

Urbs Concrecence: nehiyaw Dreams on a Convolutud City

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

English

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University of Alberta

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Abstract

This thesis examines narratives associated with the city and Indigenous people, knowledge, and culture and it then imagines the creative possibilities of new ways of being in the city. This thesis conceptualizes the beginnings of a culturally grounded Indigenous identity that flourishes in the city. I critique narratives that associate Indigenous identity as deficient and inauthentic in the city and the colonial narrative that imposes a binary of civil and the uncivil and that denies Indigenous people a sense of belonging in the city.

From my research, I argue that there are Indigenous-led ways to conceptualize the city by seeing the city as animate and from the cosmological view point inherent in Indigenous spiritual practices. My primary argument on the city's animacy centres on rocks, a living and animate being from a nehiyaw understanding, and to see these rocks as teachers to guide our relationships between other each other: human and the non-human or the more-than-human. I look at nehiyaw laws and what I understand as an ethically grounded Indigenous citizenry. I do this not to impose a spiritual viewpoint, but to see the city from an Indigenous-centred way of being in the world. In particular, I look to the round dance as a means of connecting different voices and views of the world that is also celebratory and a mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually grounding practice of moving through the world.

This thesis is an experimental creative research study. There are poets who already critique the city as a space that excludes Indigenous people, but there is limited current research on the city and Indigeneity that coexists and flourishes in the city. I use my own poetry and stories to work alongside poets who struggle with urban space, support Indigenous presence in the city, and advance Indigenous resurgence; and I also use my academic research skills to

explore the work of canonical urban theorists. I bridge poetry and academic writing together to create a form wherein both writing practices can be in conversation.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Mackenzie Ground. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

Dedication

For nipeyakoskân ekwa nicânisak

who help me find strength

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Christine Stewart

and Reuben Quinn
and Bob Cardinal
and Dorothy Thunder

and Rob Jackson
and Kaitlyn Purcell
and Keighlugh Donovan
and the Writing Revolution in Place Collective
and Les Danyluk
and Rick Olynek
and Zeny Marte
and Roberta Kreuger
and James MacDonald
and John Holman
and Martha
and Denis Lapierre

and Dwayne Donald
and Sarah Krotz
and Marilyn Dumont
and the moon
and the wâpos who taught me so much
and the trees who always heal me in times of stress and not stress and who help me in many
different forms
and the educational kit of rocks from Alberta that sat with me through the writing process and
who helped provide the visuals for this text
and the nipi of my baths
and the maskihkiwâpoya i drank during my study because i like to believe that i watched and
learned enough from tea that namoya emasinahikeyân mâka emaskekihwâpoyân
but thats not all that humble is it

and my handsome ones
and my family

and the many others who have supported me through my writing

kinanâskomitinâwâw
ekwa kisâkihitinâwâw

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introduction

we humans have an obsession with rocks

i will try to imagine a city

that is a livable space

of relation making for humans

and the more than human

despite a history that defines who belongs in the city

i will interweave poetry and theory with my own journey

be a storyteller of my own choosing

to story Indigeneity and urban space



i will nourish the relational roots

of place and of story

buried in Edmonton

amiskwacîwâskahikanihk

ground my readers in the city

in an Indigenous citizenry

and i will discuss the role of rocks and stones in cities

because the nehiyaw understand rocks as storytellers

alive and full of knowledge

i listen to rocks because they know so much

i listen to rocks because we use so many to built our cities

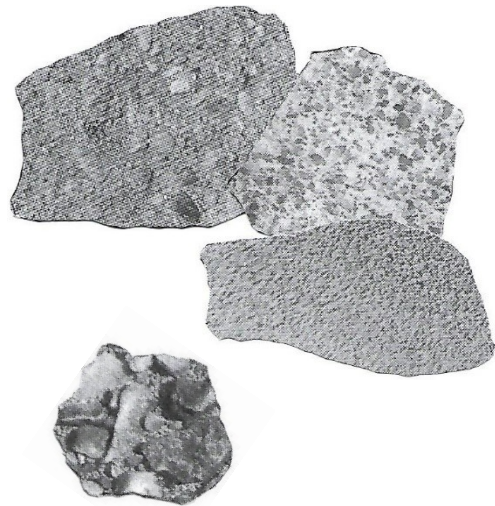
as monuments and decoration and in concrete

which is “the most widely used material on earth apart from water, with over two-and-a-half tons produced every year for every man woman and child on the planet” (Adrian Forty 69)

we humans have an obsession with rocks



how can you love concrete



how do you love concrete

how do we walk in the city and on the city in a way that engages with the city

how do we converse with the rock cities that we step on everyday

rocks that construct the architecture rocks that mould the spaces of our city

how do we lovingly engage with our spaces

without falling prey to the colonial constructs of civility that plague our images of concrete

that inhabit those construction sites

how do you love concrete

this thesis must stay and struggle with these questions because

how do you love concrete is not a just question about giving to and receiving love

from materials and from more than human beings

it is in part but it is a question of synecdoche

a part of the city standing in for the whole

concrete as a metaphor for the city

i need to look at and to the conglomerates

who are symbols of the city as composites

materials working together

to reflect people coming together

the rocks with the binding fluid the human intervention of working the material

and the holding together by imperfections cracks weights and dispersals

concrete as city teacher

i look to concrete for its suspension of incorporating fluid and solid forms

to show us how to create bonds with each other

but to keep our distinct identities in tact

concrete as theory

stir rocks of theory Indigenous and Western European

mixing in a slurry

for others to build upon



central to my investigation are nehiyaw concepts and law structures

that guide us how to live in the world
and the language of Cree nehiyawewin¹ as a teacher
to guide us through another way to think of words and sentences

i cite written teachings gathered from Elders
these are not myths as some of my dear readers may think
if you smudge you smudge

i want to work with a different way of perceiving and conceiving the world

yet i also deal with western histories theories and origins of cities and modernity
because growing up i was also told to get an education to pay attention to what i was taught
contestable buffalo

i learned these histories these stories these origins

i remember that it is our responsibility to each other to remind each other of our histories²
not only to remind but to also mark and to note
that there are different ways to approach these topics

Elder E Ghostkeeper said those across the ocean had their own set of four directions that
differs from the four directions of Turtle Island³

¹ I do not use a macron over the letter e for nehiyaw words. This is how I learned nehiyawewin in Standard Roman Orthography. For me, it is a reminder to stop looking at nehiyaw words from an English perspective and pronunciation and to pay attention the rhythm of the word.

² Reuben Quinn, personal communication, January 2018.

³ Elder Elmer E. Ghostkeeper, personal communication, September 2017.

i think it is important to attend to these different notions of balances
 because the city becomes a place where these directions and differences meet and circulate

 as a nehiyaw iskwew who is also fair skinned white coded
 and visually ethnically ambiguous yet resonantly still somehow different
 i experience the city as fraught with assumptions
 with inclusion and exclusion
 a moving and connecting space
 stagnating and isolating transient and permanent opportunity and end
 in its histories and assumptions and inconveniences and conveniences
 the city erodes and shapes
 its citizens



this writing comes from a nauseating knot of thought
 that the city is not livable for everyone
 this writing comes from a difficulty i have to define my own sense of self and culture
 in a cityscape
 because certain narratives and stories demand assimilation
 or one must pass as white to avoid them
 despite the “growing numbers of Indigenous people living in urban areas” (1) and despite that
 “Indigeneity survives, adapts, and innovates in modern cities” (Evelyn Peters and Chris
 Andersen 2)

there are still narratives that story urban Indigenous people

as lacking

as failing

that story an Indigenous culture as solely existing

away from the city

that story the urban Indigenous as inauthentic

and too uncivilized for city walls

i will confront

i will survive adapt and innovate the stories of modern cities



how to write

when language threatens to entrap

how to ask questions but keep and open up to the mystery of the world

rather than crush it

in the fragment disassembled exclusion in spaces of the city and academia and civility

and with the assembling connection and inclusion of these spaces

my writing is scatters of words

words shattered

we must bead

words back together

tack and attack

them back down



i am going to try something

something new

tough

discouraging

i am going to try with great effort

to make my writing a meeting ground

a meeting mackenzie ground

a ground for meeting

all these brilliant minds

all these voices

to meet on

my ground



the only way i can think of approaching this is in a concrete stew

in chunks and pieces to stew inside my readers belly hot

use form as bridgework of intellectual traditions

Modernist fragmented city phantasmagoria of collision and

a story you must gather and sit with and revisit

that requires deep listening and also calls upon the reader to bind the story together

be my rocks my readers

you have something to give

see city first as pehonân as a meeting place before contact before settlers
 an acknowledged relationship with the land and with rocks

how is that different than what we see in concrete

see city as civil to see how the city carries history ideas and words from
 Western Europe as explored with my own relationship to the writing of Walter Benjamin
 his insights and missed sights

see city as fortitude as a double ground of fortification that keeps out the ugly
 vile uncivilized and the resilient fortitude it takes to stay in the city

see city as ôtenaw the nehiyaw word for city and to imagine the city as something
 more to connect our hands and steps

a sacred circle

as a round dance



who am i

i remember how storytellers i have heard introduce themselves before the story

how people open up their lives to their listeners

it is a gift

but i want to talk about something first

something that was present in my life

and that is the quiet

the silence

a lot of my memories are the memories of

the withholding of

the safe keeping of

histories his stories her stories and stories

which is an incredibly hard story to respect as i try to tell stories

i need to respect others stories and others permission and withholding

it is incredibly important to do this i remind myself over and over

because even if it is the story of my life

it is not without the stories of others

all related

and i know families have been hurt

still hurt

and even to tell the story of your family is difficult

because before

such powerful stories were silenced

made ugly

so that you fear yourself

and would do anything to protect those you love

from such powerful stories

all this because of histories

dont let them think youre native

theyll treat you different

“all the many words slither words

lost their skin snake treaties lose their spark flash bulb memory”

(Marvin Francis 29)

“Treaty, entreat me, treat me well” (Roberta Kreuger)

i am often unsure of how to introduce myself

i have many cousins from what is called the Alberta region

i find cousins all the time from Saddle Lake and Maskwacis and i am getting to know
my family in all its extensions from Enoch Cree Nation

all that muskeg healing maskekosihk

just outside of Edmonton Alberta

who am i

eyes and gaze dictate that this is not the heart of it for my listeners at least

i continue

i may have some Scottish in my family it is tricky because it deals with adopt



oh

my now notlisteners say and cut

thats it

and they talk about Europe again or change the subject

and i do not know what to do with the world inside of me in such a conversation



in a class with nehiyaw scholar Reuben Quinn

i remember him clarifying for the class to be creative

but not to run off with our own ideas⁴

and it was a great challenge for my classmates and me

i take Reubens words as ones that ask us to express ourselves

without losing the essence of teachings

that as artists we have a relational accountability

to the ideas meanings and sacredness of thoughts

⁴ Rueben Quinn, personal communication, March 2018.

words and teachings

it is like learning to walk again when facelessfaithless institutions tell you to run

the \wedge^c in you just aches from a page

peyatik

i will write the way i have always wanted to

without punctuation and capitals and without italicizing nehiyaw

to follow a nehiyaw format

but i recognize that those i cite may not share this sentiment and may work hard for
capitalized pronouns and want nehiyaw to be distinct

so i embed quotes with punctuation and original italics and leave names and titles and
proper nouns capitalized

and when i use the word story i do not take that word lightly

i revere that word

believe it is all that we are (Thomas King 32) so i think of stories as the core of us human beings



i will write through my limited knowledge and it may not be how you perceive things

it may disagree with a teaching you carry and i will make mistakes

glorious mistakes

but i pray that i only stray from the essence of the teachings briefly until someone reminds me to
get back to the lessons i have learnt

those glorious reminders

also lets have fun



some questions and answers before we begin

why am i always writing about skin

in the city walls and civilizations fortress you are either one of us or not

and you carry that on your skin

but cities change and grow

and no one knows what to do with the signifiers of skin anymore

a being of fear threatens

what does the concrete symbolize

yes

just think about wâhkôhtowin

who is wâpos

there i saw running through the prairie grasses a wâpos

we see “his father shooting a rabbit, skinning it in the bush in winter, then saying, ‘Now we can eat. I’ve brought along some bannock, some tea – we’ll make a fire and have lunch’”

(W.B. Kinsella 72)

the wâpos is a gift it is a gift i want to give to a hare

that was a neighbour of mine for a year while i studied a place in the city

i wondered how to give back to that place of study and that hare

the hare that ran around my mind for a year and continues to run

my mind runner

so i give it space to run in these pages as well

to continue teaching and reminding

pimipahta niwâposim

nah

wâpos is wâpos is a teacher who teaches that things can be survival needs
who is swift when needed who listens to the ground dirt in paws

and listens to the city

reads deep into fields

wâpos is a meal of knowledge a hunt perhaps someones first hunt an ending of life

perhaps someones first time ending life wâpos is a teacher of humility and swift kindness⁵

ready to give some fur and meat understands its time

⁵ Dorothy Thunder, personal communication, December 2017. A story Dorothy shared inspired these lines. Thank you to Dorothy.

are the texts incomprehensible

i imagine an Elder reading a text and then asks kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten

Benjamin kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten

Adorno kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten

Lefebvre kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten

de Certeau kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten

le Corbusier kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten

Bridge and Watson kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten

my dear flâneurs kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihtewâw

Mackenzie kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten

kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten



academia and writing are bizarre in that i will become a single author of these pages

an act where i begin to forget those who have helped me and are beside me

so much of this work is done not alone

there are beings in my life along with voices of scholars and poets

along with spirits and worlds we cannot see

all coming alongside me

nothing left to do but to do my best



ahâw

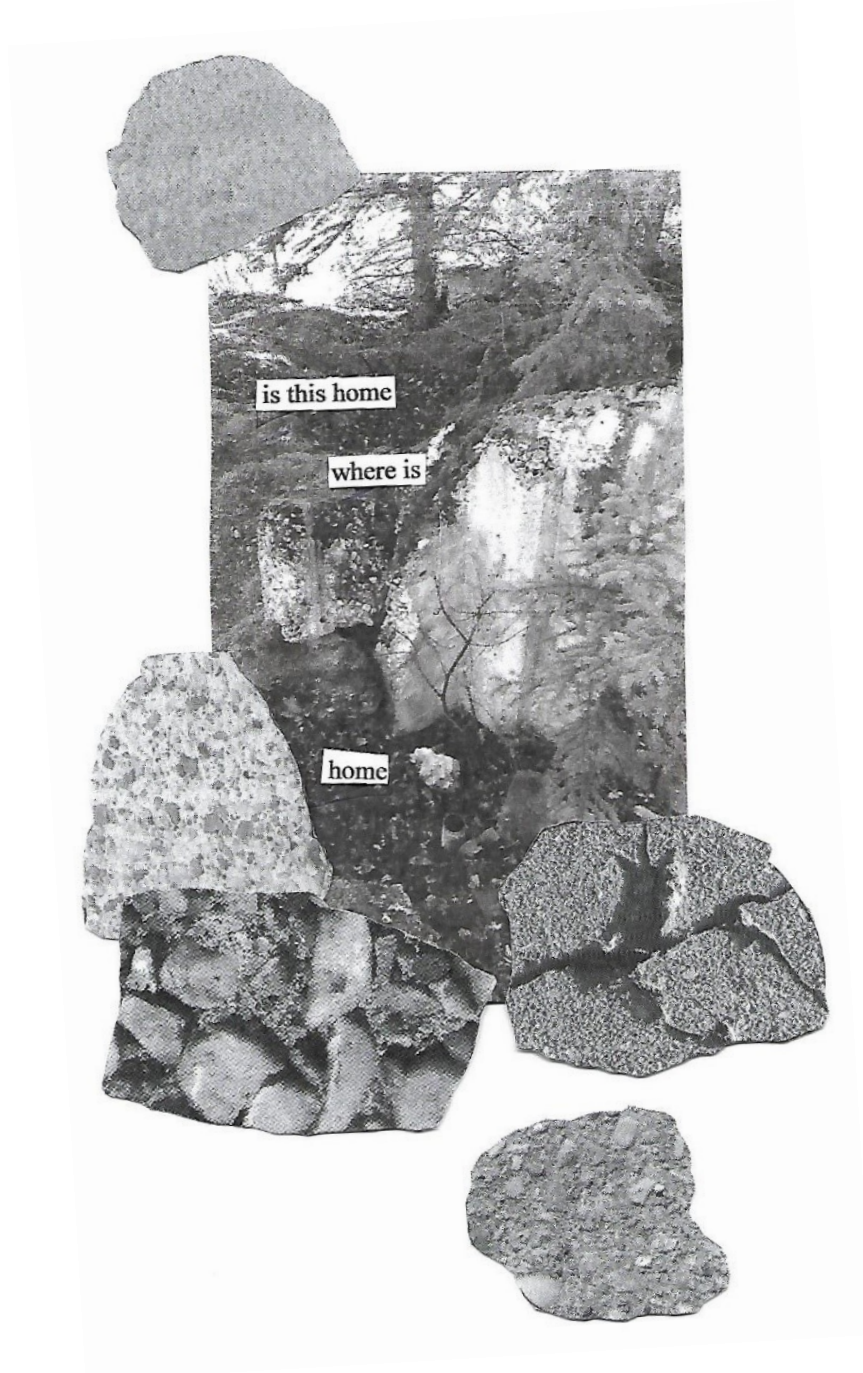
pitohkwe nitôtemitik

tâwow



convolute one city as pehonân

re cycle ling through the city





there are stories i do not yet know

there are questions i cannot answer

this is important to note

i grow

i need to look at and to the conglomerates

the rocks with the binding fluid the human intervention of working

the material and the holding together by imperfections cracks weights and dispersals

the conglomerates who hold the hum of creation

carriers of messages and law



black and white

greyscale word stones

neatly lined aggregates

but also beads of thought

my inklings

my ink and blood

my academic aunts

pity me



“The land, aki, is both context and process” (Leanne Simpson, “Land” 7) rings in my mind

the ground resonates in my step



all of this writing begins

from my questions on

what the land is and where is the land



so many connotations and images of what the land is and where the land is

get so complicated

such a slow growing beginner in learning

it is the struggle

what the land as a process and as a context looks like

feels like is like

barely sprouted grass

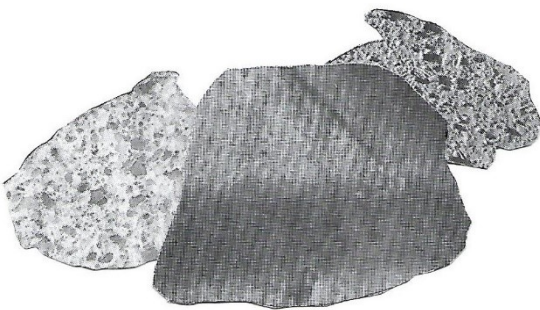
i am still learning how to listen to the land out at Enoch

but what is the land when i stand in a city

in the river valley in Edmonton

at the university

in the downtown pedway system in Edmonton



i get lost in the city

hide from carnivorous words

i get lost as i listen to so many voices

what does the land sound like

what does this mean

it is out there

what does that mean

it is as though this city is built on something other than land

or has this city snuffed out all other life



is there so much to learn or is it a call to speak out

is it a call to wonder about the city and the land

“we can also ask whose city, whose history is being privileged? Whose ‘global explanation’ is being foisted on the world” (Anthony King 265)

there are so many levels of displacement going on

how can we see how our actions affect other living beings

it can be difficult to admit

but what a gift

to see honesty become a meeting ground in words

from that i will try to take action



what is a city:

2. A large or important municipality.
 - a. With reference to English-speaking places: a municipality traditionally or officially designated a city being larger in size or population, or having greater status, than a town
 - b. In general use, and with reference to non-English-speaking places: a municipality of larger size or population than a town (“city, n.”)

how does English bring in tradition and status

city as the Latin civitas roots into a tree of tradition



there is a chasm between the history that exists

and the lack of history overlaid onto this place

there is a great discomfort with the ghosts of these grounds

excavate the city for the evacuation of stories in Edmonton

voices of this land

“if you look in Edmonton,”

just look,

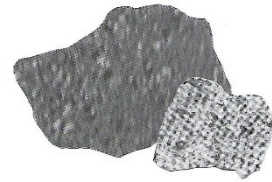
“you could probably find the residue of those who were living there before Edmonton was Edmonton. The residue resides in dust and clouds and in drawers and vaults, hidden away from use” (Duane Linklater 28)

museum validity

and institutional authority

create problems to learn who you are

that your culture lives only in history



i remember being excited to read about my ancestors history

in a museum

because what my family understood in my childs eyes

was finally made valid in a city space

but to see this validity beside plant specimens and dinosaur bones

clashed with the reality i knew at home

and the tools i would see:



“the hide scrapers looked the same, in design and in use. One nine thousand years old and the other made this year” (Linklater 29)

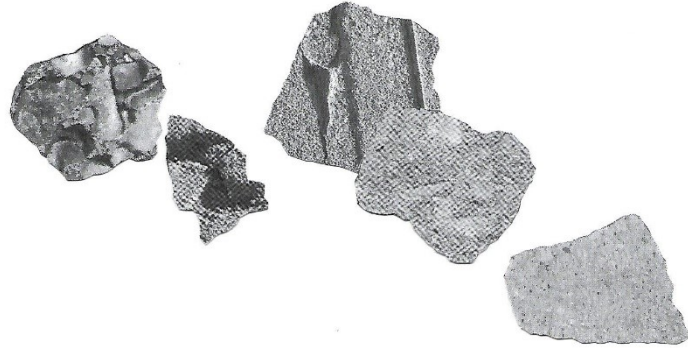
sometimes i look at the regalia my aunt made for me



and think of the similar one i saw in Banffs museum and wonder

in what time

am i



city noun

“5. *Ancient History*. A Greek or Roman city-state; = POLIS n.” (“city, n.”)



without old ruins and castles

people lament the lack of historical buildings and architecture on Turtle Island

but the land remembers:

Six thousand eight hundred years before, the volcanic eruption of Mount Mazama (in present-day Oregon) left a layer of ash in Edmonton’s river valley. A white strip is still visible today, along the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River not far from where the Mill Creek now empties (Christine Stewart, “Propositions” 248)

people move throughout this river valley

live today and carry all these memories in their blood and bones

memory

and there are histories

knowledge from Chief Calvin Bruneau

of the Papaschase Cree

knowledge of histories that place the Indigenous people as centre

as lineages to this place “have been here since time began” (Stewart, “Propositions” 252)

i stand at the memorial of graves in Rossdale⁶

see nitaniskotapans name and the ground vibrates

the land speaks

and its depth speaks louder than it ever has before



as a nehiyaw i want to take a moment to recognize that Edmonton is a meeting place

a pehonân

a place to gather to trade for ceremony (Dwayne Donald, “ôtênaw”)

but for the Blackfoot this place is “amahkoyis (Big House)” (Stewart, “Propositions” 252)

and this is home to many other more than human creatures

and the relatives made from the treaty process

⁶ An experience from Dwayne Donald’s river valley walk. Thank you to Dwayne.

and the Métis

the Nakoda Sioux

the Iroquois

the Dene

the Ojibway Saulteaux Anishinaabe

the Inuit

and the visitors from all throughout Turtle Island who continue to meet in this place

this is important because i am nehiyaw and that carries beautiful voices of support and i
want to take the time

because there is a lot that has helped me get to this point

which is not always the case for people

to respect others stories and others permission and withholding

it is incredibly important to do this i remind myself over and over

because even if it is the story of my life

it is not without the stories of others

all related



deeply rooted

a question in conversation with Nancy Lucero

are you a first or second generation of urban-based Indigenous people

dunno maybe the thousandth generation

oh

oh wait

you mean in Edmonton

dunno maybe the thousandth generation

from the generations

from the cities before the cities



it is not only the history

the bodies

the crafts and works of people

and geographical history that are whited out

but also the complexities of humans living together

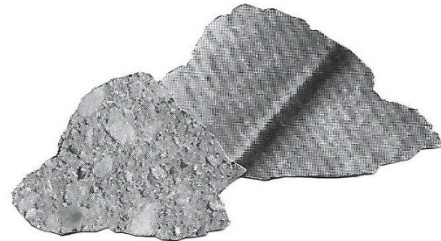
their systems

their societies

their understanding and ways of being in this world

the “complex systems of governance, culture, and spirituality that existed prior to the Crown and Canada, and that continue to exist” (Stewart, “Propositions” 255),

and the established treaty making processes (Sharon Venne 3),



and “it is likely that all the Indigenous nations had their own laws and legal systems which guided and directed the people in their daily interactions with families, communities, and other nations” (Sylvia (Saysewahum) McAdam, *Nationhood* 23)

all of this conflicts with and diverges from the idea of terra nullius

no ones land and the definition of no one
emptiness

and against all that emptiness against that overlaid lack

is actually a deep dependency as “*nêhiyaw* laws are in songs, the ceremonies, and in all the sacred sites. The land is intertwined in a most profound manner, so to separate the two would mean death to many aspects of *nêhiyaw* culture” (McAdam, *Nationhood* 23)

the land remembers and we remember



there are these histories that say such different things

and despite an insisted absence of these worlds of histories

they are right under us and in front of us

because “often, cities, towns and communities across Canada have been built on places that have specific cultural, spiritual, and social significance to Aboriginal peoples, and Canadians living in those places do not and cannot have those same connections” (Donald 10)

and in addition to being sites of significance

the cities themselves are significant because they were “settlements equivalent in size and complexity of organization to that of European cities at the time”

a reminder that “Indigenous ‘homelands’ outside of cities is in itself a colonial invention” (Peters and Andersen, “Introduction” 7-8)

cities of spirits

wondering how living human beings can hear so little

and its not just that people cannot find these histories but that people do not want to find these histories get in the way of development and progress

and justify colonial narratives and white supremacy

that historical evidence of Indigenous land use of the Edmonton area “now lies hidden beneath the urban landscape and often evidence only emerges when we build new roads, neighbourhoods or industrial facilities” (21) or they are destroyed by urban and Industrial development (Heinz Pyszczuk et. al. 28)

not simply the ignoring or denying of cities and histories

but the active and blinded destruction of them



in an interview consisting of urban-based Indigenous people:

I think we add a richness to [Saskatoon] that reflects were it's located [in Treaty Six space]. I think there's more of an awareness because we're here and we're not leaving. There's more to us than poverty and diabetes. There's a richness to our language, to our

customs, to our heritage, and the very name [of the city] itself [Saskatoon] is the berry.

(#10 adult female qtd. in Evelyn Peters and Carol Lafond 101; original emphasis;

brackets in quote)

who would not want a richer stew



all that terra nulliusing

that intervene into the laws and systems of the Indigenous people disrupt the Indigenous citizenry for the amiskwaciy area it is the disruption of the “Indigenous *nêhiyaw* birth of each citizen” (McAdam, *Nationhood* 27; original emphasis)

nêhiyaw citizenry laws and obligations

the overwhelmingly knowledge to be born with the responsibilities and obligations of being *nêhiyaw* (McAdam, *Nationhood* 27)

destruction loss disorientation

and i hear words from a Cree man i imagine looks like my *mosôm* and he asks “who then is really Cree – who thinks that he is really Cree ... That he would know what Creeness is, what the old men have been leaving behind for us” (Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 73)

for us

and it is a struggle to think to all those stories i was told when young left behind

and the frustration i feel that their preciousness was more than i could understand

and i feel a guilt for not paying attention to the world of cities within those words
and an anger to be so lost to look for so much

who then is really Cree

sites covered undone destroyed by urban industrial development
by treaty family because in “nêhiyaw law, the treaties were
adoptions of one nation by another” (McAdam, *Nationhood* 24)

your heart excavated

“EXT. – treaty site – 100 dog years ago

a pipe goes hand to mouth the truth must be spoken
words scrape paper instead word hustlers gather” (Francis 50)



citizenry is important

because to talk about citizenry means to talk about civility which means to talk about law
which means to talk about being a citizen in a city

a rhizomatic leading from the root civitas

a mislead when talking about Indigenous citizenry and laws

a citizenry

with roots of its own

its own rocky foundations





we need teachers of wood and rock and rocks call to me i think
 as Papaschase Cree Professor and educator Dwayne Donald asks,
 “what does a rock *mean*” (12)

i want to work with a different way of perceiving and conceiving the world
 that differs from Western European derived theory that is held within the language
 a difference of animacy and inanimacy

Western European rooted languages use gender of male female and maybe neuter

Algonkian languages like nehiyaw use animacy and inanimacy

and in nehiyaw rocks are animate

rocks have with qualities of living things and are therefore grammatically alive

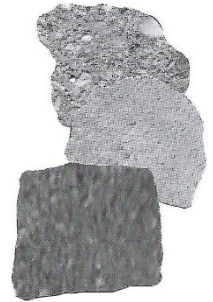
and carry the potential of teachers

how can i bring the asiniyak into conversation

we must be in animacy:

“‘Stones are very special,’ he began. ‘They have been around for a long, long time. They were here even before people lived on this earth. Stones have knowledge and wisdom’” (Harvey Knight 6)

i grew up admiring the world outside my parents house



the leaves

trees

bark

seeds

soil

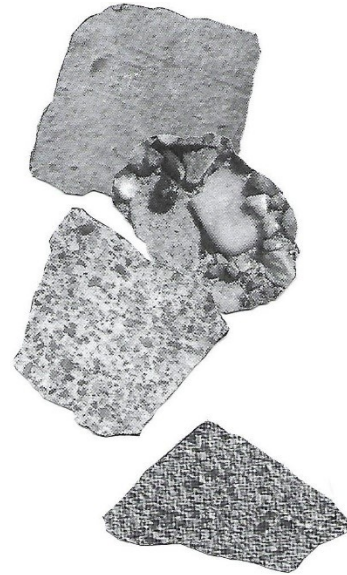
the grasses

grasshoppers

spiders

beetles

worms in the mud



the storms

rain

tornados

sky

clouds

the sun

heat

snow

cold

frost

the loons

frogs

fungi

mushrooms

the rocks on our road

and in the soil

moss

the salamanders

butterflies

moths

the lake that is endlessly deep

the beavers

moose

cranes

the foxes

coyotes

and the cats

dogs

cows

and the horses

and the more of that place that i cannot describe

i was drawn to rocks but would grow bored of colourful geodes and minerals
that people think of when they think of rock collecting

i collected those greys and browns of rocks you would find in gravel mixes
to carry them and then throw them or return them in a haphazard manner

i trust rocks

who always carry my griefs for me

always assure me of the solidity of the world



Anishinaabe and Ojibway professor John Borrows wrote on Anishinabek Elder Basil Johnston teaching that, “rocks are the elemental substance of life and must be continually acknowledged for their role in sustaining other orders of life. While plants, animals, and humans all come to an end, the Earth lives on” (245-246)

my problems seem so small in the lifetime of a rock:

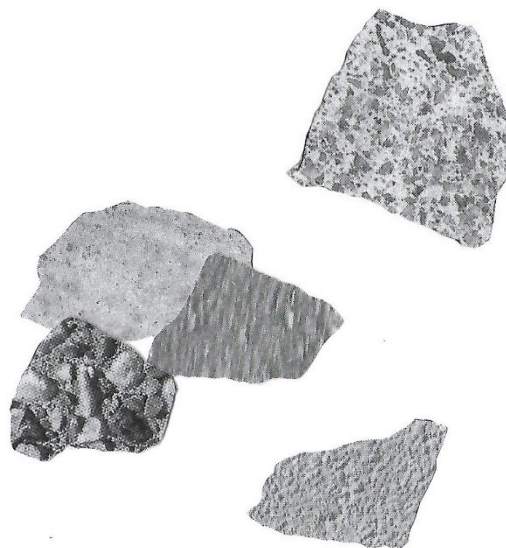
honour these gathered stones

the stones inhale

ten thousand days

into stone-sized

indentations in the earth (Randy Lundy 352)



“ask not ‘what is salal to me?,’ but ‘what am I to salal’” (Laurie Ricou 56)

ask not

what are rocks to me

but what am i to rocks



my reader let us return to the words of Dwayne Donald

his work locates the spirits of rocks and their role for Indigenous peoples of the Prairie like the nehiyaw: “rocks are spiritual entities”

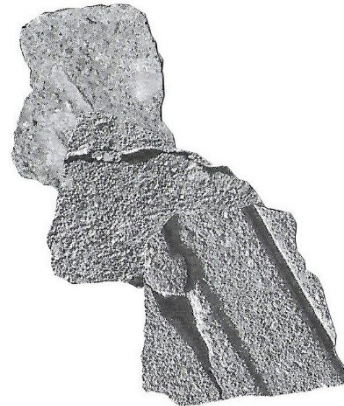
because they “have vitality to them, an internal hum of energy that, in a spiritual way, retells the stories of Creation,” (12) and “rocks are located at places that have a history – a story – and wisdom on how to live a good life comes from looking closely at the place and listening carefully, over and over again, to the story” (Donald 13)

the rocks themselves are reminders of creation but also mark place significant and embedded with meaning and teachings

rocks of meaning rock beds rocks embedded embed meaning
grooves of stories

fingers trace

visit them as your relative



rocks carry vital roles in ceremony

they make a connection of reality and the spiritual

rocks are active teachers in nehiyaw ceremony

as someone who is not recognized as an Elder

i do not feel sure what is acceptable to share of ceremony in ink

but i know this

those rocks are there just as they have always been



there is some written shared knowledge on the pipe

and this demonstrates the rocks importance both spiritually but also in the legal traditions of Indigenous people

there is a teaching that the pipe is a gift from the Creator to the humans the Creator broke a piece from a big rock and the stem from a tree branch and then told the first man, “These are gifts that I have given you so that they may speak for you” (Barry Ahenakew qtd. by McAdam, *Cultural Teachings* 30)

the rock connects and carries messages



but the pipe also engages in the legal system of Indigenous people like the Anishinabek and the nehiyaw John Borrows explains with the appropriate Anishinabek principles and “under the guidance of proper leaders, the Earth’s legal personality is acknowledged” in the pipe ceremony (245)

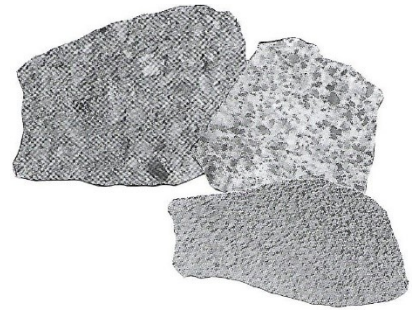
the pipe is not a tool but an active respected relative

rocks under proper guidance are teachers and reminders

and are spiritual messengers and are law keepers acknowledging legal traditions and principles for the people involved in the pipe ceremony but also the earth to speak to the Creator

the work of Sylvia (Saysewahum) McAdam resonates from the nehiyaw legal tradition for the grandfather rock is an *âtâyohkan* a spirit keeper present in treaty making because the grandfather rock “is the pipe used to seal the exchange in what is now considered a covenant” (*Nationhood* 57)

i do not know your backgrounds and what you bring to these words my readers
but i cannot stress enough
the sacredness of this ceremony
and the legal ramifications in an Indigenous legal system
a legal system undergone at the signing of Treaty Six and used between nations
prior to contact with settlers



we forget about the spirituality that many people find in cities

city noun:

1. Esp. with reference to biblical places, as Nain, Bethlehem, etc.: a town or other inhabited place. *Obsolete.*

...

4. In extended use and *fig.*

a. With modifying word or phrase. In religious language: heaven or paradise, portrayed as a city in which God, his angels, and the beatified reside (“city, n.”)



“the pipe that *nōhkom* smoked.

.....
 The smoke lifted me in those stone hills” (Louis Bernice Halfe, *Burning* 31)

the pipe connects me to the spirits of my ancestors by a thread of smoke

and a part of me feels real

a part of me feels held and supported



Borrows explains that these relationships with rocks as relatives carry responsibilities and obligations and laws

to respect rocks when using them requires permission for “without their acquiescence and participation ... such action could oppress their liberty,” which is “considered akin to using another person against his or her will. The enslavement of rocks could lead to great calamities for the Earth and her people” (Borrows 245)

there are serious consequences simple as that

for nehiyaw permission intertwines with protocol to follow earth laws, “the law of *ohcinéwin* is to put tobacco offerings before picking medicines or anything from the land” (McAdam, *Nationhood* 65-66) as part of protocol

could there ever be enough tobacco for the work we do in the city



would a city worth of tobacco suffice



to talk of protocol in a consumerist society

with relationships to things and the lack of relationships to things

to consume is to not craft

Don McKay writes on two levels of appropriation of matter

the first appropriation

the tool into “the mode of utility and to conscript them as servants”

and then the second appropriation matériel

“the colonialization of its death ... matérielization could be denial of death altogether, as in the case of things made permanent and denied access to decomposition, their return to elements”

(20)

and to think in these modes of thought makes a walk in the city overwhelming

a colony of death without decay

temporally suspended

to begin think of the consequences of human actions



who are these rocks

that mold and meld mould and hold our world

under foot

nothing but our lost ones are they

churned by our history

but monuments of history

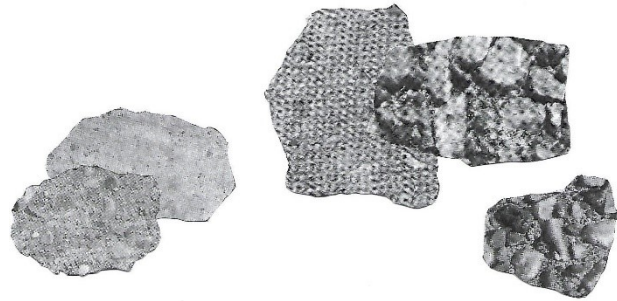
who are the rocks in our modern soups

heating up for the feasts

wâpos itwew of what of whom

let us make it our feast

for love and creation



think of the city and rocks

all the stones in gravel in concrete

and all the boulders that decorate the city

what do the rocks do in the concrete mixtures that pave the city

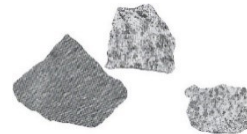
i look to the Cree language of nehiyawewin as a teacher

concrete carries the word for rock asiniy and becomes an inanimate noun

asinîwipayihcikewin

how have the rocks changed into an inanimate noun

or do the rocks sustain animate action within the word



asinîwipayihcikewin

seems to be asiniy and the animate noun of payihcikew, “a dominator; one who runs people or things” (“payihcikew”)

is there a sense of the rocks losing something of their living entity

or is concrete a form where rocks are dominating or running people or things

i keep searching



Professor Adrian Forty has written on concrete and its cultural influences

to me his attention to research concrete demonstrated a respect for concrete

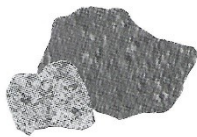
his work echoed and informed my thoughts on aspects of concrete

Forty starts the first chapter of his book with the statement that “concrete is *modern*” (14, original emphasis), not an invention of a modern time but a material associated with the modern and modernity until “concrete is but one symptom of our discomfort with modernity and everything that comes with it” (14)

i empathize with concrete as it gathers associations outside of itself

do we have a parasitic relationship with concrete

do the rocks in our city embrace what humans think of them or do they try to speak out
against human thought speak out in a way only rocks can



do we have a commensalistic relationship with concrete

a one sided symbiosis

if i approach concrete first from stone

the complex history of concrete layers is deeper than modernity

Forty reminded me of concretes “inherent backwardness, its earthbound origins” (28), its earthly elements as it occurs geologically with “deposits of naturally occurring concrete” (43), and how it can be made to look like stone (45)

its earthly referents

but Fortys research on concrete was interesting for me

because the relationship of decay and what we think of as nature

and how humans try to resist decay

began to be clear for me

concrete lacks the perfection and perfectibility that we expect from synthetic materials (146)

that reinforced concrete “has to crack, however microscopically” to work

concretes distinctive but misleading aging and weathering

“does not go to ruin” (52, original emphasis)

it connotes the city but buried and embedded within it is tradition and nature

to look at slabs of concrete they seem solid and unmoving

synthetic death

but concrete cracks decomposes from within (59) and can sustain mosses and plants

concrete shifts and grows

“concrete could be more accurately described as a *process* than as a *material*” (Forty 44, original emphasis)

sustained animate action within the word

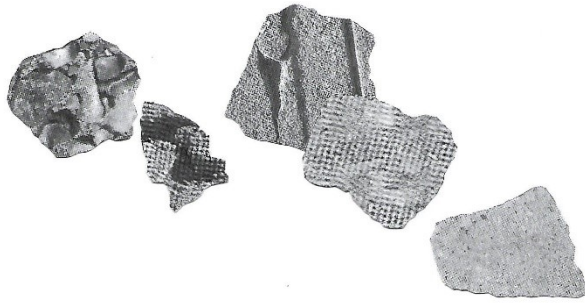
no longer recognizable the process of concrete demands conversation

i argue a relationship a trying and complicated relationship

as concrete helps build cities and also erodes the human ego
 concrete refuses to be the tool humans insist upon it
 concrete is a site of the process of the human and the earth arguing with each other
 uncomfortable arguments
 fertile ground for reciprocity
 a mutualistic relationship with concrete



concrete carries the linguistic phrase
 to concrete over



in Rita Wongs poem “reconnaissance”:

when the tongue is still, are you

.....

quiet enough to hear the land stifled beneath massive
 concrete? quiet enough to hear the beautiful, poisoned
 ancestors surfacing from your diaphragm (“forage” 58)

but i hear the possibilities of concrete

as a nourishing rock stew

digestible possibilities past paving over



“the larger and denser the block of concrete, the safer the memory will be” (Forty 203)

we trust concrete and boulders and stone to hold our stories

an unspoken recognition as

we see these rocks outliving us humans

desperate from decay

we grasp and we hold onto the belief

that these rocks will remember us humans as humans



i think part of me

just could not handle the grieving of countless rocks as they go into concrete

that that water and those rocks and the aggregates and all those ingredients make cities possible

carry our footsteps rarely complaining

without permission enslaved

and that humans are incapable of reciprocity to the stone blend holding up our cities

so i hang on to the words that hold me up and hold me to account (Daniel Heath Justice xxi)

and the closest i find comes from Lewis from Shawn Wilsons book *Research is*

Ceremony:

‘This machine here [a computer][sic] is made from mother earth. It has a spirit of its own.

This spirit probably hasn’t been recognized, and given the right respect that it should.

When we work in a world of automated things, we forget that ... everything is sacred, and

that includes what we make’ (qtd. by Wilson 90)

i think the world is just more complicatedly beautiful this way



concrete is the membrane

that writers seek to break

the porous boundary

capital n nature must overcome

as if the water was not already

in there

making paths

trails in the stone forest

for moss and roots

to open the slurry

for the rocks to breathe

minus thirtyfive air

plus thirtyfive air

all that aspen air



water

into aggregate

plus cement

plus additives



stones

gravel

sand

water

limestone

clay

gypsum

rebar

fly ash

pozzolan

slag cement

silica fume

air entrained air pockets

water reducing admixtures

retarding admixtures

accelerating admixtures

superplasticizers

corrosion inhibiting admixtures (Portland Cement Association)



this city of thirtyone different tree grates

root cells



we are the concrete ndns in the ends

feel accused and asked

how dare our walls crack

as water fills and splits

how dare it

well

because it dares

because water is life

and this is the relationship between all



there is something more to the city

than English gives or allows

i can just feel it



convolute two city as civil

this city does not belong to me

i do not belong to it

and to live i cannot be

to be without question is to be invisible

don't let them know you're native

to be with question is to face the violence of visibility

what are you

a citizen without city



“They have never had a city of their own; the girls have no ruins; they have no histories to forget; there is no language whose words they must unlearn; the girls have no orations trailing off their lips” (Anne Boyer 11)



for me the word city evokes cities far away

the word does not conjure up images of Indigenous women

or LGBT+ communities

despite how much work they do in the city

the freedoms of the city

it does not conjure them up firstly not yet

it takes me a bit of a journey before i can see myself in a city
 even with an ancestral connection to this land having lived in and near a city my whole life
 something keeps me from feeling like i belong
 and my roots ache



fragmented city pieces
 the lrt blocks through eyesight
 city line out line
 through a hundred car windows
 transit zoetrope
 hundreds of glass buildings
 on the hills
 the beavers ancestral hills



city noun

“2. ... c. Chiefly with *the*. The built-up and densely inhabited part of a region as distinguished from the countryside; urban areas” (“city, n.”)



a linguistic vortex pulls in at the utterance of certain words

for speaking a word can pull up lifetimes of histories and thought
to talk about the city is to talk about those lineages

to take up a constructed space and its word assumptions
something about the city and how people and scholars talk about the city pulls me in

because saying one thing can say a lot of things

French theorist Henri Lefebvre on urban space observes that “to say centre and centrality, and it does not matter whether these are actual or merely possible, saturated, broken up or under fire, for we are speaking here of a dialectical centrality” (101)

when people speak of the urban they also speak of the non-urban

be that country or rural or wilderness

that urban space has a real spatial core

city centre

also urban space consists of ideas and logics that build urban space

so there are ideas and logics that do not build and do not belong within an urban space

can anyone write a city without a centre



infrastructures

structures

the undercommons



anthropic rock

artificial sedimentary rock



in Lefebvres *The Production of Space* he examines the city

this requires an examination of discourses of progress and the development of production and Lefebvre notes the role cities play in creating history in determining history as people move from village to town to city and that the organizing city becomes:

knowledge and power – to become, in other words, an *institution*. This development heralded the decline and fall of the autonomy of the towns and urban systems in their historical reality. The state was built on the back of the old cities, and their structure and code were shattered in the process (Lefebvre 47)

built upon the backs shattering

it is an interesting shift from the idea of progress often tied to cities

progress as steps forward

but built upon the backs and shattering

static through a destructive renewal

to fortify what is knowledge and power

in to institution as a built up wall and foundation

a fortress of tradition

and ways of thinking



anthropic rock

civil tongue and savage tongue

a dialectic

city study leads to Marxism leads to dialectics

academic exchanges

talking dialectics

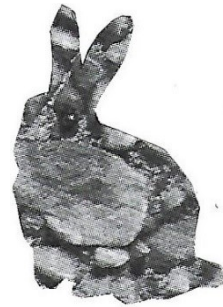
schism and chiasms

die a dialect

so focused on the human

and who is worthy to be human

the truth of opinion



i have always been interested in poetry and Walter Benjamins figure of the flâneur

because in my memories of growing up

i remember being told over and over to pay attention

and “poets, like alpinists and *flâneurs* alike, are explorers. They report on what they have found.

Pay attention, poems tell readers, pay attention” (Nicholas Bradley 133)

mah

so i try

but always respect

those who can pay attention



i met the spirit of Walter Benjamins words in the second year of my undergraduate degree

i think my draw to Benjamin was clandestine and i felt drawn to his writing

but also repulsed

and maybe a little confused because Benjamin is my dads name

his style is irregular from the previous academic writers that i encountered early in my
scholarly career

with his polysyllabic words

and the compounded German playing in French arcades

there were poetic moments breathes of heightened perception

even as i found problematic things words and ideas

even now as i review his texts still i have trouble with his writing and find even
more things to be problematic

there are brief moments of connection that i feel

that make me feel comfortable and serene

because dreams are given academic validity authority and truth

dreams become teachers something to listen to and to listen for

and just as my family members told me to pay attention

to pay attention to where you are in an engaged manner

Benjamin was the only scholar i encountered from Western Europe to ask me
to pay attention in an engaged way because there is an ancestral spiritual world all around me
especially in the city

wah

something in that resonates

something in the scholarly poetic voice

somehow led me to where i am today and where i will grow

i want to acknowledge that and this work in a lovingly critical captivatedly repulsed way



i have been working with Walter Benjamins *The Arcades Project* for a couple years on and off so that work influences my writing and my thinking

the scope of the *Arcades* requires more dedicated time and space to discuss in full but Benjamins figure of the flâneur compels me

something about the comfort and the attentiveness of this figure embodies those teachings of being attentive that stayed with me

one of the interesting things about Benjamins writing for me has been his style and how he describes the flâneur so i intervene a little and gather a lot from Benjamin

the flâneur a city splits into “dialectical poles: it opens up to him as a landscape, even as it closes around him as a room” (Benjamin, “from *Arcades*” 399)

“the street becomes dwelling” (Benjamin, “The *flâneur*” 37) and the city and the *Arcades* are home (Benjamin, *Arcades* 37) buildings are like walls of a dwelling

and the flâneur uses “illustrative seeing” (Benjamin, *Arcades* 419) who “goes botanizing on the asphalt” (Benjamin, “The *flâneur*” 36)

Benjamin ties the flâneur to dreams as he is “the dreaming idler” (Benjamin, “from *Arcades*” 399)

Susan Buck-Morss summarizes this figure as a modern intellectual who “‘studies’ the crowd” academic but untied to institutions (304) always in transition and strolling

but not leisure the flâneur loiters (Buck-Morss 306) and loiters through what

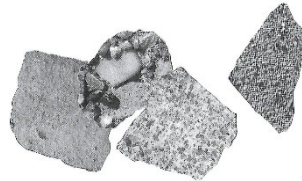
walks in dreams and also through dreams dreams of a crowded collective and “the collective dream manifested the ideology of the dominant class” (Buck-Morss 281)

the flâneur studies the manifestation of these dreams as they come in products and consumerist mass society “In the flâneur, concretely, we recognize our own consumerist mode of being-in-the-world ... by the flâneur’s principle of ‘look, but don’t touch’” (Buck-Morss 345)

yet the flâneur carries a sentiment of spirituality and sacredness into the city as the street transforms the flâneur “leads him through a vanished time” (Benjamin, “from *Arcades*” 398) downward into “a past that can be all the more profound because it is not his own, not private. Nevertheless, it always remains the past of a youth” (Benjamin, “from *Arcades*” 398)

the flâneur sees Paris as “the holy city” and sees landscape as cityscape and the figure conceptualizes “the city [as] the properly sacred ground of flânerie” (Benjamin, *Arcades* 420-421)

over streets of stone the flâneurs “steps awaken a surprising resonance” (Benjamin, “from *Arcades*” 398)



it is in this studied dreaming walk that awakens the ancestral space of the city
and that resonates with me and with teachings of Elders for it gives these
teachings access to the city
because spirits live there too



but if you my reader speak some French you will see the flâneur carries gendered
assumptions that structure the French and Romantic languages

and this linguistic form influences the reader for the flâneur assumes male
myself as a reader i ask where am i in a flâneur

to subsume into the male

to carve my own space as a flâneuse (Michael Keith 418)

or to run against an idea that the city was not made for women that women do
 not belong to the city so i run into those aching words such as cannot
 as women cannot be a flâneur

only prostitute in Benjamins collection of figures

the spiritual is only with the flâneur
 and in addition to this struggle of gender

as an Indigenous person

this figure carries an intellectual history of Enlightenment

where the unenlightened cannot enter

where the city is for the civilian who is civil

and i have to encounter the word that charged word of savagery

conditions of progress and creations of primary states of
 capital m man without “his cultural contaminations and social corruptions” and
 “in his aboriginal condition, placed at point zero, before Temptation, before the Fall”
 to “the myth of the noble savage” (Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter 16)

and i need to ask what is the point in working with these ideas

when they try to suffocate me as an Indigenous woman

is it kinder to refuse them totally or kinder to stay with the discomfort and brokenness

i stay



where are you

downtown

in the knotted centre

the stamp of beginning

first street

in the knotted centre of something called a history

made valid in ruin and monument

ozymandias fears

leave no trace behind

a different way to see the world the yourself in the world

no trace behind

archaeological digs

scrapping for scraps of pottery and tools

millennia of millions on turtle island

with little trace

but rocks and clay maybe leather

no trace behind

beautiful



i stay because something about how Benjamin's thoughts and words influence other scholars of urban studies make me want to stay

to think of dream cities as Benjamin did with Paris, "within the actual city of Paris, Paris the dream city – as an aggregate of all the building plans, street layouts, park projects, and street-name systems that were never developed" (Benjamin, *Arcades* 410)

for the space of the city seems ripe with reading

full of dream and wish thinking

that being in the city always sustains a mental and spiritual a being in the city

and a not being in the city

as in dreams "cities are desire and fear made concrete, but in deceitful, disguised, displaced ways" but also "cities are very real, the work of the conscious mind, not the random, absurd juxtapositions of astonishing images" (Steve Pile 76) but cities are also the random absurd juxtapositions of astonishing images

here and not

tension and fragments

meeting place of dreams and work

collage work



of meeting older generations' ideals and dreams and older city centres, "the resources of collective memory ... deference is given to the traditional urban elements such as the street, the

squares, the colonnades, the arcades and courtyards as the connecting tissue of memory” (M. Christine Boyer 44)

to clash and to collage together bric a brac

movements and moving inhabitants

walkers wander wonder “they write without being able to read it” (Michel de Certeau 384)

active components to the bustling grounds of the city

we can “discover what, in a spatial practice, is inseparable from the dreamed place. To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper” (Certeau 390)

asleep and awake and a wake for the dead dreams we make

we humans make stories

in cities we humans represent space

superimposing “childhood memories, dreams, or uterine images and symbols (holes, passages, labyrinths) Representational; space is alive; it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre” (Lefebvre 41-42) even if not logical and as academically recognized

we make stories

project memories and dreams and dreams

cities fill with ancestors dreams citizens walk through dreams of their own making

but also the dreams of their parents and grandparents and strangers

cannot recognize who made the dreams overstimulated but asleep

like the moderns to walk in dreamworlds is to have “no way of knowing that they are still half in league with the world of dreams. It is, therefore, the (revolutionary) task of the critic to shock the dreamers awake” (Pile 77)

wâpos epwekitot
from the profane
to the sacred



a constant making and remaking and producing and reproducing too

things are left behind

into ruin

and Benjamin “uncovered dreams of previous generations in the ruins of the city: in their castles and churches. Like an archeologist, he dug deeper and deeper into the historical layers of the city, to find the persistence of its dreams” (Pile 79)

walk too fast

fascinated with destroying

angelus novolus fright

cyclical “destruction reaffirms the eternity of these ruins” (Benjamin, “One-way” 470)

an unearthing practice where “unearthing buried markers that expose ‘progress’ as the
fetishization of modern temporality, which is an endless repetition of the ‘new’ as the ‘always-
the-same’” (Buck-Morss 56)

excavate shattered city backs

and consumerist blind search for the new new new

fragile attention destructive implication

cities static because of a destructive renewal

to fortify what is knowledge and power

into institution as a built up wall and foundation

ozymandias fear

as opposite to Indigenous livelihood

for all human trace

to return to the earth

whether totem or lodge

accept earths decay

and the return to askiy



on the ruin of the monuments to the myth of the noble savage

on the ruin of the Indian

the image of Canada seems to try to bury Indigenous into these ruins

for a pristine city to flourish old news deep embedded dreams

wake up to see

ôtenaw all along

we will get there my readers



it becomes possible to see the city in new light full

“to see how the little streets in the inner city reflect the times of day like a mountain hollow”

(Benjamin, “Return” 263)

for it is there in a city mountain hollow

where humans and beings who are more than human

the insects the birds the animals the spirits

can live



i dig and dig

in the ruins of settler colonization

settlers so preoccupied with settler dreams of a new world

didnt even know they were dreaming in someone elses bed

pawâkanak

tânehki



there are brief moments and pushes for a spiritual that look out to the cosmos
 a sense of sacredness in the work humans create

and in Benjamins work he maintains the ritualistic magical spiritual origins of artwork and human made objects as he notes, “the earliest artworks originated in service of rituals – first magical, then religious” (Benjamin, “Work” 256)

in addition to the figure of the flaneur a younger me came to Benjamins work by his essays on children toys and play Benjamin brings together these ritualistic origins to a babys rattle as he writes that “the rattle has always been an instrument with which to ward off evil spirits, and this is why it has to be put in the hand of a newborn baby” (Benjamin, “Toys” 118)

and this is noteworthy because the objects and human instruments have traces of a spiritual function and communicate beyond humans

and babies are closest to the Creator

which is noteworthy against the secular thought of a consumerist society
 to acknowledge a belief in something beyond humans

to come to know the sound of rattle and drum in song

to concede that humans contact outwards beyond themselves humans “can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos communally. It is the dangerous error of the modern [person] to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights” (Benjamin, “One-way” 486)

and as i seek to study the moon and the land around me even without a religion
 it is provoking to think that this can be a form of communication that with pen or rattle
 the instrument speaks and connects and honours



Sky. – As I stepped from a house in a dream, the night sky met my eyes. It shed intense radiance. For in this plenitude of stars, the images of the constellations stood sensuously present. A Lions, a Maiden, a Scale and many others shone palely down, dense clusters of stars, upon the earth. No moon was to be seen (Benjamin, “One-way” 472)

kîsik

i have trouble sleeping

i have spent long nights outside to look at full moons and new moons

i never sleep the whole night when i camp

compelled to see the night sky

i take pictures of open skies and cloudy skies

it is calming to see the sky

the sky orients us in the prairies

i look up to the sky and then feel the ground solid under my feet

niskîsik





shouts of

o! the urbanity!

the dandys idling is flânerie

but the drunken ndns idling is disguise

des fleurs du mal

des fleurs du malicious

des fleurs in da mall

malevolent

and male violent

our dreamy walk is disgust



being in the space

city hall

and

senators chamber

the quarters and change

being quartered

contingencies to stay with

metaphysical homelessness and loneliness

“Too many weighed down by *pāhkahkos*,
too young, lost on city streets” (Halfe, *Burning* 54)



our mouths change and alter to meet the sounds of the city
because in “the gap between the crying line & electric speech/ is the urbanization of the mouth”
(Wong, “forage” 34)

our language changes in the city new terms to meet new experiences
but in the city language relocates the Indigenous away from the city
relegated to a deep thick romanticized forest of assumptions
and this language creates stories stories of what being Indigenous in the city can mean
and “stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous” (T. King 9)

as stories establish practices and customs

what is normal



these institutionalized stories are of the lack

of the deficiency when you are Indigenous (Justice 2)

the city walls seem to heighten

Indigenous people are “overrepresented in statistics on poverty, unemployment, poor health, and low levels of formal education” (Peters and Andersen, “Introduction” 9) and these pervasive ideas stories and representations become understood as a pervasive norm to imagine an individual in these stories is disorienting to imagine ones self in these stories is exhausting and the truth of it all gets lost and “this disjunction between reality and imagination is akin to life and death. For to be seen as ‘real,’ for people to ‘imagine’ us as Indians, we must be ‘authentic’” (T. King 54)

feel inauthentic if i do not follow these statistics
 feel inauthentic if i follow these statistics
 feel inauthentic to think in these statistics
 feel inauthentic if i do not follow these statistics and do not live on a reserve
 and cannot speak the language
 or follow a traditional way of life
 or do not look like a caricature
 the lingual knife is at my throat
 to dawn the buckskin or to sleepwalk in a whitewashed dream

wâpos itwew to live in the authentici city you have to be house poor



cement our paths to our edge walking ways

do u rent

or do u own

is the biggest edge
 that makes some fall off (Francis 28)



what are my responsibilities when i write

read poetry downtown

the inner city

while a man is taken away

feel unwelcome

sky scrape words

and fashionable syllables

bellies churn

to move through the world

of pain and suffering

always reflect on how

prayer acknowledges this pain first

what are the responsibilities of my words



i think of Benjamins "One-Way Street"

its voyeur problems

as an exercise

i observe

stop looking at my eye

he curtly says to his friend

tries to hide the bruise

that covers his face

and stares across the bus

silent

transfixed

by the fiery hair of his classmate

young desire

and another man takes out

bags of fry bread

to give to an older woman

the smell wafts

fills the bus down

fills one eighteenth street

notes end

as i crave nohkôms jam

and the bannock of feasts

how to observe and how to reflect

beyond the ego of self

urbs ekphrasis



Western European and civil societies from across the ocean invest so much into written texts
 into literatures
 as makers of civility

as Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice succinctly writes:

not to have a literature is, in some ways and to some eyes, to be less than fully human,
 certainly to be less ‘civilized.’ And of all cultures, Indigenous peoples are most often
 treated as deficient in this regard, the ‘savage’ side of the ‘savage/civilized’ binary
 created by imperialist cultures to justify their domination of supposedly ‘backward’
 peoples (19)

it comes back to the lack to the stories of lack that lead to a need to fill that lack
 but only find more fabricated stories that fill the lack with an inauthenticity and
 misrecognition because the civility of Indigenous people does not have a space yet
 those cities of an Indigenous sense of civility

need a few dream walkers to strive for civility

in the novel *Waterlily* by the Yankton Sioux ethnologist Ella Cara Deloria

there is a different definition of civilization

it “is measured by the practice of thoughtful relations, good behaviours, and generosity of
 spirit, all of which made for stronger communities and more responsible individuals within the
 social network” (Justice 46)

a holistic view and a balancing of our four parts

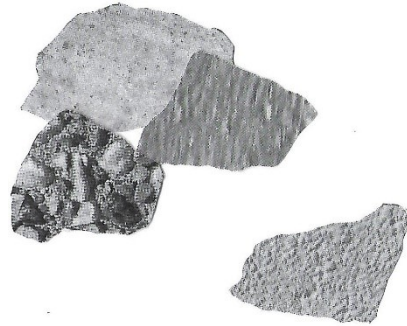
the emotional the spiritual the mental and the physical

where the individual is part of communities with ethical obligations and laws

a citizenship with the whole earth

it is not a lack

merely a perceived lack



what to do with words and silences

in an interview with Rita Wong

Anishinaabek writer Kateri Akiwenzie Damm says

something that resonates with me at a personal level

my nehiyaw family members

are fluent in silence

the comfortable silence:

Silence, in my opinion as an Anishinaabekwe, is largely misunderstood in mainstream

Western society. My experience in that society tells me that silence is often misinterpreted as agreement, acquiescence, a lack of understanding or intellectual capacity, acceptance.

Often, it's not! Far from it! One thing I know is that Anishinaabek listen to and understand silences at a much deeper level. We're fluent in it! Silence is also irrationally feared in

Western society. As a result, there's often an intense need to fill it. (26)

an intense need

... Ignoring or denying or purposefully misinterpreting silence or 'speaking for' the so-called 'silent' Other therefore can be a form of violence. This sort of denial that silence has value is much like the way in which our land was declared '*terra nullis*' and seen as worthless and unoccupied prior to its 'development'/exploitation and destruction. For me, these are linked. (26-27)

academic nullius

as terra nullius tears us

asked

where is Indigenous literature

where are Indigenous knowledges

written down

our silence is not acquiescence

slow down my readers

sit in silence for awhile



convolute three city as fort itude

how do you love concrete

how do we walk in the city and on the city in a way that engages with the city

how do we converse with the rock cities that we step on everyday



fortitude as strength and resilience

fort embedded

linguistic strength to keep out

walled defence:

The fort, as a colonial artifact, represents a particular four-cornered version of imperial geography that has been transplanted on lands perceived as empty and unused ... we can see that the histories and experiences of Aboriginal peoples are necessarily positioned as outside the concern of Canadians (Donald 3)

out out Indigenous life

disrupting the birth of nehiyaw citizens

out out of civilizing constructs

keep out the untameable wild

will these hands ever be clean



cities static through a destructive renewal
 to fortify what is knowledge and power
 into institution as a built up wall and foundation
 a fortress of tradition
 and ways of thinking



i grew up in the wilderness not out in the bush
 i did not hunt skin butcher
 i did not trap
 do not start imagining yet
 i grew up
 not on the streets and playground and roads
 not in deep isolated mosquitothick bush on traplines or in cabins with wood stoves
 i grew up in the wilderness a place of deep unconscious undistributed dreams
 and i grew up outside of the wilderness in cities on roads on concrete
 liminal spaces
 sacred stories and secularism
 moss on stone
 i grew up in the wilderness and
 out of the wilderness because
 i grew up on the reserve

out of the reserve

off reserve

liminal space

lime slurry space

i cannot remove the stains of the wilderness stains embedded within

that isolating question of what are you

accept that i must dream deeper

and wake to see the city and the wilderness as it is

and what it is to learn to love concrete



when one talks about cities

they also are talking about what are not cities

cities are interesting because city connotes a limited space

a finite space that ends

that has a border to enter and to leave

to enter and to leave

a space founded on a sense of law and order and civility

but also a space of human dominance

one can conceptualize that “wilderness and urban are at opposite ends of the landscape spectrum.

Wilderness exists out of reach of the managed forests of conservation lands, let alone the built

landscape of a city,” (Jim Butler 107)

in the wilderness humans “are temporary visitors”

and conversely wilderness is “also a refugia for wildlife ... wild animals find sanctuary in wilderness” (Butler 107)

but poet Don McKay takes this idea of wilderness a step further as wilderness also means “the capacity for all things to elude the mind’s appropriations” (21)

to the wilds of breakdown

to the mental landscape just beyond the mind

“To what *degree* do we own our houses, hammers, dogs? Beyond that line lies wilderness” (McKay 21)

i work in the word world of wilderness both as a space outside of the urban and as words outside of language for McKay writes on “calling Native Americans ‘Indians’,”

or any nomination in English i would add, “reveals the rickety apparatus of nomination ... When that vertigo arrives, we’re aware of the abject thinness of language, while simultaneously realizing its necessity ... we sense the enormous, unnameable wilderness beyond it – a wilderness we both long for and fear” (64)

is the rickety apparatus of nomination a necessity

for whom

the lifelong vertigo of having grown up on a reserve

in supposed wilderness

fortify Indigenous land as somewhere out there somewhere else

when Turtle Island is all Indigenous land

because nineteenth-century frontier towns were “established on sites used by Indigenous peoples, [and] many early settlements originally had large Indigenous populations, continuously or seasonally”

but then “Indigenous people were viewed as part of the wild nature of the wilderness, and their presence in urban centres soon came to be viewed as incongruous,”

which leads our understandings of settler and Indigenous as a binary of savagery and wilderness against progress and civilization (Peters and Andersen 4)

“did I eat rabbits
with the fur still on” (Gregory Scofield 52)

what are you



r e s e r v e s a r e m o d e r n i s m

what was this train of thought again

maybe thats too deep a dream

wâpos itwew waniska



use reserved lands

for imposed upon wilderness

your sacrificial zones

the ancestral blood

who knew people could dump concepts onto people

onto people landfills

onto people full of the land

who knew and did not say anything

who forgot

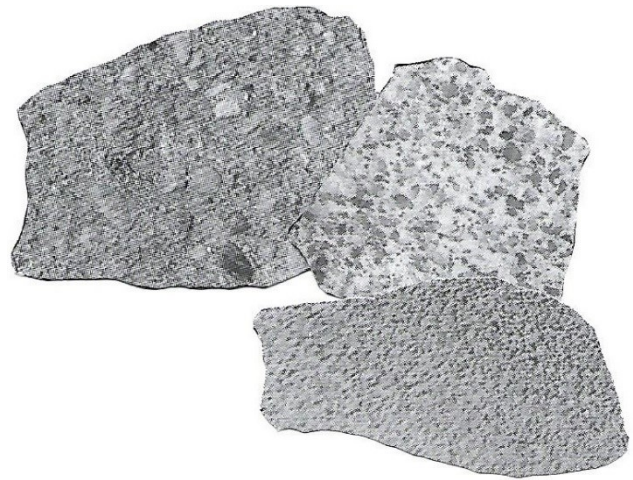
splay blood on land as

wilderness as reserve

not as city or urban or rural

struck the land into

unrecognizable zones



i stare at the city

from reserved lands

does not matter if i live in the city

because to the offices i am off reserve

words of clear

fibrous threadlike rhizoids always connect to

always chain to
does not matter which city

i am

off reserve

off reserve

off reserve

off reserve

off reserve Canada

off reserve USA

off reserve Mexico

off reserve Belgium

off reserve France

a wild horse branded

is that wild enough of a metaphor for you



“clown: time for the city
me: that is where I live
the city band” (Francis 22)



the mackenzie in glish dictionary defines reservation as

one a noun where the city

dumps all its fears of

the wilderness

wasteland

didnt even ask first

holeee

two a noun home

ekwa namoya home

where i “(rez)ide” (Joshua Whitehead 66)



reserve as not city

as wilderness

as wasteland

as unwanted wasted land unfit for agri culture

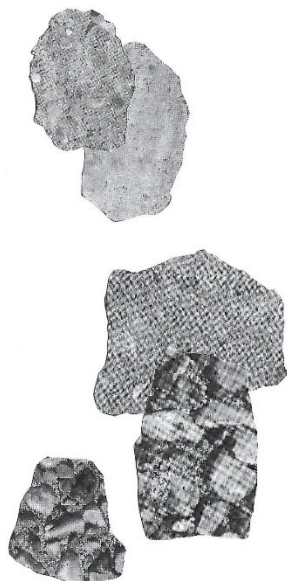
dirt roads and tableaux of poverty

i dedicate time to the reserve

because the reserve is a symptom of urban space

to take up the role of urban Indigenous suggests some thread to the reserve

as anti city



and authentic city

as reserves carry a history of being “intentionally established away from urban areas, ostensibly to reduce contact between settlers and First Nations peoples but also to ensure that prime land was not under the control of First Nations governments” (Evelyn Peters, “Part 1” 22)

reserves as the dark shadowy place of cities

the place to go through

never stop in

reserves as failed excrement of the city

“socio-economic indicators” of the “economically marginalized” (Evelyn Peters, “Part 1” 26)

a gruesome scab of the Indigenous existence refusing to bleed and bleed into the life transplanted from Western European a scab refusing to be planted into concrete pots

a nod to the work of Gloria Anzaldúa in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* on the border between the U.S. and Mexico:

The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border country. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them* (Gloria Anzaldúa 25)

i aim to not conglomerate Anzaldúa's work into mine

but to note how much i feel Anzaldúa gives in this acknowledgement of pain

two worlds grating against each other

i have read Enoch Cree Nation being called an urban reserve

and the citys growing development

has Enoch and Edmonton right against each other

an intimate pressing together

suddenly this land looks valuable

and contact with the city threatens to consume the reserve lands

grates its city size against the limited space of the reserve

grates and grates because the city thinks only of its grateness

will wear us Indigenous people into acquiescence of industrial expansion

a scab just refusing to heal because it gets no time to heal

“i am hoping to help this city heal from its trauma” (Billy-Ray Belcourt 20)

and i wonder about the role of hope and healing and help and service

and i think about the sort of forced relationship Indigenous takes with reserve

there can be a feeling of inauthenticity if you do not grow up on the reserve

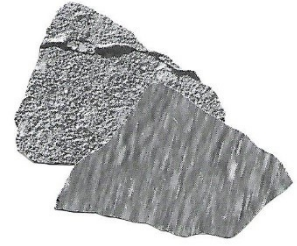
and the reserve is a space with its own markers and ways of being

that if you do not meet those standards

still you do not belong

it is an epicentre of the authentic

to get to your roots go to the reserve



the contact site

for the work of political sovereignty and assertion of nationhood

wound of life and death bleeds

how is it

all of these things and none of these things

such rickety apparatuses

“think maybe

reserve is

another word

for morgue

is another word

for body bags

-- call it home anyways” (Belcourt 29)

niwîkin



do i deal with anger

or is it anxieties

or pangs of melancholia

Elders told Sylvia McAdam Saysewahum

the weight of words and their life beyond

with words one can commit pastâmwîn

“matters such as gossiping, uttering threats, using profanity against animals or creation”

(*Nationhood* 39) “or is blasphemous or dangerous speech thought to bring misfortune to the speaker” (*Nationhood* 43)

i respect those words

so i don't want to speak in anger

i will speak from it

but not with it

people ask me why am i not mad

subtle prepositions reposition

is there love there

perhaps it is to find the love through anger

anger and love as a process

is it better to show that process

or focus on that love

i am really not sure
 what is most important to me
 to overcome or
 to be
 be inherent in the word
 in the spirit
 of the word
 for “words have power outside an individual” (*Nationhood* 44)



if there is one thing growing up on and off an urban rez taught me
 it is that the city is not so far from the rez
 maybe they are kissing cousins
 the roads connect
 asphalt veins
 connect all those vile tissue issues
 “was it too dirt road?
 what would you have done with a dirt road anyways” (*Belcourt* 13)



city streets and city roads to circulate
 the blood of the city

because roads “are generally seen as good or at least a necessary evil within Canadian society. They foster communication, commerce, and expansion,” (Borrows 258)

i thought everyone drove on dirt roads in all types of seasons
felt like everyone had to drive on dirt roads everyday like my family

“It takes you to town.

And it brings you home.

It’s almost like people that road.

Some days it gets mad and won’t co-operate with cars.

.....

But it’s easy for Indians.

People say there’s a good reason for that.

My dad says it’s because it’s a reserve road” (Bernelda Wheeler 51)

those roads comforted me on nights of long days and travels

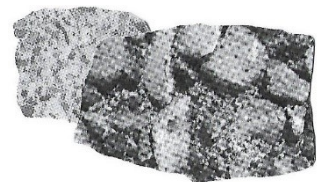
because when everything rattled in the car

i knew i was in the reserve almost home

like a rock tumbler sing swinging me and lulling me to bed

but see that in other peoples eyes empty “land is often seen as unproductive, inefficient, and of less value if roads do not service such sites” (Borrows 258)

these roads became an externalization of a sense of lack



those dirt roads can be pretty inconvenient

as critical rocks

crack windshields

make dust

interrupt people in their convenience filled lives

but we need those rocks there to interrupt us humans



there were people who have the strong gifts of the mental direction

directions of their own

a spinning of directions within me

imbalanced and impractical

what are my gifts

logics and emotions

the nehiyaw people with strong gifts of balance of four

newo is four in nehiyawewin

and is a root of the word nehiyaw (Harold Cardinal 207; Donald “ôtênaw”)

i try to reach across the dialectic

syn running through me and my thesis

this is my sin thesis

redemption

wâpos itwew lets have no such talk just for a little while

ah i forgot



cant figure myself out in ads or fashion

cocacolaindians



how can you enjoy jjoyce korean dramas and continue to strengthen indigenous practice

can you



a world of dreamed products and markets of older generations

i wonder about living and loving and having fun as nehiyaw

my eyes blur trying to recognize the sacred in a consumerist society

that television set leading us astray losing our Creeness

from profane

to sacred

lost in dreams lost in lineages of desires and fears

hunt for old spirits

lost in:

head count, treaty tax

vials of quantum blood

authenticate

this nation

neo-citizen

fancy dandyism (Whitehead 33)

how do i make the ground we stand on

more than a no place

how do i find my ground

when i am hungry for belonging

“If we were bush Indians

But our appetite is city cuisine

.....

In the city we hunt each other” (Scofield 29)

are we doomed to be cannibalistic garbage eaters

can we hunt in the city

as a spiritual practice



look for someone like myself in magazines and tv shows
 find only mediated aunts and uncles on streets
 or in warrants in prisons



it is hard to navigate through dreams
 absurd juxtapositions
 negotiate nightmares
 uncanny recognitions
 in arbitrary social roles and income
 handed out
 into an image you do not recognize
 and do not know how to deal with
 its heavy emotional charge

to see “broken people with broken houses and broken furniture. The ones I see on Main street, the ones who give us our public image,” to see why April “was horrified that that was her legacy” (Beatrice Mosionier 284)

how can one person prepare themselves for such a task



this city smells

smells like the body of the city

foul disease in excreting

the digested bodies spilt out

without a second thought

as citizens look away

from the souls devoured by city lights

speech of health and sickness enter the conversation

fort walls built to protect the healthy citizen body

“what it means to be modern, in a sense, is to be insulated from your excrement” (Warren Cariou 25)

modern living ushered in by modern hygiene

important to not deny the physicality of the body

but uncivil actions become vile and a threat to the health of civility

on victorian sensibilities and properness

other human beings grow into these dangerous stories

all stories function in a state of fear

the public threatens

because “when people say that a city, or a part of it, is dangerous or is a jungle, what they mean primarily is that they do not feel safe on the sidewalks” (Jane Jacobs 351)

city refuse tanning in streets

dry meat



concrete embodies

the weight of the city's suffocation

grey milk

the conscripted soldier who leads the urbanized

death fugue



there are stories i do not yet know

there are questions i cannot answer

this is important to note

i grow



“a wrong skin” (Scofield 27)

the wrong rock

in slabshaws of concrete

i dream myself into slabshaws

to avoid wrong skin

i try to remind myself over and over of the words Sylvia (Saysewahum) McAdam shares:

“the Elders told me not to defend myself from the attacks but to remain focussed and to develop skin ‘seven generations thick’” (*Nationhood 95*)



my skin has betrayed me again

again i betray my skin

i look down

i cant tell the difference from my skin

and the aggregate beneath my feet

the churning under your skin

freezes into the

grey aggregate

hard as the slabs under your feet



gentrification as :ization



white space



where am i in the man of w benjamin

the we in he

but with each dollared word we cash in

i feel further and further away from home

wâpos itwew a reservation and your reservations



lepus townsendii

lepus citysendii

lepus citysendthee

“we know enough about the complexities of cultures to avoid the error of imagining animism and polytheism to be no more than primitive versions of monotheism. Don’t we?

Nonetheless, the talking animals are a problem” (T. King 23)

wâpos itwew eha



i meet and eat with and write with the Writing Revolution in Place collective

WRIP in Edmonton

a motley crew of university students creatives and community scholars

who come together:

harnessing the power of language and literacy, tempered with intellect and fused with passion. Though our collective creative exploration cemented by common experience we have laid a foundation of concrete results,. [sic] So others may assemble, build and better ourselves and improve all of our futures (Les Danyluk, “Eutopia” 99)

i meet and eat with and write with these friends these teachers

my WRIP teachers have helped me ponder on words and anger and desire for change and the role i play in the city and what narratives i carry forth:

“It is good to get people angry, and to inconvenience them. But how does one transform anger into understanding” (The Writing Revolution in Place Collective, 65)

how to transform

how to write in dreams and nightmares

dreams without romanticism

nightmares without dramatization

i write with fear of failure to stay with brokenness

i write with an ideal idolized dream to succeed

how to honour stories and sentiments of my friends

how to stay

how to hold up and hold account

“while you ponder your bottom lines calculating how luxurious your thread counts should be, try hard not to contemplate the plight of those who are elementally threadbare and habitually asked to proceed to the back of the line” (Danyluk, “Exurb” 35)

at one of our WRIP meetings we discuss philanthropic service and donations
and i often return to John Holman and Martha when they shared their experiences with
homelessness and those living with addictions and living on the streets
and they talked about how people make the decisions that get them there

and that stays with me
because i agree people do have choices i think that is a powerful human trait
but i feel so helpless
and that i am not meeting an ethical obligation
frustrated that i count threads

what a powerful teaching

Elder Bob Cardinal says the longest journey in our lives is our journey from the head to our hearts⁷

and i will probably reflect on John and Marthas teaching again and again
as i try to respond with my heart to narratives that people somehow deserve what they get

⁷ Robert Cardinal, personal communication, July 2017.

and “the ideology of entitlements ... [that] follows on the coattails of arbitrary distributions of social roles and incomes” (Yanis Varoufakis)

frustrating stories

there are a lot of connections networks of connections in a life
vibrant communities in a city

and there are a lot of disconnections

the ability to dream and to have nightmares

and cities make life difficult and suffocate life

but to fulfill our longings and desires

continue in the beside each other:

It was the people that first drew me out, their endless tales of fly-by nights and twisted wanderings into a shadowy land on the other side of the tracks where there seems to be no sense of time or no rules to follow. Where you played by your own rules and listened to the rawness of your own heart and once you crossed the tracks there would be no looking back. On this trek of life I had to find out what I was missing (John Holman, 51)

and the lives and journeys that are healing at their own paces

may be bulldozed away for the pace for development capitalist expansion

and monetary gains to construct

for a city to grow it feasts upon itself

to fortify a sense of knowledge and power

state and institutional stories

as neighbourhoods “occupy the space in viewers’ imaginations of a new frontier, one which needs taming and settlement to replace degeneracy with civility, with modernity – in short, with prosperity” (Amber Dean and Kara Grozow 78)

what to do

when a thriving community

when a life

when a land

a love

is called empty



i see a shard of concrete broken off and pick it up

it cuts my skin and i bleed

things are all so complicated



the space of the city threatens with homogeneity

despite the great depth of diversity

that feeds into a feeling of inauthenticity to someone Indigenous
as the city becomes a space of failed Indigeneity

from the counselling speeches of Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw

he speaks about the mixed nehiyaw and môniyaw parents who “take out children
over there [to the city] [sic], they lead them to lose their Creeness; that is why this happens” (Kâ-
Nîpitêhtêw 89)

i tried to look through the original nehiyaw translation for the locative for phrase

to the city but he does not use ôtenaw nehiyaw for city

“ê-kimotôsêt êkotowahk iskwêw, môniyâw otawâsimisa êkwa ôtê isi itohtahêw
kitawâsimisinawa, wanisinohtahêw onêhiyâwiniyiw; êwakw ânima k-ôh-ispayik ohci” (Kâ-
Nîpitêhtêw 88)

and it is not clear where the city is

i wonder if the thereness of a city leads to a losing of creeness or if is it something else

as Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw speaks of leading our children and grandchildren astray
a television set exemplifies that leading astray: “we do not see that we are leading them astray.
Instead we turn to that kind over there [a television set][sic]” (Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw 91)

is it the thereness or those kinds over there of electronic light shows and secularized
consumerist products creating loss

or is it the thereness of the city just being in the city that creates loss
 loss of sacredness



ndn in the end concrete rabbits

break into gardens

to eat

what is a garden to a rabbit

the farmer chases them out

writes a hashtagyeg bulletin

about it

calls them riverdale menaces

campaigns for them to be run out

lest they lower the property values

then does not understand why

there are still rabbits everywhere

does not understand why

the rabbits are so angry



wâpos itwew cha

truestorynottruestory



Mama said,

.....

Real women

eat rabbit well-done

not left half-raw

on their mouth.

.....

When she finished talking

she clicked her teeth

lifted her arse

and farted

at the passing

city women (Halfe, "Body" 399)



you ever eat rabbit

wâpos itwew audible gasp

no



is it easy to think they are far away

so far away

to make counting threads easier

when cities and towns have their pains and struggles

the city is not as pristine as we citizens believed

like someone tricked Edmontonians so that they “might be angry to know it was a netherworld for some” (Tracey Lindberg 146)

that a lush river valley can be leisure

can be shelter can be danger

in Tracey Lindbergs novel *Birdie* Birdie lives in around about and under Edmonton

in a homeless state but also where “her dream life and her waking life had begun to fold over each other, seamlessly, like dough in a pan” (66),

with dreamy food and a circulating population of more than humans
for this city has “a forest in it, deer through it and the odd moose lost within it”

i want to see those Cree faces laugh and smile in the city

without blind optimism

with a stew of love a deep meaningful love and attention

time and patience

not bleeding wastelands

as Birdie discovers that “living in Edmonton, around Edmonton, about Edmonton, under
Edmonton was the same as living in and about the rez ... There were woods, a river, she didn’t
fit in, and she had to rely on herself for protection” (Lindberg 90)

it is the difficulty of the body bag being home
and finding family within it

city of spirits

healing that trauma

a family to nurture and to feed

a city worth of theories to unpack

to unpack the idea of “cities to be synonymous with assimilation” (Peters and Andersen,
“Introduction” 5) and “that moving away from home – be it the rez or the town next to it – was a
failure of sorts”

the city as a place “with jobs and resources that don’t exist in Little Loon” (Lindberg 70)
on a reserve

and to see the city as a place more than that



the history of Canada is linked with these ideas of forts
to fortify the us to protect the centre

and the institutional lullaby that only the fortified deserve protection
as the rocks and aggregates and additives of concrete fortify

how can concrete be loved when people use it to burn and scrape feet
 wear down bone and muscle

to fortify and to keep out

and the violence of visibility

“the public areas of the streets are not safe” and the negative “experience in retail and grocery stores demonstrate that ... these spaces [stigmatize] as well as on the streets” (Peters and Lafond 96)

how do you enter a space and feel so unwelcomed

Benjamin kîkwây kikîkwetaweyihten

the city does not open up to me

because the streets do not feel safe

because the streets do not give me authority to enter

there has never been a girls city

not yet Christine de Pizanes City of Ladies

the Indigenous cities get paved over

for the city is built on the backs of old cities

and it is not built for me

and to be out in the city

to be an academic visitor who studies the streets means having the power and the privilege to stop when you want to stop because “the flâneur inhabits the streets as his living

room. It is quite a different thing to need the streets as bedroom, bathroom, or kitchen, when the most intimate aspects of one's life are in view of strangers and ultimately, the police" (Buck-Morss 347)

the city does not open up for me as a living room

because the city thinks my bones should be in the ground

paved over and the basis of progress

my bones and my body are these living ruins reminders of the myth of noble savagery

but that brick was already laid

so my bones and my body are unnecessary living ruins

but also the privilege

as a budding Indigenous middle class (Peters and Andersen, 26)

wonder how deep

the sleep gets

in the dream of social evolution to give "ideological support to the social status quo ... that the ruling 'races' were justified as the dominators on the basis of 'natural' superiority" (Buck-Morss 58)

wake up says slum clearance wake up to the illusion of social equality because the eyesores and health hazards of poverty are cleared (Buck-Morss 89)

moved somewhere else

some other wasteland

wake up

wake up

to the dream world somnambulist consumption

look but do not touch

look but do not wake



and city is built on the backs of fear

fear someone will take the city away

that all those meaningless words and empty nominations held high

someone will deflate those

like “those spearheading the gentrification of the downtown east area [in Edmonton] have a psychic (and quite likely unconscious) knowledge of their own illegitimate claim to the land (and thus to the city),”

and that the institutions of human cities seem “haunted by an imperative to continually disavow the brutal and ongoing appropriation and exploitation of indigenous lands and people”

(Dean and Growzow 81)

and the city repeats and repeats the building on backs

and calls it progress

calls it terra nullius empty and open for settling

evacuates the collective memory the beautiful dreams

and the collage work that binds us together for good and for worse

calls it business

as Indigenous people continue to get displaced because “gentrification is usually accompanied by the displacement of low-income, racialized, Indigenous, and other marginalized segments of the urban population” (Glen Sean Coulthard 175)

calls it frontier for new forts for new passages of trade

calls it “*urbs nullius* – urban space void of Indigenous sovereign presence” (Coulthard 176)

calls it assimilation as a void

for the avoidance of fear that all that human construction and labour is worth nothing
that we humans try so hard to overcome time

the earth lives on

the rocks live on

long after the concrete city monuments crumble

colony of death

seeking immortal future

stay in the present

a broken loving present



seeds that are

scattered

con nected

anisko aggregates

wahkoh





how do we see in such dark winters

make those relations and make those connections

how do we make it

so that the child will lead us⁸

the young look

youth build

baring the skin thick of seven generations:

what I do see is that when you have the young people within cities or even within the reserves who do not have connection to their cultures and traditions, they look for these connections. They look for the deeper part of themselves, and I think that is something basic for all of humanity (Wilson 94)

Indigeneity that

innovates survives and adapts

see the city as a place of fortitude

relational strength

the fortitude to move past forts



⁸ Robert Cardinal, personal communication, July 2017.

convolute four city as ôtenaw

nititwewina nitôtenâhk

my words long for a home

voice

so i will construct a city

for us to breathe

stone by stone

i will break down walls



“The city and urban sphere are thus the setting of struggle; they are also, however, the stakes of that struggle” (Lefebvre 386)

i read texts from canonical writers on urban space writers who are often from or
theoretically indebted to the thoughts and ideas and writings from Western Europe

there is a lot to rework and to rethink

but i am also drawn to their poetic moments

and how the city space bursts with potential

are sites of resistance and community

connection and political engagement

sites to meet and to give voice to collective desires against institutional power
 in Benjamins figure of the flâneur

Benjamin and Lefebvre are also interested in human labours and workers
 and revolution in Marxist and Socialist reform
 on which i will not write because you could write a book on that
 but i want to acknowledge
 these bursts of potential
 reminders of what is at stake in the struggle of the city
 all these facets and fights

Idle No More:

writing with our feet
 we speak
 in the air
 conditioning (James Niigaanwewidam Sinclair 149)
 the meeting at street intersections



what are the options to study the city
 i discussed Papaschase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald earlier with his work on forts
 because the divisive linguistic and pedagogical frames of thinking
 materialize in city structures
 as walls become borders between the us and the them

Donald offers his readers the concept of Indigenous Métissage as “a research sensibility that imagines curriculum and pedagogy together as relational, interreferential, and hermeneutic endeavour” (5)

and i am drawn to this research because of a desire to reread:

the ethical desire is to reread and reframe historical understanding in ways that cause readers to question their own assumptions and prejudices as limited and limiting, and thus foster a renewed openness to the possibility of broader and deeper understandings that can traverse perceived cultural, civilizational, and temporal divides (Donald 5)

i am drawn to make my readers question their own assumptions and prejudices as i have for this research

and it has led me to places beyond what i could have imagined

proved how limited my knowledge is

and how deep understanding can be

Donald addresses the civilizational divides

Indigenous citizenry

there needs to be more address on that divide

because again it manifests into space

into forts and the wilderness

the civil and the savage

based on fear not love

and i want to know a city of broader and deeper understandings

the Métis in Métissage calls back to ideas of mixing from the French origin of the word

and i want to know Métissage with the distinct Métis identity

Métis that is more than the French origin

Cree that is more than the French origin of the word⁹

distinct identity as distinct stones in the concrete mixture

and to know the distinct Indigenous citizenry of

“the practice of thoughtful relations, good behaviours, and generosity of spirit” (Justice 46)

miyopimâtisiwin ekwa miyowâhkôhtowin ekwa miyohohpikihâwasowin

to be a scholar by thinking as a mother and as a nohkôm

and as a relative of the earth

⁹ Reuben Quinn, personal communication, October 2017. Reuben told a story on why the nehiyaw are called the Cree from the french verb *crier*..



ways of knowing and learning appear in civilizational divides

European knowledges seems so sure of themselves

strutting like a puffed up grouse sure it will get its pick of mates

low frequency drum made prideful

to work with and alongside different knowledges

there needs to be understanding on the work of remembering

i look to the language of nehiyawewin as a teacher

but it has taken years to get this point and i still know so little

to learn to reread and to rewrite takes time

and remembering

which “is paramount to learning, especially when the lessons have been all but forgotten in our collective memories because of the circumstances of colonization. Remembering is resistance” (L. Whiteman and L. Carrier 95)

remembering is resistance

Elders and knowledge keepers need time with youth because:

they help young people learn about the shooting of rabbits; making dry meat ... to

understand the importance of ceremonies, the prayers and the songs; the trees that were

best for tipi poles; the connection to the land; the connection to animals and to all living things (Whiteman and Carrier 95)

Indigenous people may refuse

because there must be time to remember

at least i refuse so as to remember

we as Indigenous people must balance the bridgework like Indigenous Métissage with the resistive work of remembering against acts that tried to erase us

there is beautiful work being done

and to be done



and this remembering comes in different forms

to remember our other relatives

to remember our role amongst the others that live on earth

to learn to remember by paying attention to the more than humans who remember the land before the cities before the forts and buildings

i admire the work of Rita Wong because she gives so much attention to the world and shows her readers all the work plants and animals and medicines do in the city

wakes us up from our sleepy circulation in city lives

and city lies and inward attention to ourselves

wakes us up to see how much work life does to make itself at home in the city:

after eighty destructive years

industrial blockage of salmon habitat

we celebrate this uncanny return in the city

.....

with each year's turn around the sun

an unbroken vow between relatives (Wong, "undercurrent" 39)

and to remember language ties the livelihoods of Indigenous nations to the land

to remember the land is to remember our human ties to the land

and to remember how Indigenous languages speak to the land

a relationship that is unlike a non Indigenous relationship to land

the resiliency of language and remembering and the living land is everywhere
even in the city

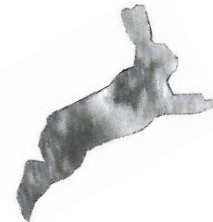
because "*the city paved over with cement english cracks open, stubborn Halq'eméylem/ springs up*" (Wong, "undercurrent" 59)



the medicines carry on

and wait

for us humans to ask for help:



The four women gingerly unpack the feast offering, and place it at the base of the tree,
giving the earth thanks for all that they have, for the clarity to be able to see it and for

having been given the gift to survive. Taking care not to spill anything they feed their relative. The earth around *Pimatisewin* soaks up the exotic and the sacred, taking the food to its roots, its branches and its bark (Lindberg 247)

the time to feed soft stews soaked
 and the land breathes and the life breathes

the \wedge^c in you just aches from the page



rhizome connects
 in ancestral blood lines
 threads and lines of seeds
 nitaniskotapan



i began my writing with Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg scholar writer and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpsons on “Land as Pedagogy” because it is something i hold onto
 something i strive to live and to honour
 and track my journey and hope to guide those who may be in a similar place
 there are so many constructs that try to hide that the land is everywhere

so i try to listen and pay attention when i start to think i am not on the land and do not have a relationship to it

try to listen

pay attention

we are on land

we have a relationship

but that relationship differs

“all land in Canada is Indigenous land. It doesn’t matter if there is a national park or a city or a mine or a reserve on top of it, it’s Indigenous land because Indigenous peoples have relationship to it” (Leanne Simpson and Glen Coulthard)

so it is not viable

to say Indigenous people do not belong to the city

but a lot of urban structures are in place to police and to survey its citizens

Simpson reminds me and gives me strength when she says, “it is our land and there’s a lot of resistance and resurgence that goes on within the city. There are sacred sites in parking lots, we have ceremony in the city, we have festivals in the city,” (Simpson and Coulthard)

we dream

we celebrate

we commune

despite divides

despite narratives

as in ceremony
 everyone is welcome
 to meet and dream together

but we must remember

that to celebrate and to have ceremony involves “a lot of red tape and a lot of fighting in order to” (Simpson and Coulthard) practice ceremony in the city

it is important

critical

to understand land as context as process

if the land of the city is a context and is a process
 does that involve a lot of unpacking human intervention
 and redress for enslaving rocks and wood without their permission

a sacredness we humans have to fight for

is it a call to fight for

our human sacredness

our potential to be good relatives

with the other beings in the city



what about all that dream talk

that Benjamin work i read



you have been patient my reader

here is my inkling there is a moment that is akin to Indigenous Métissage
that keeps me going in the city

and it is in our dreams

and from the traces of our ancestors

as we try to deepen our relationships with each other

for Indigenous nations the land and the spiritual are intertwined

and humans have gifts to communicate with both land and spirit

Simpson talks about how Nishnaabeg knowledge “originates in the spiritual realm,
coming to individuals through dreams, visions, ceremony and through the process of gaa-izhi-
zhaawendaagoziyaang – that which is given lovingly to us by the spirits” (Simpson 10)

and Walter Benjamin

coming from a background and belief in Judaism of his own formulations

and its own individual complication

writes on the ecstatic contact with the cosmos

and the mistake in considering “this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and
to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights” (Benjamin, “One-way” 486)

hear me out my agnostics and atheists

because with a history of Indigenous people and missionary work

i hesitate around spirituality
i know it is a lot to take up
i say i know because it is difficult for me
but i am drawn perhaps because of a sort of flatness and emptiness
that advertisements try to fill with products and pristine images
sleepwalking
and the feeling that somewhere along the way
people told other people that their voice
did not matter
that their skin is ugly
that they have nothing to give to the world
take everything away
in order to fill minds with products and commercials
we will still make mistakes but can hold each other to account
there is still a great potential in us humans
we bare gifts and strengths
circulating directions
protocols and obligations
to structure our lives in this world
in good relations
tough relations

trying relations

all those good relations



what does a city look like when it is built on a deep love for life

not built on the fear of the outside



exposed concrete

discrete design

architextual



i want to think of the city differently

to reread and to question assumptions and prejudices

to look to the renewed openness to possible understandings

turn to the language of nehiyawewin because it is a teacher

and the word ôtenaw is the now commonly used word for a city or maybe a large town

but as in many translations of nehiyawewin

it is a “vulgar translation”¹⁰

¹⁰ Reuben Quinn, personal communication, January 2018.

and Sylvia (Saysewahum) McAdam notes that “words that are inappropriately applied to describe European situations or institutions,” like ôtenaw

and she explains that “the original word *ê-ôtênawihhtàcik*, when translated means ‘a place or lodge of spiritual people’” (*Nationhood* 63),

which is a different meaning than a European city or town

and in her glossary she also adds that “in the days before European contact it described a circle of tipis that are sacred” (McAdam, *Nationhood* 103)

my writing also springs from what i see as a teaching from this word
and also that inaccuracy and inappropriateness

that vulgarity

what part of the word ôtenaw led speakers to call cities and towns this word
and what part of the word ôtenaw cannot be applied to contemporary European modeled
cities and towns

this is my question

i like to believe that the old ones saw something sacred in our meeting in cities
and left us with the potential to grow into an accurate use of ôtenaw
and from another Algonkian language

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson graciously reflects on the Nishnaabemowin word for city
oodena “and one interpretation of the conceptual meaning of that word is ‘the place

where the hearts gather”” (*Dancing* 94) and how “Nishnaabemowin seamlessly joins my body to the body of my first mother; it links my beating heart to the beating river that flows through my city” (*Dancing* 95)

Simpsons attention to the language of the city grounds her body
to place and to memory and to spirits and her family
with the emotional charge of a poetic word
it is an emotional spiritual mental and physical connection through language
and she makes clear the difference that words are heard differently
like a name written on stone in Rosedale

nitaniskotapan:

the word ‘Otonabee’ is heard or read differently by Canadians and Nishnaabeg peoples.
When I hear or read the word ‘Otonabee,’ I think ‘Odenabe,’ and I am immediately
connected to a physical place within my territory and a space where my culture
communicates a multi-layered and nuanced meaning that is largely unseen and
unrecognized by non-Indigenous peoples (Simpson, *Dancing* 95)

the layering of meaning within Indigenous languages and words are lost
in the context of a city
where European history and concepts of city and civilization are dominant
which is saddening

because we lose so much stewy richness specific to a place
and there could be so much more openness in the city

which is not to say there is no work already looking for richness

for the "making sense of concrete and cherry blossoms" (Bradley 133) in places like Vancouver

and to live with coyotes and hares and rocks and forests within a city like Edmonton

to see the city with dissolving boundaries

to find medicines in the city

the heart of the city

and to see how thin that line of city and wilderness and urban and rez is:

"Because optical illusion placed the mountain just beyond the city, the world as I saw it from my home strangely, simultaneously included alpine snows, coastline, cityscape, and a considerable amount of non-idyllic traffic" (Bradley 133)



*"we were on a break we had knowledge
that native landscapes contain
asphalt
back onto our
feet again"* (Francis 66)

love not in a way you think

when you think of love



round dancing in West Edmonton Mall

round dancing downtown

i round danced in Enoch Cree Nation

i round danced at the University of Alberta

dance in the under growth of the river valley

kick up leaves

footsteps made round

the beginning of the city is not the end of an Indigenous consciousness

rocks were predominate on the prairies

the rocks continue to mark to carry stories to resonate with the energies of creation

concrete the dominator who runs things and people

amiskwaciwâskahikanihk in the city of Edmonton

“Standing Stone refers to stones used to mark food caches, ceremonial sites, etc.,” (Marilyn

Dumont, *Indigenous* 11)

like an echo

the rocks resonate

these city sites mark ceremony that still hum in the ground

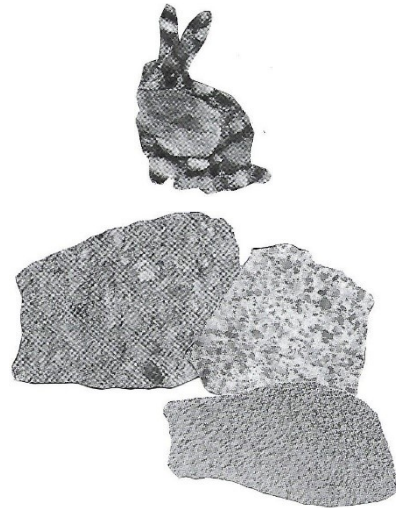
and the land awaits our feasts

our ceremony

our remembering

and the land awaits our steps to carry the drums heart beat

our feet drum what is beneath



as powwows and round dances allow Indigenous people “to ‘carry home’” in step

and awaken the urban sleepers from deep “powerful forms of *nostalgia*” (Chris Andersen and Evelyn Peters 386, original emphasis) hidden the streets of the authentic city

step sideways not forward

step into stories of hunts and healing and the grass

keep stepping and waiting

and “dance that broken circle dance because i am still waiting for hands that want to hold mine too” (Belcourt 17)



we forget about the spirituality that many people find in cities

even the agnostics can find their resonant hums

and the urban based Indigenous

who grow from disrupted births
who then is really Cree
the laws and systems of the Indigenous people
nehiyaw citizenry laws and obligations
carry the strength
to stand with concrete

hear messages from the rocky carriers of prayer
permission intertwining with protocol
earth laws
and legal over stepping
and the responsibility to make amends
and also the law to defend

to make peace

“use our own laws” Elders told Sylvia (Saysewahum) McAdam for Idle No More

“our most sacred and peaceful law is ‘nahtamawasewin.’ This law is invoked in times of crisis and great threat ... to defend for the children, all human children; it’s also a duty to defend for the non-human children from the trees, plants, animals, and others”

the ladies leading Idle No More needed to “invoke this law and let it guide [their] actions. We must always be prayerful and peaceful” (McAdam, “Armed” 66)

how threatening must a crisis be before we invoke such a law

how can we defend all children of the city

with every step

think forward in generations



how beautiful is it

to write about

poetry and

songs and

stories

but also how beautiful it is

that i get to share and

to dwell

in lines

the forces voices ferocity

the indescribable strength

of others



selfgravity pulls in
 to the core of you
 and the will to gather strength
 and the strength to gather

thanks to kîyawâw
 the heat in our held hands
 pîcicîwinihk



here we are again my readers to the question

how do you love concrete

that material that carries modernity in its form

that hard material that wears down human bodies that memorializes humanity

is destroying concrete a way to show love

sledge hammer to streets

to destroy a desire of humans to be timeless that humans strive to be worthy of being

made into rock for generations to see

but there is so much concrete all over the earth

that is probably not the answer

so how to give love to concrete to give thanks

because everyday people walk on concrete and live inside concrete

where bugs and roots crawl under and water slips in

cracks and fissures

show love by listening

concrete as something sacred when we make concrete into a tool

because if i can see these possibilities

it will teach me to see to respect my relationships with the city trees and the coyotes

and the hares and the citizens of the city

citizens of the land and of the stories from cities morally grounded

the work towards good relations

who journey to their hearts from their minds

respect your relatives

to reciprocate

something back

try to answer this concrete question without answering it to keep conversations

and to keep learning and studying and remembering and researching as a ceremony

and to keep stepping sideways to dance

lighter feet

farther vision

because “*if research doesn’t change you as a person, then you haven’t done it right*” (Wilson
135)

the work to close a broken circle

follows the rounded beat of a heart



i try to imagine as a nehiyaw the city as nehiyaw

to remember what that would look like

i try because in an Indigenous law structure

to not speak out can be the same as speaking blasphemous language against someone

a pastâmowin a legal overstep with serious consequences

an acquiescence

there has been a lot of damage in the city

the established knowledges and power

that gives narratives the privilege as knowledge and power

to see people as deserving and undeserving

civility lost in the wild

i try to write to reread those city narratives that the city only belongs to certain people
 that the city only exists in a Western European history and reality so a city means
 superimposing that Western European history to make cities a reality
 and so i work from a restorative Indigenous perspective alongside some Western
 European urban studies that have resonated with me

i am trying to construct a new city of words for new worlds
 words are powerful
 our human voices make them powerful
 because “words, once spoken, not only cannot be called back but continue to exert a force in the
 universe, however infinitesimal, in a sense, forever” (Akiwenzie-Damm and Wong 25-26)

i try to exert a force
 to exert a world
 with my wordrocks

i prepare to start a sacred circle
 to meet my responsibilities:

“Aboriginal peoples will soon have a responsibility to teach others what it means to be a citizen
 living on this land. What this means is that Canadians begin to view their notions of citizenship
 as rooted in the land and the stories coming from particular places in Canada” (Donald 19)

an Indigenous citizenry

that writes with each step

in generous gaits



'Not only to think about yourself, but to think of others, to be considerate, to be kind. To be compassionate, to remember that you are not alone. That you are a part of something larger, you are part of a family. That family is part of a community, that community is part of a greater environment. And even the environment, the earth, is part of creation'
(Wes Fineday et. al. 70)

this is what i mean to round dance



there are stories i do not know

there are questions i cannot answer

this is important to note

ehohpikiyân



Hares are a permanent component of the urban landscape in Edmonton. They are here to stay and are flourishing in the non-forested habitats of our northern city. Their greatest

numbers will continue to be found in the light-industrial zones in and around the city. City parks with extensive open-space also favour these animals. The least favourable areas are the high-density zones in the inner city, and suburban neighbourhoods with extensive fencing between housing units. It remains to be seen whether this species will expand its range northward as the climate changes. Further research needs to be done in smaller urban centres in Alberta and across the Canadian prairies (John R. Wood 133)

i find that when you read this passage about hares

you can switch the hares out for urban Indigenous people

we are here to stay



the risky birth of muskeg metaphor

moss verbiage the north side of the canon / cannon

south of the profit margin

rabbit critics got nothing to lose

peter rabbit for lunch (Francis 59)



ekphrasis ekphrastic

out speak tepwew

platonic epitome of bedness

kiskîsik reads

see a path

see the ruins of a town

see the broken concrete

see the soft moss

see the tree that guides kiskîsik with black marked eyes of its own

walk along lines for it is an end point for it is a beginning

walk along curves for they are the sustenance

and fall into land marks of the beings stretch out to the sky in praise and adoration for the
sky and life and rest into the stable stories of stone slabs where feet plant and hands caress

see the detritus litterfall

decomposing leaves

rest into the moss cushions conducts of water connect conduct tissues

the absorbing fabric that generously takes up our fluids and finds the nutrients in them

come back to the rock for it is the slab of field of uniform line and uniform grey

but not so uniform in grey not so uniform in line speckles of rest

a reprieve from our words

concrete jungle

see the rebar

see concretes rocky innards

breathing

breathing in that telephoto depth

breath in the shade and the sun for it is that orb in the sky that gives life

this is a stop in a path

a path through an abandoned mining town

that elicits thoughts of nature taking back the land

why see ruin in so much growth

what is the projection of ruin

ruin being the loss of human the loss of the upturning of earth the molding and the carving

animate into inanimate the jarring cut into relationships and take so much away and

give little:

so preoccupied

with my own

displacement

didn't notice

i was displacing

you (Vivek Shraya 19)

build up around us humanselves and forget to see the rest of the world going on without

us

my problems seem so small in the lifetime of a rock

what is ruin

what is disassembly

rework and remake and reimagine and revivify

what of resurge and reconcile

where is the city

this afterimage this image after the human toil and labour the decay of house
 modified cave dwellings as reprieve from our words and as reprieve from our world
 sleep domicile dormir lay dormant city as the hot bed of humanness
 rework and remake and reimagine and revivify the domicile and resurge and reconcile the
 relationships into a city unlike any other a city of the human and the more than
 human and of learning from the more than human for we need such compassion



“This journey has not ended; it’s still unfolding as I write this. My journey takes me back to my people’s lands and waters; it is in the lands and waters that Indigenous people’s history is written. Our history is still unfolding; it’s led by our songs and drums” (McAdam, “Armed” 67)

we dream

we celebrate

we commune

in ceremony

everyone is welcome

to meet and dream together



a hare runs through it

forages





conclusion

go back and read and reread

because this writing needs cycles of revisiting
through clusters of meaning and a sense of direction

there are gaps and shifts for you my readers to go out and fill

to step out onto the sidewalk and continue the story

to revisit and forget

to remember

and the work emulates a “Cree literary style [that] exploits repetition and subtle variation in contexts ranging from the seemingly simple to the saliently elevated” (H.C. Wolfart 155)

with your steps you can make a round dance

with your steps you can fill the gap in a dance

reread the city as pehonân

as civil

as fort itude

as ôtenaw

the repeating motions of sidesteps



there are reflections on treaty

to make the place of the city livable for Indigenous and non Indigenous people

because we live in cities together and treaties define that “the relationship would be based on alliance” (McAdam, *Nationhood* 78)

alliances

not the treaty talk about giving up land and selling or ceding the land

because there are a lot of misunderstandings

misunderstandings about how Indigenous societies structure themselves

misunderstandings about how Indigenous people live

it is crucial to start with the knowledge Indigenous people have of cities

an Indigenous land

before the transplantation of settler ideas of cities

and to clash this with what cities impose

i also include what is beautiful from scholars and writers from across the ocean

because i always think about how our ancestors met

clashed

and came together

saw something worthwhile in each other and worked towards that

and also did not

i do not want to be optimistic and blind to the difficulties in being treaty relatives

but i think about Elders telling Sylvia Saysewahum McAdam that “the greatest achievement a warrior (man or woman) can do is to create peace” (*Nationhood* 78)

and i strive for that in my limited knowledge

because i want to learn about how to love

love not in the way a commercial makes you think on love

i want to learn about “how we learn to live together. We love: courageously,
insistently, defiantly. We love the world enough to fight for it – and one another” (Justice 180)

to fight and to make peace

there are responsibilities and consequences for inflicted pain and suffering

as cities make a lot of pain and suffering

but there is a lot of work to do for the non Indigenous and the Indigenous people

one sided relationships do not flourish

the pains that need healing understanding and time and labour

to be on the reserve and in the city and in the wilderness

to talk about English

and to talk about spatial boundaries and exclusions

these knowledges and disconnect

life or death life and death

connect in life

to connect outwards

as ceremonies purpose “is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between
our cosmos and us” (Wilson 137)

i want to stress the work that has been done in the city

there is flourishing and innovation

i want to stress the importance of everyones work in coming together and

even if my reader is not spiritually inclined

to try to imagine a city that thinks of the cosmos and of more than just humans
through the gifts we humans carry

in that we play only a part

but we play

and we do have a part



this thesis began with a question of how do you love concrete

but this thesis also began with a question a pondering
of what the cities will look like for future generations

and in a real pondering

i wonder what the city can look for my nieces and nephews
and if there was anything i could ever leave for my cousins and my relatives

and my nieces and my nephews

maybe my awâsis someday

as i have pondered Indigeneity and the city Indigenecity

my life has become complicated and my dear relationships become strange and strained
from writing this work

because these are uncomfortable conversations and debatable opinions

try to speak

when people believe you are a quiet person

your speech seems so much louder

i learn and grow

and i want to help

watch Elders help others hours and hours of work and patience

resign to myself that i may not ever get there

but thats a good teaching

i wish a lot

wish i had financial reports and urban planning goals and layouts and ten year action
plans to give out to you my readers

to meet that desire of tangible solutions to unanswerable questions

i do not think one human has those answers inside

i want to change things

i desire and i dream

resign myself to the fact that i only have control over what i do

but that can be powerful

and i am not alone



while writing this thesis i attended a roundtable at the Indigenous Literary Studies
 Association on Sovereign Solidarities: Autonomy and Accountability in BIPOC Alliances
 this roundtable brought my attention to the relationship between the work of Indigenous
 people and the work of Black folks and People of Colour
 and also reminded me of the work of Indigenous Queer Trans and Two Spirited
 scholars i admire and i cite and try to work alongside
 and i wonder about my work
 if it will reciprocate what these texts have given me

 and i recognize that the city has stories i do not share and that i am not the one to share them
 as a cisgendered heterosexual whitecoded burgeoning into the middle class position
 i can over step
 but i can also step with
 step forward
 and side step in rhythm
 i journey to my heart and try to be honest with myself
 and know i need to acknowledge the work of my friends and role models
 and try to imagine a research that gives back

 i try to dream that my writing can be a gift that will lead me to action

my warriors

hold me to account

as i go into a dissertation i try to imagine that giving back

as i go into ceremony and the city as the next step

my warriors

hold me to account



too scared to end this with my words:

why am i always adapting your words

from latin tongues & french theorists

ive mastered my masters language

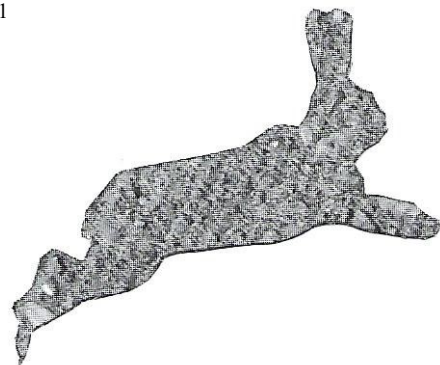
ill need a tic tac after this poem (Whitehead 68)

wâpos itwew eestakoc

as my teacher says

im done

im going home now¹¹



¹¹ Reuben Quinn, personal communication, September 2017.

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