There are, of course, people behind the counter and past the swinging doors. One of the great achievements of this series lies in Bouvier's ability to capture something of these lives. "Cam in Wainwright Steakhouse," "Clara in Consort," "Lori in the Diana," "Jeff's Daughters," "Sam and Amy," and "Sam's Turkey Sandwich" all attest to the relationships Bouvier builds with her subjects and with these spaces. These relationships speak to the power of stranger intimacy. This intimacy exceeds the sphere of the domestic, of the family, of privacy. It operates with a different kind of temporality than conventional intimacy. A logic of disclosure governs conventional intimacy. Knowing someone, knowing their histories and their secrets, is the fundamental basis of intimacy as we have typically known it. However, as Bersani and Phillips propose, it does not have to be that way. Perhaps, they suggest, we are mistaken in thinking that such knowledge can lead to greater closeness. Perhaps we do not need to depend so much on the past in order to find our way to intimacy. As Lisa Lowe observes, "intimacy as interiority is elaborated in the philosophical tradition in which the liberal subject observes, examines, and comes to possess knowledge

Clockwise from top left: *Cam in Wainwright Steakhouse*; *Clara in Consort*; *Sam's Turkey Sandwich*; *Lori in the Diana*; *Sam and Amy*

In these abundant reflections, so luminous in an image that is also enrobed in darkness, the viewer might see themselves indirectly, askew, adjacent to the intimacy on offer.

Lan in Mr. Chin's

of the self and others" (21). Instead of this desire for examination and possession, Bersani and Phillips want to find "a new story of intimacy that prefers the possibilities of the future to the determinations of the past" (viii). Bouvier's photographs of the people behind the counter and past the swinging doors offer a beautiful articulation of intimacy that opens the possibilities of the future. The camera does not know them. They do not know the camera. But there is still knowledge here. Thus, when I note that these images attest to the power of Bouvier's relationship to her subjects, I do not mean that she necessarily spent a lot of time with them. Rather, I mean that Bouvier's work opens up a story of intimacy that is not governed by the knowledge and possession of the histories of her subjects.

A relationship to history and a commitment to futures embody the particular intimacy of these restaurants. These are the places where almost everyone is a regular who knows Cam in Wainwright, Clara in Consort, Lori in the Diana, Jeff's daughters, and Sam and Amy. They do not need to know their life stories; indeed, such stories are typically not on offer. My parents had little interest in revisiting the traumas of the past that lead them to the restaurants where they worked. The point is to start a life and to make out of that life something other than what it was. It is not an erasure of the past nor denial. It is a privileging of that which is to come, of that which is still becoming.

Such a privileging is not a refusal of intimacy. Indeed, Bersani and Phillips suggest that stranger intimacy, where we do not need to *know* the other, but only to trust in the knowing that will come, might be intimacy *par excellence*.

Notably, this intimacy turns on a shift in temporal emphasis. Instead of a divulging of the past as a basis for intimacy, Bersani and Phillips signal the necessity of a turn towards the future. Such a turn offers a way to understand the temporality of stranger intimacy in Bouvier's restaurants. As I observe in *Eating Chinese*, the small-town Chinese-Canadian restaurant has been situated as a marker of a disappearing form of rural life, or what Zeleny refers to as "rural drain, urban claim" (103). I note that there is a narrative of the "premature requiem" attached to these spaces. However, I challenge this narrative: "it is precisely at the moment when something is declared to be outdated that the investment in the dating of things, their situatedness in history, reveals itself" (*Eating Chinese* 7). Casting this challenge within the frame of stranger intimacy allows us to understand the complex temporality these restaurants occupy. They are not markers of a disappearing past. Yet they do seem to be, in Zeleny's evocative phrasing, places "of past construction" (105). Their pastness is not the only way to locate their cultural significance; we can also grasp their intimate invasions within the frame of their futurity.

BOUVIER & CHO

top to bottom:
Stavely; Bonneyville; Turner Valley;
Wainwright; Trochu

ELYSE BOUVIER & LILY CHO

clockwise from bottom:
Coffee at Mr. Chin's; Mike's Neon
Lights; E&W Family Restaurant;
Turner Valley Family Inn;
York Restaurant

IMAGINATIONS

Even the limits of this intimacy indicate its power. “Lan in Mr. Chin’s” strikingly illustrates this limit and the power of this intimacy. The mirror seems to give us almost nothing—Lan’s back, a closed door, the reflection of the light on the wood paneling. “Lan in Mr. Chin’s” seems to be a photograph of enclosure and capture. The mirror appears to offer only the suggestion of access to Lan, to what might beyond the door, to the space of the restaurant itself. Yet it is this very evocation of access and its denial that indicates the truth and power of the recalibration of intimacy in Bouvier’s photographs. In this photograph, there is a precise echo of the glossiness I noted earlier in “Ng’s Café” and “The Diana.” Find it in the reflection of the light on the wood paneling. Find it on the surface of the counter behind Lan; the corner of the doorframe; the baroque edges of the gilt mirror; the sheen of the brocade wallpaper; the curve of the brass sconce. Find it even on the collar of Lan’s shirt and the sharp angle of Lan’s cheekbone. In these abundant reflections, so luminous in an image that is also enrobed in darkness, the viewer might see themselves indirectly, askew, adjacent to the intimacy on offer.

This adjacency recalls my argument regarding the function of the menus in small-town Chinese restaurants. The restaurants and their menus appear to offer some access to Chineseness, but ultimately reveal more about the viewer and the consumer than they do about Chinese culture. “Lan in Mr. Chin’s” is, in many ways, a corollary of my suggestion that the menus do not offer “authentic” Chineseness, but rather give back to Canadians a version of themselves: “The legacy of

the menu suggests that Chinese diaspora subjects exploit the menu’s capacity for the reproduction of a cultural space in order to produce an ethnicity that... frustrates the desire for authentic Chineseness” (*Eating Chinese* 71). The menu, like the mirror in “Lan in Mr. Chin’s,” reveals much about desire for access to the real and the authentic as well as a desire for intimacy. Again, Bersani and Phillips’s conception of stranger intimacy illuminates the tension between knowing and closeness. If the desire for access to so-called authentic Chineseness seems to be a demand for disclosure (tell me what is really Chinese), then the anxieties around so-called “fake” Chinese food is a plea for familiarity (bring me closer to what is really Chinese). Yet stranger intimacy offers a way around the impossibility of this demand (there is no “real” Chinese food or, to put it differently, who has authority to say that egg foo yong is not real Chinese food?) and this plea for the comforts of the familiar. Stranger intimacy reveals instead that the most real Chinese food, the most proximate experience of Chineseness, will unfold in the indirect and adjacent such as those reflections that glimmer throughout “Lan in Mr. Chin’s.”

While the intimate may suggest an interiority divorced from political engagement, stranger intimacy can be a politically enabling possibility. This intimacy does not traffic in individual histories, but rather collective ones that make the invasions of history and memory something to be held in trust. Bouvier’s photographs offer a way into living with disquiet and the disjunctures of history. Thus, the assemblage of the materials and objects in

“Coffee at Mr. Chin’s” signals the ways in which the unhomely moment can offer a point of entry, a way of understanding that we do not need to stave off the disquieting déjà vu. Instead, we can transform private terror into a kind of public sanctuary. In Bersani and Phillips’ example, Isabel Archer realizes in the flash of a moment at the Palazzo Roccanera that her world is not quite right and she retreats as her world moves increasingly, insistently inward. However, taking Bersani and Phillips seriously allows for a reorienting of that moment that does not give in to the inexorability of the inward turn. Stranger intimacy suggests that intimate invasions might become a resource for living in displacement. For Bersani and Phillips, depersonalizing the past demands reimagining it in order to craft an intimacy that is not based on any singular story. “Coffee at Mr. Chin’s” might be easily read as a celebration of hybridity and multiculturalism. The china teapot lid is jauntily perched on the pitchers of coffee at the “Bunn-o-matic” warmer station. In the background, the coffee station is flanked by a repurposed Chinese mooncake tin and a box of Red Rose tea, that great commodity of British imperial histories. However, it is also an image that recalibrates intimacy by depersonalizing it. These objects, and the histories that they signal, belong to everyone and to no one. They offer a powerful, collective form of uncanny inhabitation. No matter which side of the swinging kitchen door you occupy, there is some kind of a déjà vu here for you.

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¹ Nyan Shah explores this concept in *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* as do I in my article “Intimacy Among Strangers: Anticipating Citizenship in Chinese Head Tax Photographs.”

Résumé

Dans cet essai, j'examine l'attachement personnel au lieu, tout particulièrement les Prairies. Mon attachement aux prairies de la Saskatchewan tient en partie à une affection pour l'abstrait et le minimal. Plus précisément, c'est ce que les philosophes appellent un engagement esthétique c'est-à-dire une participation et immersion active dans un espace. Psychologiquement, mon attachement aux Prairies est le résultat de souvenirs personnels significatifs que je porte en moi, de mon investissement émotionnel pour ma maison (d'adoption) et des liens sociaux et du sens de la communauté que j'y ai développés. Être en plein air dans les Prairies évoque aussi chez moi une certaine mélancolie réflexive et contemplative ; une expérience émotionnelle qui bien que parfois déplaisante, je recherche et apprécie toujours.

Un nombre d'artistes ont réfléchi sur l'influence profonde que grandir dans les prairies a eu sur leur œuvre. Les peintures de Georgia O'Keeffe sont une réflexion sur la beauté infertile des plaines. Wright Morris a dit que les prairies « ont conditionné ce que je vois, ce que je recherche et ce que je découvre et dont je parle dans le monde. Les plaines sont un paysage métaphysique...ou il n'y a presque rien à voir, ou l'être humain observe le plus. »

Abstract

In the accompanying essay, I examine attachment to places, particularly to the prairie. My attachment to the Saskatchewan prairie is partly a fondness for the abstract and minimal. More deeply, it is what philosophers have called an aesthetic engagement, that is, an active participation and immersion in a place. Psychologically, my attachment to the prairies is a result of the significant personal memories I carry with me, my emotional investments in my (adopted) home, and the social ties and sense of community I felt living there. Being out on the prairie also evokes a certain contemplative, self-reflective melancholy in me, an emotional experience, while not always pleasant, I also cherish and court.

A number of artists have reflected on how growing up on the prairies has had a profound influence on their work. Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings reflect the "barren beauty" of the plains. Wright Morris said that the prairie "conditioned what I see, what I look for, and what I find in the world to write about. The plain is a metaphysical landscape...Where there is almost nothing to see, there man sees the most."

opposite page

left: Somewhere in Saskatchewan
right: Somewhere in Mexico

The camera eye is the one in the middle of our forehead, combining how we see with what there is to be seen. (Morris 11)

I have photographed the Saskatchewan prairie for close to 40 years. Though I came to the prairies "from away," as they say in Atlantic Canada, I developed a strong attachment to the landscape. Why, I have wondered, have I grown so fond of

driving, walking, and photographing the prairie? What about being on this land attracts me? Or, perhaps, this attraction is more about me than the land, that is, something about my psychological make-up has led me to become attached to the prairie rather than to mountains or forests.

I began to realize how profoundly the prairie landscape influenced my seeing when, early on, I spent a year in California and could only

photograph the sea, its strong horizontal divide near the middle of my viewfinder. I could not photograph landscapes there as they were so unlike my beloved prairies. Traveling over the years, I have often photographed landscapes reminiscent of the prairie. In these 10 diptychs, I place Saskatchewan prairie landscapes alongside photographs from other landscapes that are reminiscent of the prairie—Tuscany, Costa Rica, Mexico, the United States, and other Canadian provinces.

Forty years ago, I began to photograph the prairie landscape as an outsider, as a tourist or newcomer, in a distant and detached way. Over the years, my view gradually evolved into that of an insider—a participant engaged in the place. As a tourist in these other places where I have travelled, my view is as an outsider, an outsider looking inward to a remembered landscape of his (adopted) home place.

I left Saskatchewan nine years ago, returning regularly to photograph my prairie homeland. Photographing the prairie is a great passion of mine, but also a limitation, as I seem to have lost interest in photographing much else.

In this essay, I examine attachment to places, particularly the prairie, and the influence of attachment to the prairie landscape on my art work.

The Prairie: Love It or Leave It

The prairie landscape certainly does not appeal to everyone. How many do you know who have driven across southern Saskatchewan on the Trans-Canada for the first time and raved about the beautiful landscape?

Lured by cheap land and extravagant promises of fertile soil, early settlers typically found the prairies a harsh place.¹ For example, a Welshman on his way to his homestead in Saskatchewan wrote home in 1910:

This was so unlike what we had imagined back in Wales. We had visualized a green country with hills around. There was something so impersonal about this prairie, something that shattered any hope of feeling attached to it or even building a home on it. (qtd. in Rees 157-158)

To enrich their understanding of the problems of adjustment to an alien environment, American astronauts at one time were required to read Walter Prescott Webb's classic study, *The Great Plains*.

Many newcomers find the prairies to be barren, desolate, and alienating, a “vast nothingness”; they feel exposed, vulnerable, frightened in the emptiness of the prairie, as if they were “on the edge of the earth” (de Witt 36).

Others are immediately taken by the prairie landscape. Albert Pyke, traveling in Texas in 1831-1832, wrote:

The sea, the woods, the mountains, all suffer in comparison with the prairie....The prairie has a stronger hold upon the senses. Its sublimity arises from its unbounded extent, its barren monotony and desolation, its still, unmoved, calm, stern, almost self-confident grandeur, its strange power of deception, its want of echo, and, in fine, its power of throwing a man back upon himself. (qtd in Haley)

Walt Whitman referred to the prairie as “that vast Something, stretching out on its own unbounded scale, unconfined ... combining the real and ideal, and beautiful as dreams”. He spoke of the “grandeur and superb monotony of the skies,” and “how freeing, soothing, nourishing they are to the soul” (qtd. in Milton 59).

Near St. Denis, Sask.

Long Beach, B.C.

Rural Municipality of Vanscoy, Sask.

Northern New Mexico, U.S.

Old Man on His Back Ranch, Sask.

Near Wounded Knee, South Dakota

Rural Municipality of Perdue, Sask.

Southern New Mexico, U.S.

Aesthetic Attachment to the Prairie Landscape

Geographers have studied what they call a sense of place—the affective bond between people and place or setting. Such ties may vary in intensity, subtlety, and mode of expression. Responses to the environment may be aesthetic, tactile, or emotional (Tuan; Relph).

My attachment to the Saskatchewan prairie is partly aesthetic. Connoisseurs of the “picturesque” in the 18th century used a special device through which they viewed natural landscapes: the “Claude Glass,” a tinted convex mirror that framed and reflected the view, transforming it into something like a miniature painting (Brady 316).

Looking through my camera viewfinder is not unlike this kind of “picturesque” or “scenic” aesthetic appreciation. I appreciate, aesthetically, many visual art works of the prairie landscape, including my own photographs. My aesthetic appreciation of a landscape has to do with the abstract minimalism of the expansive prairie land and sky.

However, standing out in the middle of a prairie landscape evokes something more than a two-dimensional, visual appreciation of a scenic place. There is a strong sense of the tremendous vastness and the power of the open prairie. The experience can be both exhilarating and, with a storm approaching, overwhelming and frightening. The experience, for me, has been what Brady describes as the “sublime” in nature (318).

My experience of the prairie is what Berleant has described as an aesthetic “engagement.” Such engagement in a landscape involves active participation and immersion in a place. Many times I have stood in the middle of a vast prairie landscape immersed in the vista, the smell of wheat, the song of a meadowlark, the feel of the wind on my face.

Being in the natural environment, unlike looking at works of visual art, allows one an aesthetic experience that draws on a broader range of senses.

My attachment to the prairie comes, then, from both a visual appreciation of the minimal scenic viewpoint and a 40-year personal engagement with the landscape.

Near St. Denis, Sask.

Long Beach, B.C.

Rural Municipality of Vanscoy, Sask.

Northern New Mexico, U.S.

Old Man on His Back Ranch, Sask.

Near Wounded Knee, South Dakota

Rural Municipality of Perdue, Sask.

Southern New Mexico, U.S.

Psychological Attachment to the Prairie Landscape

Though not born or raised in Saskatchewan, it is my home, as I have lived there for over 40 years. Environmental psychologists (see Scannell & Gifford) understand my attachment to the place as a result of the many significant memories I carry with me, my emotional investments in my home place, my social ties there, and the sense of community I feel being there. Saskatchewan was a good fit for me as many of the traditional values there (such as community and social justice) matched my own values.

My psychological attachment to the prairie is also associated with emotional experiences. Being out on the prairie brings feelings of solitude and calm, and also a certain contemplative, self-reflective melancholy. My

photographs of the prairie today are more melancholy than before. After photographing only in colour, I prefer a black-and-white aesthetic today.

A few of my friends have told me that they sense a feeling of longing or yearning in many of my prairie photographs, even in my older, colour work. While this was a surprise to me at first, I now recognize what I understand as melancholy in my pictures.

I think that the longing or melancholy I experience while photographing the prairie, connoted in my pictures, has as much to do with me as it does with qualities inherent in the prairie landscape.

The prairie landscape itself does evoke negative emotions in some, including isolation, loneliness, vulnerability, fear.

For me, being out on the prairie has often brought some melancholy. I think this is simply because melancholy is a part of my inner life that is stirred while alone on the empty prairie. Today, returning to Saskatchewan after leaving brings back many memories of my life there, along with nostalgia and some regret.

My melancholy is not usually enjoyable or otherwise a positive feeling. Yet melancholy is a very familiar emotional experience of mine. It is a familiar habit of mind. Melancholy is a part of me. In a sense, I am “attached” to my melancholic nature.

At the same time, I am aesthetically engaged and psychologically attached to the prairie landscape in the positive ways I’ve described.

**Attachment to the Prairie
as an Influence on One's Art Work**

Visual art in the tradition of abstract expressionism and minimalism can reflect the minimal and abstract landscapes of the prairie. Artists who grow up on the prairie often feel that the landscape leaves an indelible print on their imagination.

Jackson Pollock, who grew up in Wyoming, never got over what he called the West's expansiveness and "vast horizontality," qualities that influenced his abstract paintings. The lines that he put into his paintings express an expansiveness that has been associated with the Western landscape. Because the landscape is relatively empty and uncluttered, it lends itself both to abstraction and to the filling of the open spaces. In Pollock the two approaches come together. (Milton 61)

Georgia O'Keeffe, who grew up on the Midwest plains and lived most of her later years on the high plateaus of New Mexico, thought that where a painter grew up and lived was reflected in their art. Her own paintings reflect the "barren beauty" of the plains (Milton 61).

Wright Morris, the novelist and photographer who spent his adolescent years in Nebraska, said that the prairie "conditioned what I see, what I look for, and what I find in the world to write about. The plain is a metaphysical landscape...Where there is almost nothing to see, there man sees the most" (qtd. in Marty).

Robert Adams, who for years photographed the plains in Eastern Colorado in black and white, was greatly influenced by his deep attachment to his home land. He described his engagement with the plains:

Were you and I to drive the plains together, and the day turned out to be a good one, we might not say much. We might get out of the truck at a crossroads, stretch, walk a little ways, and then walk back. Maybe the lark would sing. Maybe we would stand for a while, all views to the horizon, all roads interesting. We might find there a balance of form and openness, even of community and freedom. It would be the world as we had hoped, and we would recognize it together (Adams 182).

left: Rural Municipality of Arlington, Sask.
right: Yucatan, Mexico

left: Near Kyle, Sask.
right: Vancouver Island, B.C.

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¹ The Canadian government greatly exaggerated the promise of farming on the prairie, especially the Palliser triangle in Sask., to entice European settlers. In the first decade of the 20th Century most who had settled left due to severe drought. And then, during the depression, many more left after years of drought and no crops.

PHOTOGRAPHY AS THEORY IN ACTION: WILLIAM HANSON BOORNE, GEORGE WEBBER, AND THE PEOPLE OF THE BLOOD

GEORGE WEBBER & MATT DYCE

Résumé

Cet article analyse les représentations non-Indigènes des danses cérémonielles des Kainai (Gens-du-Sang) de l'Ouest du Canada en comparant deux événements photographiques distincts séparés par un siècle. Le premier photographe, William Hanson Boorne, était imprégné des présomptions coloniales sur les peuples Autochtones qui prévalaient au cours des années 1880. Boorne a employé les mythologies liées à l'appareil photo, comme sa prétendue capacité à « capturer l'ombre » ('shadow catcher') en photographiant la traditionnelle danse du soleil contre les souhaits des Kainais. Selon lui, il photographiait là les images d'une pratique qu'il croyait être sur le point de disparaître à cause de la modernisation de l'Ouest. Le deuxième photographe, George Webber, est un documentariste contemporain basé à Calgary (Alberta). En 2000, il a également photographié les participants à la danse du soleil des Kainais. Bien que Webber partage l'objectif de Boorne de représenter visuellement la spiritualité et le mouvement de modernisation de l'Ouest, sa pratique photographique est différente de celle de Boorne. Webber concevait l'utilisation de l'appareil photo comme un outil de mémoire culturelle et une façon de comprendre les changements tels que vécus par les individus. La comparaison des deux événements photographiques que représentent Boorne et Webber sont mis en contexte dans le cadre des deux thèmes de ce numéro spécial : l'Ouest canadien comme un discours visuel, et la photographie comme « théorie en l'action ».

Abstract

This paper analyzes non-Indigenous representations of Kainai (Blood) ceremonial dances in Western Canada by comparing two distinct photographic events separated by a century. The first photographer, William Hanson Boorne, exhibits colonial assumptions about Indigenous people that were prevalent in the 1880s. He utilized mythologies about the camera as a "shadow catcher" when he surreptitiously photographed the sun dance against the wishes of the Kainai, capturing images of a practice he believed was about to disappear as the West was transformed by modernity. The second photographer, George Webber, is a contemporary documentarian operating out of Calgary, AB. In 2000, he also photographed participants in the Kainai sun dance. While he shared Boorne's aim to depict spirituality and desire to present the West in transformation, Webber's pictures and photographic practices are significantly different than his predecessor. He treats the camera as a cross-cultural memory tool and means of understanding personal change. Comparison of the two photographic events illuminates the Canadian West as a visual discourse and photography as "theory in action."

Fig. 1. Horace Shouting in his living room holding a photograph of himself after completing his Sun Dance in 2000, 2005 - (Webber, *People of the Blood* 101).

This special issue of *Imaginations, North By West*, considers how photography is "theory in action" in the context of visual discourses of the Canadian West. Assigning these two together is a felicitous pairing, as photography and "the West" are both inventions of the 19th century: contained in each is the literal sense of being a newly discovered practice or a place, yet their larger making cannot be subtracted from the realm of cultur-

al imagination. Photography, developed in the crucible of a European industrial revolution, was quickly enlisted as a medium through which to present modernity (Trachtenberg; Kern). The realism apparent in the camera became a significant tool for organizing the natural sciences, freezing the chaos of the observable world into a still and silent document; in the home it became the preferred method of recording family histories and experience. Emblem-

atic of the modern world undergoing a period of rapid change and upheaval, photography offered not only the remarkable ability to capture and freeze time but also appeared to overcome space by making the distant apprehensible. For many Europeans, it made remote lands of imperial conquest appear before their eyes and helped organize the people who lived there into the racial and social prejudices imagined by "European civilization."

In parallel, categories of time and space also informed the invention of the Canadian West. After purchasing Hudson's Bay Company's land rights in 1871, the nascent country of Canada planned for independent growth through a national policy calling for opening the West to farming and transforming it into a captive market for Eastern manufacture. To accomplish this goal, an array of spatial technologies were released on the region: the train was meant to annihilate distance between east and west; the squared survey grid of the Dominion Land Act aimed to fix an egalitarian settler society in place; government cartographers gave the land new names and meanings; Indigenous peoples were forcibly moved to reserves; the churches hoped to spread Anglo Protestant values; and visual propaganda in settler's pamphlets and CPR advertising promised a country of plenty, imagining gold wheat fields and a string of glistening prairie metropolises stretching across the plains (Owram). At the turn of the century,

the Canadian West was created as a thoroughly modern space, a frontier representing an implicitly new area that promised to be a step forward into a dynamic future. Thus, in the realm of cultural imagination, photography and the West were of the same order: they both promised a means of coordinating space and time. Each signalled a break between the past and the future, and both conveyed the dynamic sense of modernity and suddenness of change present in their age. In turn, looking at the places where photography and the West intersect can help illuminate the relation between visual discourses and Western imagery and the anchor points that have bound them together.

In this essay I draw comparisons and contrasts in two places where photography and the West were enmeshed in order to analyze the understudied relationship between photography, history, and spirituality. I argue that a pair of photographic encounters—one in the 1880s and one in the 1990s—may provide helpful bookends for thinking about the relationship between these issues. Both take place on the Kainai Reserve in southwest Alberta and involve non-Indigenous responses to the ceremonial sun dance carried out there. A comparative analysis of these photographic sets, separated by a century, offers insights into the relationship between peoples and concepts in the late-19th century and today.

As a historical and cultural geographer, I was invited to reflect on the work of Calgary-based documentary photographer, George Webber, and to do so using “photography as theory in action” as a method for thinking through visual discourses of the Western Canadian frontier. *North By West* intentionally aimed to place academics and practicing photographers in collaboration with one another. The assessment offered here emerged out of a conversation between myself and Webber. In order to continue that conversation here, I juxtapose his recent work with a photographer working in the same area 100 years earlier, William Hanson Boorne. They form important bookends of the period, since both Boorne and Webber offer photographic responses to Indigenous ceremonial practices in the West. This essay proceeds by recounting Boorne's photographic work relating to the sun dance of the Kainai people in Western Canada and then exploring the ways that academics have interrogated, overturned, and sought to decolonize previous understandings of Indigenous views on and uses of photography. With this methodology established, I return to the work of Webber to analyze how his photographic point-of-view and work on the Kainai Reserve upsets and challenges received ideas of spirituality, frontier, and history.

1880s—William Hanson Boorne

In the late-19th century the Kainai were known as the Blood Tribe and were one of three bands making up the larger Blackfoot Confederacy. Their trading relationship with Europeans dated to the early fur-trade period and they retained a significant amount of power and influence in the region. Yet their autonomy had been severely undermined by the extirpation of the plains bison, the incursion of white settler society, and government attempts to erode their culture through the *Gradual Civilization Act* (1857) and later the federal *Indian Act* (1876). As their society was under assault by colonialism, the rich spiritual representations of the Kainai, Siksika, and Peigan people were repurposed to serve as symbols denoting European ideas about the frontier in this period. Although the horse had long been an integral part of Kainai culture and social rank, images depicting a lone warrior on horseback roaming the prairies conjured for many viewers a concept of independence from the decadent grasp of modern, industrial cities and waged labour. Brilliant headdresses and embroidered garments evoked much the same interest in the parlours of the East (“Making Sense out/of the Visual”). The photographs in Figures 2, 3, and 4 offer a glimpse of the types of images that interested colonial society. The images captured Indigenous peoples and transformed them into an overlapping set of meanings. For some, these pictures were evidence of a world of freedom that still existed outside “civilized” colonial society, while others recoiled in horror at the

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apparent “savagery” they portrayed (Welch). Indeed, many had no trouble in experiencing both of these impressions simultaneously. Moreover, the culture of realism ascribed to the camera reminds us that Victorians believed photographs carried within them the moral truth of their subjects. Even the clearly staged “Deligalugaseitsa – Sepistopota” shown in Figure 3 would have been viewed as an open window into the souls and individual character of the subjects portrayed (Lalvani). The popularity of Western imagery of this order was in large part due to the unstable experience of white spectators viewing them through the lens of colonial racism, where the Indigenous subjects evinced both desire and revulsion (Said; Aloula).

Fig. 2. *Mutsinamakan and wife, T'suu T'ina, near Calgary, AB, about 1885* - by William Hanson Boorne (McCord Museum, Montreal MP-1973.49.3.21).

Fig. 3. *Deligalugaseitsa - Sepistopota, Sarcee Indians, Sarcee, near Calgary, AB, about 1885* - by William Hanson Boorne (McCord Museum, Montreal MP-1973.49.3.39).

Fig. 4. *Warriors' society, Blood sun dance, Gleichen, Alberta in 1887* - by William Hanson Boorne (Glenbow Museum, Calgary NA-2172-5).

Among those who travelled to the West hoping to profit from the photography of Indigenous peoples was William Hanson Boorne, a studio portrait artist originally from England. Boorne and his partner, Charles May, had set up a small studio in the frontier outpost of Edmonton and began photographing the changing West. Their visual narrative framed the Western landscape in two ways. Indigenous people were presented as ethnographic evidence of life before the arrival of white settlers—if not framed by studio backdrop wilderness, Indigenous subjects were usually set against vast and seemingly empty spaces. In contrast, the pioneer transformation of the prairie was valorized through images of progress depicting workers engaged in railway construction, farmers ploughing fields, or vistas of growing towns and cities (Figures 5 and 6). Unlike images of Indigenous people, the meanings here are unambiguous: they offered a narrative of colonial society settling the unused plains, modernizing and making them productive. These images were sold to publishers and collectors in eastern North America and Europe; here Boorne's goal was to exploit the fact he was one of the few practicing photographers in the new Western frontier.

Fig. 5. *View of Calgary, 1889* - by William Hanson Boorne (Glenbow Museum, Calgary NA-2399-23).

Fig. 6. *Canadian Pacific Railway bridge over Elbow River* - by William Hanson Boorne (Glenbow Museum, Calgary NA-1753-2).

After some years of financial uncertainty, in 1885 Boorne discovered a lucrative opportunity that drew him to the Blood peoples' lands around what is now Standoff, Alberta. He aimed to photograph a rare event never pictured before: the ceremonial sun dance of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Sun dances were and continue to be widely practiced by Indigenous groups throughout North America. It is impossible for outsiders to accurately convey the importance of the sun dance or to represent the diversity of practices that have existed over time between different groups. In the 19th-century interior plains, sun dances served numerous functions. Families and communities congregated annually at these ceremonial events, allowing for the arrangement of marriages, the passing of stories, the trading of goods, and the observation of sacred rites of renewal (Pettipas). An important aspect was the dance itself, which took place inside an open lodge constructed for the occasion. What interested many 19th-century colonial voyeurs was not the sacred ceremonial knowledge of the plains peoples, but the practice called "piercing." At some events, dancers had their chest muscles cut open and a piece of wood drawn through the opening. With this fixture in place, rawhide ropes were used to hang a drum from the body or were strung to a pole in the centre of the lodge. By dancing through the pain created as the ropes pulled at the wooden anchors, participants honoured the Creator on behalf of the larger community, eventually ripping holes in their flesh as the dancers broke free. Rather than see the self-endurance of the dancers as a

ritual of renewal, however, Boorne imagined the dance as a kind of "torture" he could profit from by capturing on film. He proposed to photograph this ritual for private collectors.

In the pages of the Toronto-based *Canadian Photographic Journal* (1892-1897), Boorne shared details of his two trips to the area, describing his attempts to capture images of the sun dance ceremony. He believed the most valuable would be images of what he termed the "torture" scene, which he knew would be desirable precisely because it had never before been photographed. Victorian audiences were fascinated by the salacious and "savage" ways of the plains, the images offering both the pleasure of voyeurism and the opportunity for moral condemnation. Viewed through the racial logic of imperial supremacy, the self-harm involved in the ceremony provided evidence of the perceived racial degeneracy of Indigenous groups and showed the necessity for the civilizing power of colonialism. Boorne traded tobacco, tea, and other goods to gain entrance to the ceremony. However, his first attempt to access the sun dance failed. According to his accounts, as soon as his camera was set up, "the racket began. They crowded around me, threw a blanket over the camera, yelled, shouted, danced and actually fired guns over my head to scare me" (Boorne 372). It was only on his second trip to the sun dance in 1887 when he visited the Blood Reserve and met the famed Chief Red Crow that he was able to photograph freely. According to Boorne, after three days of taking photographs of the general camp (see Figure 4),¹ his presence was becoming ordinary and the chief and

seven other headmen all accepted a payment of a couple of dollars. At the sun dance the next day, this transaction bore fruit. Employing popular racist tropes to set the scene, he described how, when some "bucks, braves, and squaws" (Boorne 373) tried to intervene with his picture work, Red Crow allowed him to make the photograph.

Boorne's photograph of a pierced dancer performing the sun dance is still available today for anyone who would seek it out; it is sold at online auctions where it may be purchased for private collection or display.² Exploring the context in which the photograph was made explains as much about why it was valuable to colonial viewers then as it offers a window into the desires of colonial society today. Yet, notwithstanding the uncertain circumstances of its production, Boorne's 1887 photograph also allows us to bear witness to an important historical act of resistance. In a period when the sun dance was increasingly scrutinized by Indian agents and missionaries intent on halting its practice—indeed, the Federal Government outlawed sun dances in 1895—Boorne's photograph records an Indigenous community in open defiance of colonial rule. No matter what meaning derived from it, the photograph as a historical document is enmeshed in a broader sense of the passing moment it was intended to capture. As Boorne pointed out, "Nine braves were tortured that day, and this I believe was the last 'sun dance' held by the Indians in the North West" (373). Refusing to acknowledge his own implication in this historical turn, Boorne explained, "All the old customs are gradually dying out" (373). In

presenting this claim, he both obfuscated the role of settler colonialism in attempting to extinguish those same customs and appealed to a popular but mistaken belief that Indigenous peoples were a “vanishing race” (Ryan; Lyman and Curtis). His description was clearly motivated by a desire to increase the value of his photography. The notion that such scenes would never be seen again drove a kind of anthropological rush to document the final moments of the Indigenous North Americans untainted by Western civilization. While the camera was an instrumental part of capturing this supposed disappearance, the desire for memorialization was driven by a belief that Indigenous society was incommensurate with the unfolding pattern of modern civilization that was gradually overtaking and transforming Western Canada. The title of Boorne’s account, “With the Savages of the Far West,” evoked the same binary tension between a space and people fading into history and an emergent society witnessing their demise. Conjuring a medieval crusade into a heathen land, he described himself as a “knight of the camera” (372). By describing his photography as a crusade into a space outside civilization and a step backwards into the past, he elaborated on the shroud of myth he believed still hung over the land of the Blood. Key to this tension was his explanation of their reluctance to be photographed:

I must digress a little here, to explain that the Indians are the most superstitious of people, and in those days it was a very difficult matter indeed to get one to allow a photograph to be taken, even with the offer of money. They were beginning to know the sight of a camera, and understood what it was for, but what they could not comprehend was how a ‘spirit picture,’ as they called it, could be taken of them without taking something away from them; in short, they believed, as many do even now, that the act of photographing them would shorten their lives, by robbing them of a part of themselves (Boorne 372; italics in original).

In a late-19th century context, Boorne’s photography was indeed theory in action. Though deep within the trappings of colonial thought, he utilized the camera at the nexus of spirituality and history to make sense of the wider contours of time and space wending through the West—it was the Blood’s spiritual prohibition and fear of photography that demonstrated they were out of place in the modern West. Boorne drew Romantic colonial notions of a vanishing race and spirituality-as-superstition through the image itself: exposing layers of time and space, he presented his photography as a means of recording the moment when the Indigenous past ended and the future of the Canadian West began.

History, Spirituality, Photography

Boorne was by no means alone in either his experience trying to secure the images or his willingness to speculate on the spiritual reasons behind the difficulty in doing so. In fact, many historians have recently taken a more serious approach to understanding the relationship between Indigenous spirituality and photography. Historian Brock Silversides explains, “It has been a generally accepted truism that Native people did not like having their pictures taken” (Silversides 6). However, he suggests that while some Indigenous people called the camera “the face puller” and believed that a photograph weakened some part of them, a more likely reason to be wary of photography was that Indigenous people were aware that white male Europeans carried assertions of their own cultural superiority. Understanding that such images would be used to make them objects of scorn, they generally avoided the invitation to sit for portraits. In *Print the Legend* (2002), Martha Sandweiss attributes the fear of cameras to outbreaks of disease coinciding with visits from photographers who introduced new pathogens. Refuting claims that Indigenous people thought cameras were “shadow catchers,” she counters that these understandings of Indigenous belief are squarely situated in late-19th-century prejudices about the backward nature of non-white cultures. As such, they should be interpreted as just one more myth based on the systemic stereotyping of Indigenous landscapes, stories, and traditions. She argues instead that the understanding of photography

(consenting to an image of oneself) was akin to signing one’s name. As such, the powers afforded to the camera were not for ensnaring spirits but only an “obliquely acknowledged role in capturing the image so easily shed by the subject” (Sandweiss 222).

By posing the question of how photographs and cameras entered Indigenous societies, Sandweiss provides a more nuanced view of how Indigenous people were caught in a mesh of European social and cultural ideologies. According to Carol Williams in *Framing the West* (2003), reconsiderations of Indigenous views must also be paired with broader understandings of the power relations inscribed in cross-cultural image making. She argues that “[t]o conceive of photography as an active negotiation rather than a mechanical process resulting in an artifact fundamentally revises conventional assumptions about the European use of photography in colonial lands” (Williams 139). Arriving at this conclusion by reconstructing the introduction of photography from the perspective of the Coast Tsalish on the Pacific coast of present-day British Columbia, Williams has asked not only how photography was introduced to Indigenous groups, but also what kinds of things in their culture photographs replaced. In the case of the potlatch ceremony, photographic images replaced goat-hair effigies used to stand in for the presence of a distant figure unable to attend the feast. The spiritual power of the goat-hair effigy was to symbolize the absent spirit and convey the presence of the person metonymically. To her this suggests a

refined, if different, understanding of representation from Europeans—the Coast Tsalish did not believe images were some stolen part of themselves, but also recognized that photographs could carry with them important meanings of self. The cultural difference was made clear in William’s comparisons of photographs used to memorialize the dead: while European settlers usually commemorated people by portraying them alive as a memory, the Coast Tsalish often requested post-mortem photographs to properly honour the spirit of the deceased their body represented. While the Coast Tsalish are distinct from the Kainai and other groups, the example confirms a broad wealth of research leading to the consensus that in many cases of transcultural image-making, Indigenous people understood European conventions of photography and also possessed their own sophisticated understandings of the practice.

What these historians endeavour to do is see through the colonial archive to access the social and ideological world of Indigenous people at the time of European expansion into their territories. They reveal a complex set of understandings behind the surface of the records left by photographers such as Boorne, who claimed to understand the West. Not only were his beliefs about Indigenous spiritual relationships with photography incorrect, but the overall view he perpetuated—that Indigenous culture was disappearing under the weight of modernity—was also wrong. The 1887 images were not of the last sun dance performed. The

ceremony continued as an act of resistance through the early-20th century and was given renewed legal status when the Government of Canada lifted the ban in 1951 as part of its early efforts at redress.³ Indeed, the relationship between the sun dance and non-Indigenous photography may also be considered from the perspective of the present. Here, George Webber’s images of the Kainai sun dance provide the starting point for a renewed way of thinking about photography and the West as “theory in action” and for understanding history and spirituality in the contemporary age.

Though deep within the trappings of colonial thought, he utilized the camera at the nexus of spirituality and history to make sense of the wider contours of time and space wending through the West—

1990s—George Webber

With new perspectives on photography and the West as “theory in action” we can turn to the photographs of George Webber. Webber’s pictures can be thought of as an entry-point for showing how the same things that historians have discovered get pulled through images in practice. Webber is a Calgary-based photographer whose visits to the Kainai Reserve between 1992 and 2005 are the basis of *People of the Blood*, what he calls a “photographic journey.” By the time he took these trips, he had already achieved acclaim for his work employing the candid style reminiscent of photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson and the social realist perspective of American such as Walter Evans and Dorothea Lange. This lineage is telling, given that their photographic work was, at least in part, a response to the heady boosterism of agricultural expansion of the late-19th and early-20th century that framed the West as a productive Eden. Evans’ and Lange’s images challenged this narrative by chronicling the hardships of Depression-era farmers and sharecroppers during the dustbowl of the late 1930s and 1940s. Whereas the Western imaginary of Canada and the United States had once been saturated with promises of prosperity and wealth, the Depression exposed how debt economies and the harsh parameters of industrial agriculture on the plains environment had turned the countryside from a modern experiment into an impoverished social and ecological landscape.

In Webber’s photographs, the intersections of time and space that structured the birth of Western Canada are in disarray. Considered against the visual narrative of Edenic West in the late-19th century—in which the latent potential of the land is transformed into wealth and progress through human effort—Webber’s pictures often portray the landscape as austere and dominating, tracing the natural limits placed on the excesses of the imagination. The pictures are replete with the powerful prairie theme of space: the billowing clouds in the sky, a vast sea of grassland extends from the bottom of the frame, and only a thin layer of human artifice existing at the line of the horizon. The human landscapes are compressed between earth and sky. While his landscapes bear the traces of decay—abandoned dwellings, a fraying grain elevator, a ruined church—in the social-documentary tradition he bears witness to the endurance of humanity. While the dream of limitless prosperity in the West has eroded, the people living there are resolute and resilient in the face of change.

Though the bristling sense that the Canadian West was powerfully striding into the future emerging from the late 1800s has ended, many of these images evoke that past perspective. Hence, in Webber’s photographs, time and space are not so easily divided: the great swelling wave of the Canadian attempt to conquer the West has already crashed; the landscape that remains is made from the swirling currents of success and failure, past and present.

top:

Fig. 7. *Swalwell, AB* and Fig. 8. *Joseph Prive, Forget, SK* - by George Webber (*Prairie Gothic*). In the photograph of *Swalwell, Alberta*, Webber contrasts the lasting promise of an abundant prairie, shown on the town’s welcome sign, with the apparent bleakness of reality.

middle:

Fig. 9. *Buttes and fence in Spring, 2001* - by George Webber (*People of the Blood* 91).

Fig. 10. *Scotsguard, Saskatchewan* - by George Webber (*Prairie Gothic*).

bottom:

Fig. 11. *Joey Hofer and Maria Hofer in the automotive hop, Little Bow Hutterite colony, 1999* - by George Webber (*A World Within: Little Bow Hutterite Colony* 38).

GEORGE WEBBER & MATT DYCE

In one important sense, Webber's photographs of the Kainai reserve in *People of the Blood* are not significantly different from the other projects he has undertaken to document the Canadian West. In an interview, Webber described his spiritual motivation for learning about closed societies through photography. Raised Catholic, he was initially drawn to photographing closed societies by his interest in the relationship between belief and struggle. Reflecting on a photojournalist experience at a closed Hutterite colony, he says he simply went out "looking for commonality" (see Figure 11). His images of Standoff on the Kainai Reserve show the same themes of time and history in the landscape and offer a glimpse of the depth of character people develop through struggle. Yet, whether intentional or not, the overwhelming presence of the colonial past provides a measure of the context in which present-day photographs are made. One powerful manifestation of the complexity of this relationship emerges in an image of Larry Hairy Bull, which Webber uses for the cover image of his volume. As he explains, "On a rain-drenched Highway 2, I meet Larry Hairy Bull and his pregnant wife, Bernice White Man Left. ... I offer them a lift. Larry tells me he used to play guitar for the country-rock group Stray Horse. After we arrive in Standoff, he looks back at me and lifts his hand to mimic a Native headdress" (Webber 16). The image shows Larry in front of the townsite, a stretch of suburban ranch homes extending beyond him. The gesture is powerful and ambiguous; it plays to

the notion of the Romanticized photographic gaze to which Indigenous people have been subject, conjuring up images of Boorne seeking out the "noble Red Man" of a James Fennimore Cooper novel. The image contrasts the historical associations between the headdress as a more authentic or traditional aspect of Indigenous culture with the reality that Larry and Bernice live in ranch homes on the reserve, in the shadow of power lines and a giant water tower.

In this image, Webber lets the subject narrate the context of the event, rather than structuring it in a way that relies on pre-existing tropes or the viewer's expectations. The intention of the photographer recedes to a sympathetic portrayal of the subject, what Webber describes as "gentleness with the other," rather than seeing the man as a mechanism to tell a larger story. Photography is theory in action when it becomes a means for people to negotiate the context of both their representation and place in history. In this respect, there is both an interesting similarity and striking difference between Webber's experience at a sun dance ceremony on the Kainai reserve and Boorne's experience over 100 years earlier. For Webber, his induction to the dance was the result of an invitation from a new friend whom he met on the Blood Reserve in 1997: Horace Shouting, who would be participating in an upcoming ceremony. As Webber explains, while the sun dance is meant to show thanks to the Creator and bring strength to the community, Shouting had

decided to participate in the sun dance as a means for moving past difficulties he had with alcoholism and a marital breakdown. What attracted Webber to the sun dance was his empathy with Shouting's position: he thought of his Catholic upbringing and recognized that within both traditions, ceremony could offer "value or a pathway to a better life" (Webber, Phone Interview). When it came time to participate in the dance, Webber brought his camera with him. Though he was granted permission to photograph before and after the ceremony, as he set up his equipment some participants requested he stop. No explanation is offered as to why the photographs cannot be made (instead, in Webber's view, this is for the Blood alone to know), but the narrative proceeds with an account of the ceremony and its meaning, the gathering of plants and herbs, the preparation of the lodge, the piercing of the chest and back, the fastening of rawhide to the central pole, the dancing and pulling of the ropes.

Fig. 12. *Larry Hairy Bull, Standoff*, 1997
- by George Webber (*People of the Blood* 18).

Fig. 13. Horace Shouting after completing Sun Dance, 2000 - by George Webber (*People of the Blood* 18).

These striking parallels with elements in Boorne's account remind us that the people who practice it have maintained the customs and significance of the sun dance over a long span of time. Webber describes Shouting being pierced with the rawhide lanyards and viscerally recounts Shouting's pain as he tears the leather ropes from his body. However, the similarity between the two exchanges ends there. While Boorne attempted to claim authority and take power over the meaning of his photographs, Webber offers only those images made in collaboration with Shouting: for example, standing outside the lodge after the ceremony with evidence of the proceedings on his body (Figure 13).

Webber's photographs, like Boorne's, are theory in action. However, in his case, what he pulls through history and spirituality is not a sense of a drastic break or difference, but his shared attempt with Shouting to find connection. Both Webber and Shouting interpret the pictures they made as part of a journey, not mechanical records of time or as part of some historical transformation of Western Canada. The time and space they locate in the image is still important, but it is less a historical document than a memory device for Shouting to consider, which he does when Webber visits him in later years (Figure 1). Webber writes that Shouting had explained that he decided to participate in the sun dance after he had a vision: "he recounts a dream in which he saw an eagle perched on the east side of his house. The next night he had another dream in which he saw the eagle on the west side of his house. He took the dream as a sign that he

must change the direction of his life" (Webber 2006, 58). Aligned with this story, the photograph conveys a moment of spiritual transcendence—a reminder that such intimate moments of exchange coalesce and challenge the yawning historical spans of time and space we associate with periods akin to modernity or geographies such as "the West."

Legacies of the Photographic West

Comparing Boorne and Webber's image-making practices illustrates the various ways in which spiritual beliefs and beliefs about spirituality were and still are woven into photography in Western Canada through coordinations of space and time. However, a lingering question still remains over what to do with the legacy of Boorne's image-making practices in society today, given that the historical production and use of his photographs was deeply suffused with colonial values and power relationships (Paakspuu).

Boorne's sun dance images and the "torture" scene are only a small fraction of a vast archive of images produced by settler-colonial society. Many Indigenous groups have sought to recover names and meanings of ethnographic imagery or photographic records made for government indexing purposes, often working with academics or public institutions (Payne and Thomas; LAC). One initiative along these lines paired the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, the current repository of many of Boorne's images, with Blackfoot elders in order to return Indigenous voice to the pictures within

(Onciul 3). Another book, *"Pictures Bring Us Messages" / Sinaakssiiksi Aohtsimaahpihkookiyaawa: Photographs and Histories from the Kainai Nation* (2006), produced through extensive collaboration between two European anthropologists and the Kainai Nation brought a set of images made in the 1920s back from England to a community who had never seen them, where they became an entry point for recovering community heritage (see Brown and Peers). Museum curator and historian Ruth Phillips sees one way forward is to re-visit assumptions about the power relationships inherent in colonial imagery, arguing that many of the seemingly stereotypical uses of Indigenous dress (Figure 2) also represent self-fashioning expressions of identity ("Dress and Address"). Taken together these endeavours seek to decolonize the visual archive of the West, disentangling imperial coordinations of space and time and returning Indigenous meaning and significance to images.

Alternatively, an argument exists that colonial photographs should simply be destroyed, ending their enduring power to make meanings. Such debates point to a lingering debate on the nature of photographic representation (Barthes): do the material images physically store and convey the violence of colonialism that produced them, or are they merely ephemeral representations that symbolize a world entirely removed from the picture itself? Arguing these points may owe as much to the power of photography as it does to the colonial mythology that Indigenous people believed pictures stole their soul, or to the Victorian belief that pictures contained the moral embodiment

of the subject depicted. Indeed, we can ask the same question of "the West": should we now praise the decaying barns and empty towns that fascinated Webber as part of the end of the colonial era?

In this sense, what cultural imaginations of "the West" still have to offer are much less clear than what ideas about photography do. Webber's work certainly reminds us that, inasmuch as late-19th century photographs of Indigenous people were made and imbued with myths about spirituality and taboos around image-making, the enduring belief that photographs tell a moral story about the subject portrayed can be an important point of connection and a means to understand difference as Canada aims to enter an era of truth-telling and reconciliation. If photography can work in this process as theory in action, can the West as well?

Notes

¹ Figure 4 shows Boorne’s picture of the general sun dance camp, not the sacred ceremony. Boorne was clearly pestering the Blood people and admits as much in his account, but there is no indication as to whether the people here agreed to making this photograph. That the subjects of the image are lined up and looking at the camera suggests they were willing to be portrayed or at least interested in controlling the conditions of their representation.

² The photograph is not reproduced here as it was clearly taken against the wishes of the Blood participating in the ceremony.

³ A review of the timeframe shows something of the importance of the sun dance in cultural adaptation to the pressures of colonialism. Following the Government ban in 1895 the Kainai continued to openly practice the ceremony. While it continued to be a sacred and communal practice it also evolved to incorporate new meaning of resistance to Federal Government policy. Shortly after the prohibition was lifted in 1951, the Kainai hosted a National Film Board of Canada crew in order to film the proceedings with the hope of preserving their customs for future generations. The 1960 film *Circle of the Sun* details how the sun dance was being used to encourage troubled Blood youth to find direction by getting back in touch with traditional culture (Low).

Image Notes

Figure 1. *Horace Shouting in his living room holding a photograph of himself after completing his Sun Dance in 2000, 2005* (Webber, People of the Blood 101).

Figure 2. *Mutsinamakan and wife, T’suu T’ina, near Calgary, AB, about 1885*, by William Hanson Boorne (McCord Museum, Montreal MP-1973.49.3.21).

Figure 3. *Deligalugaseitsa – Sepistopota, Sarcee Indians, Sarcee, near Calgary, AB, about 1885*, by William Hanson Boorne (McCord Museum, Montreal MP-1973.49.3.39).

Figure 4. *Warriors’ society, Blood sun dance, Gleichen, Alberta” in 1887*, by William Hanson Boorne (Glenbow Museum, Calgary NA-2172- 5).

Figure 5. *View of Calgary, 1889*, by William Hanson Boorne (Glenbow Museum, Calgary NA-2399- 23).

Figure 6. *Canadian Pacific Railway bridge over Elbow River* by William Hanson Boorne (Glenbow Museum, Calgary NA-1753- 2).

Figure 7. *Swalwell, AB* and Figure 8. *Joseph Prive, Forget, SK*, by George Webber (Prairie Gothic). In the photograph of Swalwell, Alberta, Webber contrasts the lasting promise of an abundant prairie, shown on the town’s welcome sign, with the apparent bleakness of reality.

Figure 9. *Buttes and fence in Spring, 2001*, by George Webber (People of the Blood 91).

Figure 10. *Scotsguard, Saskatchewan*, by George Webber (Prairie Gothic).

Figure 11. *Joey Hofer and Maria Hofer in the automotive shop, Little Bow Hutterite colony, 1999*, by George Webber (A World Within: Little Bow Hutterite Colony 38).

Figure 12. *Larry Hairy Bull, Standoff, 1997*, by George Webber (People of the Blood 18).

Figure 13. *Horace Shouting after completing Sun Dance, 2000*, by George Webber (People of the Blood 18).

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BORDER LINES AND CROSSING POINTS: A RESPONSE TO ANDREAS RUTKAUSKAS' PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE CANADIAN-U.S. BORDER

ANDREAS RUTKAUSKAS & KARLA MCMANUS

Résumé

Écrit en réponse au projet Borderline du photographe Andreas Rutkauskas, cet essai est une réflexion sur les tensions historiques, culturelles, politiques et géographiques visuellement et viscéralement vécues le long de la frontière Canda-États-Unis. A la fois un emblème et une manifestation physique de la nation-état moderne qui maintient son autorité à travers le contrôle et la surveillance de ses frontières, la frontière entre le Canada et les États-Unis soulèvent des questions sur l'utilisation du sol officielle et vernaculaire, les droits autochtones et les droits des colons en rapport avec le territoire et l'identité culturelle inhérente. Considérant les points de passage entre frontières comme des espaces culturels tendus, Rutkauskas utilise son objectif pour réfléchir aux similarités visuelles et spatiales- et à l'ordinaire banal- que l'on trouve au long de cette vaste frontière. En se concentrant sur la section de la série Borderline qui porte sur l'ouest canadien, cet essai interprète les images de Rutkauskas comme une réflexion sur l'intervention humaine constante sur l'environnement. Ultimement ce projet pousse le spectateur à découvrir ce que signifie partager un environnement séparé non par l'écologie, l'architecture ou l'ethnicité mais par une autorité nationale arbitraire.

Abstract

Written in response to the project Borderline by photographer Andreas Rutkauskas, this essay reflects on the historic, cultural, political, and geographical tensions visually and viscerally experienced along the Canada-US border. Both as an emblem and physical manifestation of the modern nation-state that maintains its authority through the control and surveillance of its boundary, the Canada-US borderline evokes questions about vernacular and official land use, indigenous and settler territorial rights, and the cultural identity inherent in place. Responding to the border points as fraught cultural spaces, Rutkauskas uses his camera to reflect on the visual and spatial similarities—and outright banal ordinariness—found along the vast boundary. Focusing on the western-Canadian portion of the Borderline series, this essay understands Rutkauskas's photographs as a reflection on the continued human transformation of the landscape. Ultimately, this project provokes the viewer to ask what it means to share an environment divided not by ecology, architecture, or ethnicity but by the arbitrariness of national authority.

I am crossing the border in a rented car. It is early summer and I'm enjoying the gloriously scenic drive along the St. Lawrence River from Montreal to the Thousand Islands border crossing under an almost-equinoctial sun. My companion and I have decided to avoid the heavy traffic of Highway 20 (Quebec) / 401 (Ontario) by taking the more winding and time-consuming route through the small towns and cities that make up the most southerly border of Canada. The boundary on this route is mostly river: once past Saint-Zotique, Québec, you enter Ontario and for another 50 kilometres or so you drive along a river that is divided between the two largest provinces of Eastern Canada. The Canada/U.S. border becomes watery at Cornwall, Ontario or, more accurately, in the middle of Saint-Régis Mohawk Reservation, which juts into Canadian territory from the American side and is bounded by two countries and two provincial boundar-

ies. Part of the larger Akwesasne Mohawk First Nation on the Canadian side, severed from the Saint Regis Mohawk Reservation in upstate New York, this little blip of land stands as a reminder of the colonial history and violence that continues to shape our understanding of territory, place, and identity in North America. For another 139 kilometres, we drive along a boundary that exists as solidly as a metaphor, with a current that flows across and around and under (into the Earth's very core?) this rock-steady divide. It feels only natural, then, that the border checkpoint should require us to traverse two bridges and a series of islands to achieve our goal of international travel. Somehow, the form of this journey seems right: crossing the border should be as complicated and arbitrary as the surrounding geographical and cultural landscape. Argued another way, creating a boundary is an act of authority, regardless of good intentions or practical neces-

sity. The imposition of place and order on a landscape should be something that we recognize as interventionist and domineering, like lines on a map, done with purpose and insight and, at the very least, it should make us a little uncomfortable.

This border response is not about the North or West of Canada. Like many Westerners, I have ended up “back East”—a funny expression meant to reflect how our origins as Canadians can be traced back to the settler-colonial roots of England and France, regardless of the fact that many of us have no ancestors from those founding nations or even Eastern Canada. These days I am more likely to take a plane across a border than to drive across the physical boundary between Canada and small-town America at one of the small checkpoints that barely see a hundred people in a week. Yet when I fly back West the sense of crossing a border always hits me while I look out the window at the lakes and forests below. Somewhere just north of Thunder Bay, I cross an imaginary boundary and, just like that, I'm almost home.

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Like me, the photographer Andreas Rutkauskas is from “out West.” Full disclosure: we grew up together in Winnipeg, playing softball and eating birthday cake in the historic Wolseley neighbourhood, named for the colonel who led the Anglo-Canadian military forces against the Red River Settlement’s short-lived provisional government. When we were kids, you could still drive down to the border crossing at Emerson, Winnipeg’s closest boundary point and enter North Dakota or Minnesota with just your birth certificate and photo ID to do some cross-border shopping. If this makes me sound old, let me clarify that this was not very long ago: only the 1980s and ‘90s, a time before the heightened security and the extensive use of CCTV, thermal-imaging cameras, and other forms of high-tech surveillance. In fact, it wasn’t until 2008 that regulations began to require that Canadians present their passports. To drive from Winnipeg to Grand Forks was still a big deal during our childhoods. Most of the people we knew hadn’t travelled much farther than Vancouver or Toronto, unless as immigrants who often did not have fond memories of their past border experiences. To cross a boundary into another country, especially into our big, bad neighbour to the south, seemed suspect—both risky and cosmopolitan—unless it was for a good consumer deal, something our prairie neighbours could always get behind. Yet, for people living right along the boundary, I suspect things were different. The border was more porous then and going across was like crossing the street. For those folks, it was only in the post-9/11 era, with its escalating regulation of the Canada-U.S. boundary, that the land beyond the border started to feel increasingly like a foreign place.

Rutkauskas understands the power and the fear of borders. Between 2012 and 2015, Rutkauskas traveled the Canada-U.S. boundary line—from Tsawwassen, British Columbia to Campobello, New Brunswick, and up to the most northerly crossing point between Little Gold Creek, Yukon and Poker Creek, Alaska—to photograph official and unofficial, active and decommissioned boundary points between the two nations. The U.S. and Canadian divide is, at 8,891 kilometres, the largest “undefended” border in the world and it marks the landscape softly yet surely: in the words of the International Boundary Commission, the organization in charge of boundary maintenance, it is “undefended but not uncared for.” (“The Boundary”) Across mountains, lakes, and forests—and sometimes right through buildings—the boundary marches along, demarcated at regular intervals by waist-high obelisks (over 5,500 of them), unobtrusive monuments to hundreds of years of bloody and not-so-bloody settler-colonial occupation, settlement, and statecraft in the Americas. By cleaving Canada out of the continent of North America, the boundary renders tangible—if not always visible—the social, political, and cultural histories that lurk behind the innocent signage and loosely barred gates that mark the Canadian from the Other. In the case of the United States of America, the Imperialist Other is both our best friend and the bully we watch for as we walk home from school.

Fig. 1. Monument #276 Waterton Lakes, Alberta - 2014

Fig. 2 Most Northerly Land Border - 2014

Fig. 3 Port of Climax - 2014

In Rutkauskas’s series *Borderline*, we see pictured this historical friction, which scholar Rob Nixon has called the tension between vernacular and official landscapes. Nixon, drawing on the ground-breaking work of American cultural geographer J.B. Jackson, describes a vernacular landscape as an evolving space that is integral to the social, economic, and ecological functioning of a local community (Nixon 17). On the other hand, an official landscape is one imposed on a place by an external group, sometimes governmental, non-governmental, and/or corporate, to reshape existing land practices and livelihoods—both human and non-human—for the purpose of bureaucratic, cultural, or financial power gain (17). This type of landscape-reordering attempts to quantify the value of certain people on the land—such as the Mohawk people of Akwesasne or the Métis of Riel’s Red River Settlement—and measure the benefits of displacing them to restructure the landscape along official lines. The Canada-U.S. boundary was imposed through such a bureaucratic and delocalizing intervention, “severing webs of accumulated cultural meaning and treating the landscape as if it were uninhabited by the living, the unborn, and the animate deceased” (17). Today, like many acts of greed on the land, what was a *cultural act* of landscape transformation has been normalized to be seen as a regular function of the contemporary nation-state. We expect the authority of border guards to make us nervous, to be watched by CCTV cameras, and to feel slightly uncertain about whether, having made it across, we might have gotten away with something.

Rutkauskas’ *Borderline* project was influenced by a 2010 invitation to produce work about the small town of Stanstead, Québec, which, as a border town, shares its town library with Derby Line, Vermont. Inspired by the increase in security in these traditionally linked communities, curator Genèvieve Chevalier invited three artists to respond to the site and the question of how borders shape and transcribe a sense of place (“Exhibitions—Stanstead Project”). Struck by the difference between the well-supervised town and the vast unmonitored forest that stretches out on both sides, Rutkauskas made a series of works—photographs, a book work, a video—that addressed what he calls the “wilderness-border zone” (“Stanstead Project”). In turn, Rutkauskas was inspired to explore the larger critical questions raised by this singular piece of the Canada/U.S. border. Intrigued by the problem of how to represent such a vast and complex site as the Canada/U.S. border, and inspired by the larger global context of migration, borders, and security in the 21st century, Rutkauskas planned his expedition across Canada. Rutkauskas was drawn to the unique and diverse border points: ones that offered complex visual, cultural, and historical readings and aesthetic and spatial problems for his eye to solve. Made up of approximately 50 photographs, a third of which focus on the West of Canada, the photographer now considers the series complete (“Re: Imaginations Journal”).

Fig. 4 Chief Mountain,
Alberta / Montana - 2014

Fig. 5 Monument #4 Tsawwassen,
British Columbia - 2014

opposite page:
Fig. 6 Snowflake, Manitoba - 2014

As much as *Borderline* reinforces the sense of infrastructure as authority, Rutkauskas' project also displays the banal ordinariness of many boundary points, shaped as they are by local geography, architecture, and land-use. Rutkauskas seeks to capture the similarity of place in his pictures, demonstrating that while the official boundary of the two modern nation-states rely on the authority of separate identities, difference isn't found on the ground or easily pictured. In his image of the small peninsula border town of Tsawwassen, B.C., the two sides of the vast border are distinguished with nothing more than a concrete marker and a chain-link fence. Rutkauskas frames the image tightly between the white clapboard building that stretches across the two sides of the boundary on the left of the picture and the two lane highway that leads towards the ocean, forcing our eye towards the horizon, on the right. In another image, "Chief Mountain, Alberta / Montana" (2014), the divide is marked by a couple rusty gates, a "welcome to Canada" sign, and a six-metre track of cleared forest receding into the mountains. Rutkauskas shoots the crossing from above and his elevated vantage point gives the viewer a direct sightline along the clear-cut tree line that leads towards the distant mountain range. The tiny line of the boundary is apparent even in the distance, as a white scar against the green of the forest.

A committed tourist who enjoys touring little towns, wilderness parks, and scenic routes might easily identify the Western Canadian locations by geography alone. In *Monument #276 Waterton Lakes, Alberta*, the mountains and water

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receding into the background behind the concrete marker that reads "Canada" can be clearly recognized as the landscape of the southern Rockies. No small town with border guards marks this site. The Waterton Lakes obelisk is located in a national park in which a micro-habitat of prairie meets the might of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, bordering Montana's Glacier National Park to the south. These two parks together have been jointly known since 1932 as the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, designated a UNESCO World Heritage in 1995. Fantastically scenic, one might think one was seeing a landscape free of human interference—what we used to call wilderness—if it wasn't for that tall marker of ownership solidly upright in the middle of the photograph.

Another official peace park marks a border crossing between Manitoba and North Dakota. Its founding in 1932 was a diplomatic event between neighbours attended by 50,000 people and celebrated with the dedication of a rock cairn that pledges: "To God in his Glory, we two nations dedicate this garden and pledge ourselves that as long as men shall live, we will not take up arms against one another" ("History"). Carved from Turtle Mountain Provincial Park on the Canadian side and surrounded by lakes, forests, and farms, and the Turtle Mountain Reservation to the south, the International Peace Park requires visitors to check in and out with customs upon arrival and departure. A colossal landscaped outdoor space that spreads across both sides of the boundary, the garden includes hiking trails, camping, picnicking, a 3000-square foot conservatory, a series of interpretative centers and arts camps, a 18-foot flower clock, a Carillion bell tower, and seven peace poles donated by the government of Japan. Most striking—photographed by Rutkauskas in his image of this site—is the Peace Tower: four concrete columns rise 120 feet into the air, straddling either side

Fig. 7 International Peace Garden - 2014

Fig. 8 Monument #162B,
Alaska / Yukon Border - 2014

of the boundary, two on one side and two on the other. Built in 1982 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the park, today the Peace Tower is a crumbling monument to the folly of building in the international architectural style of late Brutalism in a continental climate. It is currently scheduled for demolition (Wasney). By far the most spectacular of Rutkauskas' border subjects, the International Peace Park is a parody of itself—glorying in its status as monumental symbol of Canadian-U.S. goodwill and freedom of crossing.

On the other hand, the border crossing in Snowflake, Manitoba represents a contrast to the monolithic peace park. The small-town checkpoint is located an hour east of the International Peace Park by car, winding along the small gravel roads and two-lane highways of rural Manitoba. *Snowflake, Manitoba* (2014) pictures a white clapboard building with a peaked dark asphalt roof punctuated by a series of antennae and an overhang for cars to drive through. SNOWFLAKE is marked prominently on the side of the building. A double-car garage to the back completes the architectural infrastructure of the site. In between the two buildings, a truck is pulled off into a field where several bales of hay are piled. To the right of the building, where the road pulls off towards the U.S., a man puts gas into a lawnmower. Just in front of him, a smoky pile of burning weeds confirms that he has been hard at work keeping the boundary clear of unwanted vegetation and unauthorized life. Rutkauskas' photograph shows an official structure imposed on the landscape, just as the grain farms and settler towns in the surrounding

region were forced onto a land once lush with mixed and tall prairie grasses, lady-slippers, and Saskatoon bushes. This small contact point between two vast nations suggests a once vital past for this rural crossing, when agricultural settlers to the fertile uplands of the Pembina Valley would have seen the border as little more than an arbitrary divide, a fence between neighbours.

Borders are fraught cultural spaces, some more so than others, and Rutkauskas' photographs reminds us that even the most seemingly innocuous boundary points

are places of bureaucratic power and authority. By highlighting the tensions between local and official interventions in the landscape, Rutkauskas asks the viewer to consider how national diplomatic, economic, and ecological interests shape our sense of place, identity, and community. Following the history of photography in the Canadian West, when photographers came to survey and document territory for future use, Rutkauskas' *Borderline* pictures the human transformation of the West, offering a new way of imagining what it means to live along, below, and above the 49th parallel.

Fig. 9 Whiskey Gap, Alberta - 2014

BORDER LINES AND CROSSING POINTS:
A RESPONSE TO ANDREAS RUTKAUSKAS' PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE CANADIAN-U.S. BORDER

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Fig. 10 Monument #120
Chilkoot Pass, Alaska - 2014

DIS/APPEARANCES ON A HIGHWAY: A MODEL DRIVE

ERIN ASHENHURST

Résumé

Dis/Appearances on a Highway met en scène les éléments d'un voyage en voiture de Vancouver à Stewart, en Colombie Britannique. En juxtaposant des extraits de textes décrivant une histoire personnelle avec des images de paysages qui semblent avoir été prises depuis l'intérieur d'une voiture, cette œuvre explore un espace perçu comme une altérité. L'autoroute n'offre pas à ses usagers un paysage rural idéalisé ou une nature intacte mais plutôt une artère traversant la province et autour de laquelle de petites villes exhibent des motels lugubres et des mines et églises abandonnées. Pour ce conducteur, les montagnes sont une présence menaçante à l'horizon.

A première vue, la photographie de Dis/Appearances pourrait être perçue comme une série d'images sans prétention si ce n'était pour la fraude et l'aspect ludique que l'on voit dans leur construction. En bousculant les normes des images d'un voyage en voiture traditionnel par le biais d'un pare-brise illusoire, les images créent une subjectivité fictive. Dans Dis/Appearances, les vastes étendues de l'Ouest canadien ne rappellent pas le périple d'un aventurier mais plutôt une relation instable naviguée au travers des vitres d'un véhicule en mouvement perpétuel.

Abstract

Dis/Appearances on a Highway constructs elements of a road trip from Vancouver to Stewart, BC. Juxtaposing fragments of text describing a personal narrative with photographs of the landscape that appear to be taken from the secure distance of a car, the work explores a terrain experienced as an otherness. The highway does not offer its user an idealized countryside or untouched wilderness but is instead an artery running up the province, around which clusters of towns present grim motels, abandoned mines, and churches. For this driver, the mountains grow into a foreboding presence.

At first glance, the photography in Dis/Appearances could be read as unassuming snapshots, but there is a fraudulence and playfulness in their construction. By disrupting the traditional road-trip snapshot with the illusory layer of the model windshield, the images create a fictional subjectivity. In Dis/Appearances, the vastness of western Canada does not signify the journey of an adventurer, but rather an unstable relationship negotiated through the window of an ever-transient vehicle.

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Dis/Appearances on a Highway constructs elements of a road trip from Vancouver to Stewart, BC. Juxtaposing fragments of text describing a personal narrative with photographs of the landscape that appear to be taken from the secure distance of a car, the work explores a terrain experienced as an otherness. The highway does not offer its user an idealized countryside or untouched wilderness, but is instead an artery threading through the province where small towns host tired motels, churches, and abandoned mines. For this driver, the mountains grow into a foreboding presence.

At first glance, the photography in *Dis/Appearances* could be read as unassuming snapshots, but there is fraudulence and playfulness in their assembly. While photographs taken on location gesture to cinematic staging, the framing of the car interior is done using a *Playmobil* toy from a kit appropriately titled “City Life.” By disrupting the traditional road-trip snapshot with the illusory layer of the model windshield, the images create a fictional subjectivity from what might otherwise be seen as documentation. While pages of prose juxtaposed with imagery are conventionally used to signal the development of a linear storyline,

here the fragmentation of text and the falsity of image test a viewer's desire to form a cohesive narrative. Indeed, in one image, the glimpse of a plastic deer threatens to push things towards the absurd.

Though the trip described traverses less than two-thirds of the province, it is a distance of almost 1,500 kilometers—the same distance of a drive from Rome to Paris, or less than Madrid to Marrakesh. In *Dis/Appearances*, the vastness of Western Canada does not signify the journey of an adventurer, but rather an unstable relationship negotiated through the window of an ever-transient vehicle.

It was August and it seemed as if we had spent the

summer driving and watching things die. They died all

day in sudden, lonely blasts of yellow cream, and red

jam, and clear jelly. We would comment on how big or

bloody, and then I would yank forward the lever for the

windshield fluid and the wipers would spread their exotic

carcasses in half-moons across the glass.

By the time we made it to the town of Clinton,
British Columbia, we were desperate to escape the
shape of the car. Hours on the road and the catch
of our knees like a reluctant folding chair, wood
bloated in the heat.

On the highway, human density was exchanged for
insects, bunions of brown grass, and trees with crooked
white arms. Gravel shoulders hissed under tread and
the wide sky turned robin's egg blue to seething sepia.
There were stars.

As the sky grew dim, the insects thickened the air with
the vehemence of a death drum. In a pink sunset towards
Williams Lake, we mistook the rapid explosions of their
bodies for rain. Then, in the dark, oncoming headlights turned
their ruins opaque and I had to squint through the smears
to keep on the road. We turned the music up and the twists
of the canyon were abstracted in orange reflectors and the
floating taillights of monstrous big rigs.

One night, after the evening had throbbed with lightning before the quiet, deep black, the hazard lights of a hatchback ahead flashed the body of a deer. The car was pulled off the road and the deer lay behind on its side, head pointed towards the near edge of the highway. We slowed to see the haunches, hooves perfectly aligned and motionless. A pickup truck had pulled in front of the car and a large man walked between the vehicles, cigarette smoke snaking around his face.

I turned the high beams on through the mask of insect sludge as we lunged into the valley.

At the mouth of Vanderhoof, we saw a billboard for a missing woman. Her face was three meters tall, blonde, beaming. A number with a long string of zeros measured the value of her return. She had been at a lake party two years ago when, just before dawn, she slipped into the unknown. I saw a poster for her in a coffee shop and one taped to the back window of a grimy gray van. The message was clear: careful, this highway could consume you.

I could feel he had changed once we passed the city limits. Become calm and loose. He had done this drive for years—a feverish marathon in a battered Ford Tempo hot with summer, or a cramped doze in the back of a Greyhound bus on Christmas Eve. I had only flown to his hometown before, where the sudden dwarfing proximity of the mountains made me nervous.

In these towns, video stores thrived and phone reception
wavered. Buildings were brick and wood, stucco, and
aluminum siding. It felt as if the rules were different,
but then I thought of my husband's disapproving look when
I explained why I had decided to leave the pleasant malaise
of my towel to wade in the lake. "I had to pee," I said.
It had seemed natural, clearly the best place.

The couple had an RV and two Siberian Huskies
named Smokey and Bandit. They said a party of three
had made it through the tunnels last spring. It had
taken most of a day with their headlamps illuminating
the rusted debris abandoned in the dark.
"You shouldn't try in those flip-flops," they agreed.

We drove for days and I wondered if,
at the end of this highway, the mountains
would swell and swallow me up.
Perhaps, I thought, I could just wait in the car.

SEEN AND IMAGINED: A NORTHWESTERN CROSSROADS CITY

DOUGLAS HARPER & TARA MILBRANDT

Résumé

Cet article est une étude interprétative de la ville d'Edmonton qui combine photographie, réflexion écrite et analyse. En mêlant des points de vue externes et internes, cet essai représente la ville à travers l'imagerie d'une frontière postmoderne réaliste. Edmonton est peinte comme un lieu d'énergies diverses et souvent contradictoires, qui sont associées de manière significative avec son caractère du nord-ouest. Le projet s'est développé à travers un processus de photographie et de dialogue et, par nature, est subjective et partial. Il nous offre un engagement visuel sociologique avec un environnement social et un paysage culturel particulier, dont l'apparence et le ressenti sont représentés à travers un mélange d'images et de textes.

Abstract

This paper is an interpretive study of Edmonton, Alberta that combines photography, written reflection, and analysis. Blending insider and outsider voices and perspectives, the essay represents the city through the imagery of a gritty, postmodern frontier. Edmonton is depicted as the locus of mixed and often contradictory energies, associated in significant ways with its northwestern character. The project developed through a process of photography and dialogue and is by nature suggestive and partial. It offers a visual-sociological engagement with a particular social environment and cultural landscape, whose look and feel are represented through a combination of photographic images and written text.

Fig. 1. Edmonton, late-summer evening, a lingering sunset in a city at the 54th parallel. A discernible yet distant urbanity.

This essay interprets the social landscape of contemporary Edmonton through a combination of photographs and written text. We represent it as a gritty, “postmodern-frontier” city, emphasizing how its ambiance suggests a settlement located at the borderline of different worlds, the locus of conflicting elements and energies.

This essay was produced through a reflexive process of conversation, exploration, photography, and writing. We traversed Edmonton over several months, photographing it separately and as a team; we discussed our impressions of the city, including the question of how to represent it visually. Our dialogues were influenced by our differing backgrounds (Canadian and American); our overriding commonality as sociologists interested in photography and the urban lifeworld produced a basis for dialogue from which a shared vision of the city emerged. We made several hundred photographs and studied them in a photographic software editing and management system, using a keyword system to classify and sort images in relation to emerging themes. This enhanced our ability to compare and study the images, which influenced how and what we photographed on successive outings.

The creative tension in the narrative reflects our different backgrounds: for one author Edmonton is a place to live: a site of structural contradictions, colliding energies and contested versions of alternative futures. For the other the city was originally a visual and experiential impression, interpreted comparatively against the backdrop of a post-industrial American city (Pittsburgh). In dialogue and successive photographic outings, these two perspectives on the city produce a relatively coherent vision.

In the beginning stages we characterized Edmonton’s look and feel as a “postmodern frontier.” Postmodernity was first used to describe architectural forms in which contradictory elements playfully confronted

the authoritarian blocks of modernity, combinations of styles that contradict each other but make an interesting, engaging totality (Jenks). Frontier, on the other hand, connotes a boundary between the settled and unsettled: a “meeting place between two or more cultures” (Spurgeon viii), it is a point of contact and struggle, material and symbolic. Taken together, “postmodern” and “frontier” offer creative tensions, both within their own interpretive universes and between them. These tensions and contradictions resonated for both authors and led to the identification of the following themes that offered specific challenges and possibilities for visualization:

- The mix of north and west as a source of order and tension;
- the centrality of river and bridges as sites of connection and separation;
- transient and affective energies implied in “boom” and “bust”;
- the textual and architectural inscription of the past in the present;
- the interplay of ambient light and built form.

The photographs and textual analysis develop these themes, offering an approach to representing the city that highlights the dialectical relationship between the material and the imaginative. While we do not envision them as exhaustive, definitive, or exclusively “Edmontonian,” we nevertheless propose that there may be something discernibly “Edmonton” in how they comingle and form a unity. They also represent our interpretive choices within the modest constraints of a short essay, as elicited through sociological discussion, walking around, looking at, reflecting upon, and photographing the city. We concentrate primarily on the south-central area of Old Strathcona, and to a lesser extent the urban core and the outlying regions.

The essay embodies an approach to urban visual sociology in which images of landscape and sociological ideas intertwine. The tradition of urban sociology that emerged out of the Chicago School is an important influence that informs this project. In particular, we find inspiration in its call to take sociology into the streets, carefully attending to and accentuating the relationship between the form and experience of the city.

This project also draws on a social-landscape tradition that explores the dynamic relationship between human habitation, material, and land. These studies range from George Tice’s 1970s photographs of gas stations and

working-class vernacular architecture, often at night and devoid of humans, to Edward Burtynsky’s recent aerial photographs depicting marks made by humans as we transform (and destroy) the natural environment.¹ While we draw upon Tice and Burtynsky (for example) for inspiration, both are art photographers who draw their visions from particular photographic approaches applied to specific subject matter. Tice used a large-negative camera, long exposures, and black and white film to present formally the architectural structures of east-coast American working-class communities; Burtynsky photographs in colour from the air, finding the “above” perspective a means to grasp visually the often fantastically huge issues he confronts, such as water use. Thus, while we study the work of these (and other) art-based landscape photographers to see how they used particular photographic techniques and approaches, we defined our own working method rather than mimicked theirs.

We were also influenced by photographers who produced “portraits of cities,” such as W. Eugene Smith’s famous photographic study of Pittsburgh.² Smith’s Pittsburgh essay offers landscapes in which humans perform the scripts seemingly asked for by their settings: working, laughing, arguing, filling routine public spaces. Pittsburgh in the 1950s came alive for Smith because he photographed with an eye to human action within the context of factory, street, club, and home. As a seasoned photojournalist

he was trained to intrude when necessary into these events, and his small camera (a rangefinder Leica) and fluid shooting style made him seem transparent. In other words, he was a master “street photographer”: observing, recording, merging momentarily into the setting before disappearing into the next. While we share Smith’s interest in exploring a city’s identity photographically, we elected not to include images of identifiable persons.

We are both practiced photographers and constructed images self-consciously, with attention to the effects of camera technologies (lens choice, aperture, shutter speed, ISO, and so forth) on the images made. Emphasizing the “how” over the “what,” our photos were constructed by our framing and technical choices to exemplify the ideas we wished to communicate. We resisted the temptation to spectacularize the city or present photos as urban “eye-candy” through digital enhancements aimed at bedazzling the reader. We both use moderate wide-angle lenses that foreground objects in the context of their setting and present landscapes at approximately the perspective of the human eye. To reflect on the multiple layers and forms of social existence that the landscapes imply, we have (mostly) emptied them of identifiable human persons through photographic methods, including the use of long exposures in which people moving through space fade or disappear from view.

Edmonton—A City West by North

The cardinal directions west and north begin to locate Edmonton geographically and culturally. Edmonton is a western city, located in the western region of the Canadian prairies. Within the collective imaginary, it is a city “out west” in a sparsely populated region, an intense urbanity surrounded by low-density settlements and agricultural forms of life culturally associated with the west. The city’s extensive and connected parks and trails include dense forests that sometimes resemble wilderness territory. There is a vivid sense of urban landscape, epitomized in the view of the city’s skyline from the south side of the river along Saskatchewan Drive; yet the experience of the built world is continuously punctuated by natural elements.

Fig. 2. Edmonton’s first Nuit Blanche street festival, downtown core.

Fig. 3. Downtown Edmonton, as seen from the multi-use path along Saskatchewan Drive.

Fig. 4. The links between the city and the wilderness-like parks are often wooden steps from the surface of the city down into ravines and valleys or conversely, up into the streets of different neighbourhoods and areas.

Fig. 5. Winter clouds above the river and city, as seen from the High Level Bridge.

Fig. 6. The High Level Bridge, 2:00 p.m. on the winter solstice.

Symbolically and ideologically, Edmonton evokes the settler imagery of a frontier town at the edge of habitation (“old west”) with the promise of subsistence or even prosperity during hard times elsewhere. Tied to the hope signified by going west is a sense of nostalgic longing, captured poignantly in the lyrics of Ian Tyson’s 1963 song “Four Strong Winds.” The song has been ritually sanctified in Edmonton, collectively performed on the last night of the four-day Edmonton Folk Music Festival that takes place every August in Gallagher Park, near the banks of the North Saskatchewan River: “...*Thought I’d go out to Alberta, weather’s good there in the fall. Got some friends that I can go to working for...*”

Edmonton is also a quintessentially northern city. Geographically it is the most populous northern

settlement on the continent, the only northern census metropolitan area (CMA) with a population exceeding one million.³ The winter nights are long and dark and summer light lasts well into the night. Amongst major Canadian cities, it is the darkest place to be on the winter solstice (approximate 9:00 a.m. sunrise and 4:30 p.m. sunset, 7.5 hours of daylight); conversely it is the lightest major Canadian city on the summer solstice (approximate 5:00 a.m. sunrise and 10:00 p.m. sunset, 19 hours of daylight). Such extremes invite different forms of habitation that fluctuate with the seasons.

Edmonton is a gateway to the remote north, a site of intersection between northern routes and workers en route.⁴ Economically and geographically, its northern character is tied to the extraction of raw materials

and the energy sector; workers on the oil patch, particularly Fort McMurray, use the city as a staging ground, a place of transition between times of work in an industry that is both volatile and contested.⁵ Billowing smoke pumps into the typically blue skies above the city, lingering potently and visibly in the thick cold of a clear and sunny winter day; from the rows of oil refineries located towards its north-east outskirts, these clouds evoke a strangely dreamy and sinister effect. They are also visual metaphors and material traces of Edmonton’s deep economic ties to the oil and gas sector, with all of the ambivalence that accompanies this relationship. Indeed this is a time in which critical environmental challenges hang heavily in the political air, both here and around the globe.

Fig. 7. Cloud-like smoke billows into the air from an oil refinery around Refinery Row on the eastern edge of Edmonton, as seen from a car window.

The city’s northern geography also shapes its cultural identity in creatively tangible ways. In recent years Edmonton has officially embraced the identity of “winter city.”⁶ Popular cultural events and annual festivals staged in the cold dark of winter suggest a spirit of joyful resilience in the face of a typically bitter (though dry!) cold. Popular annual winter festivals such as Ice on Whyte or the Deep Freeze Byzantine winter festival are two examples that include ice sculptures, snow slides, and other enticements to abandon the warmth of the indoors for the frigid world outside. The north is both a source of physical hardship and collective possibility.

Fig. 8. Ice on Whyte, 2016. The festival invited an international ice-sculpting competition, including the submission pictured here, “The Wind Blows from the South,” by team Lithuania.

River and Bridges: Connection and Separation

“The bridge becomes an aesthetic value insofar as it accomplishes the connection between what is separated not only in reality and in order to fulfill practical goals, but in making it directly visible” (Simmel 6).

Referred to locally as “River City,” Edmonton is bisected by the North Saskatchewan River. A river city is perhaps by definition a city of bridges. Bridges simultaneously connect and separate parts of the city, physically and symbolically (Simmel 5); they help to create, connect, and delineate a north and a south side. Edmonton’s bridges are also a vivid reminder of the city’s industrial prowess, especially true of the High Level Bridge, an iconic landmark in the city centre. The rough and imposing construction has recently undergone a visual transformation through the Light the Bridge campaign that is visually enchanting, sometimes garishly so. Sixty thousand programmable LED bulbs are illuminated every night. Varying in color, the lights often mark notable local, national, and international events. On Christmas Eve, for example, they were illuminated in green and red; following the Paris attacks in November 2015, they were white, red, and blue. In these instances the enduring functional form plays with the ephemeral, celebratory, and carnivalesque.

Traversing the bridge on foot brings together several defining elements of Edmonton. It has a gritty look and feel; one is exposed to the elements with little protection, at the same time as one is opened up to the dramatic glow of a vivid downtown cityscape. As motorized vehicles on two narrow lanes rush by, pedestrians and cyclists precariously share the narrow, tunnel-like pathway between the river below and traffic, often barely audible to one another amid wind and noise. Juxtaposed against the industrial functions of the bridge, with a train-track on top, one encounters a spectacular, dangerous, and sublime beauty set against a massive and ever-changing sky, overlooking a wide river whose sounds and movements reflect the city in its variable seasons. Even on the coldest days of winter there is typically a thin strip of water 48 meters below, moving too rapidly to freeze completely. From the vantage point of the bridge, the sliver of moving water cutting through the frozen surfaces represents life and movement but also perhaps a strange invitation to jump (as Trevor Anderson suggests in his documentary short *The High Level Bridge*, 2010). The bridge invites melancholia and an existential moment in the city and perhaps also for the city.⁷

Fig. 9. *The High Level Bridge.*

Fig. 10. *Entering the pedestrian walkway from the south side of the river.*

Transience: Boom and Bust, Population, and Economy

Edmonton is marked by tensions between growth and stasis. The city has always been demographically dynamic, creating a cultural, economic, and visual environment that is in perpetual development and always showing its rough edges. In part, these tensions reflect the coexistence of those who use Edmonton as a stepping-off place to northern extraction industries or other endeavors beyond the city boundaries and those who settle in the city, normally drawn by the promise of work or study rather than as a destination in its own right. Marked by its location at the intersection of multiple regions of economic activity, Edmonton is a pathway through and site of arrival for economic migrants. It is also marked by the anomic dimensions that invariably accompany a boom-and-bust economic pattern within an often ruthlessly individualistic, late-modern capitalism (cf. Durkheim).⁸

Indeed the city accommodates, services, and exploits the transience of significant parts of its population. The embodied and unique biographical energies underpinning this ongoing drama are evoked in the ample pawnshops and predatory lending institutions seen throughout the city core and in the various built forms that meet the mundane needs of people on the move: laundromats, park benches, and self-storage facilities whose monotonous façades conceal the narrative details implied in each interior. Prosaic public architecture, such as the modernist public bathroom in Old Strathcona, suggest Edmonton’s attempt to accommodate lives on the move and bodies in between places, from transient and under-housed persons, to suburban visitors, Farmer’s Market shoppers, and intoxicated bar-scene revelers.

Fig. 11. *The spectacular and often garish light show.*

Fig. 12. *The light-rail transit bridge as seen from the High Level Bridge, suggesting the extraordinary vistas afforded pedestrians and cyclists on the bridge at all hours and in all seasons.*

Fig. 13. Public Laundromat, east Whyte Avenue.

Fig. 14. Modernist public bathroom, open all hours, offering facilities and momentary shelter in a glass box.

Fig. 15. Uncle Ed's, a predatory lending institution.

The Inscription of Past in Present

The past is inscribed in the city's present in different ways, both literal and symbolic. These are marked self-consciously in the city's formally designated historic areas and also implied in the lingering presence of particular historical eras implied by fonts on material surfaces, creating an ambiance of colliding times and memories.

Indeed, the city has created what it calls a living-history museum at Fort Edmonton Park, comprised of working shops, restaurants, and other facilities that combine original and re-creations of buildings from three eras in which Edmonton was a fur-trading outpost (1885, 1905, and 1920). Touted as the largest museum of its kind in Canada, Fort Edmonton presents a sanitized and simplified version of earlier eras, replete with guides in costume during summer months to reinforce the visual presentation of an imagined past.

Fig. 16. Fort Edmonton, a museum preserving and codifying a version of the region's history. To wander through these re-created streets is to immerse oneself in an idealized vision of the past and engage in an imaginative involvement with Edmonton's history and identity.

Fig. 17. Historic hotel and cinema, in continual use since its construction in 1921. The iconic Princess Theatre is located next to the Commercial Hotel, which houses the popular bar and live-music venue Blues on Whyte.

Edmonton's demographic dynamics have contributed to an ongoing tension between original architectural definitions of the city and continual rebuilding, reuse, and redefinition. Buildings combine original historical definition and contemporary uses, most notable in Old Strathcona, a formally designated historic area south of the river that is also the university area and a popular live theatre, restaurant, bar, and shopping district. Historic buildings are often labeled with informative brass plaques and occupied by contemporary and mostly independent businesses. Some historic buildings continue to serve their original uses, though of course in ways that bear traces of the contemporary.

Certain historical eras, such as the 1950s, are frozen in fonts and design used in large permanent signage, often with corresponding neon displays. For example, an auto-dealer on Whyte Avenue continues to advertise "Olds" in a large tower and sign that preserves the look of the 1950s and '60s, though the last Oldsmobile was produced in 2004. The presence of multiple car dealerships in this relatively pedestrian concentrated and cyclist inhabited area of the city communicates mixed messages.

Fig. 18. Garneau Theatre Building, which houses the art-house Metro Cinema, restaurants, and a popular cafe near the University of Alberta.

Overall, Edmonton mixes historical eras freely, with self-conscious attention to the historical significance of particular places and structures. The overall look is gritty-historical, with an ad hoc feeling attuned to the rapid development of the city. Edmonton's pragmatic identity is based on its connection to the energy sector in the north and its constant use as a transit zone between places, imagined eras, and regions. Fighting to the surface is a sense of a "new frontier," an urban place deriving from location and purpose.

Fig. 19. Neon signage celebrating an automobile that has been out of production for more than a decade.

Interplay of Ambient Light and Built Form

The city's northern latitude creates a landscape of shadows that shape the look and feel of its neighborhoods, streets, and buildings. The sun along the horizon shines into surfaces, rather than down onto the tops of objects, even when the midsummer sun is highest in the sky. This effect influences the experience of the city in subtle yet distinctive ways. By contrast, in cities nearer to the equator, one seeks refuge from the sun's direct and incessant rays; in Edmonton the muted and oblique sunlight is an aesthetically

Fig. 20. 1950s font on an auto dealership on Whyte Avenue, where the prevailing businesses are independent shops, restaurants, and cafes. The bold signage recalls an era and is deteriorating before the eye of the public.

pleasing presence. Prairie clouds are typically textured and dynamic, often interrupted with beams of sunlight that momentarily break through the grey cover, offering an illuminated silver texture to both the sky and building surfaces.

Edmonton also has a relatively high proportion of sunlight hours, generally ranking in the top three or four Canadian cities for total sunlight hours and for the number of days in which bright sunlight is recorded.⁹ As a result, it has a visual energy driven by light, in

Fig. 21. Army & Navy department store on Whyte Avenue, opened in 1928. The chain is touted as "Canada's original discount store." Army & Navy's perseverance contrasts with the rapid turnover in adjacent blocks.

contrast to the energy of cities with dull, overcast, foggy, or (more) visibly polluted skies.

Edmonton light appears relatively undiluted by industrial pollution in spite of the harmful particulate matter that lingers invisibly in the air. The winter light is muted by the low angle of the sun and the correspondingly soft hues of long sunrise and sunset hours. Although the summer sun is higher in the sky, the mornings and evenings are extended and gradual. At 11:00 p.m. in June the city is still vibrant from

Fig. 22. Rainbow over an industrial alley, Old Strathcona, early evening, approaching summer solstice.

the post-sunset glow. It is also a city in vivid winter blackness, where darkness communicates atmospheric cold, stillness, and withdrawal into domestic spaces.

The city features light in its environmental designs, particularly in recent projects on the High Level Bridge and winter festivals where colored lights illuminate sculptures made from ice, sometimes juxtaposed against fire. Afternoon light in midwinter illuminating bare trees and the low angle of the sun create visual drama; the ephemerality is intensified by the

Fig. 23. Ceiling light reflections from a drugstore window.

Fig. 24. Shopfront of Cleaning by Page against sunlight beaming through moody clouds.

appearance of dark afternoon shadows along a vacant storefront, with a residual sign that reads "TIME IS PRECIOUS" (see Fig. 28). It is as if the city's material and atmospheric elements are in dialogue with one another.

Fig. 25. Afternoon light in midwinter. Bare trees and the low angle of the sun create visual drama; the ephemerality is intensified by the sign on the vacant store.

Fig. 26. Northern light reflected in Edmonton's downtown office towers.

Fig. 27. Art Gallery of Alberta. In 2010 the new public building was opened in a more prominent and central location near City Hall. Its surreal architecture design contrasts with the urban brutalist style of the previous building and the generic modern towers that surround it.

Conclusion

Guided by the idea of a “postmodern frontier,” we have explored several themes and tensions that evince perceptible aspects of Edmonton’s public ambiance and unique geography. We have been attuned to seen-but-unnoticed dimensions of the everyday and night, in a city not typically revered for its visual or urban qualities. Without a rigidly preconceived framework, we allowed ideas to emerge and develop in dialectical relationship with the images being made, through conversations elicited by these images and in continuous (if sometimes implicit) comparison with other cities. This narrative is a modest attempt to understand and characterize a multi-layered urban identity through written and visual text, an invitation to see and imagine Edmonton sociologically.

**The listing of author names is alphabetical.*

Notes

¹ For an overview of social landscape as the basis for a visual sociology of the city, see Harper (2012, 2015). For an introduction to the concept of social landscape, see Knowles and Sweetman. Tice’s representative work is found Tice (1975). Burtynsky’s extensive work is best accessed via his website (<http://www.edwardburtynsky.com/>).

² W. Eugene Smith’s photographic survey of Pittsburgh was an unprecedented visual study of a city. Armed with a letter of introduction from the mayor of Pittsburgh, Smith immersed himself for more than a year in the public life and institutions of the city, making thousands of black-and-white photographs that were not systematically catalogued, exhibited, or published until several decades after Smith’s death. See Stephenson.

³ The Edmonton census metropolitan area (CMA) population was estimated to be 1,328,300 according to the 2014 census by Statistics Canada, whereas the City of Edmonton had a population of 877,926. The population has been recorded in censuses performed at five-year intervals and typical growth rates over these five-year periods have been more than 10%. For more detail, see <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150211/t150211a001-eng.htm> and http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/facts_figures/population-history.aspx.

⁴ Dorow and Dogu studied what they termed the “local consciousness” of residents of Fort McMurray by having them draw maps that represent their subjective definition of the city. They write: “... most of the workers’ maps included escape hatches to places that temporarily mitigated the stark reality of spatially deferred hope. ... Mark went regularly to Edmonton on his days off to spend time with activist friends; next to ‘E-town’ he wrote ‘this place keeps you sane.’” (284). Their study appears in an exemplary collection by Davidson, Park, and Shields (2011) that explores what they term “ecologies of affect,” that is, how particular aspects of place (and time) evoke or manifest nostalgia, desire, and hope.

⁵ The energy industry, particularly oil and gas, has become increasingly criticized both nationally and internationally by the association of bitumen extraction and “dirty” oil from the Athabasca tar sands, located in Fort McMurray, Alberta, as well as fears of oil spills associated with pipelines. Further, boom and bust has been the dominant economic pattern within Alberta for decades as a result of how the (now former) Progressive Conservative dynasty government managed the resource economy through close ties to the private oil and gas industry, while boasting of the (low) tax “advantage” in Alberta but leaving workers vulnerable to such events as collapsing oil prices in the global economy. By 2016, under a New Democratic Party government, diversification of the economy has become a more imaginable alternative, although the degree to which this becomes reality remains to be seen. For some critical elaboration of what this might require, see Laxer.

⁶ Edmonton joined a list of other northern cities around the world seeking to engage winter as a positive time of cultural possibility rather than a season of dread. For background on Edmonton’s official WinterCity strategy, see the following report: http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/PDF/COE-WinterCity-Love-Winter-Summary-Report.pdf.

⁷ In addition to emergency telephones, which were installed by the city in 2015, construction is underway to build suicide prevention barriers, in the form of high-tension wires, along the High Level Bridge. While this is being lauded as an important step in responding to the problem of suicide, it has also led to some controversy concerning its implications for cyclist safety.

⁸ A recent increase in suicide has been attributed to mass layoffs in the energy sector in the past year. For example, between January and June 2014, there were 252 suicides in Alberta, compared to 327 in 2015, a year in which there were mass layoffs in the energy sector. See <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/suicide-rate-alberta-increase-layoffs-1.3353662>.

⁹ <https://www.currentresults.com/Weather-Extremes/Canada/sunniest-cities.php>.

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Milbrandt: 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 25

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POKE YOU IN THE HEART:

WHAT CAN A PHOTO SAY, WHAT SHOULD IT SAY, AND HOW IS THAT AFFECTED BY THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND THE AUDIENCE?

AARON ELKAIM, NADIA BOUCHIER, AND JENNY GERBRANDT

Résumé

Dans cet article, l'auteur utilise les photos de deux photographes (Nadia Bouchier et Aaron Vincent Elkaim) afin d'explorer l'expérience des membres de Fort McKay en Alberta, ainsi que le dialogue visuel Ouest canadien. Trois perspectives importantes sont unis dans cette pièce : Nadia, le photographe qui a vécu dans la communauté de Fort McKay pour la plupart de sa vie ; Aaron, l'artiste et photographe qui a passé plusieurs mois dans la collectivité de Fort McKay; et l'auteur en tant qu'anthropologue tenter de rendre justice au travail de deux photographes afin de fournir une analyse sur les grandes questions de droits indigènes, les questions environnementales, et discours visuel de l'Ouest Canadien. Le but de cet article est d'explorer les réponses aux questions qui sont posées dans le titre : que peut dire une photo, que devrait-elle dire, et comment est cela affecté par la perspective du photographe et le consommateur le l'art ? Explorer la nature et le sens de l'art politique est important pour la discipline de la photographie, à l'étude de la représentation visuelle, ainsi que la façon dont les membres de la communauté et les étrangers conçoivent de l'Ouest canadien, les sables bitumineux, et la communauté de Fort McKay.

Abstract

In this article, the author uses the photographs of two artists (Nadia Bouchier and Aaron Vincent Elkaim) in order to explore the experience of the members of Fort McKay, Alberta as well as western-Canadian visual discourse. Three important perspectives come together in this piece: Nadia, the photographer who has lived in the community of Fort McKay for most of her life; Aaron, the artist and photographer who spent several months in the community of Fort McKay; and the author as an anthropologist attempting to do justice to both photographers' work and provide some analysis regarding the larger issues of Indigenous rights, environmental issues, and western-Canadian visual discourse. The purpose of this article is to explore answers to the questions that are posed in its title: what can a photo say, what should it say, and how is these imagistic utterances shaped by both the perspective of the photographer and the audience? Exploring the political nature and meaning of art is important to the discipline of photography, to the study of visual representation, and to the way that community members and outsiders conceive of the Canadian West, the oil sands, and the community of Fort McKay, Alberta.

ELKAIM, BOUCHIER & GERBRANDT

Interview and Discussion Context

As soon as I arrived in Fort McKay and the home of Nadia's Aunt Rose, I was struck by the natural beauty that could be seen from the windows and balcony of Rose's home. During our first meeting and our subsequent interview, I took my own photos of the sun shining over the snow-covered Athabasca River through the forest (the same river that is featured in Aaron's photos). As we sat at Rose's kitchen table talking, eating her homemade rice pudding and drinking tea, I commented on the beauty of this scene to Nadia. Her response is instructive regarding the issues this community faces and the complex meaning and understanding of all forms of visual discourse. She used this river to speak about all of her photos and her photographic goals. She commented that this water (the Athabasca River) is not the river of her childhood or of her ancestors, but has been changed by the oil industry. She and her fellow community members can no longer drink, fish, swim, or bathe in the water. She explained, "I can't do anything with it, and so there is a loss of connection as a person you know, how am I supposed to care for this river if it's going to hurt me?" This is just one example of the complex nature of using photos to understand a community, a place, an issue, or a regional identity. Even as I look at my photos, I realise that without talking to a community member I could not have understood many of the meanings and emotions tied to this river for those who have lived around it for generations.

Marita Sturken characterises the camera image as a significant "technology of memory," an object "through which memories are shared, produced, and given meaning" (9, 11). When a friend and colleague asked me to participate in the unique opportunity to explore western Canadian visual discourse by bringing together photographers and scholars, I was excited to explore the medium, the discourse, and Aaron Vincent Elkaim's photographs of Fort McKay Alberta.¹ Loopmans et al. explore the ways that "photographs incite public debate about place and community" (699). Camera images (as well as the conversations and stories that give them meaning) are an important part of the political and personal ways we see and understand the world. I interviewed a Fort McKay First Nation community member, Nadia Bouchier,² about these photos, and our conversation forms the basis for this article. Nadia herself is a photographer and a friend of Aaron's from his time in the community in 2011 and

2012. She has contributed 15 of her own photos for this article. My goal in writing this article as a conversation between two photographers' photos is to explore what a photo can say; what it should say; how photos connect to place; and the inherent contradictions and politics present in producing and viewing photography.

In the following summary and analysis of our discussion, three important perspectives come together: Nadia, the photographer who has lived in the community for most of her life; Aaron, the artist and photographer who spent several months in the community; and my own as an anthropologist hoping to do justice to both photographers' work and provide some useful analysis regarding larger issues of Indigenous rights, environmental issues, place, and western Canadian visual discourse. The discursive format that I have chosen serves these two photographers, their photos, the community of Fort McKay, as well as the larger issues that the editors of this issue have asked contributors to explore.

Community Context

Many people identify Fort McMurray, Alberta with the Athabasca oil sands. However, 50 kilometres north of Fort McMurray along the Athabasca River is the small community of Fort McKay, which sits at the heart of the oil sands activity in the region. There are approximately 450 members of the Fort McKay First Nation and 800 people live in the community. Oil development and extraction has brought both economic opportunity (e.g. the Fort McKay Group of companies) as well as environmental damage and health issues to the members of this community (Elkaim & Bouchier; Fort McKay First Nation). This community has faced ignorance, hatred, and disregard for their history and wellbeing as they navigate an economic, political, and environmental context that has created dependence on the very industry that threatens their land, rights, and traditions. While facing the effects of the globalized oil industry, the members of this community also continue to engage proudly in their traditional hunting, trapping, gathering, and other practices.

Photographic Goals and Audience

Nadia and Aaron have similar understandings of the purpose of their photos. “Sleeping with the Devil,” the title of Aaron’s larger work excerpted here, reflects his artistic goals. Aaron argues that everyone, whether near or far from the oil sands, is responsible for the larger system that thrives on the extraction of oil:

For the Fort McKay First Nation the situation is much more personal and immediate, but we are all part of this system that creates wealth through the destruction of our lands and ecosystems. We all participate in global warming, in species extinction, in water and air pollution, no matter how much we try not to.

The title of Nadia’s unpublished collection of photos, “Lost with Time,” also reflects her views about the land, places, knowledge, and traditions that could be lost in the future if we continue exploiting the environment. Her purpose in showing her photos is the same whether in Victoria where she studies photography or in her home of Fort McKay. She explains:

I wanted to bring a piece of my history to people. I wanted them to understand that there are still things out there that are left to be seen and experienced. You can still go back to your traditional ways and connect in some ways to the land. I wanted also to show what could be lost if you we continue on doing what you we are doing.

In terms of audience, both Aaron and Nadia are aware of the need to attempt to inform but not judge and the need to allow questions but not to force opinions. They have obviously made their own judgements about the oil industry and its influence on the community of Fort McKay. However, the goal of these photos is not only to be honest about these opinions, but also to encourage honest reflection in viewers of the photos. Aaron is not trying to convince people or to change their minds, as that would be unfair. He explains:

Audience is a question that I have always found difficult to answer. It supposes that I know how people think, and that I should wish to change their perspective, or that I may know what is right and wrong and am trying to convince someone. While my work is based on environmental issues, I don’t have the answers. My job is to focus my lens on places where these issues exist ... I want people to confront the realities of our life on this planet.

Nadia explained that the audience for her photos includes her community, the wider world, and even herself:

My goal would be the same [no matter the audience]. The whole idea is, this is what you are going through and this is what I’m going through ... My work speaks from me, from my heart and growing up and living here and having been effected by it [oil] for so many years ... There is no right or wrong way [to connect to a photo] ... Who am I to impose that on someone and say, well you are supposed to be looking at it this way?

The ways that both Nadia and Aaron struggle to answer questions about audience are instructive in terms of their conceptions of their own identities, bodies of work, and responsibilities to the land and to their local, national, and global communities. How they see their photos and the places and issues they represent are informative about how they view themselves and their roles in their photographic, artistic, and Aboriginal communities.

A Thematic Discussion of Nadia and Aaron’s Photos

Two photos bring up themes of change, loss, inevitability, and the huge timescale of nature: Aaron’s photo of the orange scarecrows on a tailings pond (Figure 5) and Nadia’s photo of an ink cap plant among brightly colored leaves, twigs, and berries (Figure 1). Nadia interprets how Aaron’s photo could (and perhaps should) make viewers feel guilty and embarrassed at what has been done, contrasting to the plant photo that represents “something I would like to see more of.” She sees Aaron’s scarecrow photo as an example of what has been lost and can never be regained, while her plant photo represents to her what still remains natural but could easily be lost. We discussed whether reclamation of extraction areas was actually possible and if so, what that would entail. Nadia used both of these photos to explain why reclamation (or returning land to its pre-industrial state) is impossible for many reasons, including a misunderstanding of the timescales involved. In reference to what used to exist where the tailings pond sits now, she says, “You can’t replace a muskeg, you can’t actually make a muskeg (that took thousands of years to form)! Reclamation is a word they [oil companies] use to make themselves feel better.” These photos do not immediately pair together in my mind, but they do for Nadia. Discussing them together is important to understanding her view of the issues facing her community and the place that she loves. It is important to Nadia and Aaron to depict

Fig. 1. Nadia Bouchier 2013

Fig. 5. Aaron Vincent Elkaim 2013

both the physical and emotional aspects of what has been lost, what is being lost, and what could be lost in the future. It is also imperative not to allow the perceived (and actual) power of the oil industry to prescribe a future that involves an irrevocably changed or damaged landscape.

Fig. 2. Nadia Bouchier 2014

Fig. 6. Aaron Vincent Elkaim 2012

Nadia connected two photos in particular to the concepts of home and connection: the photo of her Aunt Rose cooking (Figure 2) and Aaron's aerial photo of the Athabasca River (Figure 6). For Nadia, both images represent values and practices that are traditionally important but also increasingly rare. Nadia explained the motivation for photographing her Aunt in her home by talking about the love that her Aunt continues to put into her hard work as a caterer in the community. Her aunt is a highly sought-after cook who prepares traditional foods in traditional ways, which is popular with Elders and other community members. This photo pulls Nadia towards her physical and emotional home as it represents what is special about her Aunt and her community but also what is sadly changing:

It's really rare to find someone that wants to put their whole heart and soul into helping the community the way she does. It's rare to find that in this community, someone to put out their life like that and to feed up to 1500 people ... You watch her in her kitchen and get that love, because really that's what she puts into her food, is all of her love ... It makes people feel like home.

Fig. 3. Nadia Bouchier 2013

Nadia explained that Aaron's aerial photo of the Athabasca river (Figure 6) also speaks to her about community and home in the same way. For Nadia, this beautiful photo evokes peacefulness, mindfulness, and connection to the place she calls home. She commented that "the river when you are in a boat, it's just peaceful and puts you in a trance almost as you are meandering around these points and trying to get yourself through the river." Nadia says

that this photo evokes a sense of connection and home that is being lost because of oil development. Nadia described an instance when she tried to travel by boat from Fort McKay to Fort McMurray but was forced to turn back because she had difficulty breathing amongst the fumes caused by the nearby oil extraction and processing sites along the river. Because of the oil development, she and her fellow community members no longer trust the health and safety of the river. Nadia

calls the environmental effects "a total and complete loss, a loss of connection to your heart and what the river represents." She argued that the river represented in the photo is an example of beauty, freedom, as well as the obvious disconnect from the river and the land among multi-national oil companies, many local oil company employees, and even some members of her own community. One cannot irrevocably change or destroy something if they understand and respect it.

Nadia's photo of the shore at Moose Lake (Figure 3) reflects her strong emotional response to the environmental changes in her community. This place has long been vital to the lives of the Fort McKay community, and its importance grows as development moves closer. Every time Nadia leaves Moose Lake, she says, "I always shed a tear ... It's like I'm leaving a piece of my heart behind and I'm leaving the land and the forest and then flying over this [oil mines] and coming back to reality." Moose Lake is a place that represents what is still present, what has been lost, and what could be lost in the future. It is a chance to slow down and reconnect with nature and history. Foere she belongs, the struggle to live a life connected to the land while surrounded by seemingly unstoppable oil development, as well as the responsibility to defend this place and way of life. Like many of her and Aaron's photos, Nadia sees this one as representing hope, struggle, and duty. She explains:

My children are from here, they are Treaty and going to have to contend with the oil industry when they grow up ... If I could leave a lasting legacy that would be this is what I'm leaving behind for you, it's up to you to take care of it. I'm not thinking for me, I'm thinking for them, when they have babies, because there are only 800 of us.

Nadia feels a personal responsibility to fight for her community and to protect Moose Lake not only for herself, but also for her children and future generations. She also feels that this responsibility extends beyond her, her family, and her community. It is all of our responsibility to keep these places unspoiled and available for future generations of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. For Nadia, this photo signifies the place where her heart belongs and also the duty to defend the rights of Aboriginal people and the land for future generations, even when it is easier and even safer to stay quiet.

The themes of simplicity, respect, healing, and tradition are important to the way that Nadia speaks about her and Aaron's photos. Three photos sparked the most conversation about these themes: Aaron's photo of the trailer guestbook (Figure 7), Aaron's photo of the partially butchered deer on a table (Figure 8), and Nadia's photo of freshly cleaned fish on a table (Figure 4). Nadia described the meaning of the guestbook as well as the importance of its location, Poplar Point. The water in this place is still useable and "it's a place to heal yourself, to reconnect with the Athabasca, and to discover yourself again, after being away for so long." The book is a repository for the history, connection, healing, and interacting with nature in the trailer at Poplar Point that community members (and even Aaron himself) share. Nadia connected Aaron's guestbook photo to the one of fish being cleaned on a wooden table (Figure 4), which also represents tradition and purity: "that is good fish that is pure fish. It's free from contaminants, fresh out of

the lake and ready to eat." This photo brings forward strong sensory memories for Nadia. When she looks at the photo, she can "still feel that fish in my hands, and scaling it, I can still feel and taste it. When it comes fresh off the fire like that, oh my gosh!" This fresh, clean fish sitting in the sunshine stands in stark contrast to the fish that she and others have encountered that have been contaminated by the oil industry. The ability to collect and consume traditional foods from the land and water is a sign that the environment and the people are healthy. In this case, the fish is significant because it is an example of the power that this place still has to provide and to heal, but also the fact that because of oil development, places that can still be called healthy are becoming few and far between.

Finally, we discussed the photo of fish-cleaning (Figure 4) in comparison to Aaron's photo of a partially butchered deer with red blood dripping on white snow (Figure 8). For Nadia, the deer-butcher photo represents an inability to heal and a departure from what she sees as tradition and purity. It also represents the necessity of being open to both differing ways of butchering meat and interpreting photos. She remarked, "I take offence to that photo because it's dirty hunting to me ... It should be cleaned, put away, and ready to go right away." Nadia also made clear that, although she thinks of this photo as an example of moving away from tradition and respect for nature, hers is not the only interpretation of this photo or this practice. In reference to this photo in particular, Nadia commented that it is important to "keep an open mind. That is the best way to be." There is nothing wrong

Fig. 4. Nada Bouchier 2013

Fig. 7. Aaron Vincent Elkaim 2012

Fig. 8. Aaron Vincent Elkaim 2011

with practicing one's traditions as one can within the context of rapid change and environmental damage. There is also nothing wrong with this photo being used as a comment on the way that oil development encroaches on traditional lands and uses of that land. Nadia voiced her opinion on this photo to Aaron, who used this photo in his own collection to comment on the fact that the oil industry is restricting Fort McKay community members' use of trap lines and access to animals.³ The perspectives that both Nadia and Aaron bring to this photo in particular, and in relation to their other photos, are evidence of the complex and urgent nature of the issues affecting this community and its traditions.

Discussion and Conclusion

My goal in writing this article as a conversation between two photographers' photos is to provide some answers to the questions I pose in this title: what can a photo say, what should it say, and how is that affected by the perspective of the photographer and the audience? The first phrase in this title, "poke you in the heart," comes from my conversations with Nadia, and speaks to my goal of exploring how and why photos effect and inspire those who take them and those who view them. The perspective of those who take photos and those who view photos are often different, but that is the point: everyone has their own interpretation of photos and none are more or less valid than others as long as questions are asked. The act of taking, describing, and displaying a photo, is inherently political (like any other act), and one fraught with contradiction. The point is to present ideas but not force the viewer of a photo in a certain direction; the photographers' act of taking certain pictures and not others and displaying or explaining them in a certain way leads but does not shove the viewer in a certain direction or to certain questions. The question of the political valence of art is important to the discipline of photography and the study of visual representation and place, as well as the way that both community members and outsiders conceive of the Canadian West, the oil sands, and the community of Fort McKay.

The questions that have most influenced my writing this article revolve around the way that we categorize photos, photographers, viewers, and the unique perspectives and experiences of place that influence them. Before I spoke with these two photographers, I categorized Aaron as an artist who had spent several months getting to know the land and people of Fort McKay in late 2011 and early 2012. I categorized Nadia as a community member of Fort McKay and an insider. I characterized both of their photos and the place in which they were taken from my own perspective as an academic outsider. As I corresponded with Aaron and spoke with Nadia it became clear that this simplistic categorization was inaccurate and belittles the significance of their photos and the important work that both of them have done within and outside this community. Though Aaron is an outsider, he is an ally of the community and he has a clear respect for the land and people of the Fort McKay First Nation, which Nadia herself acknowledged. Nadia has lived, travelled, and studied in many places, such as Victoria and Edmonton, but Fort McKay is the place she comes from and calls home. Obviously these two photographers have differing perspectives, goals, audiences, and understandings of the places and issues they photograph. Both of these photographic explorations of Fort McKay are important to understanding the community and the issues it faces and convey the urgency of attention to the people, the environment, and the place we call Fort McKay. In his 1996 book, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Keith Basso states

that "places possess a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection, inspiring thoughts about who one presently is, or memories of who one used to be, or musings on who one might become" (55). We cannot and should not be forcing places, photographers, or their photos into particular categories or boxes. Doing so is yet another extension of the colonial influence on the discussion of places, Indigenous issues, and visual representation, which both of these photographers are trying to combat.

Another question that arises from this project involves who has the right to judge the correct way to interpret or connect to a photo or the place it represents. Furthermore, who has the right to judge how the Canadian West is portrayed or understood, and how best should we include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives? We all assign legitimacy by our explicit and implicit understandings of photos and other representations of the Canadian West. As the preceding discussion displays, these photos do not have a single authoritative meaning, even if they seem to be coming from an "activist" or "Aboriginal" point of view. As Loopmans et al. point out, "photographic projects are complex processes which tend to create unpredictable effects in relation to the perspectives and motivations of the curator" (714). We should be questioning how we understand and ascribe legitimacy to multiple points of view. The way we assign or deny legitimacy to certain perspectives says as much about the conscious, sometimes unconscious, and always

political ways that we judge Indigenous communities, the oil industry, and the environment, as it does about the photos, the photographers, their place, or their message. The community of Fort McKay is not simply an idyllic natural space or a wasteland beyond saving. This article is an attempt to challenge these judgements and viewpoints and consider why some photos, issues, and conceptions of the Canadian West receive much more attention and legitimacy than others. Doing so is imperative to understanding photography, place, and the community of Fort McKay.

Another question that must be asked by photographers, audiences, and academics involves what a photo or any form of visual representation can and should be expected to do. As I visited with Nadia and corresponded with Aaron, I realized how much of my understanding of these photos is informed by personal interactions and my own perspective as anthropologist, academic, and outsider. I was struck by their photos as soon as I viewed them, but their meaning deepened as I was able to pair them with a face, a story, and a history. Nadia explains that "you have to really look into the story and ask questions ... There is a give and take, knowledge is learned and you have to try." The photographer has a duty to display and explain their photos in a way that leaves openings for questions to be asked and for thoughts and emotions to be elicited. Photos create paradoxes in the minds of photographers and audiences because it is often difficult to cultivate passionate viewers of photos while

not forcing them into certain opinions. Again, the act of taking, explaining, and displaying photos, as well as interacting with them as an audience is an inherently political act. As Wendy Ewald points out, the meaning of a photo or collection of photos can change with time and with world events, despite the work of an artist or photographer to make clear their goals and perspective (Ashford et al.). Soon after the attacks on the U.S. on September 11th, an exhibit Ewald's photos of veiled Saudi Arabian women opened at the Addison Gallery in New York; the meaning that her audience ascribed to this collection was markedly affected by fear and grief (Ashford et al. 80). The important and powerful ability of photos to say a great deal, but also to leave so much to the imagination, points to the possibility for variable interpretations.

As Wendy Ewald notes, "It is aesthetically interesting to see an image made by someone who lives in a certain situation ... where she [or he] stands in the world and literally where she stands to make the picture add other layers of meaning to the image" (Ashford et al. 73). Of course, the eight photos I have included in this article do not represent the complete picture of these two photographer's collections, the community of Fort McKay, or the cultural, environmental, economic, and political issues it faces. I chose to present Nadia's, Aaron's, and my perspectives on these eight photos because they encapsulate my goal of exploring the visual representation of the Canadian West. Nadia's and Aaron's choosing, explaining, and describing their

photos is critical to my and others' understanding of their photos and the issues they represent. Their and my own choices in writing this article are inherently political and inherently contradict our shared goal of not forcing the audience of these photos or this article. Many may see Nadia's and Aaron's photos and this article as a form of activism. However, during our conversations, Nadia told me that she does not like the term "activism." She said that her photos are "about realization not activism, to show my life and my people and how we are coping, and to ask questions about how we will grow and be self-sustaining in the future."

Aaron's goal in his photography is to create awareness of and inspire interest in and questions about a community and a place he deeply respects. Nadia's goal is one of healing and protecting her own community, as well as telling a story about what remains, what has already been lost, and what could be lost if the destructive changes continue. No photo or collection of photos can convey the complete meaning of an event, place, community, or tradition. The goal and perspective of every person who views any photographs will be unique to that person and the particular moment in time that they are viewing it. Both groups of images honour the community of Fort McKay and neither fit into discrete categories such as photography, activism, or art. It is impossible to predict how an audience will react to or connect to a photo or the concept of western discourse or how that could change over time. Neither photographer is trying to "change or force the minds

of others,” but rather they are trying to use pictures to spark stories, emotions, questions, and memories in order to inspire much needed reflection about the meaning of the lands they photograph and the ways they are changing. Nadia declares “that you cannot force a person to experience a photo a certain way, or the same way each time they view it,” but also that “you cannot un-see what you have seen [with your heart].”

Special thanks to Nadia Bouchier and Aaron Vincent Elkaim for sharing their photos and stories. Thank you to Rose Bouchier for welcoming me into her home and for sharing her stories and her wonderful cooking. Thank you to Andriko Lozowy and Peter Fortna for your assistance, ideas, and perspectives which helped in the research and writing of this article.

Notes

¹ Aaron Vincent Elkaim is a Toronto-based documentary photographer and photojournalist who spent several months living in and learning about the Fort McKay community in late 2011 and early 2012. For information on his work, please see his website: <http://www.aaronvincentelkaim.com/>

² Nadia Bouchier is a member of the Fort McKay First Nation who currently studies photography in Victoria, BC. She has lived the majority of her life in Fort McKay and considers home this community and the larger traditional lands of the Fort McKay First Nation.

³ Please see the project description and full display of Aaron’s photos taken at Fort McKay at <http://www.aaronvincentelkaim.com/sleeping-with-the-devil>.

Image Notes

Figure 1 *Ink cap plant* Nadia Bouchier 2013

Figure 2 *Aunt Rose Cooking* Nadia Bouchier 2014

Figure 3 *Moose Lake* Nadia Bouchier 2013

Figure 4 *Freshly cleaned fish on a table* Nadia Bouchier 2013

Figure 5 *Scarecrows on a tailings pond* Aaron Vincent Elkaim 2013

Figure 6 *Athabasca River* Aaron Vincent Elkaim 2012

Figure 7 *Trailer Guestbook* Aaron Vincent Elkaim 2012

Figure 8 *Partially butchered deer* Aaron Vincent Elkaim 2011

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STUDIES ON HOW TO VIEW LANDSCAPE

JESSICA AUER

Résumé

Les photos de Jessica Auer montrent souvent l'impact du tourisme sur certains des lieux les plus populaires au monde, en particulier la manière dont les paysages sont préservés, modifiés ou transformés par le tourisme. Sa série Comment observer un paysage propose que nous projetions nos propres mythes et perceptions sur la nature. Dans ce projet, nous voyons le paysage en relation avec nous-mêmes, la vue un arrière-plan sur lequel nous projetons notre curiosité et nos désirs. Après avoir quitté ces lieux nous laisserons peut-être une trace mais d'une certaine manière nous faisons partie de l'image dans son ensemble.

Abstract

Jessica Auer's photographs often depict the impact of tourism on some of the world's most popular places, showing how landscape has been preserved, altered, or commodified for sightseeing. Her series On How to View Landscape proposes that we also project our own mythologies and perceptions onto nature. In this project, we see the landscape in relation to ourselves, the view to a degree still a backdrop onto which we project our curiosities and desires. Upon leaving these viewpoints we may or may not leave a trace, but we somehow become part of the overall image.

JESSICA AUER

The pleasures of photography and landscape came together for me at the same time. Shortly after I turned 10 years old, my parents divorced and, as a consolation, my father bought me a 35mm Nikon camera. He also told me to pack a bag and be ready to leave the next day—that all I needed was a small bag of clothes, a book, and the camera—as I would be travelling with him throughout the summer. Thus began my first road trip and my first photographic mission. Day after day, I experienced a cinematic view of the Canadian landscape from the passenger seat, witnessing subtle changes as we traversed the geography of a diverse country, snapping photos of everything from roadside attractions to black spruce forests and the trains that often glided alongside the Trans Canada Highway. Our arrival in Banff National Park was the most striking experience of the journey. The Rockies were rich in photographic content: colorful lakes, precipitous mountains, spiraling railways,

and lots of other people. It was during this first National Park experience that I learned that the significance of landscape was not just about natural vistas but also the culture of nature.

Twelve years later, I found myself once again at the edge of Moraine Lake. As a recent University graduate with a BFA in photography, I looked at the view before me with scrutinizing eyes and a curious mind. The signature mountains of the Valley of Ten Peaks stood in front of me as they had before, but somehow the scene felt unfamiliar. There were certainly signs of cultural development, yet I still questioned how much the landscape had actually changed. On the other hand, how much had I changed?

Over the next decade I returned to Rockies several times, as a retreat from the routine of my predominantly urban life in Montreal, but also to make photographs. Since my student days, my research-based photographic work has been largely concerned with the study of cultural sites, leading me to photograph the impact of tourism on some of the world's significant places, showing how landscape has been preserved, altered, or commodified for sightseeing. After several years of examining the topic from a photographically objective

perspective, I began to understand that the collectivity of my experiences has informed my perspective much more than the viewpoints to which I struggled to hike. Growing weary of repeating the same images I had already produced, I chose to take a few steps back from the traditional viewpoint, to look at the sightseeing phenomenon from a more anthropological perspective.

In his seminal book *Landscape and Memory*, Simon Schama argues that landscape cannot be free of culture and that as viewers we project our own mythologies and perceptions onto nature. During the summer of 2012, I participated in a two-month artist residency at The Banff Centre on Tunnel Mountain. Using photo and video cameras to passively record the gestures and actions of sightseeing tourists, I shifted my focus to the space of the viewer rather than the space being viewed, observing from a human perspective and on a human scale. “Studies on How to View Landscape” shows the landscape in relation to ourselves, the view to a degree still a backdrop onto which we project our curiosities and desires and, to some extent, our inadequacies. Upon leaving these viewpoints we may or may not leave a trace, but we somehow become part of the overall image.

Fig. 1. 'Lake Louise #1,' 2010, CHprint, 40"x50"

Fig. 5. 'Lunch at Sentinal Pass,' 2012,
Inkjet Print, 60"x75"

Fig. 6. 'Moraine Lake,' 2012, HD Video Still

Fig. 7. 'Sulphur Mountain,' 2012, HD Video Still

opposite, clockwise from top left
Fig. 8. 'Johnson Canyon,' 2012, HD Video Still
Fig. 9. 'Tunnel Mountain,' 2012, HD Video Still
Fig. 10. 'Paradise Valley,' 2012, HD Video Still
Fig. 11. 'Peyto Lake,' 2012, HD Video Still

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Erin Ashenhurst is an interdisciplinary artist and writer living in Vancouver. With a focus on visual narrative, her research explores themes of identity, memory, the digital mediation of experience, urban landscape, and the general oddity of the everyday. She holds an MA in Interactive Arts and Technology from Simon Fraser University and teaches in the Wilson School of Design at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

Erin Ashenhurst est un écrivain et artiste interdisciplinaire vivant à Vancouver. En mettant l'accent sur la narration visuelle, sa recherche explore les thèmes de l'identité, de la mémoire, la médiation numérique de l'expérience, le paysage urbain, et la bizarrerie générale du quotidien. Elle détient une maîtrise en arts interactifs et technologie de l'Université Simon Fraser et enseigne à l'École Wilson de Design de l'Université Polytechnique Kwantlen.

Jessica Auer is a photographer and visual artist from Montreal. Her work is broadly concerned with the study of landscapes as cultural sites. Auer received her MFA in Studio Arts from Concordia University in 2007 and has since exhibited across Canada and abroad. An avid wanderer, she has participated in numerous international artist residency programs including The Leighton Colony at the Banff Centre in Alberta; The Brucebo Residency based in Gotland, Sweden; The Chilkoot Trail AIR in Alaska and the Yukon Territory; Baer Art Center in Hofdaströnd, Iceland; and the Skaftfell Centre for Visual Art in Seydisfjörður, Iceland. Auer currently teaches photography at Concordia University.

Jessica Auer est une artiste et photographe de Montréal. Son œuvre porte largement sur l'étude des paysages comme espaces culturels. Auer a obtenu sa maîtrise en Beaux-Arts de l'Université Concordia en 2007 et a depuis pris part à des expositions au Canada et à l'étranger. Avide de voyages, elle a participé à de nombreux programmes de résidence à l'échelle internationale comme The Leighton Colony au Banff Centre en Alberta ; The Brucebo Residency à Gotland, en Suède ; The Chilkoot Trail AIR en Alaska et dans le territoire du Yukon ; Baer Art Center à Hofdaströnd et au Skaftfell Centre for Visual Art à Seydisfjörður, en Islande. Auer enseigne la photographie à l'Université Concordia.

Nadia Bouchier is an Aboriginal Photographer that is based in northeastern Alberta. Her contemporary artwork has become a historical documentation paying homage to her land and her people. Like the land she photographs, she is constantly changing and moving with it. Over the past two years Nadia has visited various families and industries surrounding her tiny community of Fort McKay First Nation, establishing a collection of photographs depicting what could be lost with time. Nadia has a unique perspective of change from which to visualize and portray the realities of everyday life, as well as the need to understand how she fits into this reality that surrounds us. She has met the changes brought on due to the oil embedded in the sand beneath her feet in her traditional territory. Through photography Nadia has learned from the past and confronts the changes inherent with resource extraction. The landscape has changed; the people have changed. Her culture hangs on the edge as her people struggle between two dissonant worlds and her community grapples with the uncertainty of being self-sustaining in the years to come, as they once were in the past.

Nadia Bouchier est une photographe autochtone du nord-est de l'Alberta. Ses œuvres sont une documentation historique qui rend hommage à son territoire et à son peuple. Comme les paysages qu'elle photographie, elle est en évolution et en mouvement constant. Durant ces deux dernières années, Nadia

a visité de nombreuses familles et industries aux alentours de sa minuscule communauté de Première Nation Fort McKay, établissant une collection photographique de ce qui pourrait être perdu avec le passage du temps. Nadia a un point de vue unique sur le changement qui lui permet de visualiser et de mettre en scène les réalités de la vie quotidienne ainsi que son besoin de comprendre sa place dans cette réalité qui est la nôtre. Elle a été confrontée aux changements à cause du pétrole caché dans le sol de son territoire traditionnel. A travers la photographie, Nadia apprend du passé et confronte les changements liés à l'extraction de ressources naturelles. Les paysages changent, la population change. Sa culture ne tient qu'à fil alors que sa communauté se débat entre deux mondes dissonants et avec l'incertitude de pouvoir subvenir à leurs propres besoins comme dans le passé.

Elyse Bouvier is a western-Canadian photographer based in Toronto finishing a Masters in Fine Art in Documentary Media at Ryerson University. She also holds a BComm from Mount Royal University (2010). Her current practice explores issues of community, memory, and place, with a particular fascination with how food intersects with cultural identity. Her most recent work, *Royal Cafe*, was exhibited in Toronto as part of Ryerson University's DocNow Festival.

Elyse Bouvier est une photographe de l'ouest canadien qui vit et finit sa maîtrise en Beaux-Arts à Toronto dans le programme de médias de documentaire à l'université Ryerson. Elle est titulaire d'un baccalauréat de commerce de l'université Montt Royal obtenu en 2010. Elle explore des questions de communauté, mémoire et d'espace avec une certaine fascination pour la manière dont la nourriture et l'identité culturelle interagisse. Son travail le plus récent, *Café Royal*, a été exposé à Toronto dans le cadre du festival DocNow de l'Université Ryerson.

Elizabeth Anne Cavaliere received her PhD in Art History at Concordia University. Her research centres on the Canadian photographic landscape and the possibility of a national aesthetic therein, looking towards topographical survey photographs of the 19th century. She has published in the *Journal of Canadian Art History*, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, *Histoire sociale/Social history*, and RACAR. In 2012 Elizabeth received a Lisette Model/Joseph G. Blum Fellowship in the History of Photography at the National Gallery of Canada. In 2015 her dissertation received the Michel de la Chenelière Prize from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Elizabeth Anne Cavaliere a obtenu son doctorat en Histoire de l'Art de l'Université Concordia. Sa recherche porte sur le paysage photogénique canadien et la possibilité d'une esthétique nationale et s'intéresse aux images d'études topographies du 19ème siècle. Elle a publié dans la revue de l'Histoire de l'art canadien, La Revue des études canadiennes, Histoire sociale et RACAR. En 2012, Elizabeth a reçu une bourse Lisette Model/Joseph G. Blum pour l'histoire de la photographie au Musée des Beaux-Arts du Canada. En 2015, sa thèse de doctorat a reçu le prix Michel de la Chenelière du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal.

Lily Cho is an Associate Professor of English at York University. Her book, *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada* (2010), examines the relationship between Chinese restaurants and Canadian culture. She is a member of the Toronto Photography Seminar. Her essays have been published in journals such as *Interventions*, *Canadian Literature*, and *Photography and Culture*. She is currently conducting research on two projects. *Mass Capture: Chinese Head Tax and the Making of Non-Citizens in Canada* is a SSHRC-funded project that examines the relationship between surveillance and citizenship. *Asian Values: Fictions of Finance and Beautiful Money* explores diasporic movement and theories of value in postcolonial Asia.

Lily Cho est professeure d'anglais associé à l'Université de York. Son livre *Manger chinois : La culture au menu des petites villes canadiennes*, publié en 2010, explore les relations entre les restaurants chinois et la culture canadienne. Elle est membre de Toronto Photography Seminar. Ses essais ont été publiés dans des revues telles que *Interventions*, *Littérature canadienne* et *Photography and Culture*. Elle est actuellement impliquée dans deux projets de recherche. *Mass Capture : Chinese Head Tax and the Making of Non-Citizens in Canada* est un projet subventionné par le CRSH qui étudie les relations entre surveillance et citoyenneté. *Asian Values : Fictions of Finance and Beautiful Money* porte sur la diaspora et les théories de valeurs dans l'Asie postcoloniale.

John Conway - I lived in Saskatchewan for most of my adult life and developed a strong attachment to the land—so strong that, while traveling over the years, I have often found myself photographing landscapes very much like the prairie. In these 10 diptychs, I place Saskatchewan prairie landscapes alongside photographs from other places that are reminiscent of the prairie: Tuscany, Costa Rica, Mexico, the United States, and other Canadian provinces.

John Conway - J'ai vécu en Saskatchewan pour une majeure partie de ma vie d'adulte et ai développé un lien très fort au territoire, si fort que lors de mes voyages au fil des ans, je me suis souvent pris à photographier des paysages similaires à ceux des prairies. Dans ces 10 diptyques, je juxtapose des paysages de la Saskatchewan à des paysages qui y sont reminescents tels que la Toscane, le Costa Rica, le Mexique, les États-Unis et d'autres provinces canadiennes.

Matt Dyce is an assistant professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Winnipeg specializing in cultural and historical approaches. His main research areas are the creation and use of environmental knowledge in 20th-century Canada, the emergence of regionalism as a framework for understanding the country, and the cultural study of “geography in practice,” including photography, cartography, and geovisualization.

Matt Dyce est professeur adjoint au Département de géographie à l'Université de Winnipeg. Il se spécialise dans les approches culturelles et historiques. Ses principaux domaines de recherche consistent en l'étude de la création et de l'utilisation des connaissances de l'environnement au cours du XX^{ème} siècle au Canada, l'émergence du régionalisme comme cadre d'analyse de la société canadienne, et l'étude de la géographie culturelle « en pratique », incluant la photographie, la cartographie, et la géovisualisation.

Aaron Vincent Elkaim is a Canadian documentary photographer and founding member of the Boreal Collective. Aaron's work focuses on narratives in which traditional culture and environmental degradation collide. Since 2011 he has committed himself to exploring colonialist narratives in which people still connected to the natural world are affected by industrial development. Through highlighting important human and environmental rights issues, Aaron addresses the need to protect the natural world by revealing our profound connection it. Aaron is the recipient of the 2016 Alexia Foundation Professional Grant. His clients include *The New Yorker* and *The Globe and Mail*.

Aaron Vincent Elkaim est un photographe documentaire canadien et l'un des membres fondateurs du collectif Boréal. L'œuvre d'Aaron porte sur des histoires ou la culture traditionnelle et la dégradation environnementale entre en conflit. Depuis 2011, il est dévoué à explorer les récits colonialistes ou des peuples till connectés à la Nature sont affectés par le développement industriel. En soulignant d'importants problèmes de droits environnementaux et humains, Aaron parle du besoin de protéger la Nature en révélant notre connexion profonde. Aaron a reçu le prix Alexia Foundation Professional Grant en 2016. Sa liste de clients inclue *The New Yorker* et *The Globe and Mail*.

Karen Engle is Associate Professor (Visual Arts) and Director of the School of Creative Arts at the University of Windsor, where she teaches in the fields of visual culture and cultural history. Her book, *Seeing Ghosts: 9/11 and the Visual Imagination*, was published by McGill-Queen's University Press (2009). Current research interests include the history of photography, built environments, and theories of memory and affect. Recent articles include “The Boondoggle: Lee Miller and the Vicissitudes of Private Archives” in *Photographies* 8.1 (2015) and “Becoming Monument; Activating Windsor” in *Societies* 3.4 (2013).

Karen Engle est professeure d'arts visuels associée et directrice de l'école des arts créatifs de l'Université Windsor où elle enseigne la culture visuelle et l'histoire culturelle. Son livre *Seeing Ghosts : 9/11 and the Visual Imagination* a été publié aux éditions McGill-Queen's University Press en 2009. Ces champs de recherche incluent l'histoire de la photographie, les environnements construits et les théories de la mémoire et de l'affect. Elle a récemment publié les articles suivants « The Boondoggle : Lee Miller and the Vicissitudes of Private Archives. » dans la revue *Photographies* et « Becoming Monument ; Activating Windsor » dans la revue *Sociétés*.

Thomas Gardiner graduated from Yale University with an MFA in Photography in 2012. He earned his BFA from The Cooper Union, during which time he began working with a 4x5 camera to document the small communities around western Canada where he grew up. During his studies at Yale he switched to 8x10 and began documenting working-class cities in the Northeast around New Haven. In his first year he was awarded Yale's Schickle-Collingwood Prize and in his final year both the Leeds-Marwell Photography Scholarship and the Tierney Fellowship. He currently lives in Vancouver.

En 2012, **Thomas Gardiner** a obtenu une maîtrise de Beaux-Arts en photographie de l'université Yale. Pendant ses études à Cooper Union, d'où il obtient un baccalauréat en Beaux-Arts, il commencera à travailler avec une caméra grand format 4*5 pour documenter les petites communautés de l'ouest canadien où il a grandi. Pendant ses études à Yale, il passe à une caméra 8*10 et commence à travailler sur les villes ouvrières du nord-est, aux alentours de New Haven. Pendant sa première année d'études, il se voit offrir le prix Schickle-Collingwood et pendant sa dernière année la bourse Leeds-Marwell Photography Scholarship et la Tierney Fellowship. Il vit à Vancouver.

Jenny Gerbrandt was born and raised in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. She holds a Master of Arts in Environmental Anthropology from the University of Saskatchewan (2016). She also holds a Bachelor of Arts Honors in Anthropology with a minor in Archaeology from the University of Saskatchewan (2012). Jenny’s thesis researched the effects of oil in the Woodland Cree First Nation community in 2013. Since February of 2015 she has enjoyed working and learning in the Métis community of Fort McMurray, Alberta as a research consultant and a regulatory affairs and heritage research associate.

Jenny Gerbrandt est née et a grandi à Saskatoon, en Saskatchewan. Elle est titulaire d’une maîtrise ès lettres en anthropologie de l’environnement de l’Université de la Saskatchewan (2016). Elle détient également un baccalauréat ès arts avec mention en anthropologie avec une mineure en archéologie de l’Université de la Saskatchewan (2012). Sa thèse portait sur les effets de l’huile dans la collectivité de la Première Nation des Cris de Woodland en 2013. Depuis Février 2015, elle a bénéficié de travail et d’apprentissage dans la communauté métisse de Fort McMurray en Alberta en tant que consultant en recherche et associé de recherche des affaires réglementaires et patrimoine.

Michael Granzow is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta. Michael uses interdisciplinary approaches from sociology, cultural studies, and human geography to study cities and urban change, with a particular focus on the politics of public space. His current research looks at emerging geographies of urban agriculture in the Global North.

Michael Granzow est un candidat au doctorat dans le département de sociologie à l’Université de l’Alberta. Michael utilise une approche multidisciplinaire dans les domaines de sociologie, études culturelles et géographie humaine afin d’étudier les villes et le changement urbain avec un accent particulier sur la politique des espaces publiques. Sa recherche actuelle examine les géographies émergentes de l’agriculture dans le Nord global.

Douglas Harper is the author of several visual ethnographies and is currently President of the International *Visual Sociology* Association. His book *Visual Sociology* (2012) is the first comprehensive overview of the field.

Douglas Harper est l’auteur de plusieurs ethnographies visuelles et est président de l’International Visual Sociology Association. Son livre *Visual Sociology*, publié en 2012, est la première vue d’ensemble compréhensive dans cette discipline.

Kevin Edson Jones is Research Director of the University of Alberta’s City-Region Studies Centre. His research is interdisciplinary, overlapping boundaries between the fields of environmental sociology, social studies of science and technology, and urban studies. Dr. Jones’ current research explores pathways towards social and environmental transformation, addressing the roles of community engagement and governance innovation in creating resilient and sustainable futures. He is co-editor (with A.D. Lord and R. Shields) of *City-Regions in Prospect? Exploring Points between Place and Practice*.

Kevin Edson Jones est directeur de la recherche au City-Region Studies Centre de l’Université de l’Alberta. Sa recherche interdisciplinaire chevauche les domaines de la sociologie environnementale, les études sociales des sciences et technologies et les études urbaines. La recherche de Dr Jones explore des voies possibles vers une transformation sociale et environnementale, aborde les rôles que l’engagement communautaire et l’innovation gouvernementale jouent dans la création d’un futur durable et endurant. Il est coéditeur, avec A.D Lord et R. Shields, de *City-Regions in Prospect? Exploring Points between Place and Practice*.

Andriko Lozowy is Instructor of Sociology (Arts and Education) at Grande Prairie Regional College, Alberta, Canada. His doctoral thesis *Icons of Oil: The Photographer Researcher and Collaborative Practice* (2013) foreshadows *NorthByWest* by exploring collaborative research methods with youth participants within the context of petrocultures of Fort McMurray, Alberta. Current research interests include spatial politics of ecocide, digitalized life-course, and photo-collaborations. Recent articles include “Mashup: New Representations of the City” in *Theory Culture & Society* co-authored with Rob Shields (2015), “Picturing Industrial Landscapes” in *Space & Culture* (2014), and “The Camera as a Tool for Assembling ‘Community’” in *Canadian Journal of Sociology* co-authored with Shields and Sara Dorow (2013).

Andriko Lozowy enseigne la sociologie au Grande Prairie Regional College, dans la province canadienne de l’Alberta. Sa these de doctorat, intitulée *Icons of Oil: The Photographer Researcher and Collaborative Practice* (2013) préfigure *NorthByWest* en ce qu’elle explore diverses méthodologies de recherche collaborative avec des jeunes participants dans des milieux marqués par les pétro-cultures à Fort McMurray en Alberta. Ses intérêts de recherche actuels se concentrent sur les politiques liés à la géographie et à la notion d’écocide, à la digitalisation des récits de vie, et aux méthodes de collaboration photographiques. Il a publié récemment une série d’articles : “Mashup: New Representations

of the City” (avec Rob Shields), dans la revue *Theory Culture & Society* (2015); “Picturing Industrial Landscapes” dans la revue *Space & Culture* (2014), et “The Camera as a Tool for Assembling ‘Community’” (avec Rob Shields et Sara Dorow) dans le *Canadian Journal of Sociology* (2013).

Currently based in Toronto, artist **Eamon Mac Mahon** works with photography and video. Raised in the boom town of Grande Cache, surrounded by the boreal forest, his preoccupation with wilderness and isolation began at an early age. Mac Mahon's photographs have been published by *The Walrus*, *The New Yorker*, *National Geographic*, *Capricious*, and MIT Press. His prints have been exhibited at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery and San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, and video installations at the Art Gallery of Ontario and Detroit Institute of Arts. Work from this project was recently exhibited at the Art Gallery of Alberta and acquired for their permanent collection.

Basé à Toronto, l'artiste **Eamon Mac Mahon** utilise la vidéo et la photographie. Élevé dans la ville de Grande Cache, en plein cœur de la forêt boréale, sa passion pour la nature et l'isolation commence à un très jeune âge. Les photos de Mac Mahon ont été publiées dans *The Walrus*, *The New Yorker*, *National Geographic*, *Capricious* les maisons de presses MIT. Ses œuvres ont été exposées à la galerie d'art Beaverbrook et à l'Institut d'art contemporain de San Jose et ses installations vidéo présentées à la galerie d'art de l'Ontario et à l'Institut des arts de Détroit. Une partie de ce projet a été exposé à la galerie d'art de l'Alberta et a été ajoutée à leur collection permanente.

Karla McManus is an art historian and visual theorist who specializes in the study of photography and the environmental imaginary. Karla completed her PhD on the study of contemporary eco-photography at Concordia University in 2015. Currently a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow at Queen's University (2015-2017), Karla is researching the work of mid-20th-century wildfowl photographer Lorene Squire, as seen in the HBC magazine *The Beaver*. Karla is a founding member of the *Canadian Photography History/Histoire de la photographie canadienne*, a digital humanities research initiative. Karla's writing can be found in publications including the Journal of Canadian Art History (forthcoming), *Captures*, *the Journal of Canadian Studies*, and *Intermédialités*.

Karla McManus est une historienne de l'art et une théoricienne visuelle spécialisée dans la photographie et l'imaginaire environnementale. Karla a obtenu un doctorat en éco photographie de l'Université Concordia en 2015. Dans le poste de post doctorant qu'elle occupe à l'Université Queens, Karla fait de la recherche sur le travail de la photographe du milieu du 20ème siècle, Lorene Squire, comme vu dans le journal, *The Beaver*. Karla est l'un des membres fondateurs de *Canadian Photography History/Histoire de la photographie canadienne*, a digital humanities research initiative. Ses écrits ont été publiés dans des publications telles que *la Revue de l'histoire de l'art canadien* (à venir), *Captures*, *la Revue d'études canadiennes et Intermédialités*.

Tara Milbrandt teaches and publishes in the areas of social theory and visual and urban culture. She is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus.

Tara Milbrandt enseigne et publie dans les domaines de la théorie sociale et de la culture urbaine et visuelle. Elle est professeure de sociologie associée au Campus Augustana de l'Université de l'Alberta.

Jonathan Petrychyn is a PhD candidate in Communication and Culture at York University.

Jonathan Petrychyn est doctorant en Communication et Culture Université de York.

Alixandra Piwowar recently completed her Master of Architecture at Carleton University in Ottawa. She spent three summers as a researcher at Carleton Immersive Media Studio (CIMS) and with for The National Trust for Canada and is currently working with the Heritage Conservation Directorate, Government of Canada. Her MA thesis research focuses on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the wooden grain elevators in her home province of Saskatchewan. She has been awarded the Henry Adams Medal from the American Institute of Architects, The Herb Stovel Scholarship from the National Trust for Canada, and the Carleton University nomination for the Canadian Architect Student Awards of Excellence.

Alixandra Piwowar a récemment complété sa maîtrise en architecture de l'université Carleton à Ottawa. Elle a passé trois étés en tant que chercheure à Carleton Immersive Media Studio (CIMS) et pour le Fiducie National du Canada et travaille maintenant avec la Conservation du Patrimoine, Gouvernement du Canada. Son mémoire de maîtrise porte sur l'héritage concret et abstrait de l'ascenseur à grain en bois situé dans sa maison en Saskatchewan. Elle a reçu la médaille Henry Adams de l'Institut Américain des architectes, la bourse Herb Stovel du Fiducie National du Canada et a été nommée par l'Université Carleton pour le Canadian Architect Student Awards of Excellence.

Andreas Rutkauskas lives and works in Kelowna, BC. Using photography, video, and mapping, Rutkauskas' work addresses the effect of various technologies on the perception and development of landscapes. He explores the impact of internet-based research on wilderness recreation, cycles of industrialization and deindustrialization in Canada's oil patch, and the subtle technologies used to survey the Canada/US border.

Andreas Rutkauskas vit et travaille à Kelowna. Le travail de Rutkauskas étudie l'impact de diverses technologies sur la perception et le développement des paysages par le biais de la photographie, la vidéo et la cartographie. Il explore l'impact de la recherche digitale sur les loisirs en plein air, les cycles d'industrialisation et de désindustrialisation dans le secteur pétrolier canadien et les technologies discrètes utilisées pour contrôler la frontière Canada/États-Unis.

Vera Saltzman, a graduate of the School of the Photographic Arts: Ottawa, focuses her attention on issues of identity and development of a “sense of place,” the passage of time and fragility of life. She won an Applied Arts Award recognizing creative excellence for her series *Sue and Winnie* and was a runner up in the *Creative Quarterly: Journal of Art and Design* for her series *Cry of the Lake Dwellers*. Her work has been featured by *The Atlantic*, *Ottawa Magazine*, *Black & White Magazine*, and *Photo Life*. Currently living in Saskatchewan, she is represented by SLATE Fine Art Gallery in Regina.

Vera Saltzman, diplômée de l'école des arts photographiques d'Ottawa, concentre son attention sur les problèmes identitaires et le développement d'un « sens du lieu », le passage du temps et la fragilité de l'existence. Elle a remporté un prix des arts appliqués en reconnaissance de l'excellence créative de sa série *Sue et Winnie* et a été finaliste dans la revue *Creative Quarterly : Journal of Art and Design* pour sa série *Pleurs des habitants du lac*. Ses œuvres ont été publiées dans *The Atlantic*, *Ottawa Magazine*, *Black & White Magazine* et *Photo Life*. Vivant en Saskatchewan, elle est représentée par SLATE Fine Art Gallery à Régina.

Trudi Lynn Smith is an artist and anthropologist with an interdisciplinary PhD from University of Victoria. Her artistic and academic practices are platforms to address the lively political, habitual, magical, and material entanglements of photography. Recent artworks, “Breath Camera” and “562 Fisgard St,” explore the significance of photography by breaking it down to its fundamental properties in order to propose new forms of subjectivity and collectivity. Recent writing includes “The Anthropology of Historical Photography in a Protected Area: Life and Death in Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta,” in *Anthropologica* 56 (2014). Since 2009, Smith has worked with the award-winning collective Ethnographic Terminalia, curating exhibitions at intersections of art and anthropology.

Trudi Lynn Smith est une artiste et anthropologue, titulaire d'un doctorat interdisciplinaire de l'Université de Victoria. Les mondes artistique et universitaire lui servent de plateformes pour aborder les enchevêtrements matériels, le vibrant aspect politique et la magie coutumière de la photographie. Ses œuvres récentes, comme *Breath Camera* et *562 Fisgard St*, explore l'importance de la photographie en la décomposant fondamentalement afin de proposer de nouvelles formes de subjectivité et de collectivité. Un de ses articles récents est *The Anthropology of Historical Photography in a Protected Area : Life and Death in Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta* paru dans *Anthropologica*. Depuis 2009, Smith travaille avec le collectif Ethnographic Terminalia, organisant des expositions à l'intersection de l'art et de l'anthropologie.

George Webber has been photographing the people, landscape, and urban environment of the Canadian west for over thirty-five years. He was inducted into The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1999. In 2005 George received the Alberta Centennial Medal in recognition of outstanding service to the people and province of Alberta. In 2010 he was the recipient of the National Magazine Gold Award for Photojournalism. His books include *Requiem, A World Within, People of The Blood, Last Call, In This Place, Prairie Gothic, and Badlands*. Webber's work can be found in museums and archives in Canada, France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and Australia.

George Webber photographie les gens, les paysages, et les milieux urbains de l'Ouest canadien depuis plus de 35 ans. Il s'est vu intronisé à l'Académie Royale des Arts du Canada en 1999. Il a reçu en 2005 la Alberta Centennial Medal en reconnaissance de services exceptionnels rendus à la province et à ses habitants. En 2010, il a été récipiendaire du National Magazine Gold Award for Photojournalism. Il a fait publier les ouvrages *Requiem, A World Within, People of The Blood, Last Call, In This Place, Prairie Gothic*, et *Badlands*. Ses oeuvres se retrouvent dans des musées et des collections d'archives au Canada, en France, en Allemagne, en Belgique, en Suisse, et en Australie.

Kyler Zeleny is a Canadian photographer-researcher and the author of *Out West*. His current photographic research interests deal with contemporary rural issues and how geography extends identity and creates community. He received his bachelor's in Political Science from the University of Alberta and his master's in Photography and Urban Cultures from Goldsmiths College, University of London. He is a founding member of the Association of Urban Photographers (AUP) and a guest publisher with The Velvet Cell. Kyler Currently lives in Toronto, where he is a doctoral student in the joint Communication and Culture program at Ryerson and York University.

Kyler Zeleny est un chercheur et photographe canadien et auteur de *Out West*. Ses sujets de recherche photographique sont les problèmes ruraux contemporains et la façon la géographie développe l'identité et crée des communautés. Il a obtenu son baccalauréat en science politique de l'Université de l'Alberta et sa maîtrise en photographie et cultures urbaines de Goldsmith College, Université de Londres. Il est l'un des membres fondateurs de l'association Association of Urban Photographers (AUP) et éditeur invité chez Velvet Cell. Kyler vit à Toronto ou il poursuit ses études de doctorat dans le programme de Communication et Culture des universités York et Ryerdon.

Raised on a farm in the foothills of Alberta, **Valerie Zink** received her bachelor's in History from Dalhousie University before studying at the International Centre of Photography in New York. Her work focuses on metabolisms between people and nature, issues of economic migration and displacement, and the intersection of landscape and memory. Through photography, she seeks to reveal the ordinary ways that people struggle to live just lives and defend their attachment to home. She currently lives and works in Fort Qu'Appelle, SK.

Élevée dans une ferme dans les contreforts de l'Alberta, **Valerie Zink** a obtenu un baccalauréat en Histoire de l'Université Dalhousie avant d'étudier au Centre International de Photographie de New York. Son œuvre se concentre sur les métabolismes entre les humains et la nature, les problèmes de migration économique et de déplacement et l'intersection de paysage et de mémoire. A travers la photographie, elle cherche à révéler les manières ordinaires dont les gens luttent pour vivre décemment et défendre leur attachement à leur foyer. Elle vit et travaille à Fort Qu'Appelle en Saskatchewan.

ARTIST STATEMENTS/MOT DE L'ARTISTE

THOMAS GARDINER, ELYSE BOUVIER, JESSICA AUER, AARON VINCENT ELKAIM

Thomas Gardiner

It wasn't until having moved to the thriving metropolis of New York City that I began documenting the small towns and communities of western Canada where I grew up. In a sense, they're partly biographical insofar as they represent places where I lived as a child and into my teens. However, having transplanted myself into such a sharply contrasting environment also made me view the place (largely responsible for having shaped me as an individual) in a radically new light. Not only did I begin reflecting on its influence upon me simply for having lived there, but I also began to consider, more generally, the geographic relationships of hinterland regions to major metropolitan centres—as well as the social and economic aspects within these relationships—through the lens of how the camera could interpret them visually.

Western Canada's small towns and communities are often viewed as existing at a social and economic disadvantage to places with major financial firms and large corporations, such as those radiating from larger city centres. Despite the geographic barriers determining their status as hinterland regions, the citizens living here have had a significant role in forming Canada's social infrastructure, from universal health care to affordable education. By forging strong community bonds and forming cooperative conglomerations, the people of these regions were able

to resist exploitation by the large financial firms in Eastern Canada. (It is worth noting in this regard that the province of Saskatchewan elected the first socialist government in North America in the 1940s.) Since then, the region has gone through many economic and ideological shifts and changes. My photographic project aims to render visually the cumulative aggregate of these changes and influences that have both shaped me as well affected the people and places where I grew up.

Ce n'est que lorsque j'ai déménagé dans la vibrante métropole de New York City, que j'entrepris de documenter les petites villes et communautés de l'ouest canadien où j'ai grandi. D'une certaine manière se fut un travail partiellement biographique dans la mesure où ces images représentaient des lieux où j'ai vécu et grandi pendant mon enfance et mon adolescence. Cependant, ma transplantation dans un environnement radicalement différent m'a permis de percevoir de manière complètement différente l'endroit qui a eu un tel impact sur la personne que je suis. Je ne me suis pas simplement contenté de réfléchir à l'impact qu'avoir grandi là-bas a eu sur moi, j'ai aussi commencé à prêter attention, de manière plus générale, aux relations géographiques entre les régions plus reculées

et les grands centres urbains ainsi qu'aux aspects socio-économiques de ces relations tels qu'ils pouvaient être interprétés au travers de l'objectif d'un appareil photo.

Les petites villes et communautés de l'ouest canadien sont souvent perçues comme ayant de grands désavantages sur les plans économiques et sociaux comparé à des endroits où l'on trouve d'importantes entreprises financières et des larges sociétés, comme on en trouve dans les grands centres urbains. Malgré les obstacles géographiques qui en font des régions reculées, ceux qui vivent ici jouent un rôle important dans la création des infrastructures sociales canadiennes, de la sécurité sociale à l'éducation pour tous. En tissant des liens communautaires solides et en créant des conglomérats coopératifs, les habitants de ces régions ont pu se défendre contre les grandes entreprises de l'est canadien. (Il est important de noter à cet effet que la province de la Saskatchewan fut la première à élire un gouvernement socialiste en Amérique du Nord dans les années 40). Depuis lors, la région a fait face à de nombreux mouvements et changements économiques et idéologiques. Mes projets photographiques ont pour but de rendre compte de manière visuelle de l'ensemble de ces changements et influences qui ont fait de moi la personne que je suis et ont eu un important impact sur les gens et les lieux où j'ai grandi.

Elyse Bouvier

Royal Cafe is a photo-based documentary project that explores the prevalence of Chinese-Western cafes across small towns in rural Alberta. These cafes—diner-style restaurants caught in an ambiguous time period—reflect the identity of the communities they inhabit and are also indicative of a Canadian culinary identity. Although difficult to define, the hybrid nature of Canadian identity, and the rural identity in particular, can be highlighted through the merging of these two distinct cultures: Chinese and Western.

Café Royal est un documentaire photographique qui explore la fréquence de cafés chinois dans les petites villes rurales de l'Alberta. Ces cafés, de type diners perdus dans une époque ambiguë, sont une réflexion de l'identité des communautés qui les peuplent et sont aussi un excellent indicateur de l'identité culinaire canadienne. Bien que difficile à déterminer, la nature hybride de l'identité canadienne, et de l'identité rurale en particulier, peut être soulignée par la fusion de ces deux cultures distinctes : chinoise et de l'ouest.

trans.plant

In a country as large as Canada, regional identity plays a significant role in our sense of who we are. I identify with being an Easterner and Maritimer, but I have lived in the Arctic, central Canada, and now “Out West.” While each move presented challenges, I struggled most with this one. Longing to belong, I search for triggers to memories of my “primal landscape.” These images are a consideration of what might have been a shared history of human experience between an east-coast transplant and those who grew up in Saskatchewan.

Dans un pays aussi grand que le Canada, l'identité régionale joue un rôle important sur qui nous sommes. Je suis de l'Est et des Maritimes, mais j'ai vécu dans l'Arctique, au centre du Canada et maintenant à l'Ouest. Bien que chaque déménagement ne soit pas sans inconvénients le plus difficile à gérer fut ce dernier. A la recherche d'un sens d'appartenance, je recherche des éléments me renvoyant à des souvenir de mon « paysage primal. » Ces images sont une considération de ce qui peut être partagé entre un expatrié de la côte Est et ceux qui ont grandi en Saskatchewan.

ARTIST STATEMENTS/MOT DE L'ARTISTE

THOMAS GARDINER, ELYSE BOUVIER, JESSICA AUER, AARON VINCENT ELKAIM

Jessica Auer

During the summer of 2012, I participated in an artist residency at the Banff Centre in Canada's most visited national park. Growing weary of contributing to the oversaturation of nearly identical images that are produced by the everyday tourist, I chose to take a few steps back from the traditional viewpoint, to look at tourism from a quasi-anthropological perspective. In *On How to View Landscape*, I used photo and video cameras to passively record the gestures and actions of tourists who are sightseeing. By shifting focus to the space of the viewer rather than the space being viewed, my work observes these places from a human perspective and on a human scale. The scenes that transpire are sometimes absurd, occasionally melancholic, but altogether banal—reminders of when we may have stood in the same locations or struggled up the trail in search of an individual experience or moments of contemplation.

Pendant l'été 2012, j'ai fait partie des artistes en résidence au Banff Centre, le parc national canadien le plus visité. Fatiguée de contribuer à la surproduction d'images pratiquement identiques produites par les touristes de base, j'ai décidé de prendre du recul du point de vue coutumier et d'étudier le tourisme d'un point de vue presque anthropologique. Dans *Comment regarder un paysage*, j'utilise la photo et la vidéo pour enregistrer les gestes et actions des touristes en visite. En changeant le centre d'attention du paysage au spectateur, cette œuvre étudie ces espaces d'un point de vue humain et à l'échelle humaine. Les scènes capturées sont parfois absurdes, mélancoliques mais dans l'ensemble un rappel banal de ces moments où nous étions peut-être au même endroit ou avons remonté un sentier à la recherche d'une expérience unique ou d'un instant de contemplation.

ARTIST STATEMENTS/MOT DE L'ARTISTE

Aaron Vincent Elkaim

In the 1960s, Fort McKay First Nation, situated on the Athabasca River in Northern Alberta, had no roads connecting it to the rest of Canada. They sustained themselves through a traditional economy of hunting and trapping, as their ancestors practiced for generations. However, as community elder Zackary Powder says, "It's not like it used to be; everything has changed." Sleeping with the Devil captures the transformation of a community torn between economic development and the endangerment of their land and traditions. Living in the heart of the Oil Sands, some are proud to participate in the economic prosperity, while others decry their powerlessness against environmental destruction.

Dans les années 60, la Première Nation de Fort McKay, située le long du fleuve Athabasca dans le nord de l'Alberta, n'était connecté à par aucune route au reste du Canada. Une économie traditionnelle composée de chasse et de pièges leur permettait de subvenir à leurs besoins comme leurs ancêtres le faisaient depuis des générations. Cependant, comme l'ancien Zackary Powder le dit « : les choses ne sont plus comme elles l'étaient, tout a changé. » Dormir avec le Diable documente les transformations d'une communauté aux prises avec le développement économique et le danger posé à son territoire et ses traditions. Vivant au cœur des sables bitumineux, certains sont fiers de leur participation au développement économique alors que d'autres déplorent leur impuissance face à la destruction environnementale.