

***WOODHAVEN CUSTOMS AND BORDER PATROL***

**A PEFORMANCE BETWEEN TWO SOLITUDES**

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

The College of Graduate Studies

(Interdisciplinary Studies)

[Performance/Theatre]

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Okanagan)

August 2011

## Abstract

This dissertation is a reflection and analysis of my thesis performance: a site-specific, durational installation of a border patrol service at Woodhaven Nature Conservancy in Kelowna, British Columbia: *Woodhaven Customs and Border Patrol*. The paper addresses the potentiality of performance to investigate, and critique, the separation of wilderness spaces from civilization spaces in contemporary culture; our relationship to “nature” and “culture” as two distinct entities; our relationship to borders, both international and metaphorical; and the history and emergence of national, provincial and regional parks as parallel to the history and emergence of Canada as a nation state. The performance of *Border Patrol* as a memory project is also examined, with attention paid to notions of “biogeography” as a nationalist project that overrides personal memory with institutional memory, and the parallels and similarities between the logic, structure and organisation of nature parks and museums. Throughout, there is an emphasis on performance, collaboration, and participation, with a retelling of key moments, stories, and memories from the performance itself in support of the analysis. In conclusion, the paper asserts that troubling binaries through performance can reveal the extent to which they are constituted by each other, and that notions of interdependency, collusion and collision are vital to a healthy appraisal of the ways in which we are currently using, inhabiting and marking out social space.

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## Acknowledgements

I offer my deepest gratitude to the faculty, staff and my fellow students and friends at UBC and in British Columbia itself. I also offer my humblest thanks to my family and friends in the UK and the USA—you supported my wild idea to travel to the westernmost reaches of Canada, and for this I am forever grateful. You have all given me more inspiration and support than I could have possibly imagined.

Thanks go to, in particular, but in no particular order: Denise Kenney; Neil Cadger; Dr. Virginie Magnat; Nancy Holmes; Sharon Thesen; Dr. Daniel Keyes; Dr. Ilya Parkins; Kristoff Stein; Natalia Hautala; Dr. David Jeffress; Lori Mairs; Robert Whitmore; Nancy Whitmore; Annabel Harris; Howard White; Martin Haworth; Louis Harris-White; Eleanor Grace; Abigail Conway; Tom Hunt; and Nicole Cormaci. All of your work continues to provide me with the inspiration to examine more deeply the creases, and absurdities, in the places we live. Thank you.

## Introduction

We first crossed into Canada by car, approaching Omak, WA/Osoyoos, B.C., with hearts that accelerated as the border became nearer. It was a physical effect that I had come to associate with border crossing. The border seemed to loom not only in the landscape, marked by signs and endless mile countdowns, but also in the imagination, and in the body. I turned to retrieve the passports, then held them in my lap: one red, one blue—one British, one American. My American partner and I, after over a year of living liminally in each other's countries as tourists, were finally going to live somewhere, together, officially—waving farewell to in-betweens. 21<sup>st</sup> century settlers, we had driven 1600 miles west across the United States in four days, and although we were not explorers we drove, with a nod to consumerist irony, a Ford Explorer, packed and weighted with belongings. We could not see out of the back; the past seemed to deteriorate behind us; we did not even see it go.

I was surprised to find I recognised many of the landscapes we burned through—from films, from television, from songs and books, daydreams and advertisements. The border appeared suddenly, improbably, at the edge of Omak, cluttered with abandoned gas stations. As the Explorer idled at the borderline, I had the feeling we were precisely on the edge of something—as though we were at the beginning of a movie, the titles rolling over our windshield: at the threshold of experience. My new life is *over there*, I thought, and I am here, waiting, just a few feet away. It was a distinctly spatial feeling.

As my partner was processed towards her visa, I took in the Immigration/Welcome Centre: cedar beams, maple leaves, glass, natural light. The walls were covered with contradictory messages; posters selling the “natural” qualities of B.C. jostled

alongside others advertising the cultural penalties of entering this natural space illegally, or with too much alcohol, or with an unregistered car. “Super, Natural, British Columbia” said one. I wondered about the suitability of this pun in its entirety—“supernatural” conjuring ghosts and restless spirits, a sense of the uneasy, the unexplained, the occult, that jarred with the soaring mountain and the happy hiker in the image.

I relate this anecdote because it starts to contextualise the impulses and experiences from which my thesis project, *Woodhaven Customs and Border Patrol (WCBP)*, emerged. Sifting through these stories, these border memories, became an important part of the work, and they are something I am keen to situate in this paper. This first memory, of entering Canada for the first time, informs key components that would come to configure *WCBP*.

Firstly the idea, or material contradiction, that a place, in this case B.C., is “sold” to you, the border crosser, at the border—sold like an object, or a single experience—and yet crucially this “selling” is simultaneously undercut by vocabularies of exclusion, of possible punishment for “doing wrong” at the border. B.C. is sold as an exclusively natural product: as the home of pure nature. I would come to see that the ways in which we talk about nature, and the ways in which it is organised, regulated, preserved and defined interlock it irrefutably into the systems and practices of culture. I would also see that the nature project in Canada was bound, historically and contemporarily, with the project of nation: a nation that we can read as being composed of the dynamics of “invader-settler”<sup>i</sup> policy—invented in the white, colonial European psyche as *Terra Nullius*, the old lie: “land belonging to no one.”

Also in this story I see the beginnings of my realisation that the border is an intensely theatrical space; that it demands a heightened performativity from its

crossers and agents (its players), and that to a certain extent the place, the space, the country, the province, is made to perform, too. I use the freighted word “performativity” to try to indicate just how intensely nationhood is experienced at the border—it is performed to within an inch of its life. And sown within those performances at the border are the tracks on which they cycle back into themselves, producing feedback loops that endlessly replay the status quo. As Judith Butler puts it, performativity is understood here “as the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains.”<sup>ii</sup> In other words, performativity at the border can signal reflexive behaviours—performances—of both domination and submission; producing and simultaneously produced by, the power structures in place. Which performative action you produce is very much dependent on which side of the booth you are on, and here we see that the story is not only about reflexive performances between and within individuals—these behaviours are simultaneously contingent on space, place and environment.

This story precipitates the “sting” of memory—it prompts action—it has physical, emotional heft.<sup>iii</sup> This is a story that, along with other border memories, defines and limits my experience of borders, just as simultaneously borders define and limit spaces, lands, maps, imaginations. This, then, is a dialectic; a mutually constitutive relationship between space and subjectivity, an interpretive geography that, according to Edward Soja, “recognizes spatiality as simultaneously ... a social product (or outcome) and a shaping force (or medium) of social life....”<sup>iv</sup> Just as there is an important degree of self-reflexivity manifest in performances at the border, the border itself, and that “nature” out there, *is* us; reciprocally, each produces the other.



## One: Introducing *WCBP*

Two Master of Fine Arts students from UBC's Okanagan campus are taking over the Woodhaven Nature Conservancy from October 22 to 25 for an interactive, site-specific performance art piece. Lara Haworth and Nicole Cormaci, co-creators of the project, say visitors to Woodhaven can expect to encounter and interact with a fully functional border patrol unit, on duty from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

— UBC Okanagan Press Release, October 20, 2010 <sup>v</sup>

What my eyes beheld was simultaneous, but what I shall now write down will be successive, because language is successive. Nonetheless, I will try to recollect what I can.

— Jorge Luis Borges <sup>vi</sup>

There is no staying in any one place; for at one and the same time everything has to be done everywhere. It is much the same with him who attempts to describe the scene.

— Herman Melville <sup>vii</sup>

The lines above from Borges and Melville gets at the problems I face in writing about *WCBP*, which unfolded in a distinct space; space, with its “stubborn simultaneity,”<sup>viii</sup> connects to memory, which recalls the past in the present. I must now nevertheless fold the performance, and everything that occurred before and afterwards, into a written structure. “The structure is everything,” I remember Dora Arreola saying, a director with whom I worked in Poland. “Don’t throw the structure in the garbage.” My thesis will be structured in sections; however it might be more helpful to think of these discrete sections as nodes—as joints, as connecting points that constitute something larger, and that make no sense alone.

The first node contextualises *WCBP*—attempting to explain what, indeed, the project is and consists of, where it came from, and how it came to be.

The second node examines the spatial properties of the project, investigating the “othering” of wilderness in Western culture, and its separation from civilization, the

history and philosophy of nature reserves, their role in the manufacturing of a national identity, and the production and shifting semantics of “nature” itself.

The third node sifts through *WCBP* as memory project, and will look at the extent to which nature reserves, wilderness spaces, and parks are conceived as memorials to an imagined past, and at how they are constructed to follow the organisational logic of the museum, with the space productive of museological gazes that obfuscate a sense of belonging.

The fourth node addresses *WCBP* and borders, asking questions about their function not only as a divisive measure, but also one that might be productive of relationships and negotiations. This node looks at the fundamental “in-betweenness” of borders (and our place on the edge, in the parking lot); of their parallels with “ecotones,” (meaning, in biological terms, “transitional regions between two different habitats”) and asks if their liminality might hold the key to their possible rescripting.<sup>ix</sup>

Throughout, an emphasis will be placed on *WCBP* as a *performance* that interrupted and intervened into visitor/participants’ everyday relationship with the space. To what extent could this performance unmask certain presumptions about the space? Through action, through the doing, could we simultaneously reveal and transform? Attention will be paid to the place performance might have in these various investigations and challenges, and to what the performance did to me *as a person*—was I changed, and was it indelible?

The different nodes of this paper interlock. An interlocking analysis might resist the categorisation of oppositions into discrete entities, introducing the notion of branches, webs and circuits into an examination of the systems that co-exist in the devising, performance and dissemination of *WCBP*. These tensional systems “are each other and...give content to each other,”<sup>x</sup> writes Sherene Razack, in a move that

shifts emphasis away from duality and towards a more radical intersubjectivity. My approach therefore is not one that intends to separate; indeed *WCBP*, in a post-structural gesture, explicitly critiques separation and categorization. My principle, in my project and in this paper, is one of collaboration, one that signals, after Solnit, the “intricate interdependencies of mind and body, individual and environment.”<sup>xi</sup> It is this approach, I will argue, that might point to alternative solutions to the various problems I flag in the ways we are inhabiting, organising and performing our spaces currently.

Between all of these distinct areas of research: nature; culture; wilderness; civilization; borders; performance; memory; museums; nationhood, there are zones of negotiation, and it is my belief that talking about, or remembering, *WCBP* might bring those contacts to light.

## Two: The Through Line

To see and rediscover the past not as a succession of events, but as a series of scenes, inventions, emotions, images and stories.

—Norman K. Denzin<sup>xii</sup>

*Woodhaven Customs and Border Patrol* was designed as an unscripted, ensemble performance; a fully functioning border patrol agency to control, protect and manage the very palpable borders of the 22-acre Woodhaven Nature Conservancy, in Kelowna, B.C., for four days. Nicole Cormaci, my collaborator, and I played the roles of senior border agents, inviting participants to join us on “work experience” as border agents. (When the project was first conceived, I had imagined the participants to be on duty for 24 hours, with camping and night patrol, enabling a very deep interaction with the material and the structure. This turned out to be impossible within Woodhaven—bound and regulated by the Regional District of Central Okanagan—human presence is forbidden in the park after-hours. It is certainly something I am considering for future iterations of the project.)

Participants were introduced to the project via infrastructure, training manuals, maps, and brief training exercises. Border agents processed all persons entering the park, issuing visas, passes, and the forms necessary to complete in order to procure them.<sup>1</sup> They were also on constant patrol of the trails and perimeters, monitoring not only human incursions to the space but also of flora and fauna, with particular attention paid to “invasive species,” and “immigrant animals.” Notes from these patrols were formalized in logbooks.<sup>2</sup> Border agents were highly visible, in uniform,

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2.

at all times. A history of Woodhaven was devised and disseminated, introducing the idea of Woodhaven, a so-called “nature space,” as a nation state, with founders, Jim and Joan Burbridge,<sup>3</sup> and a head of state, Lori Mairs.<sup>4</sup> The project ran from the 22 October through the 25 October 2010, from 6am until 8pm every day. The start and close of each day was signalled by the opening and closing of the border, the main gate.

I remember a clear impulse for the project came from wanting to draw attention to the border fence that surrounds the park, which defines its limits, separating the “nature” from the suburbs surrounding Woodhaven on all sides. And yet, that is somehow disingenuous. The project has deeper roots than that—it comes from somewhere further away—from many places; and it begins, as does this paper, with my very first entry into Canada. I want to show that I am in collaboration with my sources, and my inspirations—I do not subscribe to the belief in the “lone artist/genius” who produces work on her own, with no outside influence. Harold Bloom’s *The Anxiety of Influence* perhaps has no place in this process, although, by my logic, everything is connected—maybe there is both anxiety and pleasure in charting this project back through time.<sup>5</sup>

There is Pina Bausch’s *Nelken*, a dance-theatre performance staged on a traditional proscenium, covered with carnations, pushing upwards out of the floor.<sup>xiii</sup> An indelible image—beautiful—almost perfect. And yet, to temper and undercut this beauty, to remind us that the outside world *still exists*, that even paradise is

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<sup>3</sup> Jim and Joan Burbridge lived in Woodhaven from the 1960s until Joan’s death in 2001. They were instrumental in the creation and preservation of Woodhaven as a nature reserve.

<sup>4</sup> Lori Mairs is an artist who is also employed by the Regional District of Central Okanagan as caretaker and custodian of the park. She lives in the Burbridges’ original house.

<sup>5</sup> Bloom’s thesis (severely paraphrased) is that only “original” artworks will have any posterity. Living artists must therefore battle the “influence” of the artists that preceded them if their work is to have any originality, and, in Bloom’s opinion, longevity. Bloom’s work looks at the processes by which a handful of “successful” poets have evaded the “anxiety of influence.”

compromised, needs protecting and is not for everyone, Bausch had two male security guards constantly patrolling upstage; they wore dark uniforms, sunglasses, with radios clipped to their belts that emitted passages of static; they each held back two snarling Alsatians. When I try to find an image of those security guards, I cannot. All I can find are the fields of artificial carnations with dancers, and accordions. At first I am disappointed because I wanted to recall visually how effective they were, but then I consider that it's probably interesting too that in the 2,380 results that Google image provides, not one is of the ubiquitous guards, always there and curiously never there in documentation. Apparently in art as well as in life (and this was undoubtedly one of Bausch's points—the world, the stage is a police state) we would rather forget that we are guarded, secured, patrolled.

Another trail of influence is found in Santiago Sierra's *Wall Enclosing a Space* at the 2003 Venice Biennale—where he blocked up a majority of the entrance to the Spanish Pavilion with breezeblocks, allowing entry only to people with Spanish passports.<sup>xiv</sup> Again, it seemed like an important, necessarily uncomfortable spatial interjection through performance. The piece made many people furious, but, as McLuhan points out: “The artist... has often been regarded a kind of enemy of society because he [*sic*] makes things, he [*sic*] points out things that many people would rather not notice.”<sup>xv</sup>

National borders have of course been a fruitful area of exploration for site-specific artists for some time (see especially Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco).<sup>xvi</sup> In the summer of 2009 I worked with Dora Arreola in Poland, who runs a collective operating on the U.S.-Mexican border called Fronteras Desviadas/Deviant Borders. We would talk long into the night about bodies as borders, skin as fences, the fact that a woman working on the Mexican border could earn three times as much as a

prostitute than as a poultry factory worker. “Which would you choose?” she would ask me, up close. I could never quite answer. The border, in itself a false dichotomy, produces, at least on the U.S./Mexico line, falsely dichotomous avenues of employment, of generating capital. These particular jobs (prostitution; poultry slaughtering and packaging) hover and cluster around the border; the border conditions the work *and* the choices therein. Further north, these choices translate to me, relatively privileged border *crosser* (not *hoverer*), as a raft of identities that I may flip through and select. I may not have to choose between sex work and chicken gutting, but I must decide whether I am “tourist” or “visitor” or “temporary resident” or “landed immigrant.”

Since living in Canada, close to the U.S. border, as most of us do, strung out like beads of light along what McLuhan has called an “interval of resonance,”<sup>xvii</sup> the border has grown larger and larger in my imagination. Stories began emerging out of my environment: Canadian border crossers being pepper sprayed by U.S. border agents following a request for said agents to “please be polite;” non-white truckers being erroneously renditioned to Pakistan to be tortured whilst crossing the border to deliver timber to Oregon; my friend’s boyfriend, who had long hair at the time, being asked to step out of his vehicle and told that he “shouldn’t” have long hair, and, presumably because of this long hair, did he “smoke pot?” The stories go on and on. Everybody has one, it seems, and they certainly provided an impetus to coax border stories out of Woodhaven visitors on the visa form that all entrants were required to complete.

As a Western European, borders have a different value, a different etiquette. You drive on the motorway and suddenly a sign approaches then rapidly recedes: “Bienvenue a France!” or “Willkommen in Deutschland” and, just like that, you are

“in” a different place, though there may be no perceptible change in topography, road design, or colour of the sky. This is not to say, however, that this relationship is uncomplicated; twentieth-century European history is constituted by restless border expansions, contractions and dissolutions. Our collective memories of border crossings in Western European cultures are stained by the wars: by Walter Benjamin, killing himself at the boundary of Spain and France; even the Von Trapps, ascending the mountains to Switzerland; by the countless, countless, stories of people more and less fortunate than these extremes—longing for difference across an artificially demarcated line.

Of course Cormaci, my partner and collaborator, and I, transnational bisexual artists (to some border agents there is undoubtedly a very thin margin of difference between these institutional categories) carry around our own, anxiety-laden border stories and experiences. The names of the places alone can conjure the images, the physical memories for us: Chicago O’Hare; Bad Schandau.

I realised then that borders are inherently theatrical spaces, defined by the various, but at the same time limited and highly codified, performative roles available there. There are people in costume, amidst vast sets and props, with lines to memorise, and appropriately rehearsed codes of behaviour. Borders are spectacles—visions of equipment and bodies and lines and paperwork—the spectacle is only heightened when somebody does not play their allotted role, or forgets their lines—they are hauled out of the predominant structure and gawked at, whispered about. I have been the person hauled aside, and the thing I remember above everything was the incredible gesture of the agent, marching ahead of me with my passport in his hand, held aloft above his head, announcing it to the crowd that we pushed through like a flag, a siren, a raised gun.



Running parallel to this realisation was the slow understanding that borders on a grand scale are “panoramas of amnesia,”<sup>xviii</sup> predicated on a collective “forgetting” of how the land was used and/or practiced before. Indeed, when you cross a national border it is better to forget most things, certainly anything that might incriminate you or draw suspicion. It is best only to remember basics, and to empty your mind of questions or inquiries. It is also sensible to behave as passively, as empty-minded as possible, as if your memory had been stripped to its most basic components: name, citizenship, age, address.

The international border, in these preliminary investigations, was produced as an often violent, contested strip-space, with some clear grounding for theatricality, for performance. This feeling expanded, and I started to see that there were borders everywhere, distinct from, but with some of the same properties as The Border. The sense of contested space resounded with the land of western Canada and the U.S., with its roiling debates over Crown lands, federal lands, reservations, expansion, resource extraction and development. “NO NATIONAL PARK” blared the signs in the ranchlands along Hwy 97 in Okanagan Falls. These resonances were to play out in Woodhaven itself; a historically contested site now bounded, managed and regulated by the Regional District. *WCBP* would work to unsettle the nominally “peaceful” border at Woodhaven, asking questions about how the land is parcelled up, identified and categorised.

Other, less tactile borders were at work in my status as “student,” institutionally bound by the university. The project is my “passport” to my M.F.A., and the condition on which I can conclude my studies and leave Canada. *WCBP* also operates as cultural capital for the Faculty of Critical and Creative Studies, where my discipline is located, and was contingent on them approving its legitimacy as a thesis

project. In this way, I had to cross the institutional border between proposal and practice, or, in my case, performance.

If performance is “the manifestation of agency, and the action through which agency and creativity emerge,”<sup>xix</sup> how could I then reclaim that fundamental performative agency from performances at the border? Looked at another way, the border could metaphorize into “lines of geometry, lines of poetry; lines of sight, lines of enquiry; wonderland, no-man's land; line-ups, line drives.”<sup>xx</sup> I had a feeling that, after Heidegger, “a boundary is not a line at which something stops but a line at which something begins to become present...”<sup>xxi</sup> I had a feeling that it might, in fact, be both.

### Three: Border Agents in the Nature Conservancy

Canadians make the mistake of assuming that Canadian parks receive the same kind of protection [as U.S. parks]. They do not, not any of them. They will not either, until Canadians become aware of the defenceless nature of their parks, and take action to make them secure.

— R. Yorke Edwards <sup>xxii</sup>

It takes a long time to know a site, although arguably, as a site-specific artist, you should start from a place where the space is in question, and end up there, too. W.H. New has described the idea of the border itself as “a set of questions.”<sup>xxiii</sup> One of the principles of my research has been the desire to contest—through performance—the notion that space is, as Soja puts it, simply an “environmental container of human life.”<sup>xxiv</sup> If I am to honour a socio-spatial dialectic, then space itself must be configured as a subject, as a materiality, with its own memories, imprints, contradictions, and secrets.

In order to undercut the dominant spatial narrative of Woodhaven—that of wilderness, home of some kind of “pure nature”—*WCBP* conceived of the site as a nation state. There are many parallels between the creation of nature parks and the building of nation, which I will examine in more detail later. But at the outset, in order to precipitate an alternate relationship to the park, to perhaps enable a way of seeing and experiencing it differently, we had to reinterpret the park. “We have let ourselves forget. It is the duty of the interpreter to jog our memories,” writes the journalist Freeman Tilden, in his 1957 book *Interpreting our Heritage*.<sup>xxv</sup> And yet, it is not the purpose of the work to congeal an interpretation into memory, or to fasten one over another. Rather they might exist as a palimpsest—giving the visitor, the participant, an opportunity to intervene into these interpretations with their own

version. “To represent the past does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was,’” reminds Denzin. “It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger, to see and rediscover the past not as a succession of events but as a series of scenes, inventions, emotions, images and stories.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

The “invention” of Woodhaven as a nation state worked well to precipitate alternate relationships to the space. It enabled us to translate the language of the nature reserve into that of national history—and that the transcription was relatively seamless speaks to the similarities—and revealed absurdities—therein. Anointing Lori Mairs, custodian of the park, as Head of State, gave the alternate spatial narrative a form, but also enabled Mairs herself to “play” this role over the four days. I also saw this working through the participant border agents, who could readily connect a sense of remembered patriotism (however ironic) to their job of “protecting” Woodhaven.

It also worked to make people feel excluded, which is an intrinsic part of nation, too. Nancy Holmes, poet, professor, and organiser of the year long Woodhaven project, putting on her uniform to go on patrol Sunday morning, confessed to Mairs that she was upset not to have been made Minister of Culture. It was honestly one of those things, as an artist that I *just hadn’t thought of*. I wish I had. But I reflected that histories, hierarchies, nations, produce feelings of belonging and not-belonging, and it was, I suppose, strangely appropriate that this imagined history could function in the same way. Holmes went on to produce quite astonishing border patrol literature in the logbook that morning, so hopefully all was forgiven—or at least—understood.<sup>6</sup> *WCBP*’s history of the site, then, imbued the structure, the contingent event-score, with a depth that was borrowed from our collective understandings of History. Here is

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 2.

the history as it appeared in the logbook, and framed on the inside wall of the processing booth:



## A HISTORY

The state of WOODHAVEN was founded in 1973 following a fierce and glorious battle.

James Burbridge and Joan Burbridge, founders and framers of WOODHAVEN, fought with great courage against the imperial advances of the Okanagan Builders Land Development Ltd.

In 1973 WOODHAVEN was known by its former name, the Raymer Property. Harry Raymer (1853 – 1916), first mayor of Kelowna, built a holiday home here. Burbridge and Burbridge later rented it from Winnifred Raymer, Harry Raymer's daughter. This special site is now known as the heritage home of WOODHAVEN's founders, Burbridge and Burbridge. This fine example of early European settler pioneer architecture is now inhabited by current head of state, Lori Mairs. It is not accessible to the general public.

In January 1973, the Okanagan Builders Land Development Ltd. took ownership of the site from Winnifred Raymer. Burbridge and Burbridge, for unknown reasons, were never notified.

On May 18, 1973, the Okanagan Builders Land Development Ltd. invaded the state of WOODHAVEN. They came armed with chainsaws and measuring sticks and stakes. The chainsaws were used to attack the trees; some were felled, others ringed with barbed wire. Steel spikes were hammered in to the earth to create subdivision property lines. Bright blue gas pipes were inserted in to the soil. Burbridge and Burbridge were taken by surprise. It was a black day in the history of WOODHAVEN.

Using the tools at their disposal, Burbridge and Burbridge were able to halt any further desecration at the future state of WOODHAVEN. Joan Burbridge went further perhaps than any other to convince us that the pen is mightier than the sword through a barrage of petition signing, letter writing, and interviews with the press. Meanwhile, Burbridge and Burbridge prepared to ban trespassers and block invading bulldozers by any means necessary.

Following these numerous heroic acts, and a guided tour of the future state of WOODHAVEN led by Joan Burbridge for notable supporters of the cause, the Okanagan Builders Land Development Ltd. formally surrendered.

On August 11 1973 Burbridge and Burbridge declared victory. The official borders of WOODHAVEN were drawn up on maps, and later formalized by the building of tactical infrastructures that edge and protect the site.

In 2001, Joan Burbridge passed away. During an interim it was decided that Lori Mairs, current head of state, should succeed Burbridge. Mairs is still today in residence at WOODHAVEN, chief custodian of the state and its native inhabitants.

Since its early days as a fledgling state, WOODHAVEN has evolved into a vibrant community of flora and fauna, complete with an organised network of trails from which to enjoy our natural treasures; however, due to the delicate nature of the life within our borders threats from the outside are taken extremely seriously.

We welcome you as visitors to the great state of WOODHAVEN.

I was careful to frame it using the indefinite article—"A History"—for although all of those facts are perfectly true; in being "true" they necessarily elide other facts, other secrets. "History," as Pierre Nora has written, aims to "annihilate what has in reality taken place."<sup>xxvii</sup> I was curious to see that many visitors who stopped to read "A History" had no previous sense of Woodhaven as a contested site. Writing, and then performing this history, did seem to produce a new resonance in the fence line, in the borderline. The ring around the wilderness started to produce new meanings—becoming not only a material border but also a conceptual one: for visitors, for participants, for city workers who came to use the Porta-Potty, for us. It started to edge the limits of another past—I was no longer sure, at times, if we were keeping "danger" out, or fencing ourselves in. On the frontier, both are often true.

The U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964 defined wild land as "an area where the earth and its community of life lie untrammelled by man [*sic*], where man himself [*sic*] is a visitor who does not remain."<sup>xxviii</sup> The historic interpretive mapping at WCBP, complete with "A History" was an attempt to work against this mythologizing project of the West/Woodhaven, with its insistence on "empty" landscapes with no record of human bloodshed or pleasure, as places that might properly be called "homeland," as places riddled with the scars and memories of battlefields, contested treaties, graves and massacres, dreams and meanings.

The interpretive map that we constructed, situated on the side of the processing booth and in the logbooks, titled "Visit These Historic Sites Today!" was an

opportunity to connect the theoretical battlescars detailed in “A History” to the land itself, to materiality. A trail map of Woodhaven was marked in specific places with the crossed swords I had spent my childhood in England poring over maps to find. (England, of course, is riddled with them.) These swords matched actual sites where the Okanagan Land Development Ltd. had marked and altered the land in some way, producing it as altern to pristine wilderness. “Fallen Cedar” read one mark, “Blue Gas Pipe” another. Rescripting alternate perspectives on wilderness, revealing wilderness as constituted by “open secrets,”<sup>xxxix</sup> enabled our visitors and participants to walk along the trails encountering, and discovering, human incursions into the park—experiencing, in fact, its connections to what lies outside its borders.

There is a specific story to tell, though, with regards to the wider historical imperatives that have separated nature from culture spaces in North America, and in order to understand some of the strategies deployed in *WCBP* to investigate these, it is necessary to widen the focus briefly. Before “nature” in North America was bounded up and parcelled off into reserves, parks and conservancies, the vast untamed lands of the West were conceived of, by the colonising, settling Euro-American-Canadians, as wilderness, as desert—places of terror, uncharted and therefore unknown.<sup>xxx</sup> (Of course the Okanagan is still, literally, a desert, although through irrigation and tourism we do our best to forget this, and alternately rewrite it as adventurous wilderness and emergent metropolis.) This vision of the land as “savage” is a peculiarly Judeo-Christian one; Tuan shows that in the Bible the meaning of wilderness is “negative—and dominant,”<sup>xxxi</sup> emphasising the examples of Adam and Eve, cast from the Garden and into wilderness, and Christ’s temptation in the wilderness. This cultural heritage was manifested in both pioneers’ and preachers’ initial attitudes to the North American wilderness; as the “empire of Antichrist”<sup>xxxii</sup> and as potentially lethal

impediment to livelihood and progress. On the receiving end of these attitudes were of course the First Nations. Consider this perspective from Chief Standing Bear of the Ogala Sioux:

We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills and the winding streams with tangled growth as "wild." Only to the white man was nature a "wilderness" and only to him was the land "infested" with "wild" animals and "savage" people ... When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was that for us the "Wild West" began.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

In the 1850s and 1860s, as cities in North America grew and industrialised rapidly and the lands of the West were effectively colonised, the preservation movement began, creating a gap, an ironic distance, between wilderness as sin and wilderness as salvation. Known as the “closing of the frontier”<sup>xxxiv</sup> in the U.S. and the “opening of the West”<sup>xxxv</sup> in Canada, wilderness began to acquire a new value: it could be developed, preserved and maintained in opposition to the perceived filth and debauchery of the city. The verbs “closing” and “opening” are key in this context, as they describe the simultaneous action of providing access to nature whilst removing it from everyday existence. Now that nature had been “tamed” and pushed back, it could be reimagined as a place to visit; it became an excursion. This re-mapped these previously hostile, violent territories into spaces that might mean, according to Rebecca Solnit, the “authentication and liberation of man [*sic*] through nature.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> Influential writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and John Muir enabled a shift in perception that held nature as a romantic object: suddenly the rose was in focus, now that the thorns had been hacked away. “Viewed in the grand tradition of romanticism,” notes Charles Petersen, “Muir appeared as a final, farcical stage.”<sup>xxxvii</sup> And yet, Muir was not the last; the sense of the redemptive power of nature looms decisively into the twenty-first century: consider the title of Ken Burns’



latest coffee table book—*The National Parks: America's Best Idea*.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The book opens with an ecstatic quotation from Muir.<sup>7</sup>

Quotations from Muir, one of the founding fathers of the conservation movement, are extremely popular in nature circles. This one, used to this day by the B.C. Wilderness Tourism Association, illustrates the dichotomous construct perfectly: “Keep close to Nature’s heart ... and break clean away, once in awhile ... climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean.”<sup>xxxix</sup> Nature becomes not only an abjected “other,” mysteriously “out there” and separate from our lives, but is simultaneously recast as an almost spiritual space—with venturing “out there” a quasi-holy ritual, which somehow washes off the sins of the city. This view of the “city” is of course an urban, classist story imposed quite unilaterally—it elides those who may work out in “nature,” who might, indeed, wish to return to the city to wash off the sins of the wilderness.

It is also made extremely clear that nature is not to be a permanent habitat for humans. The Regional District of Central Okanagan, who own and manage Woodhaven, is fond of saying “take only pictures, leave only footprints,” with regards to “nature.” This attitude is the myth of non-human presence in sanctified nature spaces, so crucial to our (non) understanding of these sites. This cute formulation, “take only pictures...” has an altogether different subtext, to me. It seems to say: “You Are Not Really Welcome, You Are A Stranger.” I wonder if this makes it easier for us to perpetuate an unsettling doubling effect, whereby in some geographic locations nature is treated “as a well-loved pet,”<sup>xl</sup> and in others as a never-ending resource—a place for extraction and destruction. Woodhaven embodies this dualism;

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<sup>7</sup> The quotation reads: “Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike. This natural beauty-hunger is made manifest...in our magnificent National Parks—Nature’s sublime wonderlands, the admiration and joy of the world.”

standing in the woods at the borderline, in the “haven,” the consciously designated “safe place,” one is perpetually confronted by the ranch houses, the swimming pools and the dark lawns on the other side.

There were very few negative responses to *WCBP*, and for those few who did blanch at our presence, I posit that one of the reasons is perhaps because we challenged and intervened on those people’s culturally received myth of free, “untrammelled” nature. This response, and I will go into this in more depth in the following node, stems perhaps not from an instinctive “love” of nature but from a cultural indoctrination that works similarly to patriotism. The language that has come to define the wilderness preservation movement in North America (and this was alluded to in “A History”) demonstrates the early naturalization of militaristic rhetoric. Both the Sierra Club in the U.S. and the National Parks Association in Canada “repeatedly engaged in battle those hostile or indifferent to wilderness values and generally succeeded in keeping them outside park borders.”<sup>xli</sup> It is perhaps hardly surprising then that those visitors felt an instinctive rush of indignation—this language, this cultural memory, is extremely powerful. The production of wilderness as concurrently a production of collective imaginary identity therefore runs deep, as Turner and Rees have shown: “Canadians ... still regard themselves as a pioneering people with an over-abundance of wild country ... [it] is very central to Canadian identity....”<sup>xlii</sup>

The irony, however, is that the “wild country” they are looking for does not exist; at least not here. Woodhaven is closely managed by the Regional District (its real government); it is, I would say, produced; manufactured. It is as Baudrillard says: “Nature... must now be offered an industrial contract: protection and security—”<sup>xliii</sup> One element of the project was physicalising and performing that “protection”—

encountering it in the flesh, in the space, made some people uncomfortable. We were trespassing, perhaps, on a deeply rooted belief. As Yi-Fu Tuan has pointed out: “People rarely perceive the irony inherent in the idea of *preserving* the wilderness. ‘Wilderness’ cannot be defined objectively: it is as much a state of mind as a description of nature.”<sup>xliv</sup>

Nature, such as it is in B.C., and in the West in general, has been sold to us as a product, albeit one that strives to operate outside of the market economy; indeed, it is advertised as its antidote. The edifying benefits of nature as an object, as a bifurcated experience, have been sold to us through various rhetorical constructs since the nineteenth century, and we now have a situation where hundreds of miles and kilometres have been drawn across the land in the form of park boundaries and borders, keeping the nature “inside” and the threat of industrial or residential development “outside.”<sup>xlv</sup> Woodhaven exists as a very tangible example of this ideological bifurcation between the market economy and a public civil space that “saves” nature.

There is, I think, a productive contradiction in *WCBP*’s imagining Woodhaven as a nation state. It makes the parallel between the nation, and nature, as an object, both packaged and sold, either at the border (recall my first experience of driving into Canada), or at the entrance to the nature reserve, or park (various interpretive kiosks, signs, maps, rules), suggesting that, as Wilson notes, “the commodity form [extends] both out into the natural world and back into our imaginations.”<sup>xlvi</sup> But also, in imagining Woodhaven as a nation state and making people citizens, however temporarily, we troubled a binary and let them, crucially, “belong” and become part of this abjected nature. The subjectivity produced by space can be tactical; it can shift and edge and alter. As Kwon identifies: “the phantom of a site as an actual place

remains, and our psychic, habitual attachments to places...return as they continue to inform our sense of identity.”<sup>xlvii</sup> We can attest to the spirit, the curious joy of the Woodhaven regulars—the city workers; the walkers; the neighbours—who came past the booth and flashed their passes in a new performance of belonging; a new play.

## Four: A Memory Project

The goal of managing the National Parks...should be to preserve, or where necessary to recreate, the ecologic scene as viewed by the first European visitors.

— The Leopold Committee, 1963 <sup>xlviii</sup>

As we drove west in the Explorer across North America, towards B.C., you might recall that I had a familiarity for the landscape—as if I somehow remembered it. Alexander Wilson, in his book *The Culture of Nature*, describes something similar; riding the train one summer from Toronto to Vancouver, he sees the “familiar... sweet summer fields” of Saskatchewan. And yet, as he establishes: “While it’s nice to think that my image of those fields came from within, from the memory of authentic, animated, real space, I know that it is also part of the repertoire of images of nature that tourist culture produces in great number and variety, and that in some ways are indistinguishable from nature itself.”<sup>xlix</sup>

Both of these realisations, I think, precipitate the understanding that many of our “memories” of nature in fact come from rhetoric—from images, advertisements, movies, songs. It was my deliberate intention to probe at this with the visa question “First Memory of Wilderness.” To stage those memories within another framework—the border—gets at questions of *how* we remember space—institutionally? Personally? Out of necessity? Are our memories “natural?” Or do we have an idea, a collective memory, of nature, implanted in us by our culture? As the quotation from the Leopold Committee at the start of this node illustrates, often the “goal” of these nature reserves and parks has been to produce a visual memory that deliberately elides what exists outside the park borders: “the ecologic scene as viewed by the first European visitors.” Leaving aside the impossibility of determining what that looked

like (except—I’m pretty sure—fewer white people), we start to get a sense that these parks have a museological logic—to present, as heritage, the natural glory of a bygone age. This “bygone age” never existed, of course, and the concerted effort to enact North American park land as examples of *Terra Nullius* is an erasure of history: a flat-out spatial denial of First Nation presence.

Experiencing Woodhaven as a museum can be viewed as a somewhat heretical response. It can be quite difficult to come between people and their “natural” expectations of “nature.” But from many angles, Woodhaven is a constructed environment—preserved as a “eulogy for what industrial civilization has destroyed.”<sup>l</sup> This is not to say that I think these places should not exist—far from it. But I do think there is a lot of mythologizing that obscures some of the meanings and functions of these places—things that *WCBP* was concerned to unmask, to reveal.

There is a curious paradox that produces certain responses in the Woodhaven visitor—on the one hand, the park as a repository of memory exists—“this is what Kelowna once looked like,” one thinks. “This is a living reminder.” The other hand contains the impulse to forget—to forget that the outside world exists, or that people once inhabited this land, lived off it and through it and with it. Wilson calls these “panoramas of amnesia.”<sup>li</sup> It is why the fence, the borderline of Woodhaven has always resonated so strongly with me because it does act as a reminder—although it creates a line, it allows you to see through, to pierce the other world, which is leaf-blowing, washing its RV, listening to the radio.

The border agents served as this mnemonic device, too. On patrol in the park, whether running, or learning birdsong, or writing in the logbook, or scouting with binoculars, they functioned as an often absurd reminder that this is not a “paradise,” or “static Utopia”<sup>lii</sup> separated from the world outside; it is, in fact, constituted by its

politics, its ideology and its culture. *WCBP* introduced the aesthetic of the “big” world—the “outside” world, into the park—everything is connected, our performance as agents served to say. It jogged memory in an uncomfortable way, sometimes, for sure. The notion that natural space in North America is a hereditary right goes back to the nineteenth-century, when, as Thomas Patin has shown, the “landscape became an effective substitute for a missing national tradition and a repository of national pride.”<sup>liii</sup> In other words, the perceived inferiority of North American cultural identity could be redeemed by cleaving heritage to nature.

Yi-Fu Tuan describes “a confusion of virtues” ascribed to wilderness in North America—“it stood for the sublime...in its solitude one drifted into higher thoughts away from the temptations of Mammon; it has come to be associated with the frontier and pioneer past, and so with qualities that were thought to be characteristically North American; and it was an environment that promoted toughness and virility.”<sup>liv</sup> The Canadian Outdoor Recreation Demand Study, releasing reports in 1967, 1969, and 1972, suggested that “outdoor recreation, far from being a fad, was a component of the national character.”<sup>lv</sup> It is thus that the “memory” of untrammelled nature starts to appear as a right, and as constituent of national identity.

On the Sunday at the park, when we had many visitors, swarming the booth as they filled out visa forms, I remember one woman looking at us, confused and unsettled and slightly irritable: “But why are you *doing* this?” she asked. Before I could speak, a woman to her left spoke up—this woman, influential in Kelowna nature circles, was a big part of the push to build the Mission Greenway. “It is a gift to the park,” she said. “A gift.” I was surprised by this response. It wouldn’t be until later in the project, and in my reckoning of it, that I would realise that perhaps it was a gift, this effort to beckon together two separate worlds.

If Woodhaven is in some senses a museum, then sometimes on that Sunday it seemed as if we were museum admission guards—explaining, denoting, guiding, in some sense hewing to the 1969 Parks Canada annual report, which described a hermeneutic objective of the parks: "not only to increase the visitor's awareness, understanding and appreciation of the park's environment, but to help him [*sic*] assess his [*sic*] own natural surroundings and his [*sic*] place in them."<sup>lvi</sup> "What is that string hanging from the skeleton?" people would ask. "What's the Jell-O about?" others would say. "Where can I find a trail map? Can I take one of these? Are you here to help?"<sup>8</sup> The questions were never-ending. I found myself in the awkward position of feeling that, in this case, *my* interpretation was interpolating on their memory—encroaching on their agentic right to simply watch, and be, in the space. On the other hand, it demonstrated how disciplined we have become in these spaces—how we are trained to submit our memory and experience to other people's (usually figures of authority) interpretations. It is quite sad, I thought, that the only people to whom I could reply—"what do *you* think the Jell-O is about?"—without sounding rude, were children.

*WCBP* lost some of its secret embeddedness that day—some of its unexpectedness, some of its intimacy, but it had to tactically reinvent itself for the spectacle at hand. In the building of *WCBP*, we had to take care that both the structure and the content were believable—believable and yet playful. This conceit is what would assure the theatrical double take: the doubleness of our objectives. On every day except for perhaps the Sunday, this care we had taken worked—we inserted, believably, into our environment. Borders are spectacles, yes—but what was occurring within the park

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<sup>8</sup> These questions pertain to other art works and happenings that were taking place in the park that day. Explicitly my comments in the body of this paper refer to a piece where four male performers, masked in ghostly Butoh-esque white face-paint, consumed bags and bowls of red Jell-O; and a piece by Lori Mairs in which braided buffalo wool emerges from bone structures fastened high up in the trees.



that Sunday (a series of performances and installations as part of the big Woodhaven eco-art opening day) overshadowed us as spectacle.

The surge of people, many in costume, provided an amusing counterpoint to the border guards. It was a circus. Nicole and I had to spend a long time setting up shots and doing on-camera interviews for the CTV team who had come to cover *WCBP*, so we found ourselves performing performing border patrol: performing the role of artists and graduate students performing border patrol. Our usually quiet, dusty, interstitial space, the parking lot, became full of cars—reversing, idling, unloading. The quiet, attentive work of prodding memory was lost for a while, but I reflected that the park was still functioning as a museum, and our play, installed at the entrance to the nature-museum, was still working to deconstruct the normalised habits and expectations of its visitors.

The “museum effect,”<sup>lvii</sup> identified by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, and shown by Patin as functioning in parks as “a strategy that insinuates the museum into the wilderness,”<sup>lviii</sup> was present that day in the network of trails and signs—some produced by *WCBP*, and in the essentially exhibition-style, and exhibitionist, way that visitors were ambulating through the space. The space was produced as both a museum and a gallery: a place for looking. The gaze that this produces, a museological gaze, simultaneously distances and congeals the view into a panorama—a “panorama of amnesia.”

The museum of nature was set alongside the exhibition of artworks, and they mingled and juxtaposed in various ways. As the performance of the border patrol took on a different quality that day—changing to reflect duties of managing, directing, and organising, we became more like the Regional District, and the park itself became more prominently produced as the performance. Through this, we could “concentrate

on what landscape does,<sup>”lix</sup> that is, how it works as *action*, and how *WCBP* worked to uphold, or frustrate dominant expectations of Woodhaven. That the responses elicited that day ranged from surprise to irritation to curiosity, speaks to the alternative perspectives that we perhaps could produce. Woodhaven itself was performing the various interpretations we had laid upon it, and inviting the performance of the agents, and the visitors, as a collaborative process. Unveiling the often contradictory practices at the heart of the parks project could then provoke a re-looking at how we remember, patrol and idealise nature.

If indeed, as Patin shows, the “use of nature, has been, historically, the preferred technique in justifying and naturalizing authority,”<sup>lix</sup> it follows that this “authority” prefers to remain invisible. The function of *WCBP* as a mnemonic to remind visitors that this authority is always present, though not always tangible, has been stated. There are other ways that this authority is masked at Woodhaven. Several cottonwood trees, dead from their roots, due to the removal of their creek by developers who did not want their properties to flood, are held up by wires, almost invisible through the tips of branches. Many of Woodhaven’s trees are in fact dead—standing, but dead—and during high winds the park is closed in case one of these trees falls, strikes across a trail and causes injury or death to a visitor. These trees speak to an uneasy relationship to time in the park—the preserved past, the disappearing present, the uncertain future.

Attention is paid to “invasive species,” which came to be figured in the project, via the visa forms and the training manuals, as “immigrant species.” These speak to the desire to preserve Woodhaven as it “was” some time in the past—before unwelcome, and apparently uninvited, plants were introduced to the region. A particularly fertile place for *WCBP* was the fence line at the very end of the trail (presuming you are

walking in the prescribed direction, counter-clockwise) where a plant called a money tree—an invasive species—clusters and edges towards the boundary from the lot on the other side. (The plant name itself acts as a lovely metaphor for the forces of capitalism—“money”—infringing on the nature space enacted as immune, or above, the forces of capital.) It always reminded me of the basic impossibility of preserving this space as it “was”—given that the money tree was, in fact, “naturally” predisposed to spread itself, to sucker its seeds to the wind and the underbellies of deer, and grow into the park. It is of course we humans, who, in our fairly arbitrary exercises in cultural memory pluck and manage and attempt to (re)construct Woodhaven as “virgin,” untouched by both time and the space surrounding it.<sup>lxi</sup>

Woodhaven was created as a regional park in 1972, around the same time that Parks Canada began to institute and develop a plan to produce more land as national, provincial, and regional parks: “the idea being that each region of Canada should be represented by a national park; and, conversely, each...park should be a microcosm of a Canadian biogeography.”<sup>lxii</sup> This idea of “biogeography” really speaks to something at the heart of this project. Its official meaning, of course, pertains to the word in its expanded form: biological science and geography. But looked at another way, it suggests to me that the drawing up of parks is related in some way to the pursuit of biography—inserting between the “bio”—the life—and the “graphy”—the writing—with *geo*; with land, space, earth, rocks, mountains. Biogeography in fact then hints that these parks are explicitly areas of spatialised memory, that we produce “natural” biographies of who this land “was.” Crucially, we produce a spatialised narrative, and a spatialised way of telling the “national story.” Sifting through this idea of a biogeography is interesting also because biographies, and autobiographies, are notoriously selective—we only remember what we want to remember—or, put in

another way—we only remember in the style in which we wish to be remembered. As Denzin points out: “what the members of a social group remember is always overdetermined, structured, by the artifacts of material culture.”<sup>lxiii</sup>

Playing with another fruitful contradiction, then, *WCBP* investigated two potential outcomes of this pursuit of biogeography. The first was through the bureaucratic practice of filing and collecting and categorising the more personal, fragmented memories from the visa form—“First Memory of Wilderness”—and from the logbooks, and notes from patrol.<sup>9</sup> The question on the visa form, with its deliberately small space in which to record an answer—speaks to the borders that surround memory, and, actually, the essential disinterest of the institution in recording the nuances of these memories. The various answers to this question: “My Parents” / “Be scared by a giant toad!” / “Loneliness” / “Divorce” / “Woodhaven;” dutifully collected and filed away, speak to the sense that these words are only scratching at a surface, that although these memories point to a longer story, a longer explanation; there is a dialectic here between memory and forgetting. That is to say, a tension between what is being officially remembered and recorded, and that which is left to unofficial actors to recall and remember. These are the parts missing from a nationally implemented project of biogeography.

And yet, there was an alternative to this truncating of memory through the visa form. This lay in the performance—the specific interaction between visitor and agent—that happened every time the visitor came to the “First Memory of Wilderness” question. I understand that not every visitor had this experience—sometimes the border was too busy—this is the contingency of the duration, the unfolding. But there were many occasions on which I could stand at the processing

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendices 1 and 2, respectively.

booth and *watch people remember*. There was a gesture for this, an accompanying physical action—they would pause, elbow on the counter, pen circling in their hand, and look up. Often the eyes would close. It was quite beautiful to watch, this spontaneous action, performance, of remembering. It was astonishing how similarly everybody “remembered”—what his or her body instinctively did in that moment. And then, accompanying this gesture would be a story because they would unfailingly *speak* before writing in the tiny box.

These stories were let loose into the air—they were not “officially” recorded; they became, rather, oral autobiogeographies. These autobiogeographies of people’s relationships to wilderness simply unfurled, in the actual, real tangible space of “then”—remembered now only by those who participated in the exchange. “I used to come here, *here*, to Woodhaven as a child” / “I was born by a volcanic lake, and there was a palm tree right in the middle” / “Oh, the Blue River” / “You ever been to Manhattan?” / “My grandparents, they would always take me and my cousins to this lake in Manitoba” / “The birds on the South Island—we’ve got [*sic*] no native plants there, no native mammals, just birds, yeah we lived on this island—” These words, and more, the images they recollect, are studded on my memory now—I carry them around. But also, we gave back some of that agency to the visitors—to interject into the “static Utopia,” to remember, whilst inside the “panorama of amnesia,” to add depth to biogeography, to recollect inside of the official histories. In the dialectic, the tension between remembering and forgetting, the project located itself in an interstitial space—between “the distant poles of spatial experiences.”<sup>lxiv</sup> Living at the frontier, as we were, was always bound to produce the feeling of inhabiting two, overlapping worlds.

## Five: Performing the Border

Borders are everywhere—we cross borders all the time  
—Visitor to *WCBP*

Let's be honest; for all this talk of nature and wilderness, the real “home” of the border patrol was in the parking lot, the inter-zone between the suburb and the forest. *WCBP* was positioned in an interstitial space—announcing therefore the presence of three distinct sites: wilderness, suburb, and in-between. The project therefore seemed to establish, as McLuhan has put it, “...the artistic effort to make visible two worlds at once, frontier worlds.”<sup>lxv</sup> The entrances to parks also serve the function of delineating between that which is signed “natural” and “artificial.” These spaces enable the visitor to prepare for nature—just as on the international border, the visitor is given time to prepare for difference. By placing the main hub of the project—our processing booth—in the parking lot, we built a sequence of allusions to other spaces that seemed to take seriously the Center for Land Use Interpretation's appraisal of parking lots as “latent places of potentiality.”<sup>lxvi</sup>

Hovering on the margins, at the line of the frontier, does things to you as a person—as a performer. If “performance is treated... as a means by which we may come to know”<sup>lxvii</sup> then it follows that certain distinct events over the course of the four days manifested in us the border itself—as both a tangible place and an idea, an experience. These generated knowledges became the proliferating performances of the border.

On the first morning, at 10:00 a.m., our first two work experience agents arrived. Having got them into uniform, and through training, we assigned them the job of “BOOTH:”<sup>10</sup>



Image 1: The Booth with three agents on duty, installed at Woodhaven. (Photograph by Nicole Cormaci, 2010.)

This enabled us to go on patrol—to get into the park—something I had been looking forward to all morning. Nicole and I entered the park via each opposing path—I

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<sup>10</sup> The job of BOOTH is denoted as follows in the Training Manual: “Equipment: Pen; ink pad; discretion. Objective: To process human visitors to Woodhaven using the W-W form. Agents must briefly read over visitors’ completed W-W forms, asking questions where answers are out of the ordinary. Once this is done, they must take a print of the visitor (the visitor may choose which print is to be taken), and enter it into the correct box on the form. Agents must then tear off the perforated slip at the bottom of the W-W form and hand it to the visitor for re-entry. Agents must keep the completed W-W forms in a neat and orderly fashion. They must be courteous, polite and respectful to human visitors. Purpose: To gather data regarding human visitors to the park and to issue cards (perforated slips) for re-entry. Agents at the BOOTH will often be the human visitors’ first contact with WCBP; it is therefore vital that they can provide knowledgeable information and be alert and responsive to situations as they arise. Site: The WCBP processing booth in the PARKING LOT. Time: One hour.”

would trace the perimeter “backwards” (though this distinction is of course part of the arbitrary practice of route management in the park) and Nicole would go “forwards.” I enjoyed my patrol for a while—the fence was rustling and tingling with a kind of energy (transmitted in no small part from myself, no doubt), and I was writing notes, and peering into all of the backyards, poking at plants and whipping my neck round to squirrels that laughed at me along the branches. My walkie-talkie, hanging from my belt loop, began to bleep. It being very early in the project, I had no idea how to actually communicate using these walkie-talkies—the bleeping continued—an electronic counterpoint to the silence of the shale along the lower edge of the Dry Interior Zone, where I now stood. I was pressing buttons—calmly at first, and then with more urgency. Every now and then a low wail of static would erupt from the speaker. I got the sudden feeling that something had gone wrong. At that point, I turned and started to run; back the way I had come—back down the trail, my action connected absolutely, resolutely, to a reality—a danger, I thought—an incursion!—on the border.

I came at the booth running, and Nicole arrived at exactly the same point—though emerging from the other side of the forest. “Did you make contact—over the radio—?” I said, over the top of my breathing, and it turned out that yes, they had tried to make contact, quite urgently. Following our peaceful morning visits from enthusiastic city workers, art patrons and neighbourhood ramblers, it transpired that the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO)—the true government of Woodhaven—had timed Nicole and mine’s patrol with their weekly trip to collect the trash from the park. Our brave agents had asked the RDCO trash collector for his pass, or to please come and apply for an entry permit. “Who are you?” he’d asked. “Border patrol,” they replied. “I don’t know anything about this,” / “Oh, we’re with the Woodhaven



project.” / “Do the regional district know about this? You’re not supposed to be here. Did you say *border patrol*?” / “Yeah—border patrol—I’m just going to radio my supervisor—” That is, of course, when they tried to contact me. The RDCO trash collector then proceeded to take out a camera and photograph the agents in the booth—in a surprising and rather ironic inversion of the traditional border process. By the time we had sprinted back, he had gone. The border was quiet, but the memory of this recent incursion seemed to hover in everyone’s bodies.

Of course, the RDCO knew that we were there, and that we were doing this project. It was an unfortunate series of misunderstandings, and a sign of how vividly *WCBP*’s presence could affect people. But I felt terrible on two counts—awful that I had left our first work experience agents to be subjected to the RDCO’s weight pulling, and awful that I had neglected the border. In fact, as Dan Keyes, one of my committee members, points out, I hadn’t neglected the border at all—I was patrolling the border: the impossibility of being everywhere at once, and the anxiety of the state to enact complete security via a border had reared its ugly head. This crystallised in the fact that from that moment on I became more paranoid as an agent, and as a performer—the two roles merging quite conclusively—and I was left with the sense that the border—at its main crossing—had congealed in me.

I no longer felt very comfortable with venturing into the park for long periods—I would get a bit twitchy, a bit suspicious. When we designed some of the promotional material for the piece, I suggested getting the aerial map of Woodhaven, whiting out the interior, and stamping it with our logo and the times, dates and location of the project. In this way, all that was left of Woodhaven was the border, making its distinctive shape, and the suburb surrounding it. This is how I imagined the effect of “manning” a border—the inevitable forgetting, the erasure, of what you are actually

protecting because you spend so much time on the edges. This is, in fact, exactly what happened to me as a performer. The parking lot, and that main border crossing, preoccupied me until the forest, the park, became almost an abstraction. This is one of the paradoxes of guarding a border—losing sight of the thing you profess to want to protect.

Performing the border, and becoming and performing the roles of border agents, became acts of negotiation, responding always to context—“not ... static, or passive, but ... active, distinctively relational.”<sup>lxviii</sup> Sandoval, writing from the perspective of third world feminism (and here I must flag my position of privilege; writing from an undeniably first world feminist position), posits the idea of “a new subjectivity, a political revision that denies any one ideology as the final answer, while instead positing a *tactical subjectivity* with the capacity to recenter depending on the kinds of oppression to be confronted.”<sup>lxix</sup> In the context of the durational *WCBP*, the “one ideology” would be “one performance” that was unresponsive to flux, to visitor, to contingency. Instead, then, a *tactical subjectivity* was to be found in the performance—and these constant shifts in mood, in action, would act as generators of meaning—propelling the piece and its arc through time. This might mean being a “hard ass” at some moments, and at others being softer—going from silence to verbosity at times, or watchful to paranoid, polite to distant, present to absent.

These are performance instincts that the border, and the project, generated. But using Sandoval’s idea of a *tactical subjectivity* also speaks to something else: our unwillingness to simply reproduce the conditions of the border. I think Sandoval would see that as simply reproducing oppression, and not attempting to transform it in any way. If we had wanted to do that, I once said, we would have simply organised some road trips to the border at Osoyoos, selling it as a performative experience—

(this time, you really will need your passport!)—and seeing who got across, and who didn't. In *WCBP*, it was never our intention to keep people out of the space, unless they violated a RDCO rule. Rather, we wanted to deconstruct the border crossing experience a little—to prod it, to sting with memory, with absurdity. It was designed to take some of the terror away, and also to supplant it—perhaps for visitors' future “real” border crossings. Playing with different images of border agents—merging from the stony to the delicate, from the negotiator to the ambassador to the despot—became a key way, through performance, to tactically *play* the border.

One of our work experience agents, Alex Eastman, started his shift as a hard-ass; arms folded, eyes narrowed. He stopped cars as they drove in with one flick of his palm—he checked underneath their carriages, directed them to park, and beckoned them to the booth. He was almost absurdly correct, never smiling—it provoked responses of hilarity in some, and intimidation in others. “You will need to sign here, here, here and here,” he would say, unflinching. “Remember, be kind to nature, and nature will be kind to you,” he would instruct, upon issuing the final pass. He ran everywhere, knees coming up high, absurdly high—he played with, in a sense, the border agent as clown—utterly, utterly, serious clown.

But incrementally, revisions to this first interpretation emerged: children began to arrive and be processed at the booth, asking questions about the questions on the form—“what's a border?” / “what's wilderness?” and Alex the stern, serious agent tactically merged into Alex the agent with a gift of openness, prompting surprising answers from these young prospective citizens—“My bedroom is a wilderness,” wrote one. “Disneyland,” another. He would take them on roundabout routes to get to these answers, but always with the spirit of gentleness, with a quick smile that somehow they knew was only for them. “Do you want a bird stamp?” he would say.

“Ooh, I’d like one,” said a grown-up. Sharp as a dart, he looked at her: “These are not for everyone.”

Navigating between these points, these places, in the performance created little reference maps in my body, and my memory. Narrative, then, was never premeditated—it became structured spatially—it was radically contingent on environment. I was hard, brittle and authoritarian when Byron Johnson showed up with his sculpture class; joked around with the city workers; became emotional with the elderly Woodhaven regulars. Every agent played with this essential sense of negotiation differently. Nancy patrolled as a true paranoiac, suspicious of the sound of rain on leaves, until this letting-go into the all of this agent mysteriously translated to a giggling elation at the end: “I don’t want to give up my uniform!” Tanja conducted her conversations with the birds in full, absurdist seriousness, calmly performing and practicing these calls by the fence line as visitors hiked by. The birdsong became part of the vocabulary of her role as agent within the park, simultaneously reinscribing the possibilities of a border agent; coming across her, singing along the border, in her uniform, was hilarious, rich and strange, all at once.<sup>11</sup> She, too, was reluctant to give up her uniform. I can’t talk about the contribution of every agent individually, though I wish I could; they all negotiated, performatively, within the parameters that we had suggested, and those that they imagined, dreamed up and remembered for themselves.

The performances of the participants dispelled what had been perhaps my greatest fear during the research and development stages of *WCBP*, its homonym shadow:

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<sup>11</sup> The job BIRDSONG is denoted as follows in the Training Manual: Equipment: Birdsong player; list of birds by Joan Burbridge. Objective: To rehearse and practice out loud the calls of citizen birds native to Woodhaven. Purpose: To foster greater linguistic understanding with the resident bird population of Woodhaven; to engage in interspecies dialogue; to broaden the multi-lingual mandate of *WCBP*. Site: The zone between the DRY INTERIOR TRAIL and the WET INTERIOR TRAIL. This distinct site is marked by the first post of the tactical infrastructure (fence) that hereafter divides the WET INTERIOR TRAIL from the non-Woodhaven properties on the other side. Remain beside the first post. Time: One hour.

boredom. Would we be bored at the border, lonely at the frontier? Would it be overwhelmingly depressing, and dispiriting, to attempt to reclaim this essentially authoritarian action, this border “patrol?”

I have never felt less lonely in my life as I did during those four days of *WCBP*. People were visiting the border itself; it lost its function as a place for passing through and became itself a destination. We frustrated what Solnit has called the “prime significance of the frontier... that one could move on rather than negotiate, that there was always a forward to move toward.”<sup>lxx</sup> The stanchion, which had been used to enable visitors to form lines, became a resting spot—people would lean their elbows on the tops of the posts; kids would play with the retractable ropes as their parents chatted. People would also lean on the counter, drawing us in to confidences, to the sharing of food, and hot drinks. And stories just kept spilling out of people: stories of the border, or nationality, of Woodhaven, of childhood—prompted by the visa form, but also by the availability of us to listen.

We were immanently there; present in the space—and this opened wide the possibilities of relationships, forged by and through the border. People would bring us food: homemade soups; donuts; fruit; freshly baked cookies—and drinks: innumerable cappuccinos; hot chocolates; teas and coffees. These offerings were made, and shared, around a meeting—together over the counter, or sat low down in camping chairs. Some days as one visitor would leave another would arrive immediately, swinging into the parking lot with some kind of bread, in a bag. The Woodhaven regulars would come at dusk, just as the light was beginning to pixellate. They would stand and chat for a while before disappearing into the park, and if no agents were currently on patrol they would talk to us of the interior once they had

emerged again. “Good night!” they would say as they left, the last of the visitors to exit before the border closed for the night. “See you tomorrow.”

The space of the frontier became irrepressibly social. The socio-spatial dialectic was emerging in practice—as we reimagined the border, “taking some of the terror away,” it reciprocally reimagined possible relationships, between us, that could be produced there. Indeed, I came to see the border, this intensely interstitial, liminal space as a zone of negotiation—a site that was crucially alive; responsive and dynamic—resounding with both external negotiations, between agents and visitors; and internal ones, within nuances of performance, and adjustments of tone, tenor, and breath.

At that point, I felt the space of the project moving, metaphorically, from the more sterile, institutional “zone” towards Sandilands’ evocation of ecotone: “much like ecotones in biotic communities, margins in social and cultural contexts may be rich and dynamic transitional zones and may provide great learning as well as great suffering.”<sup>lxxi</sup> I felt the implications of “ecotone,” a word borrowed from ecology, speaking to *WCBP* so clearly because we were occupying both biotic and cultural ecotones: biotic, where the humans intersect with the screech owl, which in turn merges into other ecotones, rippling out and unfolding through the park; and cultural, where the concrete and chlorine of suburbia meets the pine and nest of the forest, and the logic of the border meets the organisation of the nature park.

These edges, these ecotones, as our negotiating, productive border crossing came to be, can act as meeting points, but I argue that they must retain a sense of the vulnerable, and the local. Vulnerable, because this implies a diffusion, a sense of the place as porous, where ideas can be exchanged, and not flow uni-directionally, and

local, to ensure the “learning” that might take place there is responsive to site, to environment.

One topic of conversation that came up again and again at the border was the prospective annual winter closing of Woodhaven by the RDCO. “Can’t you do something, border patrol?” the regulars would say. “Don’t close the border for winter!” Via our positioning as node, or connective tissue between Lori Mairs and Woodhaven visitors, we could pass on fragments of information—that if the park was closed for “wind events” could it not be closed for “snow events?” (The RDCO give the “danger” of snow falling on dead cedars, which might then snap and fall onto passing humans, as their reason for closing the park for five months.) “The park always used to be open in the winters,” said the woman who had played here as a child in the ‘50s, and whose children had played here in the ‘70s, and whose grandchildren now stood in a clutch around her. This fragment was passed to Sue, a New Zealander just off the plane with her family, living in Kelowna for the foreseeable future. The fragments—discussed, shared, passed on and through, coalesced gradually into a strategy—a plan. Sue, who had worked for Greenpeace in New Zealand for years, created a petition for the RDCO that canvassed for the signatures of residents who would like to see the park kept open for the winter. A suggestion was made in the body of the petition: to close the park for “snow events.”

*WCBP*, whilst being, arguably, a “micro-political endeavour”<sup>lxxii</sup> in itself, thus also created the socio-spatial conditions for the emergence of other “micro-political endeavours;” most notably, the petition drive to prevent the closing of Woodhaven—clearly an important place for the residents of that neighbourhood. But this political outcome derived from a practice—from our collective, durational performance at and of the border. Establishing its habitat in the forgotten ecotone, the parking lot, *WCBP*

attempted to make plausible, and productive, the edges between things real and intangible; nations; suburbs and forest; culture and nature; memory and forgetting—indeed, to go a step further and suggest that at the edges one constitutes the other; one becomes the other, and that to fear this process, to erect barriers between these processes, is to attempt to cut life off at the root.

Sandilands, paraphrasing Haraway, writes that “this kind of eco-cultural politics is thus about taking *pleasure* in the edges and also *responsibility* for their construction.”<sup>lxxiii</sup> This helps me to recall one late afternoon at the border—I had settled into the booth to record the day in a logbook, having seen a bunch of locals into the park. I had a feeling of deep happiness, spread out in the depths of me.<sup>12</sup> I glanced at one of our promotional postcards, lying on the counter: *WCBP: Securing Woodhaven’s Borders*. With a pen, I drew an arrow facing up between the words “securing” and “Woodhaven,” and in the strip of space above the words I added “and enjoying.” *WCBP*, it now read, *Securing and Enjoying Woodhaven’s Borders*.

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<sup>12</sup> This was the dominant mood of the border; it has to be said. Except when it rained early Saturday morning, we tried to turn the booth around in the dark (lit by car headlights), and it collapsed in a crunch of glass and plywood. After a short anxiety attack, the booth was rebuilt as the sun rose.



## Six: Concluding *WCBP*

Treelines, poverty lines, time zones, language lines, and bloodlines...

—W.H. New<sup>lxxiv</sup>

During one of the talks we gave following the project, on UBC's Okanagan campus as part of the Culture/Power series, I described the sense of what happened there at the border as a kind of "pop-up community"—a description that I still feel is a little presumptuous, and inadequate. "Pop-up" is a still-just-about fashionable term for describing, essentially, ephemeral cultural events. Working against the capitalist logic of fixity and franchising, "pop-ups," like "flash mobs," suggest a nomadic quality—a moveability, a transience that is usually considered with suspicion in our culture. And yet, to me, "pop-up" seems to be a substitute for "performance"—which depends, precisely, on its ephemerality for the very sign of its presence (and then absence), and also frustrates the capitalist model of art production: live performances cannot be bought and sold as objects. The sense of the world that emerged at the border as performative is, of course, the very point of my thesis work—the entire structure was devised as a performance; nonetheless, it is interesting to be able to see what was produced by the structure as performance, too.

And the "community," network, or group of participants, agents, artists, students, residents, caretakers, government workers, activists were brought together by the space—action was instigated by the space—by the curious hold that Woodhaven exerts. Yi-Fu Tuan identifies this, simply, as "the human love of place."<sup>lxxv</sup> But as *WCBP*, and, I hope, this paper, has demonstrated, "love" is often not enough—or it can be misguided. Kwon describes the "persistent, perhaps secret adherence to the actuality of places (in memory, in longing)...[as]...a means for survival."<sup>lxxvi</sup>

Survival, certainly, if the means to this acknowledges the need for adaptability, for a change in the conversation around preservation, development, extraction; in short, a change to the model of civilization on one side, and wilderness on the other.

Wilson, identifying (and denouncing) the rupture between naturescapes and culturoscapes—city and country—calls for “landscapes that heal, connect and empower, that make intelligible our relations with each other and with the natural world: places that welcome and enclose, whose breaks and edges are never without meaning. Nature parks cannot do this work.”<sup>lxxvii</sup> He goes on to describe UNESCO biosphere reserves as potential alternative models to the current system of nature reserves:

Natural areas in a biosphere reserve are assigned to a ‘core’ area, often an existing traditional park, which serves as both a conservation area and as a kind of control group for research. This core area is surrounded by a ‘buffer’ zone of disturbed or manipulated land used for problem-oriented research, environmental monitoring, and education. The buffer zone demonstrates the same ecosystem organized to meet human needs... It is meant to be a place of reconciliation, a model of a human community in harmony with the natural world.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

A place, in other words, that does not “other” its nature, and keep its humans out, reducing the relationship to restricted access, amnesia, and spectacle. Biosphere reserves, he clarifies, “are about relationships rather than scenery...”<sup>lxxix</sup> Despite the discrepancy in scale between UNESCO biosphere reserves and Woodhaven, 22-acres and surrounded by development, this idea of a “buffer zone” speaks to *WCBP* and its inhabiting, its opening, of the interstitial space between park and suburb, functioning as a productive space of negotiation and reconciliation. The point is truly about a contact—a touching, a meeting of bifurcated places—and this can be done in a number of ways, whether on a large-scale, as with UNESCO, or on a very small-scale.

*WCBP* was also about a contact with the past—in my understanding, the future is empty without some sense of the past, beyond the “panoramas of amnesia.” Addressing history spatially might give a sense of how we are produced by it—how its traces *are* us, and how we are responsible for their construction. “We need to be reminded in our cities of the lost warehouses where there are now parking lots, and in the country of roads that were once farm lanes or portages,” writes Wilson. “In such places rests the possibility of imagining a future on this land.”<sup>lxxx</sup> *WCBP*’s use of the material traces at Woodhaven was about these possible future imaginings. It tried to provoke a remembering that points to its history not as “untrammelled wilderness” but material space with cultural imprint—a contested site, staging interventions into the national project of biogeography.

However, we were intervening, deliberately, between people and these historic traces; between the institutional idea of the border and our artistic interpretation of the border; and between the nature park and its enfolding suburb. In the gap we cleaved between each construct, we created the conditions for irony. This gap was both material (the parking lot) and symbolic (between ideological constructs). “Irony,” says Sandilands, “is also a feature of ecotones; interstitial spaces allow interesting becomings.”<sup>lxxxi</sup> Crucially, *WCBP* made apparent that there *was* a gap, and that in this gap, this ironic space, could be the space of humour, for curiosity, for questions—for a re-seeing.

The processes of irony in the project also helped to make the connection, in a wider sense, to what Tuan has called the “irony inherent in the idea of *preserving* wilderness.”<sup>lxxxii</sup> I noticed that the overwhelming response to *WCBP* was laughter—a shared laughter—one that acknowledged the recognition and the displacement of the sign of the border—and understood, spatially, its presence at the edge of the park.

There was room in that space we made, that ironic gap, room to sift through, and work through, or perform, questions. Irony is often misconstrued as sarcasm, as retaining some quality of mean-spiritedness. In this case, however, I think it was productive of something quite genuine: whether that be Nancy Holmes' paranoid border poetry in the logbooks; returning visitors who had discovered every "historic site" on the "Visit These Historic Sites Today!" trail map; or Jake Kennedy, poet and professor of English at Okanagan College, filling in the gaps between the boxes on the visa form, curling his writing up and across the margins with additions, qualifications, observations.

Acknowledging, or drawing attention to a gap can of course be the means to connecting two previously bifurcated places, or ideas. That binaries are at best unhelpful, and at worst, dangerous and invested with unequal power relations is by now a well-established idea (see especially Grosz and Fausto-Sterling).<sup>lxxxiii</sup> If we are to get to grips with a landscape "whose breaks and edges are never without meaning," then perhaps it is primarily the job of artists—"boundary-hoppers and claim-jumpers"<sup>lxxxiv</sup> to signal, and play with, these meanings. As McLuhan indicates: "The ordinary procedures and environmental patterns of a society don't become visible until the artist creates this counter-environment of art objects."<sup>lxxxv</sup> *WCBP* created a counter-environment that inserted the visual language of the border into the "special place" of the nature reserve. In so doing, the border was reclaimed as a productive, rather than a reductive space—the interstitial space a site with its own reasoning, its own life, instigating crossings, performances, and meetings, carrying messages, inside the forest, and outside, and in, again.

## Conclusion

Just as I wish to return, and return again and again to Canada, I intend to return to *WCBP*, and develop and perform it in other places. *WCBP* illuminated something important to me about my work, and the very conditions of its site-specificity: its preoccupation with the “poetics and politics of parallel worlds.”<sup>lxxxvi</sup> The sites I inhabit in my work are conditioned by liminality, by a sense of themselves as “ecotones.” I see that I can conceptualise, and become slightly obsessed with, these parallel worlds on grand scales: the areas between nations, and at the edges of forests. I can also see this preoccupation at work on a microcosmic level; I have long been fascinated with memory and its existence as a kind of intricate, interior world that is constantly set against the unfolding, external present.

With this in mind, future iterations of *WCBP* would clearly be well suited to other parks, reserves, and conservancies; places that are bounded in some way; places that have a distinct, or troubled, relationship to the space that surrounds them. The name *WCBP* would shift, moving aside the “W” to accommodate a new letter, a letter that refers to the park it is “securing.” According to my own empirical evidence, *Border Patrol* works best when it is not subsumed into other happenings, or art events: this is when the Agency becomes in effect a box office, denoting the gateway to entertainment. It functions most effectively as a surprise—this enables a more complete double-take, and, I think, contributes more completely to the “stinging” of memory, via a recognition of the sign of the border in a displaced location, and to the remembering that takes place during the visa application. I would like to spend even *more* time in our spaces in the future; I would like the participatory experience to be one of more complete immersion, combining the actions of sleeping, patrolling,

guarding, processing and eating. In this case, it would make sense to propose the project to places where there is the possibility for camping or lodging within the space's borders; places where the park's "life," or identity, is already in some ways imbricated with human habitation (however manufactured this "habitat" actually is).

Recently more and more art galleries have been opening "park" spaces in which to install sculpture and performances: the Olympic Sculpture Park, affiliated with the Seattle Art Museum (SAM),<sup>lxxxvii</sup> and 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, opened by the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA),<sup>lxxxviii</sup> are two good examples. We will consider approaching these and other venues, as they are setting up an interesting tension between the ordered art displayed inside the museum buildings (civilization) and the art installed within the implied unpredictability of "nature" and the outside (wilderness). "Be Refreshed,"<sup>lxxxix</sup> advertises the IMA, suggesting a stroll through the Art & Nature Park following the taxing work of navigating the indoor "culture space" of the museum proper. This is a border that is growing, instituted by contemporary art and museum policy, and it is one that clearly needs some attention.

*Border Patrol* has had an expression of interest from the Center for Land + Environment, part of the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno,<sup>xc</sup> and I can see the project working well—resonating well—in places where an international border is part of everyday life. For this reason, the Folkestone Triennial in the UK is an option too—taking place on land that slopes off against the border of the English Channel, and from there, France.<sup>xci</sup> Although in many ways it is impossible to tell without doing it, I do think that *Border Patrol* could work in both "nature" and "culture" spaces; the space of the national/provincial/regional park, or the outdoor museum/gallery space. Both in some ways are drawing a line between areas of wilderness and civilization, and I believe that the project would adapt and shift to properly investigate, and play,

the semantics produced by the contexts of each distinct border, and place. The crucial condition for the performance of *Border Patrol* is that its space *has* a distinction between two zones, or worlds. Two places that have been ringed off and separated from one another—each thrown into a state, or stasis, of solitude from the other; a spatial condition of two solitudes.

The phrase “two solitudes” kept surfacing during my first months in Canada. Douglas Coupland said it, contemplating Canadian identity in his film *Souvenir of Canada*; Sherene Razack used it to answer a question at her talk at UBC, in that fall of 2008; I heard it sung in a pop song on the radio as we drove in our Explorer up the highway to school, the windows rolled down low. Employed by Hugh MacLennan to explore the so-called bilingual “divide” in Canadian culture in his 1945 novel *Two Solitudes*, this is now the phrase’s dominant meaning, though I should mention that as MacLennan’s novel is modernist, it does not shy away from dualisms but rather embraces them as a *de facto* condition of life.<sup>xcii</sup>

Nevertheless, it is a deeply resonant phrase; speaking of loneliness, one of the touchstones of experience, and also of an implicit need to somehow communicate across the divide—a need that is not met, or not contained in the two-word utterance. I started to see that the phrase worked in all sorts of contexts. In the ringing off of the forests from human habitat, I could see the separation of wilderness and civilization as “two solitudes.” In the theatre world, with its emphasis on director and actor as discrete entities, I could see the existence of “two solitudes.” I could also see it in the separation of artist from audience, either in the theatre or in the visual arts—the loneliness of performing to a body of people who, similarly lonely, cannot speak back. I saw it that first time we crossed the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, from Omak into Osoyoos, from the United States into Canada; saw that the land had similar environmental and

ecological concerns, that its citizens had similar concerns, that the industry and the earth and the trees were the same, but that they were bounded off into private solitudes by the border. The “two solitudes” speak to memory, too—in the sealing, and congealing of the past from the present. I saw, in short, that “two solitudes” was a way to evoke the emotional and physical effects of dichotomies.

*Woodhaven Customs and Border Patrol* was a way to intervene between the solitudes—to step into the gap, the interstice. I don’t mean to suggest that solitude is unimportant, or undesirable—it is not—there are good reasons that we are not allowed to build holiday resorts in the middle of ecologically fragile woodland; good reasons to be lonely, at times. Yet it is the often impossibility of communicating across these divides, and the non-recognition of each entity in the other, that my work, and *WCBP*, addresses. Forging links and negotiations and jogging memories and experiences across spaces, communities and individuals, *WCBP* dedicated itself to a reconciliation across the borderline.

The interconnectedness of forms, systems, and performances at *WCBP* has been stated. The border was re-imagined, or reclaimed, as a means to draw together, rather than keep apart; the imagined loneliness of the border agent turned itself inside out, through performance, into a radically shared happiness. And yet *WCBP* was not the first, by any means, to step into the breach between “two solitudes.” In fact, the idea has been built into the phrase, in its full context, all along. The words come originally from Rilke, in his *Letters to a Young Poet*. W.H. New also recognises this, citing this translation: “Love consists in this, / that two solitudes protect, / and touch, and greet each other.”<sup>xciii</sup> Between the “two solitudes,” therefore, there *must* be a contract—to touch, to greet—to acknowledge the other—in an ideal state, to learn from the other. This was my experience of *WCBP*. In my copy of *Letters*, there is another translation



of Rilke's words: "The love that consists in this: the two solitudes protect and border and greet each other."<sup>xciiv</sup> Witness the words "border" and "touch" becoming interchangeable; constituted by each other; meaning, silently, each other.

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## Appendix 1: Visa Form



## Woodhaven Customs and Border Patrol

## WELCOME TO WOODHAVEN

W-W Nonimmigrant Human  
Visitor Arrival/Departure Record

### Instructions

This form must be completed by every nonimmigrant human visitor not in possession of a visa (only ONE written declaration per family is required).

Type or print legibly with pen in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. USE HUMAN LANGUAGE.

Item 5 – If you are entering Woodhaven by land, enter LAND in this space.  
If you are entering Woodhaven by ship, enter CREEK in this space.

### Arrival Record

- [illegible]

WCBP Use Only

Admission Number

Departure Record  
REENTRY PERMIT

11. Gender  
☐
12. Country of Citizenship
13. Date of Issue (DD/MM/YYYY)

**Do any of the following apply to you?**  
(Answer Yes or No)

- A. Have you ever committed herbicide, or are you seeking entry to engage in a herbicidal mission? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- B. Have you ever been or are you now involved in urban planning; or between 1972 and 1973 were associated, in any way, with the Okanagan Land Development Limited? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- C. Are you, or any plant or animal belonging to you, seeking to live in Woodhaven; or have ever been excluded and deported; or been previously removed from Woodhaven; or procured or attempted to procure a visa or entry into Woodhaven by fraud or misrepresentation? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- D. Have you ever detained, retained, or withheld an animal, plant, or fungi that is a Woodhaven citizen or the offspring of a Woodhaven citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- E. I am (We are) bringing:
- (a) fruits, vegetables, plants, seeds, food, insects ☐ Yes ☐ No
- (b) meats, animals, animal/wildlife products ☐ Yes ☐ No
- (c) disease agents, cell cultures, snails ☐ Yes ☐ No
- (d) soil or have been on a farm/ranch/pasture ☐ Yes ☐ No
- F. I have (We have) been in close proximity of (such as touching, handling) mountain pine beetle (*dendroctonus ponderosae*) ☐ Yes ☐ No

W.R.P. 663b(f)(2) Woodhaven Liberation of Information Act Notice: Your signature acknowledges that the data gathered here may be made available to the public for art exhibition purposes or to assist WCBP in determining your admissibility.

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

--	--

### Departure Record

**Departure Record**  
Important – Retain this permit in your possession for reentry to Woodhaven.

This permit is valid until Woodhaven closes for the winter.

**Warning:** You may not ride a bicycle or motorized vehicle; or walk a dog; or start an open fire; or smoke; or attempt to smuggle undocumented humans, flora or fauna under the conditions of this program. You are authorized to stay in Woodhaven from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m. daily. Violation of these terms will subject you to deportation.

Image 2: Visa Form

## Appendix 2: Logbook Extracts

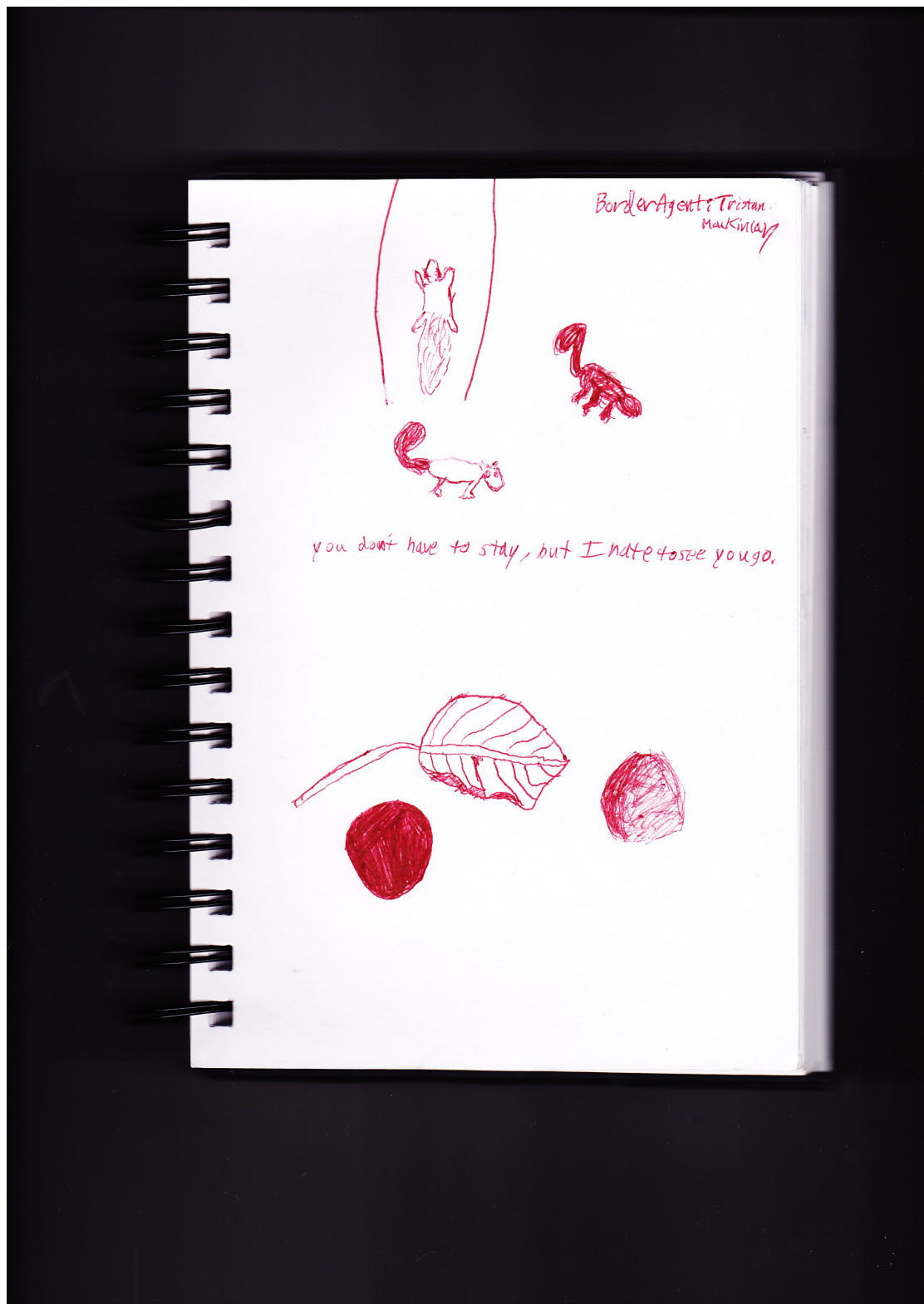


Image 3: Logbook Extract from Agent T. MacKinlay, Woodhaven, 2010.

Officer Holmes, Sunday 8:15 am

The maple leaves are making a very bright yellow light, even this early in the morning - watching to see if any plants or animals are blinded.

On the Main Trail - evidence of serious, destructive falling tree activity within the past 20 years.

While the morning rain has eased, water is still sporadically bulleting down, hitting unwary patrollers.

Image 4: Logbook Extract from Agent N. Holmes, Woodhaven, 2010.



8:30 am

Thought there was a major fire  
off the Main Trail to the  
right but the blaze was  
the cottonwood trees  
candling up the forest  
and the crackling sounds  
were rain drops.

In the distance a squirrel  
is chipping in a loud  
irritating manner - he  
is likely annoyed by  
the rain. It might  
be useful to investigate  
this complaint. Will  
head off onto ~~Suburban~~ <sup>Perimeter</sup>  
Trail.

Image 5: Logbook Extract from Agent N. Holmes, page 2, Woodhaven, 2010.

- A assortment, consisting of  
To cks, pens, nests, ink, and  
our own qoss. These people are  
conducting rituals of assimilation  
- It's a nest. These poor souls  
have been befuddled into believing  
they are birds. The an/zotars  
seem intuitive yet unaware.  
- The birdpeople have advanced.  
Here is the sense of intuition.  
AM I TAE ORLY SANE M JH  
Left... ?

Image 6: Logbook Extract from Agent A. Eastman, Woodhaven, 2010.



Image 7: Logbook Extract from Agent A. Eastman, page 2, Woodhaven, 2010.



What's their relationship? note.  
Ring-necked Pheasant called a  
bunch of others to sing as well  
California quail seems relaxed  
more than the others. Easy  
going. loose. Funny the relationship  
here between state reputation  
and name. signatures.  
I'd like to smuggle a Ruffed  
grouse. Desire for maple tonic.  
House Finch song excited the  
magpie and woodpecker.  
wow. There is something magnetic  
with the Cassin's finch song as  
well. Magpie comes closer. Wood  
pecker pecks persist.  
Song sparrow. opens the forest  
somehow. The song seems bigger  
than it. Than me. quiet belly  
rises afterwards.  
Swainson's Thrush seems to  
have some eroticism. Dance I suggest.

Image 8: Logbook Extract from Agent T. Woloshen, Woodhaven, 2010.

With rolling crescents and decrescents  
so easily. Rolling tongue. Next.

(Veery could quite likely be a lover  
of the aforementioned) Next.

Dusky flycatcher. This one might  
flight pattern like a seagull.  
Sail and plummet and ride the  
wind.

Western Wood Pewee sings with  
every vertebra, it appears. For  
me anyway.

Vaux Swift. is a tapp dancer.

White Throated Swift. speaker of  
tongues. excited after a sun-  
kissed bath. a story teller from  
every bone muscle and feather.

Barn swallow appears to show  
me the way. There's no time  
for mistakes.

These creatures have been  
generous to me in more ways  
than I can imagine. My ears  
have changed. All of me.

Image 9: Logbook Extract from Agent T. Woloshen, page 2, Woodhaven, 2010.