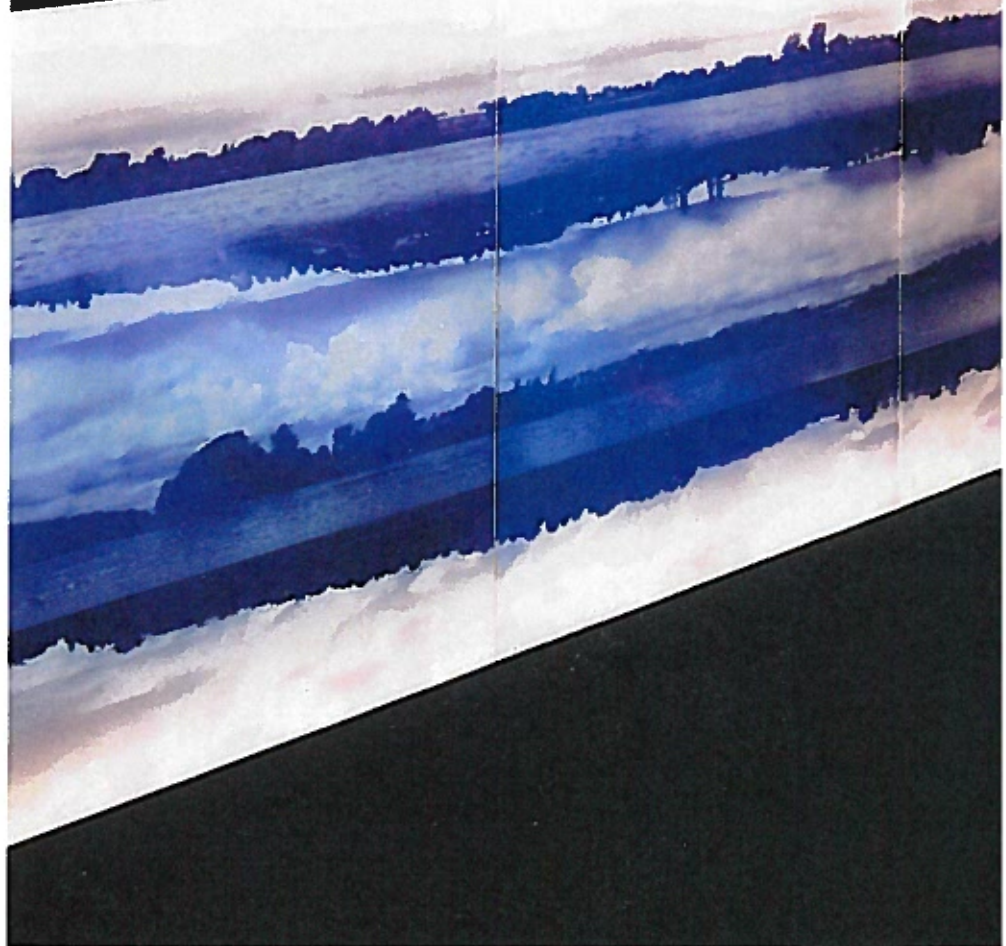


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Culture at the Canada-US Border

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*Gillian Roberts
and David Stirrup, editors*

PARALLEL ENCOUNTERS

Culture at the Canada-US Border



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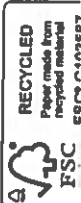
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Bordering on Borders

Dream, Memory, and Allegories of Writing

Lynette Hunter

THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES WHY sentient beings make borders, what kinds of borders they make, and the implications of those distinct kinds of borders for ways of being and thinking about our selves. It explores dream as a place that embodies difference, memory as a process of situating that embodiment, and allegories of writing as a way of building a situated textuality that enables allegories of reading. It will first consider significations of "border" and "bordering," or the performativity of the border, and will turn to commentary on memory and story and to discussion of storylines from traditional knowledge practices to think further about the embodied social knowledge that is wrapped up in the process of bordering and its articulation in the work of dream, memory, and allegory. The chapter then turns to the poetry of Judy Halesky to study her poetics of dreaming, and to recent work by Daphne Marlatt to study the poetics of memory. Each writer thinks textually about the ways words become allegories of somatic experience and performances of bordering.

Borders are sometimes rigid, sometimes flexible, at times inclusive, at others exclusive—often all at the same time. Some borders close me down, require me to behave in certain ways, yet what I am interested in here is the process of bordering and the work of dream, memory and the process of mapping that is allegory: storylines that orient the self with respect to the ecology of life, become an embodied set toward the people, things, and landscapes around us, and prompt us to engagement.

Consider the border that skin makes: we are covered by it, and it is both a delineation of who we are and what we are not, as well as a place where "we" intermingle with the rest of the world outwith the body, the skin being the second largest breathing organ of the body. The skin marks a cut between self and not-self, the Buddhist Phat, or the way we exist as different entities at the point we also realize we are one. If skin is a border, it is not the border as liminality where the fixed is deferred, but the border where we make difference, create identity through embodiment of our recognition that we are not something other/else. I call this engaged border: bordering.

A border, as Etienne Balibar, who also writes on "transindividuality,"¹ said in 1991, just after the Wall came down, is not there until we make it: "The theorist who attempts to define what a border is is in danger of going round in circles, as the very representation of the border is the precondition for any definition" (76). Neither is difference there until we make it. The making of engaged difference (a process embedded in Derrida's *différance*) leads to value because as we recognize that we make the difference, we have to take responsibility for it, which is an indication of, as Peggy Kamuf writes, "the impossibility of a *position* which is *not already a relation*" (qtd. in Gatens and Lloyd 188). Responsibility leads to valuing, and values give us agency, provide the moral energy to act or speak, and the energy of words and action carries affect and knowledge. The process defines our self as collaborative.

A border is also a performance of different kinds of identity and self that realize different kinds of rhetoric. Whether national, regional, or personal, borders are made up through rhetorics of representation as well as through rhetorics of presence and performativity. Doreen Massey's *For Space* is one of the more extensive studies of the rhetorics of situated knowledge and their relation to borders. It explores the material relations of space that can dislocate the representations that assume that locales, cultures, and nations have "an integral relation to bounded spaces, internally coherent and differentiated from each other by separation" (64). Massey argues that new ways of thinking about space can disrupt the totalizing claims of liberal humanism and neoliberal globalization, which base themselves on that notion of bounded space. Central to this new materiality is a multiplicitous awareness of "stories-so-far" that prompts us into "the continuous production and reconfiguration of heterogeneity in all its forms" (61). These stories require a redefinition of time/space elements² that posit a non-verbal rhetoric of presence and performativity.

Borders are to do not only with the geography of rhetoric, but also with affect. One of the enduring moments of my life was reading David McFadden's *A Trip around Lake Erie*. I had immigrated to Canada, aged ten, to live in Hamilton, where I spent my teenage years. McFadden's book described the south shore of Lake Erie allegorically, as a marsh draining down in a pale wash of light, as if into a different dimension (20). This was, and to some extent still is, exactly how I *felt* about the "other side of the border," and I experienced a shock of recognition in this mutually felt body memory for the United States. I *feel* differently about the US-Mexico border, to which I'm now quite close, than the US-Canada border, which is different again from the Canada-Alaska border in Yukon. I *feel* differently about the Canada-China sea border than the Canada-Europe border, which is mediated by the Grand Banks and hundreds of years of fishing traffic with which I'm familiar. And what about ice? All that increasingly coming and going of just about solid territory at the border between Canada-Greenland or Canada-Russia, borders that are sometimes there and sometimes not.

These actual borders are not necessarily the ones about which I feel most strongly. I tend to recognize, realize, make real those I'm personally involved in making. For example, during my travel down Highway 41 between Pembroke and Kingston. As I drive down the highway on my way home to a small village called Denbigh, I go over the top of a hill and—I'm *there/here*. It's a visceral feeling affirmed by a sign that announces Addington Highlands Township and the start of a potholed road, but many people will travel the same road and not experience that feeling. I've made a border, and engaged in a process of that making, the way it makes me feel; I've made a difference, crossed a border, come home. Just so, in teaching Canadian literature in Britain or the United States, I'll be reading along with a group of students, and because they usually recognize the language, English, and think of it as their own, and are imbricated into the heteronormative nation-state that determines so many countries around the world, they feel familiar with the text. Suddenly they miss a feeling, a possibility for difference. "Aesthetics" means "feeling," that embedded somatic response to things in the world. And at times, the students find a difference collectively, where I do not. Not making that difference is problematic, on their part or on mine, and I see my work as an educator as largely being to alert myself and my co-workers to ways that encourage that making, generate those feelings.

"Home" is just as open to representative or performative rhetorics as "border." Massey would argue that nostalgia for "home" insists on the past in a way that can rob others of their stories. If we have a fixed idea of "home" in mind, we deny the possibility of change, of the way others' stories may well have made a difference to the space and time we remember. Yet many people feel an affective need for "home," and Massey suggests that it is only when nostalgic denies other stories that "it is indeed 'naïve'" (124). The ways these performative and affective feelings happen is the process I'm here calling "bordering," and dream is a central part of its making.

Dream, and its connection with storyline, orients the self with respect to the ecology of life. Together, dream and storyline become part of our physiology, part of our social constitution, part of the way we negotiate a situated positionality in our daily lives, and part of the way we make situated textualities to articulate that positionality. But prior to negotiation, a privileged activity, is otiation: generally understood as "lazy" or "leisured" depending on class position, but curiously also signifying "something that is not contributing to the state of things." Dream, as we retain it in "daydream," is otiose and therefore a tool for those not included in the state. In turn, memory makes the embodiments of dream into textual mappings of many kinds. In the situated textuality of allegory in particular media, memory works through a rhetoric of forgetting. What is remembered with certainty overwrites the stories of others, yet forgetting is a process of remembering in the present that makes stories in

collaboration. I am here exploring writing, telling, listening, and reading. The process is spiral, for dream is an embodiment with which the memory needs to interact, and the situated process of that interaction is the bordering of story, the allegory of dream, that in turn becomes embodied in the reader.

Peter Kulchyski uses the phrase "storyline" to describe an Aboriginal word-craft that speaks both back to and alongside the "certain kind of writing that is the state" (37). Storyline is generated, he suggests, by dream—not the dream of the "unconscious," not part of the repressed, but in the present. This kind of dream is not a set of images discarded by mass culture,³ but a living memory of the collective. In my own words, it is involved not in rhetorics of representation but in rhetorics of presence/presents/gifts. It generates "a story that is a way of seeing, a story that reveals, makes visible, the limits of a way of seeing" (32–33). Working from Michael Taussig's concept of "implicit social knowledge," Kulchyski notes that the form—what I would call "textuality"—in which the images make that knowledge is a critical feature of the value it generates and the knowledge that results.⁴

Turning to implicit social knowledge and traditional knowledge in Indigenous communities enables thinking about borders/bordering as the direct link made by people commenting on the connection of these knowledges with particular rhetorics of story. Situated knowledge theory, which has much in common with these epistemologies, tends to neglect the need for a textuality to convey the knowledge, yet without a textuality there can be no communicated knowledge. Massey, for example, speaks of the need for texts to be "a place within continuous and multiple processes of emergence" (54), as if this were an odd challenge to a status quo of the text, whereas it is the basis on which "literature" rests, and in which many critical readers engage. Whereas disciplinary has kept situated knowledge theorists from benefiting from centuries of work on poetics, in Aboriginal studies, social effectiveness is often closely aligned with engaged textuality.

Louise Profeit-Leblanc calls the "first face" of story "ancestral memory," knowledge of the myths needed for survival that establishes "strength," gives young people "the continuous training and education about how not to be afraid of what lies before you, what lies around you, what's in your environment" (49). This kind of story is "true," but as Jim Cheney points out, quoting from other comments made by Profeit-Leblanc, truth is here "responsibly true" (a 'responsible truth'), 'true to what you believe in,' 'what is good for you and the community'" (92). In the West, this is historically the definition given to the truth of rhetoric rather than the truth of rational logic, often delineated as the "good,"⁵ "probably the best for the moment" (see Hunter, *Rhetorical* ch. 2), a sense of truth as a negotiated feeling in communities of difference.⁶ Cheney suggests that this kind of world outlook creates a "ceremonial world" in which there is an "agnostic" relationship between map and territory, so that map is

not fixed. A ceremonial map provides an "ethical-epistemological orientation of attentiveness (*respect*) rather than an epistemology of control" (94): a bordering rather than a border.

Another central element of the commentary on implicit social knowledge, or traditional knowledge, that is missing from accounts of situated knowledge is the importance of listening (see Nunavut Arctic College). The elders I have worked with briefly always talk about the first skill in storytelling being the ability to listen (Hunter, "Equality" 57); as Kulchyski also notes, most elders are concerned that people do not listen as much as they used to (35). I would extend this concern to reading—not the functional ability to read, but the skill of reading with an engaged, feeling body. Both listening and reading have etymological roots in being attentive, or attending to, the material at hand, having an attitude of care, respect, and interaction with the material.⁷ While to "listen" is to keep silence and to "read" is to advise or suggest, reading as listening is the work I'd call attention to here.

Situated knowledge theorists articulate careful theories about borders and bordering, calling on story to support the latter. Yet stories can be fixed and unfluxed and in the process of making. They are not necessarily in one rhetoric or another, but are historically contextualized so that some strategies and devices become more or less appropriate to static, relational, and processual events. The rhetoric of traditional knowledge, which understands this, involves how the story is told socially and contextually as well as orally or verbally. In this chapter, I would like to bridge from the insights of traditional knowledge as a process of bordering, through Kulchyski's insights into state stories and dream stories, to respond to Massey's call for a text that responds to process, what I call a textuality. I want to delineate bordering from border not only as a desirable process but also through particular textualities with particular rhetorics. Poetics is the field in which language is in process, but this textuality does not underwrite its ability to enable bordering in all socio-cultural situations. Poetics needs a rhetorical stance that sets it toward that bordering, a stance generically named allegory.

The chapter works through two particular engagements of textuality, my reading of two writings, in which I attempt to explore the rhetorical strategies used by each writer to enable a process of reading/listening, and my own strategies for enabling the materiality of embodied affect in the writing of this reading. The writer writes, bodily engaging the world with dream through memory into the word. The reader reads, bodily engaging the word through similar strategies into the world. The reader only engages the body when they retell the words, just as traditional knowledge imparts that the listener only engages the body when they retell the words. A text can sit in the body for years before it somatizes into dream, impelling memory to materialize it into retelling, into making it present, into mimesis. And if you work on that reading

as allegory then you make just one particular reading, a reading in process so that as the particulars change, as they must with the movement of the earth, so the reading changes.

Dream and a Textuality of Embodiment

Judy Halebsky, in *Japanese for Daydreamers*, and Daphne Marlatt, in *The Given*, focus on the borders between humans, between humans and the natural world, between humans and the man-made world, and on the different ways we textualize these borders: the moment's version of poetics. In these texts, the borders between humans and non-humans have many more apparent resistances than do humans or man-made objects. They offer an elusiveness and enigma from which we can learn about making differences that we can apply to other interactions. Articulating those differences within a situated textuality draws on and develops rhetorics of allegory.

These writers make us go back to dream to grapple with the embodied knowledge of other people and the world—dream as a felt experience that provides an analogy to a somatic bordering that both limits and dissolves any autonomous sense of self. The interaction with the natural world is perceived as immediate, somatic, and in the moment. The interaction of human with the natural world is one of hoping for a similar bordering, holding not only the promise of making difference, creating value, finding responsibility, but also the hope that the process engages us, makes us immanent in each other. Dream holds vestiges of this experience that are rehearsed in ritual. Marlatt and Halebsky not only hope but also enact/perform bordering in their writing. Halebsky meditates on translation, on the way bodies engage with what has happened in dream so that translation becomes a form of re-membering in the present; Marlatt meditates on memory and forgetting, re-membering as an active connection between what has happened and words. They elaborate rhetorics of allegory in translation and forgetting.

Judy Halebsky's *Japanese for Daydreamers* works on the process of translation to explore the poetics of dream and embodiment in a series of poems that engage with haiku by the Japanese poet Basho. Translation could be considered a fundamental recognition of difference, given that no translation can ever be exact. Halebsky's writing suggests that translation is a process of dreaming the world-to-be-translated into embodiment that yields an engaged textuality. The poems in this collection move between English and Japanese, making a space for dream, for a rehearsal of the unknown in the body that makes difference. The process is continually bordering on what-is-said and what-cannot-be-said, engaging the reader, who may read silently or aloud, in valuing the feeling prompted by the textuality.

The first poem presents the Japanese characters followed by a translation: "Oh sky, a little bit even, fly not" (3). The poem's movement generates another

translation that has passed through the body of this poet, and through the reading of the reader, into the final line: "I cannot fly in the sky at all" (3). Reading through the poem, a reader feels the embodiment when responding interactively to the textuality. The first stanza:

You can move between French and English
put the table in the kitchen
and the soft red chair by the window (3)

opens with regularity and balance, wisps of childhood French lessons, simple sentences that speak to me now of the cultural translations I make whenever I go to France or to England. It shifts from the basic "put the table in the kitchen" to the more complex third line, which may have an understood verb "and *put* the soft" or may just be a observation, and which has ambiguous qualifiers: is the red chair "soft" or is the chair coloured in "soft red"?

The second stanza:

but with Japanese you can't bring what you already have
like the words: me, you
or how to count: 1 bed, 2 chairs, 3 days (3)

The length of the first line strung right out across the page dissolving the line-end effect with a physical enjambement. If I engage the textuality and break the jam, bend the arm at the elbow, I realize the first line is a definition, that there is no Japanese word for "to bring what you already have." But also, "what you already have" are words like "me, you" and numbers with nouns. Implicitly, they too elude translation, do not exist in the other language and culture. In their place things exist differently. What this difference is we do not know, but we have made a border between us and it by understanding that we cannot translate.

The third stanza:

an airplane takes off from Sacramento
I lie at an angle so I can see the fig tree out the window (3)

The translating body is situated, in Sacramento, watching airplanes, changing the angle of vision "to see the fig tree out the window." Or is this the physical movement the translator engages in to think through the way to speak of "sky" in Japanese, to translate Basho? Either way, the words impel me to bend into the movement, to rehearse it through my own body to grasp a possibility as I translate from the poem to me. I almost want physically to cock my head, strain my neck to see just a "little bit of sky."

The fourth stanza:

arms for wings
 ears for songs
 3 days for water
 sleep for sleep
 chocolate for chocolate
 vodka for vodka
 kanji for death
 death for surrender
 surrender for sleep and 10,000 years (3)

runs through a list—are these passing thoughts as the eyes stare into the sky? are they translations from English to Japanese, Japanese to English? are they literalizations of syllabic characters? meditations or memories on words and different languages? They begin with a possible translation for “fly”—“arms for wings”—and then slip into a series of associations that eddy daydream-like from one to the next, morphing from an inserted Japanese word “kanji” to death/surrender/sleep and 10,000 years, as if leading into unknown territory.

The fifth stanza:

the sky is (o for honorific)
 a little bit (silent syllable) even
 (I (implied) cannot fly (3))

returns to the literal text and formally addresses its physicality. The ellipses cordoning off an analysis of certain elements, which we know from the ambiguity of the first stanza, are uncertain when out of context, and what is the context here? The eddying list in stanza four seeps through the tension of this grammatical/syntactical structure to release the final line, the sixth stanza, “I cannot fly in the sky at all,” which leaves the haiku behind and floats on the page with the curious sense that even if you only had a bit of sky—rather than the whole thing—you still couldn’t fly in it. There is no significance to a depth and breadth of the sky, only the human limitation in face of it.

The process of translation passes through the particular body of the translator, eddying through daydream into words as it passes from narration to association to analysis that breaks apart into new words. The eighth poem, “Zen Monks Talking Big,” has a structure similar to the first, but adds the roman characters for the Japanese syllabics, partly to foreground the last word “yo,” “Yo,” which means “yup, that’s what it’s like” or “as I said” or “hi there” in North America, turns a literal, formal translation of

watching the lightning
 those who share simply
 are noble

into a different, deadpan translation:

high brow talk
 over the lightning
 such a pity (11)

Each of the poems in this collection presents other processes of embodiment for translation. For example, the second poem “W” (this is a broken letter preceded by the Japanese character for “woman under trees”) oman Under Trees” takes us through a fugue study on the Japanese character for “woman” as the writer assesses the impact of translation on her maturing person:

you might not think these aren’t my words
 not my body, not sounds that shaped me
 when I was growing through shadows on the wall (4)

We learn from the following poem “Folksong (translation)” that “shadows” are the words the translator finds for the reality of existence in the first language.

“Woman Under Trees” takes us physically through the Japanese characters for different kinds of woman, their transliteration, and a possible translation, in a layout recalling concrete poetics that releases the final stanza:

these words flood into the river
 they are trees that rise uprooted
 they are butterflies in the trees (4)

The epigraph to the collection is a translation of a Basho haiku by Robert Hass: “A caterpillar, / this deep in fall – / still not a butterfly” (1). It reminds us that a butterfly is a realized potential. Still later, the poem “Water Voices” quotes from poet Claude Roy, “I will only say that poets are like trees: / they are all united by their roots in the earth / and their branches in the sky” (9). Bringing these to the final stanza of the second poem affirms its sense of generative flooding, of words maturing through the body of the poet into poems, and of the woman’s body realizing its potential.

“Water Voices,” dedicated to Anatole Lubovich, poet and translator,” insists not on the tree that is the poet but on water, saying, “a water heart / means how to swim” (9): “water heart” is the transliteration from the Japanese characters; “how to swim” is the translation. The physical image of the character, its

transliteration, its translation, can be read as a single “character” in itself, that generates a list of other possible translations and a series of haiku:

how to float with no mooring
 the jasmine in Berkeley in December
 the ginkgo leaves yellow in all corners of the street
 the way we prop ourselves up to dawn (9)

before returning to three more “characters” in which “water people” = “what you tried to carry,” “water voices” = “the sound of water,” “water people talking” = “a love song.” Water is the first element, the energy for action, the sense of floating anticipation, the lightness of laughter, the reason we bother to wake up.

Other poetic strategies work from the sound or shape of the words, at times importing mathematical symbols that change the shape of the meaning, at other times offering multiple translations of the same Japanese syllabics. “Read Me Where I Lie” plays even in the title with the ambiguity of the body and the word, for “lie” is to lay down the body as well as to deceive. This poem and the next, “Landscape,” underline the embodied process of translation. “Landscape” laments that “the dictionary is out of words, out of pages,” and continues, “let me dream the blank pages that were once a dictionary” as the poet searches for the words in the body (23). The search is “desperate,” yet in comparison with “Oakland / where no one has what they need,” perhaps gains a context that yields:

in Japanese there’s a character that means searching for
 something
 and a different character
 that means searching for something you’ve lost (23)

Oakland, with its substantial African American population living the crises of black American life, keeps what people “need” in perspective. Not only do these crises, which negate Afro-American access to the world of efficacious words, make possible any kind of modern civic life, but the crises also remind more privileged others of their capacity for translation. Dream becomes a place where, for this relatively privileged writer, both those characters—for “something” and for “something you have lost”—can be embodied, even as the dictionary remains “still blank.” If the dictionary is the repository of “already said” words, the poetics of translation materialize the embodiments of dream in words. Translation becomes a kind of remembering.

“Read Me Where I Lie” notes:

Sensei doesn’t like me changing the words
 breathing my angle into them
 bracing them into my shape (22)

Sensei wants the poet to say what love song “actually” means, that translation is a series of grade points, “he wants me to tell you / a different kind of love song” to the translation that lets:

the words come underwater
 breathed in like air
 seeded to spruce, to elm, to fir (22)

Outwith the words, or the translating process, there is a natural world that simply “is” in a way that the daydreaming body nearly, simply “is.” But the world of nature is also a place with more evident resistance to human beings than other humans, or even other man-made objects. We can learn more acutely about the way we make difference from the way the physical elements around us insist on their elusiveness. That natural world begins in water, in the “water lung” of birth that speaks in the final poem “Down the Mountain” before it becomes the “paper lung” of poetry. It provides the writer with a world in which translations are made in the moment, where she can see the trees ripped from Stanley Park in “Stanley Park with my Father, 2006,” and read their translation of her relationship, through the time and space that they encapsulate, into a way of making that relationship for herself. Or the immediacy of

birds in flocks on the trees
 each one urgent and shouting
 if not here, then here (19)

a cacophony of noise that goes nowhere, but is everywhere, arresting time in the sound and space of “here”—or the cicada’s call that “pierces the stones” at the same time as “the rocks hear/ the sound of the cicadas” (18).

This world runs alongside the familial and the civic, just as the world of her body, becoming a “home for worms / a nest for moths” (21), lives at the same time as she is remade by her family into “queen of cakes,” “queen of waking dreams, the queen of lost mittens.” There is an insistent parallel between the natural and civic worlds, with the natural providing a “limit case” of what cannot be known.⁶ Even as human beings change the natural world they do so with complete lack of interaction; nature doesn’t “speak back” in its terms, but in terms that we attribute to it. The city, as Massey notes, is a “human–nonhuman negotiation of place conducted, on the human side, within an overweening presumption of the ability to conquer” (161) the natural. Hence the ongoing

fascination of what it might be saying, and that concept, too, is anthropomorphic. The natural is also at the same time a reminder that human beings are part of an ecological system, a "oneness," that just because we can never comprehend it, is never complete."

The collection ends with "Down the Mountain," where the ghost of trees makes possible the words of her "paper lung" (24):

whatever I came with exhausted
I pass through these pages like a ghost
whatever I came with I spent

"exhausted" being emptied as well as tired, "spent" being tired as well as emptied. The lines recall the first poem's statement "with Japanese you can't bring what you already have," or that poets can "carry" feeling even though they cannot bring it. "To bring" implies that we bring an object or a person or a memory of a finitely locatable thing with us, "to carry" implies a process. This poet has carried the process of translation in her body, formed from the somatic responses of dream and daydream into the words that are embodiments of her voice. The poetry cannot bring with it another reality, but it can invite us into the reality of the writing body, a textuality with which we need to interact in a present-time allegorical reading that attends with care, that listens and rehearses those words in our own body.

Memory and a Rhetoric of Forgetting

Daphne Marlatt's *The Given* is an elegy, or a ritual of remembrance, for her mother, the city through which she knows her, and the wider environment. A fugue meditation on home, the homeless, ideological pressures, and war, it's an exploration of memory and forgetting, and a glancing interaction with an alongside world of natural and spiritual significance. The text also becomes an exploration of the way a modern city insists on borders, borders that include and exclude, but also on the material reality of borders that make some people inhuman (here, women and the destitute) and that could not exist at all without the defined-as-non-human body of the slave. As the "home" is the unacknowledged shadow of the civic state, the wife an unseen and unnamed labourer who enables capitalist profit, the text offers exploration of the way home is a certain kind of territory from which one could become homeless, but it also offers home and homelessness as a process of openness to change, a challenge to the definitions of the city.

The writing explores the way memory, like the "certain writing that is the state," insists on certain interpretations and is dislocated when these are disallowed. It asks, what do memories overwrite if they persist? It's not a matter of denying the past, but of engaging with it, knowing that we understand it from

the needs of the present, and keeping this knowingness present and part of the process. The textuality follows the way happenstance happens, the way chance keeps us in the moment, the way the indecipherability of the natural world and its radical difference keep us honest about our systems of man-made privilege, the way a good memory becomes a forgetting, so that the present can be present, that knowing the making of memory in the present prevents the rush of certainty. And it is also about the somatic experience generating memory and forgetting and the glimpses of that feeling afforded by the indecipherability of ritual.

The book has five parts: in part one, or "Seven Glass Bowls / [overture]," the writer begins to delineate the different points in time that will layer this story, maps the feeling into words through strategies of somatic memory—the central point being the day her mother is found dead at home, which is in the relatively distant past to her act of writing. In the second section, "1953 / [act one]," a childlike narrative voice surfaces as the main point of reference, in the year of 1953 when the second Narrows Bridge was begun between the North Shore and Vancouver. The third section, "Out Of The Blue / [intermezzo]," takes us back to the moment of the mother's death, opening out the connections between the mother's body and the city. The fourth section, "1958 / [act two]," combines the fall of the bridge with the narrative voice of a young teenage girl coming to terms with sexuality and with an increasing sense that something is wrong with her mother. The final section, "Late In The Day / [finale]," explores the process of forgetting as time collapses into the present space of her relationships with other people, the city, the natural world.

"Seven Glass Bowls / [overture]"

The section begins with "you remember—what is it you remember?", and continues, "the feel of home, that moment of coming into your body, its familiar ache and shift" (1). The prosody is broken into cohesive "paragraphs," or perhaps somagraphs, since they carry the embodied moment. Later in this first somagraph, the speaker says, "in the still of the day" "we," possibly the writer and her partner, "bring something to burn" to create a ceremony that "ribbons" through the days we share, and share, continuous, with what is gone" (2). Later in overture the reader returns to "in the stillness of morning, we set out seven glass bowls with a tea-light in the middle—two waters, a flower, incense, flame, perfume, food, music, pour water through inner turbulence, watch it brim luminous in each transparent dish, watch it through our muddied implicatedness" (12–13). This ritual draws the "we" together, offering an alongside world that brings luminescence to the turbulence of the way we are implicated in the net of the world, the mess of our situatedness present with the energy that generates it. Later, in the finale, we return to the image "in the still of almost evening, something to burn for those who have left, who go on burning

in us. *tsa sur*. brimming bowls and incense. water and light" (98), suggesting that the ceremony is one that commemorates, remembers, and—as we shall discover—also forgets, the dead.

The opening *overture* then takes us immediately back with "it was July ...," the kind of day that calls "the body out to play ... re-arisen, chickadee's two-note shrill euphoric, *here / i'm here*" (2), "this *joyant* pouring in with sun across a kitchen nook amidst with memory smoke" (2). In the midst of "that morning of liquid flight" her father calls and says "i can't wake her up" (2). At this point the poetries move on to a two-line arrest of attention, possibly in the now, possibly in the past:

and birds, in the corner of an eye as i stared unfocused at their
skywriting: flap flap, soar. their Sanskrit.

On first reading it is difficult to tell how to read these lines, but already we follow this writer's turn to the natural world when she looks for images to carry feeling, whether it is the chickadee in the centre of her focus of the joyant day, or the unfocused flapping of bird wing that speaks possibly of shock, possibly of a memory-state, possibly of the shift in set toward¹⁰ the world with which death leaves us.

The arrest spins out rapidly into a series of moments of recall and feeling for several somagraphs, spilling into the writer's comment that this is

rapid overlay, one place-time on another, as if we're actually in the
movement between, memory cascading its light-drenched moments and
then suddenly that single jet of recognition, parallel perhaps, that allows
us to see, paradoxically, this place we're in the midst of ...
incredible, conflicting with explanation. (4)

Memory layers feeling on feeling, present sense of past experience on past experience, and throughout *overture*, voice, quotation, letters, directly reported speech, indirect description, remembered observation, song, commonplace, formal speech, gendered speech, visual image, and most vibrant the staccato conversations and poetic interventions, build that insistent Marlattian prosody that turns prose into a river. The layers are strung on a fugue-like repetition of "home." From "the feel of home," to "to feel at home," "coming home," "going home," "homing in," "home and the closeness of the beloved," "so where is home for you?", the prosody is interrupted, sometimes at moments of intense feeling (where words fail?) with that alongside world. For example, remembering coming into the room and seeing her mother's body "like a child's" gives way to

birch-waver, pine-sway. Animated talk of struck glass. Rhythmic gusts
bending the length of trunks away from our neighbour's porch. (13)

This shift turns into "*furor scribendi*. rapid, with frantic signage, pine jostle green behind." It is as if there are two different kinds of writing going on: the "waver, tremble" of the "restless filigree of leafless birch," and the writer "still getting used to this particular sense of history as missed story, shadowing place" (5).

Not all shadows—here the remnants of the actual body, analogous to the actual reality of Halebsky's Japanese that is shadowed by her English—are beneficent. Marlatt's writer tries self-consciously not to pass on the "shadowy figures" of confining, gender-specific maxims with which she grew up. But the presence of the body in her memory becomes increasingly more problematic. Set against an intimacy recalling "a splotch of robin's egg blue on the soft sag of her cheeks" (3), is the "underlay, as if / her body under the / lay of the city under / lies it" (4). Set suddenly in contrast with the "love" for her mother is the awareness of the dead body, and "what to do with the body?" (7), and later "what to do with the body? // (we didn't know)" (14). Set alongside the present, with its "outrageous birdjoy all around" (20), the cats, dogs, and sunshine, is the question of what to do with the words: "if all this is a sign, what does it say? one seme, one phoneme even?"; "*description*. this writing around" (19). The writer, aware that as she remembers her mother, she is mapping her present geography and relationships, is "bordering" in particular with the person with whom she makes her home in the present.

By the close of *overture* the mother's body is "impossibly there and not there" (20), and "dumb," without words, and "released from her story." The writer's final line, "now I remember mum's the word" (21) folding "mum" into "mother," with mum / = mom (according to mother), as the sign of the journey through memory to "mum's the word," the silence, but also the "word": what's the right word? The word is central to memory, the word is what you remember in making present. *The Given* is of course the writer's story, and no one else's—until the reading.

1953 / [act one] – Out of the Blue / [intermezzo] – 1958 / [act two]

The second part, 1953 / [act one], opens with the words:

only she, to begin with, she which means about – and so begins the long
pulling of a thread from the trammel that underlies all this, the way any of
us are tangled in the past. (23)

A trammel is a fishing net, a strategy to catch some things but not others, a net offering a kind of loose map of an area, and a net disintegrating as a thread is

pulled out, becoming a tangle, a messy mapping. But trammel is also to bind up a corpse, and the line recalls the comment that her mother's body underlies the city, so thinking about the city will help her think about her mother, as well as suggesting that the city is built on the broken body of her mother.

The mother's "letters home" are intercut with the young girl's diary extracts, and the layers of memory writing to which we were introduced in part one—with the difference that there is little present-day commentary. Throughout this initial memory-mapping of her childhood pathways and geography, the writer is concerned more and more with words. Advertisements advising "KEEP YOUR HUBBY HAPPY" (24), and headlines about "happy, comfortable homes and well-ordered families" (34), "The Little Woman" (37), the bridge that is to be built from the North Shore, and the social mores of god and society, pepper the pages with solid black type and alarming fonts.

Yet the girl-voice is concerned not with the certainties of headlines but with the secrets of words. She knows even at this stage that words are potential rituals, writing and unwriting at the same time. One of her first direct considerations is a quotation from Pauline Johnson's story of "The Two Sisters." The young girl is already familiar with this "Pauline" and enchanted that she now knows the "secret name" for the mountains that everyone else in her world calls "The Lions" (31). There are accounts of the writing she undertakes in her "School Girl's Diary" (32), of the quite different angular font found in her "red scribbler hidden on the bookshelf inside a copy of the *Girl's Own Annual*" (33), and of the training of her writing through "MacLean's Method of Writing," which ensures she gets the "right, the Canadian, slant on it all, getting it right" (34). Her book by Pauline Johnson has the author's name "hand-burnt" on the cover "as if skin might absorb the words inside"—"new words, and old words she thought she knew, put together strangely" (35).

The girl-voice continually tries to find out "which words count" (36), knowing already that there are "(no words)" for feeling, "no accounting for—" (30). She asks insistently, "but what does it mean?" (37), picking up on her mother's ambivalent explanations: "that's what she's saying, but of course that isn't what she really means" (38). She asks her mother about interpretations of foreign words, or nonsense words such as "Marezy doats and dozy doats / and liddul lamzy tivv," to which her mother responds "well listen to the words" (42). The secret power of words pops up in unexpected places, such as the messages on "heart-shaped candies" (42) written on with that hidden font from her scribbler as if it conveys special significance.

All of this enriched, powerful, and exciting writing goes on at the same time as the alarming headlines. The girls are trained to be decorous readers: they carefully cover their books with paper, print their names on the front, and contain the contents within a "subject" (46), but as the year progresses these covers become filled with squiggles and doodles, scribbles and erasures, as

they make them their own by transgressing their borders. At the end of the year they tear off the covers, "surprised at how anonymous and new they looked, how suddenly not ours" (46). Our words make the page our own, not only as we write but also as we read. Reading becomes a curiously ephemeral analogy for writing, underlining their codependence.

The *intermezzo* "Out of the Blue" returns us to the question of "what to do about the body?"; extending it out to the body of the city, the body of a mother, the body of a lover, one's own body, asking, "where does the perceiving body begin and end?" (52). Like skin, the body's perceptions are processes of melding, bordering. In "*act one*" the voice speaks of the smells around her as "traces body-memory will rise to greet" (25), smell being a perception that enters the body in a quite particular and material sense. Here the dead body of the mother releases many other bodies—the mother's own, increasingly depressed, the "blue lady"—those of people in the street, people on the street, and people remembered from the street.

There's a way that this layering, this "palimpsest of removals" (49), what the writer calls at one point "streets of layered lives, lapidary, set in cement. the remains of stories" (55), becomes a meditation on how human beings build their worlds. Palimpsests are paradoxes, both overwriting past writings and harbouring their utterances. Her mother may have made a home for her and her sisters, but it is only sometimes a home for herself. She is curiously homeless at home, almost made homeless by the home, just as the bodies

asleep on church steps, in doorways, under overpasses, bodies
at sea in the streets
of this city of reconstruction, unhousted: unnamed, collapse
of social bedrock
underneath. (57)

Yet the detritus of human lives, from a burned futon to an old boot, is set against this "*world-class city*" (56), just as the depressed body of her mother, the dead body of her mother, is set against the orderliness of her "mushroom"-coloured satin brocade cushions. Somewhere the human attempt to build a home has gone awry, has not listened to the body and its necessary ecology. The modern city, and its need to capitalize, defines certain people as privileged and others as inhuman. Those not participating in the economy of the modern home are rendered homeless.

Mariatt, like Hatebsky, grasps at the inability of human beings to translate from the natural world. When "bird books" try to do so or others try in other forms, "the vowels are all wrong"; they cannot yield "spring's piercing call to bliss" (40). Yet it is the gulls' "wheel and cry above the dumpsters," their "lunge of desire" (52) with its fabulous quality of rebus and homophone that

correlates lung and lunge, that leads the writer to the perceiving body. The bodies in this part of the written text are "incontrovertible" links to the natural world; the body "does not lie" (50). Especially, it seems, the interaction between the mother-daughter body, "the maternal body the first one home re-enters, walks in through the door to its embrace. familiar palimpsest of smells" (62), which, like a bird call suddenly heard in the heart, is "there, out of the blue" (49). These memory flashes that carry intense embodiments into the present and embodiments of her mother not as the blue lady but as someone present and vital, leave the writer not in "the blues, the dumps, the mopes, the megrims" (59), but alive with that presence.

In "1958 / [act two]" the bridge that was called for and described in "1953" collapses, taking with it the lives of many people, including the father of the young girl's best friend. This part, from a more observational perspective of a teenager, is thoroughly taken over by the headlines, advertisements, and billboards that tell people how to live, that still focus on the nuclear bomb, the city, the destitute, and the perfect urban wives. *act two* acquires more of a narrative drive than the previous sections as the reader engages with the emerging sexuality of the young girl, the tragedy of the bridge collapse, and the off-hand response of the mother that finally gets the girl asking, "what's wrong with Mom?" (93). Even "Dad's red roses don't seem to help a Blue Lady" (89). The densening personal narrative with its diary entries in a "new Hilroy scribbler" (67) jostles with the signs and statements of a civic state that is trying to shape individuals into easy moulds.

There is far less explicit commentary about writing, words, or the natural world; Pauline Johnson surfaces just the once when the young girl wonders whether Johnson's story had been "fudged" (92), whether there was still a curse on the waters and the bridges over it. The mother thinks so, saying, "Fate had a hand in this, you mark my words" (91). Later a voice says, "if only I could sleep just a few hours. The Moving Finger writes—so many words, so many words all night. The Moving Finger writes—and it's indelible. who next?" (92). Omar Khayyam's, or rather Edward Fitzgerald's, translation of "The Rubaiyat" is often read as a statement that we are responsible for our own futures, but here that interpretation is a reader's memory coming second to an indication of a vengeful Fate hungry for disaster. As the writer tells the reader in the following part, "disaster fear. dis-astre. / up against the stars and their foregone orbits. conclusive" (99). This kind of disaster is written, the words realizing the actuality indelibly. Words determine our lives, write our path to death. This perspective seems not only to be that of the mother, but of a shadow lingering over the teenager as she begins to realize the implications of the power of words, that their certainties not only empower her but also control her, either way they subject her to the society around her. A reader in the moment of reading the book has subtle access to the way memory works as a process in the present.

A reader is the present of the text. Here, this reader experiences not only the double bind of the certain borders of the state but also the way the writing of this text attempts to make uncertain possibilities, borderings, out of this knowledge.

Late in the Day / [finale]

The final part of the book opens with:

you forget—what is it you forget?
not deliberately, contours of memory-landscape, significant features of its
stories shift with the years, eroded by changing weather systems. so
home, so the more and more homeless, now that it's late in the day. (97)

Memory finds an event as "past," but as it becomes aware of others' memories it experiences that event as a process of interaction, so that it becomes a happening in the present moment. Becoming aware is dependent on how well trained we are in recognizing that we make difference, can then value it and be responsible for it. A curious thing about memory is that often the more you remember the more you forget: to re-member is to change the body—put it in the present, in the moment—and to leave the body that was, behind, to forgo the getting together of that body. Halebsky translates "to remember," noting it "also means to learn" (10), and tells us that "to forget" in Japanese is made of the characters signifying "rush + heart" (8). In this reading, to forget is to rush the heart forward into the present. Much of Marlatt's *finale* opens out the process of forgetting as living in the present, using words to explore where the body is situated alongside social pressure, to understand its energy and its emptiness. This is to be well trained in practising the good rather than seeking the true.

Both the spoken and unspoken words of the book are about the mother's death, but the reader finds here why this is so problematic for the writer. All living creatures die, yet in the writer's mother's death was a life that may have been ended on purpose. But is this a fatalistic result, "pre-ordained, fatal attraction?" (105), as the doctor says, "quite common in women" (104)? Or is it specific to her mother? Suicide can leave the left-living with a rejection, or as the writer says about her father, with guilt. Yet the writer clearly has memories that lead her to believe that the death could have been suicide. The writer-daughter takes us back to a moment when the mother says with an "embarrassed edge" that "they" "were out to get her" (101). The narrative has already looped back to the time she and her mother are painting the nursery blue, when she asks the mother what she means, and the mother says, "because I'm still here," leaving the daughter to wonder, "what does *mean* mean?" (99). And when the writer and her sister hunt at the deathbed "for a note, a letter, a string of words to explain her body," all they find is: "*they are too strong for me* it said.

that's all it said. a private scrap of paper" (112). Suicide? perhaps and perhaps not. The mother certainly feels abandoned, as she says, "who am I supposed to keep the homes fires burning for?" (106). She "didn't marry a *house*" (105), she's not "just a housewife. *not a parasite ... a bum,*" but she became "a stifled bomb. deactivated" (108).

Marlatt's *Given* explores remembering as a kind of coming home, only to open out the rhetorics of repression, of nostalgia, and of self-identity that it can yield. Forgetting becomes a way of coming home that does not rob others of their stories. Massey's analysis of the City of London can be read through Marlatt's metaphor of the body of her mother underlying the city of Vancouver. Her mother is made homeless by the city's trajectory of finance and global power, just as the homeless on the streets are necessary to the success of that city, and just as London's success is a massive collision of trajectories, which depends on a "dynamics producing poverty and exclusion" (Massey 157). These people are made homeless because their stories are stolen. The homeless are without a home because they do not have the power to negotiate their own stories and, as Massey notes, this "antagonism" is denied (157). However, to have a home can become a privileged yearning for a version of the world where we do not have to engage, what Massey, citing Chantal Mouffe, calls "politics without adversaries" (86).

This paradox is the paradox of recognizing the appalling structure of the civic state; at least, for a middle-class white person in North America it's a paradox: the standard of living, cleanliness, access to foods, concepts of aesthetics, cultural and social pathways, being built on the necessity for poverty. For a black person on this continent it is the condition of fungibility, of the impossibility of humanity for black people if the civic state is to exist in the first place. For the "homeless" of any kind, the paradox is the condition of exclusion. For the mentally ill woman whose death is being re-membered, it is the loss of the "home," the story for which she thought she was made, and which she thought she had to perpetuate. But the writing pursues another way of making home. It points to another paradox. Homelessness could also be a process of consistently trying to ensure that the home is open, not fixed. We have no "rights" to home, we can only continue to make the present. In a sense the process of making the present is a kind of home.

Homelessness is the paradox of both not listening to the body's story, and listening to it too intently as defined by the civic state. To be homeless is both to have been ignored, not listened to, made abject, living on the other side of the border, and to be in an ecological relation, an ongoing process of situatedness. Yes, in the short term it is important to recognize the structural conditions that make abjection, because these could be ameliorated or changed. Without that recognition the idea of ecological relation may become a way to justify the inequities of structure: that a person is homeless "simply" because they have

chosen to be so. But in the long term the person who "recognizes" abjection is also complicit in creating it, a person can only "choose" homelessness if the condition has already been made possible by their exclusion. The long term displays the interconnectedness of all things, and the other sense of homelessness as the recognition of the territorialization of home, the need for continual process, bordering on borders.

Making a home by bordering is also a task the writer is undertaking for herself as she re-members and forgets. She walks the streets mapping both the personal history and the city itself where so much building is going on over the past, leaving "memory deconstructed" by "crane erections towering" (101), as the city maps over other stories. As she walks she sees the "unhoused people" (106), oddly also "people encased," the excluded homeless making borders around themselves, "trying to make some semblance of home on the street" (107). Juxtaposed with this errant walking is more and more of the way in which she is making a home for herself with her partner, turning an empty house into a home. Memory glances off the body to make words that recognize the differences. About halfway through *finale* the writer says, "you are gradually speaking less and less of elsewhere. that sharp pang of the place you didn't want to leave is fading. the you i know stretches its recognition network into these streets" (102), as if she recognizes that her past self is now so different that it is a "you" not an "I." This is no certain new "I" but one in a bordering process, as "connections splay out between images, cross thought traffic, don't form throughways or one-way sense" (107). She has the privilege to not-border, to make, to write, just as I have the privilege to make while reading.

It's late in the day to be re-membering her mother who died many years ago, and the writer at one point asks "why now?" (106). Yet the process of re-membering, orienting herself to her mother by way of her sense of "home" or of the city, opens the door to the paradox of home and homeless and how the city creates it. Re-membering means memories not only of a personal past but also the body memory of many pasts, in their contexts of social and political landscape. When she tries to map her mother, she maps those landscapes, releasing in her mind those who do not fit the city, the mapped over, such as her mother and social others, whose covering up both critiques the modern city and recognizes it as a site for change. And it's late in the day to remember that when you change a city you change its people. It's late in the day to remember that when you change an environment you change the whole earth. Yet it's right now that she does this for: writing, bordering, making the present day, today, here.

The present leaves her "not home. never at home in what remains. yet caught in the here of it" (115), that word "here" recalling the alongside world of birds, trees, nature. *finale* is frequently arrested by the writer's attention to

the body of this earth. tufted pine branch swirl multidirectional. crossed by the shadow of a wind-tossed crow. (107)

or, recalling *overture*, the connection of that world with writing:

so what were they writing, those birds, with their flourishes hieroglyphic? their feathered liftoff into the eye's vanishing point? (109)

It's as if for this writer's body the indecipherability of the natural world generates a landscape for the present: "here, I said, I was always saying here" (115). Like words, which human beings make both fateful and strange like that other map, the cartograph, which emerges from *chartus*: both the piece of paper on which the map is drawn and potentially fixed, and the cards in a deck of cards, full of chance and fate. It's the chance words, words in the present, that turn memory material into the writing by forgetting the words of the past. This is writing that takes time, enacts or embodies the enigmatic movement of people from body to memory to word that allows us also to rehearse the text in our readings. Birds, in contrast, are simultaneous with their being. Like Halebsky's birds that are "here and here," Marlatt's sing and are here. The last memory the writing gives us is of the writer escaping from the house of her mother's death and suddenly:

small tree—I recognized its shimmering. in it a single sparrow, head cocked eyeing me. I stop headlong as it opens its beak to pour out all that the room, her body, her house, could not. home free. (115)

The bird and its song are all that her mother could not say, all that this book has moved into saying, toward understanding the complex paradoxes of "home free." The birds have no memory; they need no translation.

Both Halebsky and Marlatt work with an alongside world of earth, birds, and trees, that attains a presence, a coalescence of time/space that usually eludes sentient beings but reminds them not to settle for less than intense presence. For Marlatt, walking the city becomes a meditative exercise to re-member the body in the present through memory of her mother, a meditation that encapsulates the writing in the ceremony of the glass bowls, with their water and light taking on a more particular difference in daily life than even the natural world. For Halebsky, the impossibility of translating from the natural world offers a reminder that the body is always in the present, coming from water and, possibly, going to sky.

These writers tell a story about the way the body is present moment to moment. They tell a story about presence as engagement with the material world. They tell a story about writing as an ongoing process in a human world

that halts that engagement in multitudes of different places, creating borders that are supposed to support specific identities rather than making borderings of collaborative identities. The writing tells us not only about the attempt to keep the writing in process, but also about the ways in which the human world halts that process into stasis, tries to make it a space without time. It also tells us about the ways in which that writing can release the stasis into other processes. The writing is, in other words, laying out the different rhetorics of borders and bordering, and exploring the connection of the latter with dream and memory, the embodied affect and image of the material world.

The reading is trying to listen to what the writing is saying, trying to engage affectively, somatically, so that the words are treated as material, as resiliently other. In an allegorical stance, we make them different and in doing so define our self. Affect here is not human sympathy but a recognition of the differences we make between our self and other people and materials, differences that change us and for which, once recognized, we need to take responsibility. Both the writing and the reading explore the way engaging with the natural world reminds us of the possibilities in engaging with the material artifact. Engagements with the natural world remind us of the limitations of our ways of knowing, and the importance of keeping the process of knowing going. Maps can halt, and maps can open the door. The word can be certain or ceremonial in an early modern sense of the word that echoes its use in traditional knowledge. Borders can chart territory or trigger ritual, make a border or engage in bordering.

Somewhere among the body, the memory, the act of writing and the story is the palimpsest of life, the layered time/place of here that becomes the embodiment in which the reader encounters the dream and makes allegory. The process is one of bordering on saying something, a process that has no mark, limit, or end, except another reading in the present, another embodiment. Writing as a process borders on reading, a process in which we feel our skin, feel where we make our differences. We engage in performativity, are affected, where we make that cut between self and not-self that is always permeable, always simultaneously one, always bordering on borders.

Notes

- 1 "Transindividuality" underlines a concept of self that does not stop with the skin (see Bailbar qtd. in Massey 188).
- 2 See Massey on contemporaneity and coevalness (10), and constitutive complexity (125).
- 3 Kulchyski cites Walter Benjamin on dream not being unconscious but conscious and part of the present (32).
- 4 Kulchyski stops short of looking at the poetics of the word, the actual process of verbal, especially graphic, articulation.
- 5 See, for example, both Levinas and Murdoch.

- 6 See Nancy for an analysis of the way communities need to base themselves around disagreement rather than unity to continue to develop; see also Cockburn.
- 7 *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines "attentiveness" as a key element in both listening and reading (listen v., read v.).
- 8 Wittgenstein's joke on "what is the case" throughout, when we can never know what is the case, in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921).
- 9 See Morton on object-oriented ontology and the concept of the "withdrawn."
- 10 A "set toward" hegemonic structures is a positionality that is not generated in response or relation to those structures but nevertheless builds a fictional stance toward them.

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