

**SPACE GETS CRITICAL:**

**Unusual subjects in Women's Studies and Human Geography**

**By:**

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Space Gets Critical: Unusual Subjects in Women's Studies and

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## ABSTRACT

Aligned with similar self-reflexive trends in Women's Studies, *Space gets critical* traces recent interventions in Human Geography that question taken-for-granted disciplinary practices and assumptions. The past decade has been witness to a steady influx of hybrids of Geography that combine spatial concerns not only with feminism, but also with queer, postcolonial, and poststructuralist thought, among others. These hybrids, referred to here as critical human geographies, typically oppose traditionally 'immutable' Geographical definitions of space, people, and landscape.

Based on these concerns, I first reinforce the argument that the way space is understood from a conventional Geographical perspective is based on a legacy of partiality and exclusion where Geographers are seen to be detached explorers who produce allegedly transcendent visions of neutral truth. Second, I argue that feminist analyses do not sufficiently incorporate space and spatial concerns, and can benefit from a documentation like this one of the relevance of space to feminist, and other critical perspectives. Finally, I conclude that the contestation and refiguring of Geographical applications and concerns, coexists with, and is only critically possible through a concurrent deconstruction of the discourses and practices of Geography itself.

I posit two related avenues through which already-critical Human Geographies can hold a broader mirror to some of their own taken-for-granted methods and assumptions, while at the same time reinforcing the importance of space to Women's Studies and feminist analyses generally. The approaches correspond on the one hand, with the role of

Geographical discourses in establishing particular ways of seeing and understanding the world, and on the other, with Cartography, as one of the quintessential practices upon which Geography is based. Drawing from interdisciplinary approaches to Geographical debates, my sources range from feminist and queer theories, to postcolonialism and the writings of women of color, to critical social thought generally, to geographically-informed creative writings, and of course, Geographical theory.

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a million thanks to bob, greer & kelly  
without whom ...

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## Introduction

“Space ... is the place.”  
(SpaceHog)

“You come from *where?*” was the incredulous response from the Department secretary to my inquiries regarding a best-to-be-left-unnamed Geography<sup>1</sup> Department. “Uh.....Women’s Studies,” I replied. “And you are applying to the PhD program in *Geography?*” she repeated skeptically. Such have been the customary responses to my explanations of the less-than typical path I have traced through various Academic disciplines. Perhaps the secretary’s dubiousness is understandable, maybe even wise, given that my cross-disciplinary voyage spans from Comparative Religion to Women’s Studies, and presently encompasses critical human geography. What initially attracted me to (critical) geographical work was its emphasis on the importance of space and place to social life, and conversely, the influence of social life on the construction of spaces. Connections like these, while not presuming relevance only to women, are acutely relevant to Women’s Studies<sup>2</sup> in that they privilege issues of power and representation by

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<sup>1</sup>Words like ‘Geography,’ ‘Cartography,’ ‘Discipline,’ and ‘Academic,’ appear throughout this work beginning in some cases with a capital letter, and in others, with lower-case. Where the word in question is being associated with a traditionally accepted Academic connotation or milieu (e.g. conventional Geography, Geography Department, or Geographical practices), I have capitalized the word to emphasize its alignment with dominant Academic and epistemological assumptions. Where the word begins with lower case (e.g. critical human geographies or feminist geographies), it is to emphasize the status of so-called subjugated knowledges as peripheral to ‘real’ Academic work. The exception is ‘Women’s Studies’ itself, which remains capitalized reflecting the contradictory state of this subjugated knowledge having ‘Discipline’ status. Otherwise, I have tried to maintain consistency, while taking into account that the boundaries between marginal and dominant Academic knowledge are blurry and shifting.

<sup>2</sup>There are strong tensions between and among critical (in this case, feminist) theorizing, and action. The danger of conflating Women’s Studies, feminist (and other critical) theorizing, and community activism needs to be countered with the reality that not all feminists in Academia do their work in Women’s

questioning peoples' agency, visibility, and participation (or lack thereof) in societal practices and institutions.

In spite of what has appeared to me to be a potentially reciprocal disciplinary alliance, my physical and epistemological navigations between Women's Studies and Geography have often seemed more like Academic trespassing, than the forging of new interdisciplinary links. The astonishment of the Geography Department's secretary (and she is far from the only one from whom I have encountered such a response) that someone from Women's Studies would cross the 'Geographical line,' still comes as somewhat of a surprise to me, and points to some of the peculiarities of interdisciplinary work. It seems strange that if the roles were reversed: if a Geography student came to do work in Women's Studies, nary an eyebrow would be raised at the prospect. Women's Studies is interdisciplinary by definition so students can expect more of an overarching span of study and concern. At the same time, the irony is that within Women's Studies itself, surprisingly little explicit reference to the importance of space is typically found.

Imagine, for example, that I was to conduct a survey of the books in the Women's Studies section(s) at the SFU library with the aim to compile a list of issues that gave an

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Studies; not all scholars of Women's Studies are women; not all critical work is undertaken by those self-identified as feminist, critical, or radical; and perhaps most significantly, Academia is not necessarily the site of the most 'thorough' and 'rigorous' critical work. It is crucial to recognize the tensions being working out between these configurations, not as limitations, but as possibilities for alliances and coalitions. As bell hooks (1988:36) maintains, since the work of many feminist theorists necessitates fundamental questioning and critiquing of the ideological structures of the prevailing white-supremacist, heterosexist, patriarchal hegemony, it is fitting that the university be identified as a useful site for radical political work. However, this is not to assume that critical Academic work necessarily translates into action, or that anti-intellectual biases on the part of non-Academics are unfounded. For the purposes of this work, I am positing Women's Studies as an extremely heterogeneous field which is not unproblematic or uniform in its theoretical and political assumptions. Even more importantly, I am in no way endorsing tendencies in Women's Studies to centralize an undifferentiated 'woman' as the central focus of concern at the expense of other factors of identity and difference.

indication of the scope of Women's Studies in the 1990s. The majority of what I would come across would likely be histories and biographies of women's issues, events and concerns. A smaller contingent of this information would probably be made up of various postmodern and poststructural debates, most of which typically centralize issues of the 'body' and identity. Although this latter subdivision of feminist literature figures prominently in critical geographical debate, it is nevertheless ironic that very little space in these Women's Studies books, let alone in the broad range of feminist concerns generally, is accorded to space itself.

The paradox is that in order to answer to the omission of space in Women's Studies, I have strayed from my own Discipline by making physical and mental forays to various Geography Departments. The existence of pockets of critical analysis in Geography means that it was not just anywhere in the realm of Geographical inquiry that the questions I was asking could be answered. By arriving through the proverbial backdoor, it was the margins of Geography, and not Geography 'proper,' that were made accessible to me. Specifically, various hybrids of Geography: 'critical human geographies' as they will be referred to in this work, have provided avenues for my inquiries. Various aligned with feminist, queer, postcolonial, and poststructural thought, among others, critical human geographies are paradoxically initiated by those typically excluded by traditional Geography, except as objects of study. Critical geographical approaches concentrate on the triad that forms between people, the spaces in which they live and interact, and the social forces that weave together social life.

In contrast, and typically in the business of providing supposedly immutable, and empirically verifiable<sup>3</sup> definitions of space, place, and landscape, is 'traditional' Geography. As neither an entirely natural science, nor an entirely social science, traditionally understood Geography fluctuates between the empirically driven task of nailing down increasingly 'accurate' descriptions of the earth's surface (often seen to be the domain of Physical Geography), while concurrently trying to reconcile (with varying success) the role of the social in geographical processes (Johnston et. al. 1994:220). Corresponding with attention to social concerns, is Human Geography, a major sub-division of Geography as a whole. Broadly defined, Human Geography concerns itself with the spatial analysis of the human population, i.e. its numbers, its characteristics and its activities, as spread over the earth's surface (Johnston et. al. 1989:175). Overall, what has generally prevailed as the dominant core of Geographical thinking over the past 150 years, coincides with what Edward Soja (1996) calls 'firstspace' geographical thinking, where space and geographies are viewed as concrete expressions of landscape. 'Real' spatial organization is typically assumed to be empirically and scientifically justified, thereby providing allegedly accurate, orderly, and objective definitions of people and places (Johnston et. al. 1989:175). This type of thinking implies a lack of attention to the nuanced configurations between and among space, bodies, and the social.

Increasingly, traditional Geography has been criticized by critical human geographers for its 'masculinist rationality,' that reifies the belief that Geographers

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<sup>3</sup>*The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Johnston et. al. [ed.], 1994:158) defines empiricism as "a philosophy of science which accords a special privilege to empirical observations over theoretical statements. It assumes that observational statements are the only ones which make direct reference to phenomena in the real world." Empiricism is a fundamental assumption of positivism and is challenged by most modern philosophies of science.

constitute 'detached explorers' who produce 'transcendent visions' of supposedly neutral truth untouched by the contexts in which they are produced (Rose 1993:7). This ensures a biased and partial version of what counts as geographical knowledge and who is seen fit to produce and possess it. Therefore, the fostering of a sharpened sense of suspicion toward the principles upon which classical Geography (in the Academic sense and otherwise) is based, becomes tantamount. Critical human geographies represent significant and tangible enactments of this suspicion, but there is more work left to be done in shaking the legacy of exclusion and partiality on which Geography is based. Consequently, my goal is to discuss the unfolding of critical human geographies as the disciplinary link that has enabled me to question both the absence of spatial debate in Women's Studies, and the residue of exclusionary practices and assumptions in G/geography itself.

Specifically, in this thesis I argue first that the way we understand space, from a traditional Geographical perspective, is fixed on a base of "historically variable relationships of complicity, collaboration, and contestation with respect to neo-colonialist and masculinist violence" (Hyndman 1995:203). Second, I argue that feminist analyses do not sufficiently incorporate space and spatial concerns, and can benefit from a documentation like this one of the relevance of space to feminist, and other critical perspectives. Finally, I conclude that the contestation and refiguring of G/geographical applications and concerns, coexists with, and is only critically possible, through a concurrent deconstruction of the discourses and practices of Geography itself.

The relevance of a project like this one to Women's Studies is (at least) twofold. First, as mentioned above, space is an important component of analyses of identity, power,

and subjectivity and therefore merits more detailed attention in illuminating common concerns and new approaches. Space has been implicit in feminist analyses for some time, the most obvious example being the theorizing around public versus private spaces, and their respective associations with ('rational, dynamic') masculinity and ('passive, fixed') femininity. However what is often left unaddressed is the role of space and place as intrinsic to the formulation of everyday understandings of places and people, and not merely as a backdrop for social interaction.

Space figures prominently in social life, especially for many women and others, for whom concerns over safety, confinement, displacement and/or mobility are inextricably connected with space and place. Over the past fifteen years, although Geography and the importance of the spatial have not yet explicitly made their way onto the feminist agenda, feminist methods and concerns have nevertheless been definitively incorporated into geographical debates. A case in point is feminist geography, which can be considered one of the earlier responses to what is still criticized as the 'masculinism' of Geography. Emphasizing the significance of space, place, environment and landscape, as the contexts within which women and others' live their daily lives, feminist geographical research shows how these spaces are gendered, and so reinforce dominant ideological assumptions about the 'correct' places for women and men (Johnston et. al. 1989:151).

An example of gendered space can be drawn from my childhood experience as an ardent Trekkie. My early elementary school years were marked by the ritual watching of *Star Trek* every afternoon at 4:00 with my Trekkie-cohort, Andrea. I have clear memories of identifying closely with the action, the adventure, and the wit of the *important* crew



members, who, not-so-coincidentally, happened all to be men. The women, in their short-skirts, go-go boots, and bit parts, represented for me, some kind of dreaded fate --- something I might be destined to become by virtue of being female: one-dimensional, ornamental and silent. If ever a woman appeared as anything other than incidental, she seemed to me at the time, to be oddly incongruent and out of place in her speaking role. To my eight-year-old sensibilities, the bridge of the Enterprise seemed indelibly to be a boy's space. The background was for the girls. What can be gleaned from this example are some of the ways that spaces become gendered, or racialized, or classed, or sexualized, in what has been referred to as a matrix of oppression. In this way, characteristics, activities, behaviors and/or appearances of certain bodies come to be associated with certain places, while at the same time fixing in space certain 'traits' of the places themselves (Pratt and Hanson 1994:11). Subsequently, social maps of places can become solidified, and social rules codified, through contextual and varying (power-based) connections made between particular bodies, activities and spaces.

By the 1980s, the initial confidence in the premises of feminist geographical work, particularly the certainty that gender was *a*, if not *the*, key social division, began to waver (McDowell 1993:158). As feminist theory was reformulated, overwhelmingly by innovations from women of colour and by poststructuralist thought, the assumed comprehensiveness of the scope of feminist geography was similarly challenged. Such feminist notions as a homogeneous category of 'woman,' too-commonly associated with the domestic and/or the maternal, and the assumption that the experiences of women were circumscribed as white and Western, became problematic (McDowell 1993:158). Since

then, queer and postcolonial geographies have made important contributions, bringing critiques that interlock and strengthen, feminist, and other earlier critical geographies.

Feminist geographies have since concentrated on issues of unequal representation and differential power relations within traditional Geographical knowledge and practice. Racism, heteronormativity, and classism intersect with these configurations of identity, not as add-ons, but as geographical considerations unto themselves (Gregory 1994:125). Just as feminist geography continues to answer to its own shortcomings, so too do other critical human geographies sustain stringent and ongoing self-critiques. These 'new' geographies have already effected substantial and far-reaching changes to the discipline by challenging assumptions about who asks geographical questions, who are assumed to be objects (or agents) of Geographical study, and what counts as Geographical knowledge. In this sense, a reflexive incorporation of feminist (and other critical) methods and concerns within geographical debate is already well underway. What remains to be established is a stringent self-reflexivity on the part of critical geographers themselves, as well as a more sustained place for geography and the importance of space within feminist debates.

The second point of relevance of a project like this to Women' Studies concerns the similarities between Women's Studies and critical human geographies, as pockets of critical thought that continually mutate to survive. Like the constant state of flux experienced by Women's Studies in Academia, pockets of oppositional geographical knowledge co-exist in uneasy and tenuous relation with their more traditional counterpart. The balancing act to closely-enough resemble traditional Academic inquiry as to merit

'acceptance,' while risking appropriation and depoliticization in the process, means that Women's Studies and critical human geographies share not only common analytical concerns, but also methodological ones: that is, how to survive, and carry out effective and self-reflexive work, in an environment sometimes hostile to our presence ( ...a spatial analysis unto itself). A third point of relevance ties back to the importance of being suspicious of the principles upon which traditional Academic practices and assumptions are based. On the role of academics, Gayatri Spivak writes that

as we produce the official explanations, we reproduce the official ideology, the structure of possibility of a knowledge, whose effect is that very structure. Our circumscribed productivity cannot be dismissed as a mere keeping of records. We are a part of the records we keep (1990:382).

Spivak's words can be considered a warning against the production and codification of 'truths' that happens as a matter of course in Academia. A second reading of her words can highlight her (and my) call for attention to the structure of a "possibility of a knowledge," where Academics figure as an indelible "part of the records we keep." Marginalized knowledges in Academia may be selectively tolerated, but in what is very much one of the fundamental strengths of interdisciplinary work, layerings of perspectives and methods from traditionally sequestered realms of thought often succeed in bringing about unexpected pockets of resistance and coalition. In this sense, being a 'part of the records' of both Women's Studies and of G/geography, entails not only suspicion of the practices and assumptions of Academia, but also an encouragement to create new links between the two -- thus *changing* the records to reflect underrepresented social realities.

## getting there

An exhaustive deconstruction of the fundamentals of Geographical thought and practice would be a formidable task, and one well beyond the scope of this work. For the purposes of the project at hand, I posit two possible avenues through which already-critical geographies can hold an even broader mirror to some of their own taken-for-granted methods and assumptions, and how Women's Studies can benefit from such a documentation of the importance of critical spatial debates. These approaches encompass the overlapping realms of discourse and practice. Geography in general constitutes a 'discourse' in its role of establishing particular ways of seeing and understanding the world. Practices, as inextricably related to discourses, include the enactments and tools used to sustain and reify dominant (and other) constructions of social life. In both cases, it is important to note I will engage with these debates in a non-empirical capacity. The decision to provide a strong exploratory discussion of spatial discourses and practices without empirical 'facts' was taken to emphasize the *process* of encouraging an expansion in spatial thinking. At the same time, the debates that follow are undertaken in such a way as to call attention to specific examples and illustrations of the spatial concepts and experiences in question. The result is meant to strengthen and enrich already existing practices and assumptions. Such a methodology might not be effective under different circumstances, or with different goals in mind, but as I elaborate further throughout my thesis, the careful scrutiny of these debates is imperative to more stringent and responsible spatial practices in general.

In Chapter One I review some current critical human geographies -- feminist, queer, and postcolonial -- and some of their predecessors, as an aggregate of oppositional discourses that counter traditional Geography. I argue that one of the fundamental strengths of critical human geographies is their acute accountability to everyday, embodied spatial configurations in ways that facilitate more inclusive reflections of socio-spatial life. At the same time I argue that for critical human geographers, attention to the everyday and the particular should be exercised with caution to keep from straying into individualist tendencies that downplay or ignore the inherently relational nature of both matrices of oppression and of collective resistance. Further, I argue that Women's Studies, as one of the sources from which critical human geographers draw inspiration in theorizing the everyday, can benefit from increased, and more explicit attention to the spatial. Although many feminists have long accentuated the importance of everyday conditions of existence, the role of space itself often remains only implicitly alluded to. For instance, specific sites like the home or the workplace are commonly posited by feminists for their associations with certain people based on factors like gender, race, class or age. However, what often remains underemphasized in feminist debate is the fundamental role of space and place as intrinsic to the formulation of spatialities, and not merely a backdrop for social interaction and power dynamics.

In Chapter Two, I fortify the importance of the everyday in critical human geographies by arguing for clarifications of the often nebulous uses and applications of the concept central to these inquiries: space itself. By more clearly differentiating between and among material, social, and metaphorical space(s), possibilities emerge for better

questioning and communicating spatial perspectives without limiting their effectiveness to undifferentiated explanations that alienate spatial concerns from lived struggles. What can result from a lack of clarification of the relationship between spatial language and material lived conditions are uncritical assumptions of (literal) mobility combined with an undifferentiated (metaphorical) 'touring' mentality, both of which can deny lived realities and mask the influence of power and privilege. The reverse is also true, that material conditions of existence must be brought to bear on the social meanings that forged their construction in the first place. This is a project especially relevant to Women's Studies where the use of a prolific spatial vocabulary to grapple with issues of difference and identity, is common. In this way, this chapter will show not only that space itself should figure more explicitly in the feminist debates, but also that clearer definitions of the 'space between' material and metaphorical space need to be encouraged for both Women's Studies and critical human geographies.

In Chapters Three and Four, I continue to work towards my goal of deconstructing the discourses and practices of Geography by arguing for a further questioning of one of the fundamental practices upon which Geography is based: Cartography; and one of the quintessential tools of the Geographical trade: the map. As both a scientific tool, and a cultural text, maps have a legacy of complicity with strategies of conquest and erasure in their selective and often inflexible portrayals of people and landscape. Following the emphasis on the everyday in Chapters One and Two, in Chapter Three I show that while extensive work has been undertaken in deconstructing cartography, what is needed is increased attention to the colonization of everyday life, highlighting the role that maps play

in *local* displacements and erasures. Often, even critical reformulations of cartography assume that the colonization associated with maps is typically practiced in a past, faraway, 'elsewhere.' By distancing colonial strategies from the everyday, attention is drawn away from complicities in, and perpetuation of, present systems of oppression in our own backyards. Again, these concerns are of particular relevance for women and others, for whom displacement, mis-representation, and/or erasure has been facilitated with and through technologies of mapping.

In Chapter Four, I extend this critical line of thought by citing three examples of map re-readings, two in the non-Academic 'everyday,' and one in Academia, that similarly aim to strengthen critical approaches to Geography. In this last chapter, I maintain that the exercise of further deconstructing cartography can be encouraged with both real and imagined maps. The first and second maps that I discuss are *existing* maps of Downtown Vancouver, while the third constitutes an *imagined* map layered overtop an existing map of the Geography Department at Simon Fraser University. Together, these tactics have particular ties with critical human geographies where similar concerns over dominant ways of seeing and understanding the world often lead to inaccurate descriptions of certain people as invisible, and the spaces in which they live as empty and uncivilized. Further, these Cartographic deconstructions encourage an expansion of spatial thinking that leads to different ways of dealing with space and spatialities.

The literatures on which my thesis is based comprise a decidedly interdisciplinary approach to Geographical debates, and in many ways, clearly resonate my present disciplinary positioning in Women's Studies. My sources range from feminist and queer

theories, to postcolonialism and the writings of women of colour, to critical social thought generally, to geographically informed creative writings, and of course, Geography. When it comes down to defining 'bodies' of literature relevant to the task at hand, reactions of skepticism and curiosity to interdisciplinary undertakings become common. My veritable *melange* of sources and ideas becomes understandable in the context of my goal to enrich both geographical and feminist debates, as two metamorphosing disciplines where the 'spatial' figures as a pivotal concern.

Specifically, my thesis draws from the ideas of Geographers like Trevor Barnes, David Bell, Alison Blunt, Liz Bondi, James Duncan, Derek Gregory, J.B. Harley, Graham Huggan, Michael Keith, Linda McDowell, Doreen Massey, Steven Pile, Gillian Rose, and Jill Valentine. Some of these Geographers explicitly identify as feminist, queer, or otherwise critical geographers, while others espouse a more peripheral association with feminism and other critical perspectives. I also incorporate some of the spatially informed ideas of Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Gloria Anzaldua, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Dick Hebdige, bell hooks, and Elspeth Probyn. Again, some of these theorists (especially Anzaldua, Butler, Grosz, hooks and Probyn), have a marked affinity with Women's Studies and/or with feminist work, while others (most notably Foucault) are glaringly ambivalent about feminist concerns.



### c / siting the ordinary

I was carrying a disproportionately large pack on my back and I was travelling alone. The assigned train seat next to me contained a large British man in a badly-fitted suit wielding a briefcase. As far as my eye could see, the other train seats around me contained remarkably similar business-type men in suits and ties, with the occasional business-type woman to break the monotony. The knees of the Suit beside me were splayed wide apart, his ape-like shoulder pushed mine aside ... he was half on my seat. Leaning over the (supposedly) neutral armrest between us, he wanted to know what a nice young Girl like me was doing travelling all by herself. His body language betrayed a barely-restrained desire to pat me on the head. I told him that I was visiting friends here, and I would soon be returning home to Canada to begin my Master's Degree. This puzzled the Suit, whose forehead shrunk into knots of quandary-induced wrinkles. I could tell he was pondering how the title, and accompanying knowledge, could possibly match my body, and how the body (a Ruffian-Girl in a sea of Suits) shouldn't have been by herself, unchaperoned, in another country. Too many contradictions. As if I was not even there, the Suit ignored me for the rest of the trip.

At the same time that my interest in Geography was being fostered, I was coming to realize how often I tended to creatively 'write through' complex spatial concerns and concepts as I experienced them on a daily basis. In the beginning, this process granted me a means to better make sense of complex spatial concepts and experiences with which I was grappling in my Academic work. By grounding them in my own immediate experience, as a woman living in the city and working in Academia, a lot of often baffling

ideas became clear. Later, as my Academic Geographical studies progressed, I began to realize the potential for what until then, seemed largely anecdotal, and sometimes indulgent, personal reflections. I began surreptitiously dropping excerpts into Academic papers with the aim to better explain, and materially ground, often abstracted Geographical concerns. What I realized was twofold: first, I came to understand how powerful and effective these stories could be as tools of explanation, and second, I learned first-hand how the 'ordinaryness' of (my own) everyday culture offers bridges between my Academic and 'everyday' spatial experiences.

Keeping in mind that my local knowledges of places are partial and sometimes cursory, and remembering the equally important dangers of displacing others into the peripheries of our own making (Probyn 1990:176), I have, throughout this work, inserted numerous such glimpses into the ordinariness of my own spatial interactions. As a running thread throughout this work, anecdotes appear as bordered paragraphs, (not incidentally) separated from the main body of the text. In an ironic reproduction of the uneasy relations between Academic work, and a situated engagement with everyday culture, the stories offer immediate examples of complicated, and sometimes inaccessible, concepts. In effect, I am turning the tables on the invisible flaneur/euse trope by providing between-the-lines readings that force the ('dis-embodied,' 'objective') gaze to don a body and a context. The idea that the seemingly ordinary, or everyday, has a significant place in critical thinking can bring about better understandings of the role and significance of spatial debates both within, and apart from, Academic inquiry. This tactic is in line with the goal of folding spatial concerns back upon themselves.

This process is not without tensions and ironies, in that the places and spaces that I describe are scattered across cities, countries, and in some cases, continents. My mobility indicates a certain privilege, and choice of movement, that I wholeheartedly acknowledge and try to take responsibility for. I have tried to locate myself as honestly and accurately as possible, even when (or especially?) these depictions give away the privilege of my mobility. This is counter to what I perceive as an equally problematic poverty/working class chic, or a 'ranking of oppressions' (Moraga:1982), where the more of one's identity that can be located on the 'margins,' the more authenticity of speaking voice one can claim, and the more non-compliance in structures of domination one is assumed to have. The fact that I undeniably enjoy a certain measure of mobility, should be qualified with the reality that I travel economy-class, I sleep in Youth Hostels, and I cannot afford to rent a car so my tours of cities are on foot. The contradictions between movement and limitation provide very particular depictions of spatialities, that rather than positing distanced and uncritical observation, add depth to common understandings of places and people by situating myself squarely within the spatial configurations I describe. The importance of privileging the lived aspects of human spatialities should be emphasized not unproblematically as vanity ethnography, but as narratives within which the idea of a "multiply placed/linked subject" serves to fracture margin/center dualisms (Grewel 1994:235). Ultimately, as Philomena Mariani (1991:12) writes, the goal is to decenter universalized subject positions and world-views: "...to be, finally, stripped of the familiar - impelling a process of self-critique."

## Chapter One - Subjects in space

It was late on a muggy Paris afternoon. I stood on the sidewalk outside of a friend's apartment in the seventeenth arrondissement. Shielding my eyes from the sun, I gazed way up at the target of my destination: Sacre Coeur. Quickly gauging the approximate angle between where I stood, and the steep and obtrusive slope harboring the cathedral, I set off. At least an hour later I was still wandering amongst a labyrinth of backstreets and passageways that sprawled around me like a knotted ball of string. So thoroughly had I become disoriented amidst the narrow streets and cobblestone roads that I no longer had a clue if I had at least found the hill, or remained on even ground.

As I wound my way higher and closer to the white gleaming cathedral of Sacre Coeur, I became increasingly aware of where and how other bodies factored into my surroundings, and the ways that my own presence may have jostled the bodies and spaces around me. Few women were alone like I was, and there were few women shopkeepers visibly tending to the businesses and restaurants that lined the streets. Many of the men relaxing in cafes, stretched out like cats on sidewalk tables and chairs, were engaged in animated exchanges with one another. Their eyes followed my passing, peering through glass or pausing from their conversations to glance up at my displaced figure. "*Mademoiselle, avez-vous besoin d'aide? Etes-Vous perdue?*"

Closer to the top of the hill appeared multitudes of artisans and street vendors selling trinkets and wares. My presence, and that of other foreigners like me, evoked from the vendors, gestures of encouragement to sit for a portrait, to taste fresh salty pretzels, or to try on rings and beaded necklaces. In contrast, when a pair of burly *gendarmes* arrived on the scene, many of the

vendors, presumably without the necessary permits, wrapped up their wares in blankets and scuttled off to another location. Sacre Coeur itself, I began to believe, had altogether disappeared ... perhaps having been swallowed up by a hill jam-packed full of buildings and knotted roads and people, that I suspected, but couldn't be sure, that I was still climbing.

After much map-consultation I did find Sacre Coeur that day, but I remain perplexed at how such an enormous landmark could have become obscured by a maze of what were in reality only three or four storey buildings. I am likewise amazed at how everyday combinations of people, spaces, and places, like the ones I encountered that afternoon, are similarly overlooked, or at least camouflaged, at first glance. Experiences like the one at Sacre Coeur have since led me to think carefully about how and why certain spatialities<sup>1</sup> are privileged over others, and about the role that Geographical discourses play in these configurations.

G/geographical discourses, as competing ways of seeing and understanding the world, encompass power discrepancies between people, different political and ideological concerns, and bodily prescriptions about behavior and visibility. On the one hand, critical human geographies, and the oppositional geographical discourses that frame their worldviews often call into question dominant constructions of places and people by offering everyday, material, immediate glimpses into different spatial possibilities. On the other hand, traditional Geography, and Geographical discourses, typically operate on the

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<sup>1</sup>I use the word 'spatiality' in the same capacity as Keith and Pile (1993:6) who deploy the term to refer to the way that the social and the spatial, or society and space, are "inextricably realized one in the other." This encompasses the many different conditions and circumstances in which people experience society and space.

assumption that there are immutable and empirically verifiable definitions of space, place and landscape. The tension between these views can be seen in the contrast between the allegedly out-of-place vendors on the streets leading to Sacre Coeur, and the *gendarmes* who, by virtue of their presence alone, effortlessly cleared a vendor-free path in front of them. This plainly suggested that some bodies 'belonged' there more than others, and that some people's understandings and experiences of space (those of the *gendarmes*) are typically seen to be more 'valid' than others (the vendors).

In response to such tensions, the goal of this chapter is to show how suspicion on the part of critical human geographers, and on the part of their many and varied precursors, has led to major reformulations of the discourses of Geography. I suggest that one of the biggest strengths of critical human geographies and oppositional geographical discourses is their attention to the 'ordinary' and the 'everyday,' like for example, the overlapping spatial interactions that unfolded on my journey to Sacre Coeur. Further, I argue that Women's Studies, as one of the sources from which critical human geographers draw inspiration in theorizing the everyday, can benefit from increased, and more explicit attention to the spatial. Although many feminists have long emphasized the importance of the everyday conditions of existence as a fundamental precept of their theorizing, the role of space itself often remains only implicitly alluded to. For instance, specific sites like the home or the workplace are commonly debated by feminists for their associations with certain people based on factors like gender, race, or age. However what is often left unaddressed is the fundamental role of space and place as intrinsic to the formulation of

everyday understandings of places and people, and not merely as a backdrop for social interaction.

I begin my discussion by expanding on the differences between dominant and oppositional G/geographical discourses. Next, I trace some pertinent elements in the metamorphosis of Geography leading to the burgeoning of critical human geographies, and by extension, oppositional geographical discourses. This overview spans contributions both of prefigurative spatial theorists like Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre, as well as more recent, and explicitly feminist theorizing around the profound spatial implications of the body as a politicized site of struggle and contestation. Next, I discuss the role of the ordinary and the everyday within both feminist and critical geographical debate, with specific attention to how and why Women's Studies would benefit from more explicit attention to the spatial. Citing Dorothy E. Smith's (1991) *The Everyday World as Problematic*, as an example, I argue that while the significance of the everyday has long been maintained by feminists and other critical theorists, what remains undertheorized in Women's Studies are the material spaces within which daily life transpires. Lastly, I review feminist geography, queer geography, and postcolonial geography, as examples of variously-aligned oppositional discourses, and conclude that one of their fundamental strengths is the attention to everyday, embodied spatial configurations. Similarly, I conclude that Women's Studies would benefit from more careful attention to the importance to space.

## what's discourse got to do with it?

*Discourses* can be considered the framework within which concepts, ideologies, and signs become relevant to particular realms of social action (Barnes and Duncan 1992:8). Three important characteristics of discourses are that:

(1) They constitute both a 'way of knowing' and a form of knowledge. The meaning that discourses construct coincides with power relations.(Corry 1991:F4).

In other words, the production and reproduction of discourses (usually associated with institutions) reflect the power relations of the socio-political realities of particular societies.

(2) Discourses establish limits "within which ideas and practices are considered to be 'natural,' that is, they set the bounds on what questions are considered relevant or even intelligible."

(3) Discourses vary among groups of people due to factors like space, place, culture, class, race, ethnicity, or gender. Although competing and often oppositional discourses may evolve among different groups, there is often a fairly stable 'discursive formation' (usually coinciding with the dominant ideology) in which these competing discourses coexist (Barnes and Duncan 1992:8-9).

Taking these descriptions as a point of departure, the factors that make a discourse 'Geographical' in the dominant sense, can be typified by two fundamental characteristics. First, Geographical discourses reify a polarized understanding of the world standardized



around binaries<sup>2</sup> like real vs. imagined, objective vs. subjective, and material vs. mental (Soja 1996). Most significant is the fundamental dualism of time vs. space itself, where time is privileged over space as the most reliable organizer of the world (Massey 1994:257). The role that such dualisms, and their associated meanings, play in naturalizing essentialist, and otherwise oppressive social relations is significant. Time, the typically privileged half of the duo, often comes to be defined by masculinity, order, rationality, dynamism, movement, progress, and history. Space, its alleged opposite, is associated with femininity: the body, deadness, disorder, emotion, simplicity, unpredictability, and stasis (Massey 1994:256-257). This division serves to reinforce particular cultural and societal prescriptions, both because the underemphasis of spatial concerns (obviously a problem unto itself) becomes synonymous with a depreciation of all things feminine, and because the primary association of the male-female and time-space dualisms, result in the displacement of equally significant geographies of race, class, sexuality, and/or ethnicity.

Second, and perhaps even more characteristic of Geographical discourses, are the colonialist assumptions upon which they are premised. Geography assumes that

a discursive space was already reserved for [it]; that one simply had to wait for the explorers, surveyors and settlers to appear and convert that immanent claim into a palpable reality (Gregory 1994:8).

History (assumed to begin at the moment of colonization) is seen to be produced on a pre-ordained stage where both the landscape and its indigenous inhabitants are duly categorized, named, and incorporated into the ideological frameworks of the colonizers

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<sup>2</sup>Such a polarized world-view has roots in many contemporary philosophers' views where Western thought in general is alleged to have a 'logic' of binary oppositions that treats difference as that which is other-than the accepted norm (Braidotti 1994:78). Beginning with Plato, and carrying through to philosophers like Saussure and Derrida, the polarized organization of the world presumed by Geography should be understood in the context of a legacy of dualistic thinking in the West.

(Gregory 1994:172). This kind of colonizing mentality operates on anywhere from a global scale, to the everyday and the micro-political. For instance, the colonial discourses that help legitimate practices of regional conquest and exclusion, contribute to similar everyday displacements like those that transpired on the steps of Sacre Coeur.

The point of drawing out the two main characteristics of a dominant Geographical discourse is that in clarifying what is being opposed in these views, better understandings of how *oppositional* geographical discourses differ can be facilitated. Oppositional geographical discourses differ most significantly from dominant discourses in the shift to considering space and spatialities as intrinsic to power, knowledge and subjectivity instead of as a neutral backdrop for social action. Critical human geographers, whose worldviews are generally framed by oppositional geographical discourses, typically have a stake in reformulating geographical thought and practice through their everyday lived struggles having to do with location, mobility, power, and embodiment. In this way, oppositional geographical discourses usually aim to draw attention to practices of displacement and distanciation by emphasizing the heterogeneous, and sometimes contradictory nature of socio-spatial life. Once again, an example can be seen in the conglomerate of competing spatialities on the steps leading to Sacre Coeur. To better contextualize these shifts in ways of seeing and understanding the world, some prefigurative elements in the reassertion of space in critical social theory merit discussion. To illustrate some of these shifts in the ways that time, history, space, and the body, have commonly been understood, I will discuss aspects of the work of Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault.

## **theoretical underpinnings**

In the late 1960s, the centrality and comprehensiveness of many Modernist schools of thought were being called into question. Critics in disparate social movements were addressing the restructuring of contemporary understandings of history, space, and lived experience (Soja 1989:4). Up until this time, Geography had experienced very little radical critique compared with many other social sciences. Among the early critical responses to this omission was Marxist Geography. Inspired by a critique of 'establishment' Geography, and by various political uprisings in the late 1960s, Marxist Geography can be described as the study of geographical questions using the analytical insights, concepts and theoretical framework of Marxism (Johnston et. al. 1994: 365). In focusing on the geographies of 'advanced' capitalist societies, Marxist Geography initially aimed to situate geographical questions and concerns within a broader social and political context.

Marxist Geography argued that spatial analyses anchored by predominantly positivist assumptions were flawed in at least three ways: First, positivist spatial analyses reinforced ruling social ideologies by treating existing geographical realities as spatial and not social patterns. Second, positivist analyses endorsed traditional class-based economic definitions of 'efficient location.' An example of this process would be the way that the alleged 'social usefulness' of decisions of where to locate factories, supermarkets and social services reinforced, rather than challenged, a 'spatial technology' for capital. Third, universalized spatial laws inferred by positivist spatial analyses served to negate the

diversity of spatial arrangements in different societies and cultures (Johnston et. al. [eds.] 1994: 365).

By the early 1980s, Marxism had come to exercise considerable influence within Geography (Johnston et. al. [eds.] 1994: 369). Among its lasting contributions are a sophisticated political economic analysis that links the geography of capitalism to political and economic processes in the wider society. Marxist Geography has also contributed to a legacy of challenging often inflexible conceptions of space commonly employed in Geographical research. Further, it helped initiate awareness of the ways that capitalism is responsible for the configuration of specific landscapes - from urban geographies, to environmental depreciation, to global 'development' (Johnston et. al. [eds.] 1994:366-369).

Post-Marxist Geography represents yet another approach different from, but still considered Marxist in scope. Not so much a movement or a theoretical position, post-Marxist Geography can be considered a reference point for the various efforts over the past two decades to respond to what is seen by some as the limitations of classical Marxism as social theory, as politics and as practice. Post-Marxism constitutes a discernible break from traditional Marxism, while also representing a continuation in new form. Among the most important post-Marxist concerns are a recognition of the fundamental importance of Marx's initial tenets, while adding vigorous criticisms of the ethnocentricity and imperialism implicit in Marxist theory. Second, post-Marxism espouses a recognition of, and respect for, difference that translates into new conceptions of the subject. In this capacity, post-Marxist debates can include feminist, and other critical

theorizing that concern themselves with difference and identity. Third, post-Marxism offers critiques of the economism of Marxism that assumes all societal inequities are economically rooted (Johnston et. al. [eds.] 1994:461-462).

Based on post-Marxist reconfigurations of Marxism, neo-Marxists are considered those contemporary theorists who no longer expect a direct link between position in the class structure and class consciousness in action, and who interpret the constitution of class identity as a highly contingent sociopolitical activity (Johnston et. al. [eds.] 1994:70). Often politically motivated, neo-Marxist concerns recognize multiple and varying axes of oppression that include, but are not limited to economic sites. Through their varying contributions, neo-Marxist Geographers like David Harvey, Dick Walker, and Edward Soja have reinvigorated classical Marxism. David Harvey's (1973) *Social Justice in the City* is a pivotal neo-Marxist work that marked a transition from the use of gradational to relational approaches to class in geography. Harvey's book represents one of the first attempts to interpret the structure and functioning of economies as cultural, social and historic entities where definitive relations are drawn between culture and economy (Johnston et. al. [eds.] 1994: 151). Similarly, Dick Walker reviews various attempts to resolve the abstractions about class *structure* to analyses of class *structure, consciousness* and *formation* in concrete societies. He argues that the abstract definition of class must be 'recast' in each historical context (Johnston et. al. [eds.] 1994:70). Ed Soja's neo-Marxist stance is evidenced in his criticism of the classical Western Marxist depiction of space and time as static and fixed. Instead, Soja insists that human geographies are fluid and filled with power, politics and ideology (Soja 1989:7).

Since the time of its general inception, the tenets of Marxist Geography<sup>3</sup> have been augmented and transformed by affiliations with other critical social theories and theorists. Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre<sup>4</sup> are two among many theorists whose insights, in conjunction with transformations including Marxist Geography, have contributed to a rethinking of the relationships amongst concepts of space, time and the social. The contributions of Foucault and Lefebvre emerge as a radical break from the pervasive (Western) way of understanding the world as a series of dualisms like objective vs. subjective, real vs. imagined, or material vs. mental. Instead, Foucault and Lefebvre posit a trialectics of spatiality that inextricably link space, time, and social being (Soja 1996). Their roles in reasserting the importance of space are based, in part, on then-current structuralist debates that can be broadly characterized as a set of principles and procedures based primarily on linguistic philosophy, but whose applications in contemporary Human Geography have varied, and continue to expand. From a basic concern with the way that meaning is produced within language, and not reflected through it, structuralism encompasses criticisms of the idea of a unified, all-knowing, and rational subject. Concerned with configurations of meaning and subjectivity, structuralism has provided important groundwork for the subsequent *post*structuralist turn in Human Geography that

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<sup>3</sup>For the purposes of this project, my treatment of Marxist Geography will be limited to an emphasis on its role as prefigurative to subsequent transformations to the Discipline. My focus will be on the more encompassing challenge that has been mounted by postmodern and poststructuralist critiques, where issues of difference and identity are privileged. This should not imply that Marxism and class analysis do not figure as crucial aspects of Geographical concern. Rather, my focus aims to open up Marxism and other social theory to a consideration of additional intersections of social difference and diversity.

<sup>4</sup>Throughout this work, when citing or quoting theorists I use the present tense even if the author in question is no longer living, or has since reconfigured her or his views. It is my feeling that the texts to which I refer are 'alive' in the sense that they remain open to discussion, contestation, and reinterpretation.

further emphasizes the interplay between space, subjectivity, agency, and power (Johnston et al., 1994:468).

Foucault's incorporation of structuralism challenges common understandings of time and history. As one of the most important avenues for the reassertion of space in critical social theory this century (Soja 1989:18), structuralism does not, in Foucault's view, necessitate a completely anti-historical stance, but a different way of dealing with time and history than had been previously seen. The spatialization of history involves criticisms of historicist views, resulting in challenges to the immutability and comprehensiveness of what is commonly held as historical 'truth.' (Soja and Hooper 1993:199). Both Foucault and Lefebvre respectively show how history is entwined with the social production of space. This restructuring essentially serves to open up history to an interpretive geography that considers not just the geometry of spatial structure, but more importantly, the many and varied layers of the cultural or social landscapes in question (Soja 1989:18). From this underlying premise, Foucault turns his attention toward the spatiality of social life by theorizing the relations between and among so-called 'external' or socially-mediated spaces (Soja 1989:17). While not completely negating the importance of historical locatedness, Foucault endeavors to emphasize the ways that spatialities, as sites of lived, and socially-meaningful experience, are simultaneously abstract *and* concrete.

An example of this simultaneity can be seen in the Parisian scenario described above where space is understood as inherently relational. In this sense, the spatial understanding of the Parisian streets where I got lost should be limited neither to an

individual dematerialized viewpoint, nor to a disembodied repository of concrete forms (Soja 1989:17). Rather, the lived and socially (re)produced spatiality I describe results from a combination of social practices *and* materialized reality. Inherent in this view is a redefinition of the experience of everyday life by those whose heterogeneous and situated understandings of lived daily experiences offer alternatives to the idea that there are limited ways to understand everyday spatial experiences (Johnston et. al., 1989:196).

To illustrate the relationality of space, Foucault posits heterotopias as places

which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted (1986:24).

Foucault insists that there is no one absolutely universal form of heterotopia, and that heterotopias constitute neither a substanceless void to be filled by abstractions, nor an empty container, inside of which we can place people and things (Foucault 1986:23). In an argument that arises in similar form from Lefebvre, Foucault's heterotopologies are meant to describe the very real, simultaneous, and lived spaces in which we live our lives, while leading away from a reductionist binary of time and space that downplays the social in favor of time as a reliable organizer of the world (Soja 1996).

Foucault's arguments begin to take a new direction from his interest in 'other spaces,' when he expands his analysis to include the linkage between space, knowledge, and power that emerges as a thread through the majority of his work (cited in Soja 1989:20). Foucault argues that power is not a totalising system, but instead is diffused throughout the whole social order, from the seemingly small-scale sites of the body, to larger institutional structures. For Foucault, the exercise of power through social relations,



the state, and other institutions can be likened to a spatial field full of competing political and ideological concerns (Smith and Katz 1993:72). Societal institutions like the home, the workplace, the prison, the asylum, and the hospital, are given as examples of sites for the construction and maintenance of what Foucault calls docile bodies. Institutions like these facilitate mechanisms of control, discipline and surveillance that become particularly important in the production of docile bodies, that reify "historically specific and spatially specific ideas of what are normal and appropriate forms of the presentation of self and daily behavior in particular spaces" (McDowell 1995:78).

Many of Foucault's fundamental assertions are shared by Henri Lefebvre, namely, that representations of space function as technologies of power, and as disciplinary technologies that produce docile bodies (Gregory 1994:405). Edward Soja (1989:47-49) cites Lefebvre as perhaps the most influential theorist in Western Marxism and the most forceful advocate for the reassertion of space in critical social theory after the 1950s. Lefebvre's theorization of space is difficult to summarize because it touches on just about every aspect of social theory and philosophy. For the purposes of this work, two of Lefebvre's major assertions will be summarized. First is his emphasis on the trialectics of space, that is, the importance of considering not only the geometry of space but also its lived practices and symbolic meanings (Massey 1994:251). Second is his 'defiant insistence' on the body as the site of resistance (Gregory 1994:159).

Lefebvre is without a doubt responsible for extremely innovative and far-reaching changes to the ways Geography, history, and society have come to be understood.

Lefebvre's reconfiguration of the spatial as inseparable from the social, highlights specific uses and understandings of space. "Social space," he writes,

is constituted neither by a collection of things or an aggregate of (sensory) data, nor by a void packed like a parcel with various contents, and it is irreducible to a 'form' imposed upon phenomena, upon physical materiality (1991:27).

In other words, space is neither a quantifiable 'container' for human action, nor is it a purely mental construct. Instead, Lefebvre argues for a trialectic in the lived world between spatial practices (physical space), representations of space (mental spaces), and spaces of representation (the lived) (cited by Soja 1996). His analysis of social space includes the myths of transparency and opaqueness that in his view, serve to mask the social production and reproduction of space (Keith and Pile 1993:24). The illusion of transparency dematerializes space into purely mental abstraction, while the illusion of opaqueness reduces space to concretized, and usually disembodied, forms (Lefebvre 1991:27-30). Both deny the social constructedness of geographies, the social relations embedded in spatiality, and the power dynamics inherent in the 'making' of geographies. (Soja 1989:7).

In another similarity shared with Foucault, Lefebvre insists on the significance of the body as a politicized site of resistance with profound spatial implications. "Indeed," writes Lefebvre, "the fleshly (spatio-temporal) body is in revolt" (Lefebvre 1991:201). The revolt to which he refers is securely situated in the present, immediate, and materialized realities of the everyday. He asserts that "the body in question is 'ours' - our body which is disdained, absorbed, and broken into pieces by images" (Lefebvre 1991:201). Lefebvre describes social space as entailing bodily restrictions and prescriptions. But, he is also

careful to emphasize, (and encourage) spatialities of the body as sites of resistance and transgression (Lefebvre 1991:201). This shift, which will be expanded upon in the politicized bodies section below, serves to contest the “spiriting-away of the body” common in spatial debate.

The arguments of Foucault and Lefebvre are particularly relevant to this discussion in two related ways. First, the consistent emphasis on drawing spatial practices and representations back to an immediate and lived dimension coincides with the way that critical human geographies generally strive for this same goal. Lefebvre (1991:94) consistently argues for the primacy of everyday life, artifacts, and occurrences, in understanding the production of space. He criticizes the way that the study of ‘real’ (i.e. social) space is so often relegated to ‘specialists’ like geographers, town-planners, and sociologists. He writes that “surely it is the supreme illusion to defer to architects, urbanists or planners as being experts or ultimate authorities in matters relating to space” (Lefebvre 1991:95). Similarly, Foucault’s attention to how space figures in the ideological and material construction of institutions like the home, the prison, and the hospital, gestures toward the need to question taken-for-granted spatial arrangements of everyday life. Especially for women and others’ for whom spaces like these often resonate with tendencies for naturalization, containment and surveillance; a critique of the seemingly ‘ordinary’ is critical.

The second way Foucault and Lefebvre are relevant to the present discussion is their contribution not only of recognizing space as produced, but of emphasizing the role and significance of the ‘body’ in spatial configurations of power, identity, and subjectivity.

Lefebvre fairly successfully draws links between embodied difference, and space. Ironically though, Foucault generally emerges as blithely unaware that the bodies he describes in relation to institutionalized spaces are impossibly generic. The shortcomings, especially on the part of Foucault, in distinguishing between bodies marked as gendered, racialized, classed, and so on, mean that his relationships with feminism, and with critical social thought generally, have been uneasy ones<sup>5</sup> (McDowell 1995:78). Nevertheless, it is important to note how these discussions have incited heated debates and criticisms leading to the growing significance, in critical human geographies, of the 'body' and of identity politics. Presently, gender, sexuality, race, age, and so on, are increasingly being understood as fundamental components in the formation of oppositional geographical discourses.

### **politicized bodies**

With particular reference to Human Geography, attention to the microgeographies of the body draws from a wide range of theoretical influences: cultural, poststructural, and postcolonial theories; the writings of women of colour, bisexual people, lesbian women, gay men, transgendered people, aboriginal women, people with disabilities, and women from 'developing' countries (Johnston et. al. 1994:194). All these approaches focus attention on the construction of differences across races, ethnicities, religions, sexualities,

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<sup>5</sup>For more detailed discussions on Feminism and Foucault, see Jana Sawicki (1988) *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body*, (New York: Routledge), Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (eds.), (1988) *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press), Lois McNay (1992) *Foucault and Feminism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press), Nancy Fraser (1989) *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

and nationalities; and on the positioning of certain 'bodies' along these multiple axes of difference (Johnston et. al. 1994:195).

Socio-spatial processes are often organized around difference. Differences, being fundamental to human experience, have "no fixed form or essence," but are instead comprised of heterogeneous experiences and perspectives (Knopp 1995:159). The process of making these differences socially intelligible involves the association of various experiences with particular markers, and the construction of these markers as the essences of difference. Although often identified as body features (race, age, sex, gender, able-bodiedness), markers of difference can also be practices, symbols, language, and particularly relevant to this discussion: space. Lawrence Knopp (1995:159) writes that "because human beings exist in space, these differences and the social relations they constitute are also inherently spatial." In an argument reminiscent of Lefebvre, Knopp asserts that bodies and interbodily space are understood to be comprised of what Lefebvre (1991:213) calls *materials* (e.g., heredity, objects) that act as 'starting-points', and the *materiel* (e.g., behavior, patterns, conditioning) which often translate into stereotypes. Stereotypes often reiterate and reinforce meanings attached to (bodily) differences, that in turn, contribute to the formation of identity.

Recent attention to the body, especially by feminists, postcolonial, and poststructural theorists, emphasizes the *construction* of identities, which in turn, emerge through difference which does not take any two (constructed) identities as equivalent, "precisely because power relations between the two identities determine the nature of

articulation” (Keith and Pile 1993:28-29). Emphasis on the so-called performative nature of sexual (and other aspects of) identity translates to mean that

such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (Butler 1990:136).

Culturally and historically varying prescriptions about what it means to be a man or a woman, are examples of the performativity of (in this case) gendered identity. Rather than concretizing essentialist ideas, this emphasis on the body as politicised means that

there is no transhistorical male or female body or essence but rather what is called the body is a site and expression of different, interested power relations at various times and places (McDowell 1995:79).

In line with Foucault’s disciplining of bodies, these so-called ‘normative’ bodies, are disciplined not through physical coercion, but through self-surveillance and self-correction, usually coinciding with prevailing notions of self, ideals of physical appearance, sexual identity and ‘acceptable’ behavior (McDowell 1995:78).

Harkening back to my childhood career as a Trekkie, I remember how the women I saw on the Enterprise appeared as hopelessly incongruous with my own experiences of being a girl in the world. My own spatial understandings of place and social life seemed light years away from the apparently commonsense supposition that my girl-body on the bridge of the Enterprise would have simultaneously rendered me highly visible as an apparently out-of-place body, but also *invisible* as an assumed non-contributor to significant social and cultural processes. It seemed that if my female body wanted in on the action, it would have unavoidably been as Kirk or Spock’s love interest, and (sadly for me) not as Away-team Leader or Chief Engineer. In other words, the way that certain bodies

are constructed as aberrant or out-of-place, coincides with fluctuating combinations between the bodies in question, the spaces they are in, and the degrees to which they adhere to dominant prescriptions of embodied, and other aspects, of identity.

Elsbeth Probyn reiterates these concerns when she writes that

space is a pressing matter and it matters which bodies, where and how, press up against it. Most important of all is who these bodies are with: in what historical and actual spatial configuration they find and define themselves (1995:81).

Probyn emphasizes that bodies exist only in relation to other bodies, and is echoing concerns raised by Elisabeth Grosz, among others. Grosz (1992:50) questions what the relation of space does to one's body to produce it as a particular kind of body, with specific social expectations or limitations, and what that particular body does to space and to ensuing social interactions with other bodies.

The recent predominance of the 'body' in feminist and other critical theorizing, as a politicized site of 'constantly changing inscription' (Butler cited in Bell and Valentine 1995:9), adds an inescapably lived dimension to the formation of geographical and other oppositional discourses. Within these frameworks, the body as gendered, sexed, racialized, aged, and so on, has profound consequences on the ways that space and place are experienced, interpreted, and understood. Conversely, space and place can contribute, through repetitive association, to the construction of identity based on (usually embodied) markers (Bell and Valentine 1995:9). It is in this sense that (embodied) identities and their conditions of existence are seen to be inseparable components of oppositional geographical discourses. In an admittedly contingent, but far from un-self-reflexive, way of looking at, and understanding the world, critical analyses (feminist, geographical, and otherwise) show

how articulations of identity are always at least partially made up by the forces that oppose it, and the contradictions that it faces (Keith and Pile 1993:27). Critical human geographies, in particular, have been instrumental in fortifying nuanced analyses of the body and identity, without overlooking the equally important role of the spatial in these debates, or ignoring the significance of the everyday representational spaces that are outside “the hermetic world of the literary or academic text” (Keith and Pile 1993:33).

### **[everyday] oppositional discourses of geography**

The ways that Geography is marked by its own origins becomes glaringly evident when juxtaposed with oppositional geographical discourses. While traditional Geography often privileges definitive, supposedly neutral understandings of both the bodies and the spaces in question, oppositional geographies espouse the idea of relationality, where everyday spaces and the social are seen to be inextricably bound up with the shifting and provisional production of each other. In this sense, one of the most significant characteristics of these discourses is an emphasis on the ordinary and the everyday.

This accountability to the everyday is one of the fundamental strengths of critical human geographies. The responsiveness to the urgencies of daily life particularize underrepresented social realities whose location-specific knowledges are not included in ‘grand narratives’ that create the supposedly common-sense understandings of Geographical ‘progress,’ of autonomous individuality, of ‘History’ and of ‘Space’ (Chang



1994:100). Referring to the 'culture of everyday life,' cultural theorist John Fiske writes that

it works only to the extent that it is impregnated into its immediate historical and social settings ... [It] is a way of embodying and living the contradictory relations between the dominant social order and the variety of subaltern formations within it (1991: 154,157).

Similarly, cultural critic Dick Hebdige advocates the *ordinariness* of everyday culture, and the place of the ordinary within critical thinking

because, perhaps, the ultimate other of modernism is not only the exoticized, feared but desired fringe .... but the ordinary, the mediocre, the unglamorous, even the petty bourgeois (1993:278).

The ordinary, in this sense, serves to make socio-spatial life more intelligible, and to challenge the matter-of-factness of social 'facts' that isolate and decontextualize instances of marginalization (Gregory 1994:12).

Many of these recent spatial reconfigurations are influenced by the work of women, gay men, lesbians, and women of colour; writing from and about specific positions, locations, and spatialities. In this sense, critical human geographers owe a debt to feminisms, and other critical thinking for lending a more nuanced focus to the micropolitics of daily life. Many feminist theorists in particular have strong views on the significance of the everyday in their politics. Donna Haraway (1991:187), for example, advocates "a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world." Similarly, Sandra Harding (1991:130) discusses the ways that women's struggles to improve the quality of daily life constitute important strategies of political resistance.

One of the ways that feminist theorizing has contributed to the incorporation of the everyday by critical geographers, is in offering tactics to guard against the recuperation of

individualism. Individualist readings of space occur when every person's understanding of space is seen to be equally true, and when no attention is paid to the social interactions that contribute to subjecthood. Far from being completely absolved of this tendency themselves, feminist and postcolonial critics have nevertheless undertaken self-reflexive responses to criticisms of 'the politics of everyday life' as being uncritical celebrations of individual experience and perception where accountability to differentials of power and mobility are lost.

The danger of inadvertently recuperating the 'self-directing' subject of Enlightenment humanism is not an unusual tendency in debates like these (Chang 1994:107). Taking their cue in part from feminist, and other critical theorizing, critical human geographers are becoming increasingly aware of the need to take responsibility for unlearning the exclusions on which identities are based. In a move that sheds light on possible interdependencies, connections, and strategic alliances; critical human geographers generally strive to maintain awareness that their work does not constitute "an unproblematic reflection of the world," based on self-sustaining and self-directed subjects. Instead, critical human geographers generally align themselves with feminisms, and other critical perspectives that posit "interventions in the world." In this sense, socio-political reformulations are brought to bear on themselves by ensuring the maintenance of connections with the ordinary meanings that are embedded in the day-to-day (relational) negotiations of lifeworlds (Gregory 1994:3).

On the other hand, where Women's Studies and feminist theory can benefit from critical human geographies is in more explicit attention to space and place themselves.

Although the everyday has long been held by feminists and other critical theorists as inherently politicized, and even in light of recent increasingly stringent self-criticism of everyday politics, what ironically remain undertheorized in Women's Studies are the material spaces within which daily life unfolds. Specific sites like the home, the workplace, and 'public' spaces, figure commonly in feminist debates around safety, confinement, displacement and resistance. However, the role of space as intrinsic to configurations of power, identity, and subjectivity is often lost, and place becomes merely a backdrop for social interaction.

An example can be seen in the work of Dorothy Smith, who argues for a sociology of women beginning with women's actual lived experience, and stemming from women's exclusion from dominant culture (1991:2-3). Smith's analysis develops from the premise that women are excluded from the 'ruling apparatus' of culture, which she describes as the intersection of the institutions that organize and regulate society (1991:3). Culture, in turn, is understood not as having arisen spontaneously, but rather as being manufactured by those in positions of dominance (mostly men) (1991:54). From this perspective, Smith posits an alternative sociology beginning with women's actual lived experience (1991:2-3). This alternative sociology advocates the unique 'standpoint' of women as

the method that creates the space for an absent experience that is to be filled with the presence and spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actualities of their everyday worlds (1991:107).

Smith insists that for subjects situated in the actualities of their everyday worlds, a sociology for women offers an understanding of how those worlds are "organized and determined by social relations immanent in and extending beyond them" (1991:106).

Smith's emphasis on the everyday often implies close and important links between and among specific places: the ghettoized workplaces of secretaries, the home as the assumed realm of women, and various sites where "other ancillary roles" of women are undertaken. In this capacity, space and place figure implicitly in her argument. In other places in her text, Smith explicitly refers to the ways the subjects interact within

*particular local places ... mediating the relation of the impersonal and objectified forms of action to the concrete local and particular worlds in which all of us exist (1991:107-108, emphasis mine).*

Nevertheless, Smith, and other feminist theorists, often fail to draw out the ways that space and place are intrinsic elements of the socio-spatial equation, and not merely arenas of action. As Pratt and Hanson (1994:8) insist, places are more than vantage points that veil or disclose one's social location: "they partially constitute social location." The issues of subjectivity and knowledge inherent in Smith's sociology of women, although embodied, are often not fully situated in relation to and with space and place (Pratt and Hanson 1994:9).

Take the example of the workplace, theorized respectively by critical human geographers Linda McDowell and Jill Valentine. While encompassing many of the same concerns as Smith (the ghettoization of certain tasks, the invisibility of certain workers), McDowell and Valentine's arguments differ in their treatment of the (hetero)sexed, (often) masculine spaces of offices themselves as intrinsic contributors to very specific social expectations including behaviour and appearance. In this sense, Kathleen M. Kirby (1996:18) writes that "the subject and its form ... are tied into particular material spaces, like bodies or countries, ghettos or suburbs, kitchens or boardrooms." Consequently, just

as critical human geographers have benefited from feminists' theorizing of the everyday, so too can Women's Studies profit from more careful attention to space and place. The critical human geographies described below, can serve as examples for Women's Studies of how space and place figure as inherent to theorizing social life.

### **critical human geographies**

The overviews of feminist, queer, and postcolonial geographies that follow all adhere to distinct, but overlapping ways of seeing the world that shape their respective analyses and responses. The crux of socio-spatial criticisms range in focus from masculinism, in the case of feminist geography; to heteronormativity in the case of queer geography; to colonialist in the case of postcolonial geography. What the responses to these criticisms generally share in common is attention to the 'everyday' and the 'embodied' as sites and contexts of potentially radical challenges to dominant (Geographical and other) discourses. Feminist, queer, and postcolonial geographies comprise geographies in process that are not discrete entities unto themselves, nor do they constitute the breadth of oppositional geographical inquiry. Taken together as a collection of non-traditional geographical ways of seeing the world, they begin to reconcile the gaps forged between traditional academic Geographical inquiry (neutral, distant, objective), and lived daily experience (relational, material, immediate). The resulting reconfigurations can effect significant consequences both on the 'real world,' and on the site of Academia itself.

## **feminist geographies**

Coinciding with the 'women's rights movement' in North America and Western Europe, some of the first expressions of concern over the role of women in geographic professions, and as objects of geographical study, began in the 1970s (Bondi 1990:438). Initially critics challenged the orthodoxies of traditional Western Geographical practices that concerned themselves primarily with the experiences of men. The geographies of women, as assessed by women themselves, focussed attention on the specificities of women's experiences of space and place, while seeking transformations not only to Geography as a Discipline, but more importantly to the ways that societies live and work together (Bondi 1990:438). Influenced by liberal feminist tenets, early feminist geography tended to centre around the description of the effects of gender inequality, and on constraints of distance and spatial separation (Johnston et. al. 1994:194).

As an oppositional geographical discourse, feminist geography has typically posited the dismantling of masculinism as the predominant 'way of seeing' the world. Michele Le Doeuff (cited in Rose 1993:7) defines 'masculinism,' or 'masculinist rationalism,' as the alleged exhaustiveness of masculinist claims to knowledge where the assumed uniformity of masculine subject positions means that difference can be understood only in relation to men. Feminist geographers argue that the masculinist rationality of Geography has typically resulted in a belief that Geographers constitute 'detached explorers' who produce 'transcendent visions' of neutral truth untouched by the contexts in which they are produced (Rose 1993:7). The legacy of confining women to the sphere of the 'studied,'

ensures a biased and partial account of what counts as geographical knowledge and who is seen fit to produce and possess it. Even more significant to feminist geographers, are the exclusions, displacements, and erasures, effected on certain women and men, resulting from masculinist Geographical worldviews.

In response to these exclusions, inceptive feminist geographical analyses primarily encompassed work on the spatial behavior of women, stemming from a previously undertheorized dichotomy between the two sexes (McDowell 1991:123). Building on a simplistic and Eurocentric public/masculine-private/feminine association, feminist geographers undertook detailed analyses of women in everyday spaces, encompassing women's daily spatialities of work, shopping, socializing, childcare, and domestic labour (Rose 1993:23) Such considerations differed from traditional Geographical inquiries, both in positing women as agents not objects of geographical focus, and in attention to everyday (and assumed to be insignificant) spaces in socio-spatial analyses.

Initially referred to as 'time-geographies,' the aim of early feminist geographical examinations of women's time-space routines is described by Gillian Rose (1993:25) as that of locating women in the everyday. Using time-geographies to show the restrictions on women's lives, was meant to prove that women's lives were different from men's. Rose explains that these differences were "usually seen in terms of mobility, in movement through time-space, and in the constraints which caused this differential geography" (1993:25). An example of a feminist time-geography would be Isabel Dyck's (1989:329-41) work on women's increased participation in the waged labour force in a suburb of Vancouver, and how the pressures women faced combining home and waged work

affected changes to daily paths traced, and to their time-use allocation. In this case, a feminist time-geography shows the conjunction of women's spatial experiences working outside of the home, with societal expectations about motherhood and about femininity in general.

The shortcomings of time-geographies quickly became apparent on several counts. Time-geographies fostered an over-emphasis on eurocentric public-private dichotomies, and conjoined essentialist notions of womanhood whereby the universalized category of 'woman' was overwhelmingly being associated with the maternal and/or the domestic (McDowell 1991:124). These two factors point to what McDowell (1991:124) cites as "theoretical assumptions based on ethnocentric notions and a rather uncritical use of conceptual polarities." Added to these omissions was an emphasis on restriction and constraint in women's mobility, instead of equally privileging women's spaces of subversion, agency, or resistance. Derek Gregory (1994:127-128) agrees that social practices and identities (like motherhood or womanhood) can be formed and reproduced through specific locales, and in conjunction with 'time-budgets' or 'time-space unpacking.' However, he argues that the construction of social meaning derived from feminist time-geographies should

treat not 'place' but places and would describe them not only as meaningful sites within a symbolic landscape - a common omission from time-geography - but also as sites between and within which identities are negotiated (1994:128).

In response, over the past decade there has been a marked shift from the consideration of gender *roles*, including the previously undertheorized social and political differences among women and men respectively, to an increasingly nuanced analysis of the



social construction of gendered (and other aspects of) *identity*, both in the relations of power between and among women and men (McDowell 1993:159). This shift in focus entails explanations of gender inequality, and the geographical relevance of the relations between capitalism and patriarchy (Johnston et. al. 1994:194). Based on more careful attention to the politics of identity, contemporary feminist geographical inquiry shows a broad range of areas of concern: dissident sexualities, urban politics, women and disability, labour markets, historical re-readings, postmodern and poststructural debates, and the politics of Academia itself.

Many feminist geographers continue to adhere to the belief that feminism remains consistently marginalized from mainstream Geography, given the continued masculinism of Geographical discourse (Rose 1993:3-4). In this way, feminism is seen to remain 'outside the project' (Christopherson,1989) of Geography, largely as a result of traditional Geography's claims "to truth and universality in knowledge which no one else is entrusted to supplement or alter" (Rose 1993:3-4). However this assumption that only the 'objective' and 'rational' gaze of white men can adequately examine and describe places and landscapes, is gradually being usurped by the acknowledgment that both men and women are immersed in "a complex series of historically and geographically specific discursive positions, relations, and practices" (Rose 1993:3-4). One of the areas where feminist responses to the masculinism of Geography become subject to debate is when questions arise about the degree to which whiteness is addressed outside of its relation to masculinism. Jennifer Hyndman (1995:202-203) in her review essay of Gillian Rose's, *Feminism and Geography*, notes that "compared to masculinism, the gendered practices of

modernity and modernism are more geographically and historically circumscribed as European.” Citing Rose’s book as an example, Hyndman (1995:204) expresses doubt that within contemporary Geography, whiteness (and other Postcolonial concerns), is adequately examined “outside of its relation to masculinism.” Through self-conscious criticisms like these, feminist geographies continue to attempt to reconcile their own limitations and exclusions.

### **queer geographies**

As an oppositional discourse, queer geography is focussed on heterosexuality as the dominant and organizing sexuality within contemporary societies. Although the roles of gender, race, and class in shaping social geographies have been considered since the 1960s, sexualities had, until quite recently, been left largely unaddressed (Bell and Valentine, 1995:4). However, a body of work, both geographical and otherwise, has begun to develop that deals explicitly with the concerns and experiences of gay, lesbian, transgendered and bisexual people. The scope of Geography has been transformed as sexualities have become a “legitimate and significant area for geographical research” (Bell and Valentine 1995:11). Increasingly complex analyses contest the perception of queer geography merely as a subcategory of feminist geography by challenging the common conflation of ‘gender’ and ‘sexualities.’ As Jill Valentine and David Bell (1995:11) explain, the problem with collapsing gender, primarily equated with women, and sexuality, referring to ‘dissident’ sexualities, (usually male homosexuality), is that “many expressions

of sexuality are actually an anathema to certain versions of feminism.” Bell and Valentine (1995:11) cite debates around sadomasochism and pornography as among those which fuel fierce differences of opinion amongst feminist and queer theorists.

Queer geography addresses the unique concerns of sexual identity, many of which retain gendered aspects, but whose focus is on

the hegemony of heterosexual social relations in everyday environments, from housing and workplaces to shopping centres and the street ... (Bell and Valentine 1995:7).

Queer geographers cite institutionalized heteronormativity as the framework within which very particular socio-spatial relations become codified. One of the first theorists to address heteronormativity, (also called compulsory heterosexuality), was Adrienne Rich (1980), who argues that heterosexual relations are not ‘natural,’ but instead are determined by pervasive social, cultural, and institutional enforcement (Rich cited in Pierson, Cohen, Bourne, and Masters [eds.] 1993:107). Rich suggests that ‘stable’ sex must be expressed through ‘stable’ gender that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality (Rich cited in Butler 1990:151). Since Rich’s pivotal “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” was published in the feminist journal *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (1980:5, no. 4), the notion of heterosexuality as the dominant paradigm has become increasingly apparent. The ways that this institution has affected, and continues to affect restrictions in the makeup not only of societal institutions, but more significantly in (sexual) identity formation, has since been significantly expanded by queer, and other theorists. Judith Butler (1990:151),

for example, uses the term *heterosexual matrix* to refer to “that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized.”

Institutionalized heteronormativity manifests in the dominance, visibility, and social sanctioning, of heterosexual identity, practices, relations, and spaces (McDowell 1995:79). The most obvious example would be the *Leave it to Beaver*-type ‘nuclear family’ as a site of heterosexual configurations between men, women, and resulting (nonsexual) children, who respectively are expected to conform to particular codes of appearance and behavior. Such a configuration reflects what Linda McDowell cites as the ways that

men, as well as women, adopt various strategies in their efforts to make their bodies conform to historically specific ideas of femininity and masculinity and a hegemonic heterosexuality (1995:79).

Much of this work coincides with notions of the performativity of gendered (and sexual) identity initiated by theorists like Judith Butler (1990) and Elizabeth Grosz (1992) and explained in the section above on politicized bodies.

Stemming from queer theory which includes issues of identity, subjectivity, representation and power; queer geographies are centred around the premise that space is produced as heterosexual. The production of heterosexual spatialities as normative and dominant, to the exclusion of queer (and other) configurations, reinforces an organization of social life wherein “heterosexuality is still often promoted as nothing less than the glue holding [dominant] spatial divisions of labour (and, indeed Western society) together” (Knopp 1995:149). Heteronormativity, and heteronormative space, is not limited to the family sphere alone. The work of Linda McDowell (1995) and Jill Valentine (1993), emphasize the links between power relations and heterosexuality in the workplace.

Drawing on the example of city workplaces, McDowell (1995:75) describes how these sites and their related practices are permeated with heterosexist imagery and behavior that includes prescriptions about appearance, behavior, positions of authority, and sexual identity. Combining embodiment, discourses of sexuality, and institutionalized power, city workplaces typically dictate conformity to very particular social practices and physical appearance that are inherently heterosexual (McDowell 1995:79). Similarly, Larry Knopp (1995:152) explains how urban spaces become sexually coded through the establishment of 'gay-ghettos' in gentrified areas of cities. The West End and Commercial Drive areas of Vancouver are examples of 'homosexualized' city spaces corresponding respectively, with gay male and lesbian communities.

However, Knopp (1995:152) also points out the important ways that many predominantly heterosexually-coded urban spaces, like shopping malls, sports bars, and suburbs, become sites of contested sexuality, where alternative codings of public spaces by gay men and lesbians can occur. Instances and processes of the so-called 'queering' of space are described by Bell and Valentine as the process wherein

the presence of queer bodies in particular situations forces people to realize (by the juxtaposition of 'queer' and 'street' or 'queer' and 'city') that the space around them .... the city, the streets, the malls, and the motels, have been produced as (ambiently) heterosexual, heterosexist and heteronormative (1995:18).

Elsbeth Probyn cites an example of the rupturing of a heterosexually coded (but homosocial) space that could occur with the act of two women kissing in a 'het(erosexual) pub.' Probyn writes

while their kiss cannot undo the historicity of the ways in which men produce their space as the site of the production of [desire of] a gender (Woman) for another (men), the fact that a woman materializes another

woman as her object of desire does go some way in rearticulating that space (1995:81).

As a tactic of oppositional geographical discourses, the process of queering spaces usually derives its effectiveness from the everyday. Precisely because of deeply embedded heteronormative meanings, there is no shortage of seemingly ordinary sites, practices, and belief systems that are open to queer reformulations.

### **postcolonial geographies**

Variously aligned with feminism, geography, poststructuralism, and Cultural Studies; postcolonial concerns also figure as inherently geographical. A commitment to changing unequal social relations and to challenging the impact of imperialism on non-Western cultures, are among the primary goals of postcolonial projects. (Johnston et. al. 1989: 465-466). The essence of postcolonial geographies can be summed up by theorist, Homi Bhabha when he refers to 'postcolonial' as the term used to describe the

form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once-colonized third world comes to be framed in the West (1990:63).

The dedication, on the part of innumerable postcolonial critics, theorists, authors, and geographers, to the eradication of asymmetrical power differentials has resulted in a flourishing set of responses and strategies of colonial resistance. However, the heterogeneity both of colonialisms, and of responses to it, are such that only certain characteristics and their relevance to geographical concerns will be outlined here. First, postcolonial projects oppose center/margin dichotomies that relegate non-Western people,

cultures, or ideologies to a geographical and cultural 'Other' (Grewel and Kaplan 1994:15). As Homi Bhabha (1991:63) explains, this entails the recognition that the social boundaries between the so-called third and first worlds are far more complex than such a straight-forward dichotomy would allow. This criticism includes the issue of postcolonial diasporas which speaks to the ways that displaced peoples respond to their environments as usually-reluctant residents, and how these same people distinguish their diasporas from their 'home' locations. Diasporas, write Grewel and Kaplan (1994:16) "are not alike and we must learn how to demarcate them, understand their specific agendas and politics." These considerations are especially relevant to the everyday in fostering awareness about how displacement and 'choice' to move, play themselves out in daily negotiations of lifeworlds.

A second characteristic of postcolonial critiques is that they typically challenge constructions of colonized peoples and places as exotic and mysterious. A colonial 'touring' mentality, whether entailing actual or metaphorical movement, is based on the privilege of voluntary mobility afforded only to certain people who feel free to explore, taste, document, and collect, and then leave when they have had enough. This colonial 'tourism,' that can occur just as easily across the street as it can across the world, often leaves the 'core-identity' of an individual unaltered, thus allowing for the commodification of Otherness to which bell hooks and others object. hooks writes that

...the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other (1992:23).

In highlighting the danger of remaining vulnerable to the seduction of 'Other' people and places, hooks is warning against the failure to acknowledge and question (and even to relinquish) one's own mainstream position (1992:23). Included in this criticism is the rejection both of the marketing of cultural artifacts from the third world, and of romanticized appropriations of spiritual beliefs, customs, and symbols (Grewel and Kaplan 1994:16). Examples can be seen in the resurgence of 'new age' religious movements in the West based on the appropriation of 'Eastern' religious traditions. Similarly problematic is the uncritical adoption of traditional 'ethnic' styles of clothing or symbols, like the display in the West of X's (referring to Malcolm) on t-shirts and baseball caps.

Lastly, postcolonial projects reject the assimilation of minorities into dominant cultural frameworks while paying lip service to 'diversity.' Homi Bhabha insists that

minorities must feel sure that participating in the reinscription of their traditions and values will lead to a more equal distribution of power and influence in the cultural conversation (1991:63).

For instance, the new forms of authority and autonomy sought by colonized peoples should not be based on a melting pot-type effacement of difference which in reality reduces their experience to assimilation to the dominant order. (Bhabha 1991:63). Rather, processes of reinscription should respect and affirm difference, while working toward more equal distributions of power.

### **conclusion**

Edward Soja writes that

the spatialization of critical theory and the construction of a new historico-



geographical materialism have only just begun and their initial impact has been highly disruptive (1989:60).

One of the roles that critical human geographies have assumed in the 'new materialism' alluded to by Soja, is that of facilitator between academic theorizing and lived practice. As just seen, oppositional geographies usually stem from lived daily concerns and are inherently relational in nature. They generally share a common concern with the 'everyday' and the 'embodied,' as elements of potentially far-reaching change to dominant Geographical (and other) discourses. Critical deconstructions of the discourses of Geography entail a deconstruction of 'common-sense' geographical assumptions in ways that makes spatial understandings "answer to other questions, to have them speak to other audiences, to make them visible from other perspectives." Reformulated discourses of Geography "show how [spatial understandings] engage with one another; how they connect or collide in complexes of action and reaction in place and over space" (Gregory 1994:12). Generally speaking, the goal of oppositional geographical discourses (usually operating in conjunction with critical human geographies) is to offer persistent challenges to hegemonic limits. It is therefore important that critical human geographers, in engaging with the oppositional discourses that frame or reflect their worldviews, sustain an acute accountability to the everyday material locations within which they operate without falling into individualist traps. In this capacity, feminist and other critical theorizing, have influenced the methods and practices of critical human geographies through their emphasis on the politics of the everyday. Conversely, critical human geographies and oppositional geographical discourses can contribute to Women's Studies by advocating a more careful and explicit consideration of space itself in critical debates.

## Chapter Two - The space between

I was once a competitive gymnast. It was through gymnastics that I learned about 'body memory.' While soaring through the air, contorting my body into tucks, aerials, and twists, I quickly learned that my body remembered movements, timing, actions, and positions. To preserve my body I had to know for certain where my centre of gravity was, what being in mid-air felt like, and that I had to open my tuck when I spotted the split-second imprint of the wall behind me. In navigating my everyday world, my body memory reminds me how to carry myself, what postures to strike, where to fix my gaze, and which spaces my body should and shouldn't be in.

Typically, many Human Geographers argue that there is no single definition of what constitutes 'space.' In *Social Justice and the City*, David Harvey (cited in Johnston et. al. 1989:444) asserts that the question "what is space?" should be replaced by the question of "how it is that different human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?" As seen in Chapter One, critical human geographers have enriched these debates through an awareness of the intrinsically power-based nature of spatial arrangements that link social, political, and economic relations. For instance, to emphasize the social aspect of space, Geographers Michael Keith and Steve Pile (1993:6,36) distinguish between space and spatialities, where the latter implies the inextricable relatedness between aspects of the social and those of the spatial, such that one cannot be considered without the other. Spatial analysis thus becomes social analysis and vice versa, making it possible to speak of the production of space where space is

interpreted in many different ways, but only after its construction in the minds of those perceiving it (Blunt and Rose 1994:12).

In spite of such distinctions, concerns like those of Geographer Doreen Massey (1994:141) remain intact. That is, the residue of questions over what 'space' is meant to imply continues to be complicated by the overwhelming number of definitions used, and the assumption, on the part of each author, that their particular use of the term is clear and uncontentious. Similarly, Henri Lefebvre (1991:3), in *The Production of Space*, points to inconsistencies in the ways that space is theorized, when he comments how "authors who excel in logical rigor in so many ways will fail to define a term which functions so crucially in their argument."

An example would be the potential to leave undifferentiated the above-mentioned relationships between my own literal movements through space (both the acrobatic and the daily varieties), and those derived from the power and identity-based navigations based on my body memory. While undeniably related, these two aspects of the spatial differ in that the former refers to my daily material conditions of existence, while the latter has to do with the more abstract concerns of identity and social location. In cases like this one, conceptual understandings of spaces are inherent within specific material conditions, including various intersections with, and effects on, other bodies and spaces. These material conditions, in turn, reinforce particular conceptual interpretations and experiences of people and spaces. Neither exist in isolation (Soja 1989:79-80).

With all sorts of literal and metaphorical spaces being 'explored,' 'mapped,' and 'charted,' in an effort to better understand social life (Smith and Katz 1993:68), what

remains less clearly defined are the relationships *between* metaphorical and material space. Donna Haraway (1991:185) writes: "Like all neuroses, mine is rooted in the problem of metaphor, that is, the problem of the relation of bodies and language." Haraway's concern is shared by many critical human geographers who debate the often unexplored implications of the differences between metaphorical and material space. Edward Soja (1989:123), for example, warns of the reduction of space purely to physical objects and quantifiable forms that denies "the deeper social origins of spatiality." Conversely, Smith and Katz (1993:76) note the danger of allowing spatial metaphors "to take on something of a free floating existence that denies their referents and material results."

In this chapter I argue for more clearly specified usages of often collapsed, conflated, or underdefined spatial concepts, and highlight some of the possible implications of leaving them unspecified. To accomplish this goal I begin to navigate the foggy 'space(s) between' so-called 'absolute space' (typically equated with pure material form), and 'relative space' (usually understood to be limited to the realm of mental constructs). Improved translations between absolute and relative spaces can help guard against spatial concerns becoming obscured by abstract explanations, or becoming depoliticized through undifferentiated uses and applications. The clarifications that follow are meant neither as an argument for the distinctiveness and respective autonomy of materiality (absolutism) and metaphor (relativism), nor are they meant to offer a definitive illustration of the spatial concepts in question. Further, I am not suggesting the displacement of Academic G/geographical discourse(s) as irredeemably elitist or inaccessible. Instead, as an extension of Chapter One's argument for the importance of the everyday in oppositional

geographical discourses, I am positing the need for increased clarity with respect to the translations between the different kinds of space that figure in everyday social life.

I begin my discussion by focusing on the relevance of material and metaphorical spaces to both Geography and to Women's Studies by looking at current attempts to differentiate between the different kinds of space being referred to. Next, I outline the flip-sides of inadequately negotiating the 'space between:' first by discussing absolute space, and followed by a discussion about relativized space. My clarifications are buttressed with my own spatial anecdotes to help situate the concept in question. Lastly, after having helped clarify absolute and relativized space, I draw on Gloria Anzaldua's concept of 'borderlands' as a specific means to more successfully negotiate the 'space between' metaphorical and material space. Anzaldua, a Chicana poet and writer whose work I first encountered in a feminist geography graduate course, represents a crossover between Women's Studies and Geography in the way that she attempts to position herself and others using spatial metaphors *and* concrete place as a way of doing this. Overall, the double layering of 'Academic' explanation with my own spatial anecdotes and the work of writers like Anzaldua, goes a long way in making oppositional geographical discourses more accountable to themselves, and more politically effective through the deceptively straight-forward exercise of specifying different types of, and interactions between, spatialities. Further, these translations contribute to emphasizing the importance of the spatial in Women's Studies, where feminist theorists commonly posit spatial ways of acting and knowing as inherent to identity formation, politics, and theory.

## space becomes critical

Distinctions between metaphorical and material spaces have become particularly relevant in light of current Academic work in this decade, most notably in a recent swell of writing from contemporary authors that shows a decidedly spatial slant. On the one hand, is an emphasis on the interplay between literal spaces, places and social life. These configurations manifest in acutely immediate and tangible ways in an incredible array of current writing. In other instances, the prolific use of spatial language and metaphors as a way to think differently about subject positionality, power, and knowledge, similarly aims to procure varying, and sometimes unfamiliar, perspectives for readers. Words and concepts like displacement, exile, marginalization, diaspora, mobility, citizenship, and borderlands, have been tightly woven into texts, from fictional works and autobiography, to literatures spanning from postcolonial, to feminist, to Cultural Studies. These tactics, found so frequently in current scholarly work, can offer lived insights into the complexities of the ways that different spatial perspectives and experiences are communicated and understood.

As an important component of this spatial trend, the emergence of an explicitly spatial epistemology in feminist theory is one of the instances where space and other geographical concerns have recently begun to make their mark on Women's Studies. Feminist theorists grappling with issues of difference often posit spatial ways of acting and knowing as inherent to identity formation, politics, and theory. These spatialities are reflected in the writing of many contemporary feminist scholars, thereby demonstrating

important connections with geography (Price-Chalita 1994:250). The systematic use of spatial language as a recurrent organizing metaphor in the writing of some feminist theorists is not deployed in an incidental fashion. Rather, spatial language is often used to refer to some women's and others' physical and epistemological experiences ranging from displacement, to having space denied, or to being rhetorically constructed as being associated with negative space or non-place (Price-Chalita 1994:238). These uses can be seen in the work of feminists and postcolonial critics like Rosi Braidotti, Kathleen M. Kirby, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Gayatri Spivak, who emphasize both literal and metaphorical issues around displacement, mobility, and positionality. Similarly, feminist uses of spatial referents include active appropriations of the spatial, that is, the struggles for presence, agency, and voice with regard to occupying or revaluing an existing place, or creating new space (Price-Chalita 1994: 237-238). Examples of the revaluing of space by feminist theorists includes bell hooks' essays, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," and "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance;" and Judith Butler's work on the body as a literal site for resisting and reformulating gender constructions.

In the case of both Geography and Women's Studies, the problem arises when little or no distinction is made between metaphorical and material positionings. Failure to draw out the relations of spatial language to material lived conditions, can have far-reaching consequences. For example, uncritical presumptions of (literal) mobility, combined with an undifferentiated (metaphorical) 'touring' mentality, can serve to deny lived realities and struggles, and to mask the influence of power and privilege. The reverse is also true, that

material conditions must be brought to bear on the social meanings that forge their construction in the first place.

As mentioned above, an example of the precarious overlap between metaphor and materiality can be seen in my spatial experiences based on body memory that might find me acrobatically in the 'wrong place' in mid-air, with allusions drawn to being 'out-of-place' in certain urban spaces because of combinations between my embodied reality, my (physical and epistemological) positioning, identity, and my material urban surroundings. Overlaps like this correspond with concerns of many critical human geographers who express an uneasiness over uncharted crossovers. For example, the 'geographical imagination,' is described by David Harvey as a sensitivity toward material place and space that

enables... individual[s] to recognize the role of space and place in [their] own biograph[ies], to relate to the spaces [they] see around [them], and to recognize how transactions between individuals and between organizations are affected by the space that separates them (cited in Johnston et. al. [eds.], 1989:174).

At the same time, Harvey emphasizes the need for conceptual or metaphorical considerations in facilitating the ability "... to appreciate the meaning of the spatial forms created by others." Similarly, as Geraldine Pratt suggests, it is now accepted as an ethical and political responsibility to (metaphorically) position oneself so as to elucidate the partiality of one's perspective as situated in concrete material conditions. Nevertheless, she warns that uncritical use of spatial metaphors can promote "a remarkable arrogance or naivety towards the construction and destruction of and caring for places" (1992:241).



Further, Pratt adds that “although geographers hold no patent on [spatial] metaphors, our disciplinary location could lead us to think more critically about them.”

One of the early attempts in Geography and critical social theory to tackle the complex relationships between different *kinds* of spaces was initiated by Henri Lefebvre, who differentiates between spatial practices (the perceived), representations of space (the conceived), and the spaces of representation (the lived). Derek Gregory (1994:403-404) offers a helpful breakdown of Lefebvre’s framework where he outlines these three categories as follows: ‘Spatial practices’ refer to the ‘sites and circuits’ through which social life is produced and reproduced. Referring back to Chapter One’s Parisian example, sites and circuits would include the concrete, ‘quantifiable’ expressions of landscape: the ‘real’ organization of the streets and buildings as (allegedly) empirically-verifiable parts of the landscape. ‘Representations of space’ refer to conceptions of space reflecting constellations of power, knowledge, and spatiality, in which the dominant social order is often inscribed and legitimated. Boiling down to myself and the persons with whom I came into contact as embodied conductors of social life, an illustration would be the way that the men lounging on sidewalk cafes conceived of ‘their’ streets as a place unsuitable to my unchaperoned body because of dominant assumptions about the space itself (masculine, public, business-oriented), and about the kinds of bodies (in my case: young, female, unaccompanied, casually-dressed) that were deemed incongruous with that particular space because of assumed characteristics of both. ‘Spaces of representation’ refer to the simultaneously real and imagined lived spaces that include both the perceived and the conceived aspects of space: the space of “the both and also...” (Soja: 1996). For

Lefebvre, the spaces of representation encompass counterspaces and spatial representations that challenge dominant spatial practices and spatialities. For instance, the presence of my body, conceived as incompatible with the space of the deserted backstreets, effected an instability in the dominant social understandings of spatialities, and could potentially offer new ways of looking at, and understanding space.

Like Lefebvre, Geographers Keith and Pile (1993:25) emphasize the multiplicity and flexibility of the possible interactions between spaces, bodies, and the social. For instance, had the Parisian streets where I got lost been full of multitudes of other women, or if it had nightfall not been fast approaching, the spatialities in question would have been altogether different. My meanderings amongst Parisian backstreets proposes not *the* definitive version of the spatial politics of a place. Rather, it posits one materially rooted perspective among many. This is not to suggest an unlimited number of equally significant spatialities. Instead, it implies an acknowledgment of the numerous spatialities simultaneously possible at any one time or place, while recognizing dominant ideology's ability to place significant limits on meaning.

While there remains an absence of absolute definitions of various aspects of the spatial and the interactions between them, this in effect, can be seen to be the very point of much of the recent work in critical human geography and social theory. What *can* be determined is a need for honing skills to critically re-think the ways we typically conceive our own, and others,' daily spatialities, and how these spatialities are communicated and understood. As Soja (1996) insists, this is not a call to abandon familiar spatial understandings. Rather, it comprises an encouragement to expand the scope and critical

engagement with spatial concepts and experiences, including learning to better recognize and respond to, some, among the multitudes, of possible combinations of the spatial, and to ascertain why certain configurations are privileged over others. In a move toward accomplishing these goals, in the following two sections I offer clarifications of two possible outcomes of inadequately negotiating the space between materiality and metaphor: absolute and relativized space.

### **absolute space**

In the early '80s, my parents bought a plot of land in the Kootenay Valley in BC. Perched on a mountain-side above the town of Kaslo, my father built a cabin where for several years my family was to spend our summers. Dubbed "Crabbs' Cottage," the house became a site of ritual and ceremony stemming largely from its rudimentary state of affairs ... the wood stove, the makeshift separations between rooms, and for a while, the lack of any running water. There were ceremonies marking the first toilet-flush, the first Kokanee salmon barbeque, the raising of *real* walls between rooms (instead of sheets of black plastic staple-gunned onto wooden wall-frames), and the perennial awakening and shutting down of the entire cabin as we arrived or left it for another season. Perhaps most significant was the way that Crabbs' Cottage asserted its presence on what was to us, the previously uninscribed backwoods of the Kootenay Valley. It was as though the land itself where our Cottage sat, didn't exist prior to our colonization ... as though it lay in wait: unnamed, undefined, uncivilized, before our imposition of nicknames, ceremony, and signification.

Smith and Katz (1993:75) refer to absolute space as the space which "is broadly taken for granted in Western societies - our naively assumed sense of space as emptiness." Similarly, Soja (1989:7) writes that the illusion of opaqueness (characteristic of absolute space) presents space as merely an environmental 'container' of human life, that overlooks the "deeper social origins of spatiality, its problematic production and reproduction, its contextualization of politics, power and ideology" (Soja 1989:123). Generally, absolute space is sustained when straight-forward geographical description is privileged over awareness of the social production of space, and the spatial organization of society (Soja 1989:123). An example would be my family's colonization of the land where Crabbs' Cottage was built. The previously 'uncivilized' land was quickly transformed into a site of legal measurements and demarcations of 'our' property, where we were free to define, name and inhabit the presumably uninscribed space. Space is thus reduced to a supposedly neutral backdrop, made up of separate and mutually-exclusive locations, and characterized by the claim of objective and quantifiable description (Smith and Katz 1993:75).

Absolute space can be traced in part to the philosophical and scientific debates in and about the works of people such as Newton, Descartes and Kant. Suggesting that the world could be seen 'as it really was' through predominantly geometric and visual descriptions, space and place became increasingly recognizable by a two- or three-dimensional plotting of coordinates. This primarily occurred without consideration given to social relations or to the constructedness of space itself. Although this type of empiricism was contested at the time by other philosophers and scientists, absolute space

increasingly became the dominant way of understanding the world (Smith and Katz 1993:74-75).

Other concurrent and equally significant events and processes facilitated the hegemonic status of absolute space. The introduction of private property and the emergence of capitalist social relations in 16th century Europe established absolute space as the basic premise upon which dominant spatial practices were based (Smith and Katz 1993:75). Geographer Nicholas K. Blomley (1994:95) argues that as property relations changed due to capitalism, so too did attitudes of landowners toward property exchange and disputes, making imprecision in measurement increasingly problematic. With subsequent advances in land survey techniques, conceptions of property became increasingly bound up with legal definition. Increasingly, property was “a *thing*, to be rationally measured, commodified, and possessed, both legally and conceptually” (Blomley 1994:97, emphasis his).

As an extension of this view, a colonialist mentality evolved whereby the ‘progressive’ (in both the sense of continual and of improving) outward expansion of European hegemony on global space was seen as inevitable, based on an assumed homogeneity of Western European culture (Smith and Katz 1993:75). For example, as Sarah Carter (1990) argues in *Lost Harvests*, Assiniboine and Sioux peoples, in what is now Saskatchewan, lost lands on which they had lived when European settlers argued to the Canadian government that First Nations peoples had failed to develop the lands, leaving them as poplar forest rather than wheat fields. It was concluded by Euro-Canadians that Indians [sic] failed to adapt to agriculture because they lacked initiative and

diligence, and had not yet evolved beyond 'primitive' behaviour patterns ruled by superstition (Carter 1990:3). The administration of Indian affairs in Canada, under the guise of protecting and guiding the Indians [sic] through what was constructed as the difficult period of transition from "savagery to civilization," pursued a deliberate agenda of fixing First Nation's people on reserves and attaching them to agriculture. The aim was to teach Indians [sic] the white man's means of support, while preparing them for a "higher civilization" (Carter 1990:4-5).

Ironically, when First Nation's peoples did begin to farm successfully, the Department of Indian Affairs used the same supposed ideal of Western European evolutionary superiority evoked to demand that they adopt farming in the first place, to block First Nation's peoples from honing their skills. Based on the European argument that each culture needs to go through the progression of horticulture/Stone Age to industrial/Iron Age, it became illegal in the late 1800s for First Nation's farmers to use metal in any implements or structures. Subsequently, many First Nations people eventually gave up agriculture because of restrictive government regulations including a permit system, the subdivision of reserves, and the ban on the use of machinery (Carter 1990:12).

The resulting view of space as socially inert and empirically justified, contributes to what Smith and Katz (1993:75) maintain is widely assumed today in Western society as 'real space,' the space of contemporary 'commonsense.' The way that First Nation's people were constructed as interfering with the 'natural' evolution of the land has as much to do with the denial of technological and financial opportunities to form a strong agricultural base, as with European views of inevitably 'progressive' uses for the land and

persons deemed appropriate to occupy it. In this way, spaces and places come to be understood as passive and fixed arenas in which things 'happen' without adequate consideration given to social forces or power inequities. (Smith and Katz 1993:75-76).

This is where Crabb's Cottage differs from a purely absolutised reading of space. Undeniably, there existed an aura of empty space before my family's arrival on the scene, including the issues of property, and legal demarcations that made the land 'ours' in the first place. However, once the land was fully colonized, cabin built and woods explored, the Cottage, and its surroundings and inhabitants, combined to create very specific socio-spatial meanings. This included the trees that became permanent clothesline anchors, the clearing out back where the badminton court was christened, the makeshift driveway, and the surplus of ritual and ceremony that marked my family's interactions with one another and with the spaces themselves. Far from serving merely as animators of space, our presence in, and social understandings of Crabb's Cottage combined to create a socio-spatial dialectic that could not have existed without the interplay between concrete forms (the woods, the cabin) and the materialized realities of our experiences there.

To counter the pitfalls of absolute space, Edward Soja (1989:122) insists that space is never primordially given or permanently fixed. Spatiality is a product of a transformative process, and always remains open to further transformation in the contexts of material life. As seen with Crabb's Cottage, important elements in this transformative process are the social and conceptual considerations of difference, identity, and social relations. However, as seen in the next section, similar care should be taken in how, and in which circumstances, metaphorical space is invoked.

## **spatial relativism**

“It is crowded at the margins, and nonbelonging can be hell.”  
(Braidotti 1994:20)

“We are living in a material world, and I am a material girl.”  
(Madonna)

The flipside of absolute space is spatial relativism which completely dematerializes space into mental constructs (Soja 1989:125). While absolute space limits itself to concrete quantifiable forms, spatial relativism reproduces understandings of space based primarily on mental phenomena. Keith and Pile (1993:8) describe spatial relativism as the concern “that every individual reading of geographical form is equally true.” Similarly, Edward Soja (1989:125) describes transparent space (which results from spatial relativism) as “an illusive ideational subjectivity substituted for an equally illusive sensory objectivism.” In other words, spatial relativism results when spatiality is limited predominantly to mental constructs where subjective images and metaphors of location are privileged over material realities and appearances of the ‘real world’ (Soja 1989:125).

As noted earlier in this chapter, and evidenced in the first quote cited above, spatial relativism should be of particular concern to Women’s Studies because of feminists’ extensive uses of vocabularies of space. The use of spatial concepts and metaphors has been undertaken by feminists (and critical human geographers) with the aim to highlight the politics of subject positioning, and of knowledge production. Current usages of these metaphors deployed by feminists and by critical human geographers are interchangeably used to represent the author’s own and others’ subject positions, as well as referring



literally to material conditions of existence (Pratt 1992:241). In this way, slippery notions of identity, nationality, and history, are negotiated within the context of lived experience. Subsequently, social location becomes not an individual, but a multi-dimensional experience, whereby the interplay between the daily, material negotiations of lifeworlds, and those of identity and subjecthood become inseparable (Smith and Katz 1993:69). Problems with spatial metaphors can arise if little or no distinction is made between metaphorical and material positionings, or if material context remains altogether absent from spatial debates. When uncritical assumptions of literal mobility are combined with an undifferentiated metaphorical 'touring' mentality, the result can obscure lived realities and struggles, and mask the influence of power and privilege.

Of the spatial metaphors currently in popular use, two groupings are particularly relevant for this discussion. First are the metaphors inspired by the notion of mobility, and second are those that privilege the metaphorical position of marginality and exile. Metaphors alluding to mobility can refer to not having a 'home base,' to leaving or coming to know certain places, to being rooted in place, or to travelling across borders or transgressing boundaries. Smith and Katz (1993:78-79) assert that the decidedly vague portrayals of movement and of multiple location inferred by these metaphors can be extremely problematic from the stance of postcolonial, and other critics. A focus on the mobility and the fluidity of identity risks the reproduction of the 'privileged unsituated observer.' Although usually referring to the unmarked positions of Man and White, roving metaphorical subject positions like these can also be assumed by women and others. This power 'to represent while escaping representation' fails to consider relations between and

among other subjects, as well as implying a lack of material grounding in material contexts (Haraway 1991:188).

Rosi Braidotti's (1994:33-34) 'postmodern feminist nomadism' is an example of an overvaluation of fluidity that gives little or no indication of material grounding. Braidotti's 'nomadic maps' are meant to incite an "intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing" (1994:36). She claims that her travelling nomadic subject need not entail mobility in the literal sense, and ultimately does not necessitate leaving the realm of metaphor. As such, the feminist nomad strives to clarify questions of individual, embodied, and gendered identity, as they relate to subjectivity and knowledge (Braidotti 1994:36). The nomad, according to Braidotti, has a sharpened sense of territory but no possessiveness about it. Her concern is with spaces of detachment and transition, and the potential alliances and new associations formed there. Braidotti tries to ground her nomadic subject in space by referring to nomadic peoples like Gypsies and Australian aborigines, and to her own nomadic lifestyle (1994:27-28). In addition to Braidotti's failure to situate herself within a material context (which obscures her relations with other nomads), the inherently problematic collapse of Braidotti's privileged (literal) mobility as a travelling Academic, with the historical persecution and forced displacement of nomadic peoples, belies an incredibly privileged placelessness.

Similarly, metaphors of exile or living at the margins are often used to represent some of the same ideals underlying the rhetoric of mobility: "the desire to disrupt categories and the authority of dominating hegemonic viewpoints" (Pratt 1992:243). Nevertheless, the vision of being located outside or at the margins shares some of the

limitations of the image of mobility. Although the theorist is situated 'somewhere' and the metaphor of marginality can be used effectively to problematize dominant subject positions, it can also encourage the hardening of difference and the pretension of being outside dominant society (Pratt 1992:243). For example, Pratt and Hanson describe that while some contemporary feminists see the margins as an important and necessary starting point for rebuilding feminist affinities, such positionings also risk rigidification where difference becomes interpreted as a static sign instead of a social process (1994:10).

In both cases, it is important not to overlook the importance and meaning of 'dwelling' and to acknowledge the struggles of people in creating their own places. As an inherently material concern, attention to dwelling should be held in tension with views that favour detachment from place (Pratt 1992:243). Pratt and Hanson (1994:10-11), in questioning the now common mobility/dwelling duality (with mobility typically favoured), call attention to the reality that many people live intensely local lives, with their homes, work places, recreation, shopping, friends, and family often located within a relatively small range. They emphasize that in order to overcome (literal) distance, time and money are required, further pointing to the fact that many of the events of daily life are well grounded within a circumscribed arena. Along these same lines, postcolonial critic Caran Kaplan (1994) insists that to emphasize the consequences of metaphorical or material movement from place to place, tough political questions need to be continually asked, like: What am I doing here? What am I going to get out of it? Do I have the choice to leave this place?

## subjects in space

Having problematized both absolute space and spatial relativism, my discussion of 'the space between' metaphor and materiality will be undertaken with the help of Gloria Anzaldua's concept of borderlands in *How to Tame a Wild Tongue*. This text represents one of my first encounters with the overlap between Women's Studies and Geography, and so seems a fitting place to tie together concerns common to both disciplines. Nevertheless, certain concerns need to be addressed before citing Anzaldua, or other authors like her who write critically about space, place, difference and identity. The overriding concern boils down to the largely discretionary ways that these writings come to be qualified as *critical*, and by whom. At times, the intention of an author may not, in fact, be to explicitly oppose dominant ideologies and paradigms. It may be that in self-identifying as oppositional, authors risk perpetuating the very margin/centre dichotomies of meaning that these writings set out in principle to challenge, or the author may be putting her/himself, or people in the community at risk through the telling of the story.

A related concern is the potential for appropriation of 'other' voices, inaccurately or irresponsibly, resulting from, or contributing to, the 'exoticization' of subjects. 'Exoticization' refers to concerns like that of Spivak (1990:381), who cautions against the ways that the 'center' selectively invites inhabitants of the margin in order to better exclude it. Tied into this concern is a mythology of innocence whereby marginalized subjects are sometimes perceived to be speaking from more authentic positions of agency, untainted by technologies of power (Haraway 1991:191).

Further, the selective sifting through, by academics and others, of the contradictions and simultaneities of 'other' spatialities, can reinforce the perception of certain subjects as perpetual victims "by stripping the subject in question of her defenses, secrets, and distinguishing marks." In the act of ventriloquising on behalf of silenced 'victims,' critics can, in other words, rob these subjects of their own agency (Chang 1994:106). The assumption that silence necessarily implies passivity and lack of agency needs to be considered. Kamala Vivweswaran (1994) grapples with this in her *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, where she struggles with issues of 'breaking' the silence of her research subjects, of confession, and of reading silence as resistance. Spivak has argued against the tendency to 'patronize and romanticize' the disprivileged or silenced 'other.' She insists that

the academic feminist must learn to learn from [these women], to speak to them, to suspect that their access to the political and sexual scene is not merely to be *corrected* by our superior theory and enlightened compassion (Spivak 1990:135, emphasis hers).

Sandra Harding expresses similar concerns when she writes:

I find it paradoxical - and, frankly, suspicious - that most of the European-American feminists I know who admire, learn from, and use the understandings of feminists of colour appear to overestimate their own ability to engage in antiracist thought but to underestimate men's ability to engage with feminist thought (1991:277).

Together, dangers like these speak to the complex technologies of power inherent in issues of representation and of subjecthood. The combination of texts and contexts I describe represents an attempt to responsibly grapple with these methodological issues through a sustained process of self-critique, and by positioning myself alongside other authors through the running thread of my own spatial anecdotes in this text.

### the 'space between'

"I can't imagine the world without me."  
(Echobelly)

Space, understood as absolute or as relative, can be seen as two possible outcomes of a lack of attention to the space between metaphor and materiality. Spatially-oriented words like margin, centre, and borderlands have been put to work to refer both to concrete geographical locations, as well as to "alienated relationship[s] to the material conditions of existence ... and an estrangement from the cultural practices through which these conditions are mediated and understood" (Chang 1994:97). As Smith and Katz (1993:68) contend, it is important that more explicit 'translation rules' are constructed, and critical awareness fostered, in the process of negotiating the 'spaces between' metaphor and materiality. Gloria Anzaldua, in *How To Tame A Wild Tongue*, carefully combines metaphor and materiality, and manages to treat the 'space between' in a grounded, immediate, and understandable fashion. She talks about her Chicana identity with particular reference to 'borderlands.' Referring to the history, evolution, and future of her Chicano identity, Anzaldua (1990:210) remarks that "the struggle of *borders* is our reality still" (emphasis mine).

In negotiating the spaces between metaphor and materiality, Anzaldua refers on the one hand to the specific geographical location of South Texas as a place where Chicano culture has grown. Almost on the border between Mexico and the United States, this concrete location becomes a metaphor for a host of social and cultural issues. For instance, Anzaldua describes how Chicanos, and other people of color, suffer economically for not

acculturating to Anglo-American values. At the same time, she says, Chicano people also do not completely identify with Mexican cultural values either. Similarly, she speaks of being constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, while at the same time contending with "the Anglos' incessant clamoring so that we forget our language" (Anzaldúa 1990:209-210). These examples point to the ways that Anzaldúa contends that "Chicanos straddle the borderlands" of geography, of identity, of language, and of culture.

In a coherent mix of metaphor and materiality, Anzaldúa navigates the *space between* by employing specific and grounded examples of the ways that 'borderlands' figure in Chicano experiences. She is careful to ground her discussions of ethnic and linguistic identity in material conditions. She accomplishes this without ignoring the interplay between Chicano and Anglo-American culture; that is, Chicanos are not simply acted upon by the dominant *norteamericano* culture. Anzaldúa manages to document the identity struggles of a people, while not downplaying their contributions to the contradictory geographical and cultural conditions in which they live.

Many sections of Anzaldúa's text, like the following excerpt, see borderlands as clearly referring to conceptual configurations of language, identity, and culture:

Chicano Spanish is a border tongue that developed naturally. Chicano Spanish is not incorrect, it is a living language. For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castillian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves - a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages. Chicano Spanish sprang out of the Chicanos' need to identify ourselves as a distinct people. We needed a language with which we could communicate with ourselves, a secret language. For some of us, language is a homeland closer than the Southwest - for many Chicanos today live in the Midwest and the East (1990:204-205).

At the same time, Anzaldua's discussion of language as a homeland is also tied into Chicano experiences of borderlands, that are based on the actual geography of the Midwestern United States, Mexico, and other concrete markers of identity and community. Inderpal Grewel writes of Anzaldua's descriptions of borderlands, that it was this 'place'

in which people who had seen themselves as Mexican found themselves, sometimes without moving, to be in the United States .... Yet they were never acknowledged as belonging to a nation that defined its nationalism in terms of whiteness, conquest, and colonization of nonwhite peoples (1994:247-248).

Succinct examples of the material aspects of Anzaldua's borderlands can be seen in the following:

Even before I read books by chicanos or Mexicans, it was the Mexican movies I saw at the drive-in -- the Thursday night special of \$1.00 a carload -- that gave me a sense of belonging. "*Vamos a las vistas*," my mother would call out and we'd all -- grandmother, brothers, sister, and cousins -- squeeze into the car. We'd wolf down cheese and bologna white bread sandwiches while watching Pedro Infante in melodramatic tearjerkers like *Nosotros los pobres*, the first "real" Mexican movie (that was not an imitation of European movies) (1990:208).

Geraldine Pratt writes that

borders are saturated with inequality, domination, forced exclusion; they are social and political constructions that are used to construct differences. But they are also relational places where individuals live and construct themselves in relation to each other (1992:243-244).

As demonstrated in the above excerpt, Anzaldua's uneasy relationship with *norteamericano* culture is grounded in concrete Americanized markers (the Drive-in movie, the cheese and bologna white bread sandwiches), that leave no question as to her (literal) location in the United States as someone (metaphorically) straddling borders of



identity, geography, and culture. Anzaldua's success at addressing the space between metaphor and materiality is largely due to the ways that she reconciles the contradictory nature of borders.

Through her use of borderlands, Anzaldua addresses questions of location, diasporas, nation, family, and communities. Hers is an exploration of identity, politics and the subject (Grewel 1994:251). Through a mixture of genres, languages, and nationalities, she carefully mediates between material and metaphorical notions of borderlands that succeed in resisting the common "tendency for such metaphors to become virtually free-floating abstractions, the source of their grounding unacknowledged" (Smith and Katz 1993:80). By drawing out the very real connections between conceptual and material spatialities that includes the relational aspects of identity and geography, Anzaldua presents us with a much more successful negotiation of the space between.

### **conclusion**

Geographers Michael Keith and Steve Pile insist that:

it is only if both the spaces of representation and the spatialized vocabulary (representations of space) of contemporary social theory are rendered explicit that we can move towards the project of 'radical contextualization' (1993:33-34).

Both Chapter One's aim to emphasize everyday socio-spatial life through oppositional geographical discourses, and this chapter's related aim to clarify the spaces between metaphor and materiality, represent a discernible move toward 'radical contextualizations' of space. Together, the emphasis on the lived aspect of spatialities (where metaphor and

materiality are better specified) and their relevance to day-to-day concerns, struggles, and resistance, counters the danger of the 'real world' becoming "a series of language moves [that] takes away from the Realpolitik of lived experiences" (Chang 1994:107). Instead, the multiplicity of spatial experiences and the expansion in spatial thinking advocated in these chapters are very much rooted in immediate material circumstances (Soja 1996). Both chapters represent tactics in line with the goal of furthering the self-reflexivity of oppositional geographical discourses in that they aim to better reflect socio-spatial life, to make social practices more intelligible to all, and to challenge hegemonic Geographical ways of seeing and understanding the world. Further, significant links have been drawn between Women's Studies and Geography, namely, by encouraging the importance of space and place to feminist theorizing, and by emphasizing the importance of better clarifying the kinds of space being invoked.

Overall, Chapters One and Two have shown how space can form a reconnection with concrete social life while preserving an acknowledgment of the fluidity of subjective boundaries (Kirby 1996:17). Kirby (1996:17) writes that Geography is ceasing to be the 'dependable anchor' of traits of both places and people, and is instead becoming more like the medium for measuring difference, distance, proximity, and similarity. She asks whether

'geography' itself is so stable: countries are defined in binary or multiplicity by borders that are more or less conventional, fragmentary, temporal, and subject to transformation on a diplomatic, military, and personal scale - just like the borders of subjects themselves (Kirby 1996:17).

Taking a closer look at these borders (both personal and geopolitical) constitutes one of the first and necessary steps in "breaching the walls of propriety" in Geography (Kirby

1996:17). In Chapters Three and Four, I continue my assault on Geographical propriety by pursuing the changing status of Cartography as one of the fundamental practices upon which Geography is based. I argue that maps, as visual, textual depictions of landscape; and the practices of displacement and conquest often legitimated by Western cartographic discourses, offer little more stability in the creation of place, or the representation of subjects, than the traditional Geographical discourses already discussed.

### Chapter Three -Making it onto the map

**map** *n.* a representation (usually on a plane surface) of the earth's surface or a part of it, or of the sky showing the positions of the stars etc., **put a thing on the map** (*informal*) to make it become famous or important. (*The Oxford Paperback Dictionary, Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 497*).

I hoard subway maps. I have always been enamored with the meticulous placement of specks and lines that represent all that is seen to be worthy of acknowledgment and name in cities around the world. The seeming ease with which an entire urban landscape can be geometrically plotted with line, dot, and color is unnerving and perverse, and yet, somehow captivating. The ways that I have come to covet subway maps, themselves guilty of massive crimes of omission, has been to re-write my own experiential maps over top of the pocket version: I arrived in Montreal having never before laid eyes upon it. The process of orienting myself in this city was accomplished largely through a concerted effort over the course of my first summer there, to cruising the metro like a fun-fair ride. It was like swimming blindfolded in the underground veins and capillaries of the city, and surfacing in altogether different and unfamiliar places from where I had initially gone under. Armed with my pocket subway map, I went about filling in the above-ground gaps with real people and places as I gauged how I was affected by (and affecting) the bodies and spaces around me.

If the traditional discourses of Geography discussed in Chapters One and Two are the framework within which space, place, and landscape are often understood, then maps can be considered one of the tools that glue these discourses together into dominant ways of seeing the world. The exercise of power associated with map construction and map use can be traced through a long history of battles fought over the claiming of property, neighbourhoods, territories, and empires. Spanning from Columbus to present-day military

occupations; from local urban developers to the leaders of countries; cartography often helps to stitch together dominant understandings of space and place leading to a legitimization of practices of displacement and exclusion. Maps in their assumed role as 'mirrors of nature' (Pickles 1992:193) influence the social construction of reality by falsely claiming exhaustive depictions of space and place. In this sense, it is important that maps are not assumed to be unproblematic and comprehensive representations of the world (Pickles 1992:194).

Not only is it important to consider the circumstances around which a thing is 'put on the map' in the crudest sense, but also to question *who* does the mapping. The British Cartographic Society, for example, suggests that there should be two definitions of Cartography, "one for *professional* cartographers and the other for the public at large" (cited in Harley 1989:3, emphasis mine). Distinctions like these imply that Cartography constitutes an exclusive activity where only 'real' Cartographers (i.e. experts and professionals) with extensive training and allegedly value-free perspectives are entrusted to catalogue the world. The 'exclusive' access of Cartographers to supposedly unmediated Geographical truth often contributes to the maintenance of particular ideas about the physical world and about social relations. Further, it limits certain people's access to making maps that represent non-hegemonic experiences and perceptions of space and place.

Geographer John Pickles explains how conventionally, the Cartographer's task is to come up with better approximations between raw data and the map image. The 'good Cartographer' is seen to be successful when the technical production of the map does not

'distort' (presumably with social factors) data collected from the real world (1992:195). According to these prerequisites, I would certainly not qualify as a 'legitimate' Cartographer, and my subway data would probably not stand a chance of making it onto the map in question. The implication is that my spatial understandings are illegitimate or unimportant, or too numerous and diverse, and that my access to socially-recognized map authorship is limited at best.

In response to concerns over map content and authorship, and in tandem with the development of oppositional geographical discourses over the past decade, a significant deconstruction of the practices and premises of Cartography has been undertaken. By virtue of this process, the taken-for-granted neutrality, objectivity, and accuracy that characterize traditional maps have been reformulated in ways that change the nature of how Cartography as a whole is interpreted. Similarly contested is the idea that only professionally-trained Cartographers can make and interpret 'real' maps. Tying in with many of the goals of critical human geographers, these transformations similarly encourage an expansion of spatial thinking that leads to different ways of dealing with space and spatialities. Like critical human geographies, re-readings of maps have succeeded in breaking the assumed link between selective versions of reality, and representation. For instance, attention to the materiality of space and place, fused with other real and imagined geographies of my subway map experiences offers other ways of authoring and reading maps that operate contrary to typically conceived and practiced Cartography. In this capacity, instead of constituting 'invalid' data, my encounters with subway maps challenge

what J.B. Harley (1989:15) calls the process of “articulating the world in mass-produced and stereotyped images [that] express an embedded social vision.”

In this chapter, my arguments coincide with the aforementioned issues of map content and map authorship. Corresponding with the issue of map authorship, I argue first that alongside the struggles for ‘voice’ and self-representation of women and others,<sup>1</sup> there can be an encouragement for more inclusive map authorship as another textual means to draw attention to underrepresented social realities. A fundamental project of Women’s Studies and feminist activism generally, has been to affirm the voices that speak from experiences and locations that have been consistently silenced, invalidated and/or pathologized in our culture: “experiences which have been spoken for and of by [those in a position of dominance], if they have been spoken at all” (Finn 1993:3). From the feminist presses and newspapers that arose in Canada during the 1970s and 1980s, to women in broadcasting (e.g. the National Film Board’s Studio 1 and Studio D,<sup>1</sup> the Women’s Television Network), to the production of art by women, and to Academic collections of works (e.g. *Atlantis, Signs*); the concern of women and others’ over inclusiveness and diversity in cultural and self representation continues to incite prolific responses. Aligned with the goal of making the salience of space and spatial practices more evident within Women’s Studies, the (re)authoring of maps can be considered another social text offering non-hegemonic voices and perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup>Both Studio 1, the five-year-old First Nations film production studio in Edmonton, and Studio D, the more than twenty-year-old women’s film production studio in Montreal, are slated for closure, or what has euphemistically been termed “realignment.” Due to the federally commissioned Mandate Review Committee (MRC), and this spring’s federal budget, the National Film Board is currently undergoing drastic restructuring that indicates a shift from the NFB’s traditional role of encouraging “direct community contact and social activism” (Feindel 1996:30).

The second point I argue is that while important work has been done by critical human geographers in deconstructing Cartography, what remains to be questioned are the displacements of everyday life, and the roles that maps play in local conquests and erasures. Often, even critical reformulations of Cartography presume that the colonization associated with maps is typically practiced in the (past) realm of 'elsewhere,' where the omnipotent colonizer was usually European and male. By historically and geographically distancing colonial strategies from the everyday, attention is drawn away from complicities in, and perpetuation of, present systems of oppression. The embroilment of maps with strategies of displacement and dispossession means that, as technologies of power, colonial (mapping) strategies do not always involve faraway masculinist impositions on "passive, faceless, exploited masses" (Grewel 1994:235). Instead, attention should also be drawn to the immediate and the local as sites of social control, but also of contestation, associated with maps. The association of maps with the colonization of (present) everyday life, operates on some of the same principles as global colonizations, and can affect similar results. However, this allusion is in no way meant to downplay the massive atrocities of physical and mental conquest associated with transnational colonialist violence.<sup>2</sup> Rather, in

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<sup>2</sup>Used as a metaphor, 'the colonization of everyday life' has been extensively problematized by feminists and postcolonial critics. Ruth Roach Pierson (1993: 189-190) writes that "the metaphor of colonization graphically captures certain operations and effects of unequal power relations, such as marginalization and appropriation, and, most especially, internalization by the oppressed of self-damaging norms." To further paraphrase Pierson, she writes that when the language of colonization is used uncritically, that is, because it does not distinguish between and among different kinds of colonization, many white western feminists inadvertently participate in perpetuating colonization by the western world of women among 'Third World' peoples. In particular, by finding facile analogies between different forms of oppression, many white western feminists have been guilty of diminishing more horrific forms of oppression. The way that 'the colonization of the everyday' figures in my arguments in particular, is not in a general undifferentiated (and often metaphorical) sense. Rather, I wish to draw attention to the *actual* physical displacements and erasures that marginalize and silence certain people and social groups colonized within our own country, city, or neighbourhood, i.e. the poor, First Nations people, persons with disabilities, and others. In this sense, while recognizing the dangers of undifferentiated uses, I engage with the



keeping with the overall aim of deconstructing Geographical discourses and practices, I wish to fortify the uses of maps in a more encompassing capacity, and in ways that locate and re-consider current and on-going displacements legitimated by map construction and map use.

Specifically, I begin this chapter with a discussion of the 'mapping crisis of representation' identified by Geographers like J.B. Harley, John Pickles, and Denis Wood. This mapping crisis has resulted in substantial challenges to the naturalizing tendencies of maps and to their reinforcement of socially-constructed norms. Next, I argue for increased authorship of maps by women and others,' thus challenging the notion that only experts and professionals can produce and read maps 'properly.' I cite as an prefigurative example, Seager and Olson's (1986) *Women in the World: An International Atlas*, a women-authored atlas that concerns itself with the presences of women and their varying social conditions. Next, I discuss some of the mythologies of maps that have contributed both to limiting the access of women and others to map making, as well as legitimating the practices of displacement, misrepresentation and erasure often associated with traditional maps. These include challenges to the interested nature of maps, to the illusion of the map as neutral in content and objective in authorship, and to the myth of supposedly inevitable progress facilitated by maps. Of these truth claims, Denis Wood (1992:18) writes that "no aspect of the map is more carefully constructed than the alibi intended to absolve it of this guilt." This section relies primarily on J.B. Harley's work on the deconstruction of maps,

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colonization of the everyday in a way that is meant to emphasize the realities of current, local, and on-going physical displacements, while acknowledging the vast differences between and among different types and instances of colonization.

and on cartography and social theory. Harley's prolific work on map deconstruction represents a significant contribution to the literature. The colonialist links with Cartography will then be discussed, considering among other things, how maps have, and continue to, contribute to the fortification of colonial power. Finally, by considering how maps facilitate local urban displacements, I conclude that the links between maps, and the colonization of the everyday are undertheorized.

### the crisis of mapping representation

**legend** (lej-end) *n.* 1. a story (which may or may not be true) handed down from the past. 2. such stories collectively. 3. an explanation on a map etc. of the symbols used. (*The Oxford Paperback Dictionary, Third Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988: p. 464).

Although the spaces that I (re)mapped throughout my journeys on the Montreal metro constitute material locations, these sites can hardly be considered immutable or complete. The spatialities in question were also discursive, political, and relational in terms of power, highlighting the importance of cultural and subjective realms being considered alongside traditional Cartographic demarcations of space and place (Kirby 1996:23-24). When J.B. Harley (1989:17) cites the ordinary road atlas as one of the best-selling paperback books in the United States, he is bemoaning the same kinds of naturalizing effects that homogenized visions of landscape often have on people's perceptions of their environment when varying social factors are not considered.

In this sense, assumptions of accuracy, independence, and value-free objectivity in mapping can be thought of as contributing to Cartographic 'legends' handed down from

the past. Inasmuch as the non- or mis-representation of ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, and social class perpetuate partial (and sometimes untrue) representations, many of the assumptions associated with map making and interpretation can be considered to fall within the realm of legend. For these reasons, maps should be understood not as 'mirrors of nature,' but as cultural texts, the bodies of which may contain "unperceived contradictions or tensions that undermine the surface layer of standard objectivity" (Harley 1989:8). The resulting denial of non-hegemonic understandings of space and of different formulations of spatialities, become justified in advance as a result of the construction of spaces as infinitely knowable and easily defined in accordance with 'objective,' empirical description (Harley 1989:17).

The ensuing Cartographic myths of comprehensiveness (in content) and value-free objectivity (in authorship) have provoked a wealth of responses from critical theorists of cartography. J.B. Harley (1989:9) in particular, is especially vocal in his assertions that it is the "divorce between the social relevance of map content and the technology of map making that underlies the present crisis of representation in cartography." Like traditional Geographical discourses in general, the role of maps in solidifying dominant and non-negotiable versions of landscape is dependent on *firstspace* geographical thinking, where 'real' spatial organization is alleged to be empirically measurable and recognizable by scientific observation, by a plotting of coordinates, or by statistical analysis (Soja: 1996).

In response, Geographers like Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (1994), Derek Gregory (1994), J.B. Harley (1989, 1992), Graham Huggan (1989), John Pickles (1992), Patricia Price-Chalita (1994), and Denis Wood (1992), have pointed to a crucial need for

more critical responsiveness in cartographic theory and practice. In what is already a well-established branch of critical human geography, critics of cartography deconstruct both the exclusionary practices of cartography, and the premises of conquest of erasure upon which they are often based. Beginning now, with the underlying assumptions of map construction and knowledge, it will become easier to link their fundamental presuppositions with the practices that often follow. Before proceeding with these 'mythologies' of maps, I will first detour to a discussion of the ways that concerns over map authorship are of particular importance to Women's Studies.

### **maps, women's studies and critical human geographies**

"To be left off the map," writes Patricia Price-Chalita (1994:243) "is, in effect, to not exist." Price-Chalita's metaphor seems an apt allusion to what I perceive to be the importance for Women's Studies of (literal) maps. I argue that maps constitute an underutilized textual opportunity for women and others to assert voice and agency through map authorship. Maps, like other sign systems, communicate and naturalize particular meanings corresponding with the presence of social forces and power-knowledge configurations. The ways that certain versions of reality attain dominance, depends not only on the sign system used to represent them, but perhaps more significantly, on who is in the position to catalogue and deploy the system in question (Harley 1992:232). In the case of Cartography, the mis-representation or omission of non-dominant perspectives and experiences is often facilitated when only certain people have access to, or are perceived to

be capable of, 'authentic' map authorship. However, like many other instances where women and others have asserted non-dominant perspectives and experiences through various texts and media, maps can provide a similar opportunity for Women's Studies.

This process can be understood in conjunction with the professionalization of Cartography and other occupations, where exclusive groups control the acquisition and application of various kinds of knowledge (Abbott 1988:1). Anne Witz (1992:41) describes a profession as an occupation that controls its own work and has been granted legitimacy and organized autonomy, usually by a dominant elite or by the state. She writes that professions are occupations with special power and prestige granted by dominant society and are seen to have special competence in esoteric bodies of knowledge. Similarly, Magali Sarfatti Larson (1977: xv) identifies the primary aim of professionalization as the attempt to secure links between education and occupation; between allegedly exclusive knowledge, and power in the form of market monopoly.

Professionals have three main market characteristics. First, a distinctive commodity has to be produced and standardized. In addition, the product must be represented as the successful harnessing of esoteric, indeterminate and complex knowledge vital to human activity (Abbott 1988:53). In this case, the product is the traditional 'objective,' 'accurate,' and 'value-free' map. Second, the producers have to be 'produced' if their products are to acquire a distinctive uniformity (Witz 1992:57). This would include the exclusive and lengthy training of Cartographers or any other professionals. It would also include the formation of associations and codes of ethics to regulate the profession, like for example, the British Cartographic Society and its attending documentation and

regulations. Third, as an occupation rises to the status and power of profession, it must form ties with significant fractions of the ruling class. As Larson argues:

persuasion and justification depend on ideological resources, the legitimacy of which are ultimately defined by the context of hegemonic society [where] special bodies of experts are entrusted with the task of defining a segment of social reality (1977:xv).

This principle of legitimacy relies on the idea of socially recognized expertise, or on the system of education and credentialing referred to above (Larson 1977:xvii).

Another position pertaining to professions that has been argued is that the relationship between gender and professionalism is a neglected one (Witz 1992:42). In this case, it is asserted that the core notion of profession is gendered in that the relations between gender, power, and professionalization have been determined by ideals of femininity and masculinity as understood in patriarchal systems. For example, of the 80 or so occupations considered as professional in Canada in the 1980s, only 12 were predominantly practised by women (Armstrong and Armstrong 1992:122). These professions were often the supporting ones to higher-status male-dominated professions (e.g. nurse to doctor, elementary school teacher to university professor, librarian to natural scientists) or were perceived as more deeply-embedded in bureaucracy (e.g. social worker) and hence incapable of true professional autonomy (Armstrong and Armstrong 1992:122-124).

To this argument I would add that like so many other 'critical' debates that posit gender as its pivot of concern, the notion of 'gendered professions' ignores the complexities, and intersecting nature of different configurations of identity. These more encompassing identity positionings should be considered with respect to processes of

professionalization in that the exclusion of certain groups of people, and the ghettoization of 'non-professional' low-paying labour, do not pertain uniquely to women. As Larson (1977:xi) asserts, the power and prestige accorded to them often has nothing to do with the professions' distinctiveness, but with who does them. In this capacity I argue that maps constitute an underutilized textual opportunity in Women's Studies to assert voice and agency through map authorship as a realm often constructed to be the exclusive domain of professional Cartographers.

This is not to deny the substantial work done by feminists and other proponents of Women's Studies in responding to omissions in various facets of cultural representation, communication, and knowledge production. Nor does it imply that Women's Studies is relevant only to women, that it is theorized only by women, and that it presumes that gender is the primary concern of all women. Since the late 1960s, the recuperation of voice and agency has been undertaken by feminists and other critical theorists to challenge the tradition of being made invisible in, and silenced by, androcentric, patriarchal culture (Pierson 1993:202). Reflecting different levels of social power and acceptance, the poor representation and participation of women and others in mainstream Canadian culture, though gradually improving, can still be seen in popular media, art, film, fiction, theory and autobiography; as well as the institutional realms of medicine, science and education (Masters 1993:394).

Many feminists, and other critical theorists continue to insist that the act of speaking for and representing others is particularly harmful when it is done without adequate consultation and without establishing channels of accountability (Pierson

1993:203). Questions around who should rightfully speak about and/or for whom means that people situated differently from the mainstream majority have found it necessary to adopt different strategies to create their own voice (Pierson 1993:202). Ranging from the creation of 'alternative' forms of communication and representation, to the reappropriation of existing ones, a broad range of vehicles and approaches have been undertaken by those typically 'left off the map' of cultural production. In this sense, maps constitute another textual opportunity for women and others to claim voice and agency through map authorship.

Maps are particularly conducive to this project because they can be considered textual in that they employ a system of symbols with their own syntax, that they function as a form of writing (inscription), and that they are "discursively embedded within broader contexts of social action and power" (Pickles 1992:193). Of course, no map, or collection of maps can say it all. Like written texts, maps can never be exhaustively representative of any given socio-historical context. However, very much like my examples of the 'spaces between' in Chapter Two where no single definitive explanation of space is being posited, the idea that there is more than one way to look at, and experience spatialities, can apply equally to maps. Through authorship by those typically excluded from this role, maps can become more representative, while at the same time questioning what is posited as an exclusive and elite profession.

There are precedents for projects like this one. For instance, innovative reformulations of traditional map content and authorship include Joni Seager and Ann Olson's (1986) *Women in the World: an International Atlas*. Seager and Olson



(re)interpret world maps in ways that concern themselves primarily with the presences of women and their varying social conditions. Their atlas rests on two assumptions; first, that the world cannot be understood without considering the everyday experience of women, and second, that women and others can benefit by considering global misrepresentations and omissions of certain people's experiences and realities. Seager and Olson (1986:7) ask not only what is happening between and among women, but also *where* it is happening, thereby affirming the idea that Geography matters. The women's atlas contrasts with typical maps that often claim unproblematically to portray places and people with supposedly unerring factuality, while in many cases, failing to represent certain people at all.

While not assuming a global community of women, Seager and Olson (1986:7) nevertheless succeed in revealing patterns about women's lives that are usually obscured in statistical tables or in narratives. This atlas of women not only explores the similarities and differences between and among women, but it also raises fundamental questions about who has authority, who has power, and who does not. The invisibility of women made 'official' through conventional maps, perpetuates the myth that what women do is "less important, less noteworthy and less significant." Women are *made* invisible by policies and priorities that discount the importance of collecting information about them (Seager and Olson 1986:8). To combat this tendency, Seager and Olson (1986:9) map the varying social and material conditions of women including job ghettos, earnings, higher education, illness and health, poverty, the vote, change, protest, violence, crime, refugees, abortion, families, and birth care.

As just demonstrated, Women's Studies can benefit from increased authorship and deconstruction of maps by women and others in the Discipline. This is a project already underway in critical human geographies, which in turn can benefit from some fine-tuning of its own: namely, attention to local displacements and erasures. Some of the mythologies of traditional Cartography will now be discussed, as factors that help legitimate the practices of displacement mistakenly associated only with the past or with faraway instances of colonization.

### map mythologies

**scale** *n.* **3.** the ratio of the actual measurements of something and those of a drawing or map or model of it, a line with marks showing this, *the scale is 1 inch to the mile*; a *scale model*, one with measurements in uniform proportion to those of the original. (*The Oxford Paperback Dictionary, Third Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988: p. 722).

It was on Granville Street, while waiting for the bus during morning rush hour that I first noticed her: Hotel California-woman, emblazoned in dusty pink and blue hues up the ten-or-so storeys of a brick wall on the side of the hotel boasting the same name. In her blonde, cornflower-eyed skinniness, she was painted in tight jeans, a half shirt, and (not-so) strangely enough, some kind of boarded up door or window right at crotch level. How puzzling, I thought. Was California Hotel-Woman meant to represent who you would meet at the hotel bar if you were a man who stayed there? Was she who you could hope to be transformed into if you are already a woman? What about the women who clean the rooms at the Hotel California? What about the women who pick the trash in the alley behind it? Yep, it seemed that representations of *true womanhood* kept

narrowing, allowing for less and less variation. I pondered my own five-foot frame, compared with that of our heroine who seemed ready to snap in half due to the tiny circumference of her waist combined with the weight of her head with respect to the rest of her body. Surely, I thought, this lack of attention to scale *must* constitute false advertising.

Present-day cartography is a product of Cartesian worldviews where the map is purported to be a 'scaled representation of the real' (Muehrcke cited in Pickles 1992:194). However, as Hotel California-woman demonstrates, the ratio of 'actual' measurements of something or someone, and the representations of it are often anything but 'scaled.' Inconsistencies like these can be seen in the three overlapping cartographic myths that follow: first, that maps are neutral in outcome, second, that they are comprehensive in content, and third, that maps contribute to inevitable progress toward ever-more accurate depictions of the world. Positing Hotel California-woman to help illustrate some of these cartographic myths helps to draw more explicit parallels between the dominant discourses of Geography discussed in Chapters One and Two, and technologies of mapping. In both cases, dominant assumptions of objectivity and inclusiveness often help to legitimate selective and inflexible versions of space, place, and people.

The first myth, that maps are neutral in outcome, stems from the assumption that the selection, generalization, and transmission of map data happens without bias on the part of the mapper, and without social consequences due to misrepresentation or omission. Of the unbudging faith in the neutrality of the Cartographic process, Harley notes that

its assumptions are that the objects in the world to be mapped are real and

objective, and that they enjoy an existence independent of the cartographer; that their reality can be expressed in mathematical terms; that systematic observation and measurement offer the only route to cartographic truth; and that this truth can be independently verified (1992:234).

In this sense, the myth of neutrality in Cartography assumes that mapping entails immutable and impartial translations from what is mapped to the map itself without considering who makes the maps, what counts as map data, and what it means to be 'left off the map.'

What is neglected in assumptions of neutrality is the omnipresence of power that applies to all systems that provide sets of rules for the representation of knowledge. These sets of rules extend to include the (disciplining) power embodied in the images we define as maps and atlases (Harley 1992:243). Maps attain disciplining or normalizing power when they exercise control that "extends beyond the professed uses of cartography" (Harley 1989:13). For instance, particular assumptions about the world and the people in it are privileged and reproduced through maps, based on the idea that certain people have more authentic access to allegedly 'true' reflections of reality. In turn, this spatially catalogued knowledge, as seen in maps, charts, or diagrams, often facilitates disciplining or naturalizing power because so much of what we 'know' about society, is constructed in spatial terms (Price-Chalita:1994:243). A good example can be inferred by looking at which map of downtown Vancouver gets mass-produced (as implied reality) and sold in gas stations: Is it Granville Street according to 'professional' cartographers, developers, and tourism promoters, or is it Granville Street according to people who live on and around it? Hotel California-woman strikes a pose meant to confirm certain standards for women in our culture at the expense of more inclusive depictions. Similarly, who and what

gets mapped, and by whom, offers a gauge of the alleged value and appropriateness of particular bodies in particular spaces, as well as offering far-from neutral definitions of the spaces themselves.

The second myth of Cartography is that maps are inclusive with regard to the reality they purport to represent. Closely tied to assumptions of neutrality in mapping, this myth assumes that the data that appears on a map constitutes the breadth and width of all that is worthy of acknowledgment and name in a given landscape. Perhaps more significantly, by assuming comprehensiveness in map data and representation, the myths of inclusiveness and of neutrality, serve to reinforce one another. For instance, Denis Wood (1992:1) argues that one of the primary characteristics of maps is that they facilitate the reproduction of 'reality' by serving people's interests. Wood writes that "because these interests select what from the vast storehouse of knowledge about the earth the map will represent, these interests are embodied in the map as presences and absences" (1992:1). In this way, selective representation in maps happens in conjunction with the interests of who is doing the mapping.

Again, the presence of Hotel California-woman as a homogenized and allegedly true version of women in our culture, operates not unlike a map in naturalizing selective understandings of people and places that coincide with the interests of certain people. The absence of more realistic characteristics of womanhood according to Hotel California leaves us, as a role model, with an anatomically impossible and Amerocentric *Baywatch* fantasy. This can be likened to the ways that a map might selectively represent certain elements of a landscape like, for example, tourist attractions and hotels on Granville

Street, without revealing other realities simultaneously present. Similarly, while it may be true that Hotel California-woman represents *some* women's reality (like the tourist map of Granville Street would represent certain elements of the landscape), what emerges as significant are the gaps in representation. For instance, a map of Granville Street from the perspective of a homeless person instead of a tourist might include warm and dry places to sleep outside, or common places to find food, i.e., elements of the urban landscape commonly deemed unworthy of attention.

As mentioned above, the correlations between the assumed neutrality and comprehensiveness of maps is strongly linked to configurations of power-knowledge. J. B. Harley (1992:243-244) identifies two distinctive, but related, ways that maps work in society as forms of power-knowledge that contribute to selective content and authorship of maps. He distinguishes between the internal and external powers of maps, both being linked to one another, and to social and political aspects of the society from which they are produced. External power, probably the most familiar sense of power in Cartography, links maps with societal institutions and centers of political power. In this instance, power is exerted both with and on Cartography. Denis Wood (1992:24) describes external power in terms of the agency of the mapper. That is, all maps inevitably embody their authors' prejudices, biases and partialities. Harley (1992:244) explains that behind most Cartographers there is a patron [sic] to whose needs the makers of cartographic texts are responding. Patrons have included, and continue to include, monarchs, politicians, ministers, developers, institutions like the Church, as well as activists, grassroots organizations and community residents associations. All have initiated programmes of

mapping to fulfill varying interests. However, their respective scopes of influence, and exercise of power, varies.

Harley argues that maps also operate internally as a form of power-knowledge. In this case, the focus shifts to the political effects of maps: specifically, the power embedded in the map text. By this, Harley refers to the role of maps in imparting inflexible senses of places of the world through abstraction, uniformity, repeatability, and standardization (Harley 1992:244). In this way, maps function as a technology of power, the internal power of which is the cartographic process itself. Harley describes this process as informed by

the way that maps are compiled and the categories of information selected; the way they are generalized, ... the way the elements in the landscape are formed into hierarchies (1992:244-245).

These distinctions lead to the third myth of mapping: that of inevitable progress. Particularly relevant to the internal power of mapping, this myth champions the importance of increasingly sophisticated precision in map making that translates into the supposed inevitability of ever more 'accurate' depictions of reality (Harley 1992:234). The process of [re]producing an allegedly 'correct' model of terrain facilitates the naturalizing tendencies and social constructedness of maps and map knowledge by offering limited possibilities for spaces, places, or people. An apt comparison to the internal power of maps that procures standardized images of the world and the people in it, would be the way that Hotel California-woman offers a very limited portrayal of womanhood while implicitly claiming universality. In both cases a disciplining and normalization of bodies and spaces occurs. "It is [this] disjunction," writes Harley (1992:245) "between [standardized] senses

of place and many alternative visions of what the world is, or what it might be, that has raised questions about the effect of cartography in society” (Harley 1992:245).

The current fixation with Geographical Information Systems (GIS)<sup>3</sup> offers a decidedly modern twist to the myth of Cartographic progress. The ultimate goal of GIS seems to be the (re)production of irrefutably ‘true’ representations of the world based on increasingly sophisticated measurement and quantification. Of the effect of rapid technological change brought about by GIS, Harley (1992:231) writes that “one effect ... has been to strengthen its positivist assumptions and it has bred a new arrogance in geography about its supposed value as a mode of access to reality.” Harley (1989:13) warns about the technology of GIS becoming the message, not just the new medium of our knowledge. Harley suggests that the dangers range from the canonization of increasingly standardized versions of reality, to more and more elitist and publicly-unattainable access to map data. Computerized mapping can now be hailed as the ultimate distanced observer in its supposed ability to procure computerized, and therefore ‘exact’ and ‘value-free’ representations of reality.

The project of debunking the three cartographic myths just discussed, is particularly relevant to critical human geographers. The deconstruction of traditional cartographic practices and assumptions ties in with concerns over static and inflexible depictions of places and people. Formulating critical cartographic perspectives necessitates

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<sup>3</sup>The Dictionary of Human Geography (Johnston [ed.], third Edition, 1994:219) defines geographical information systems, or GIS, as integrated computer tools for the handling, processing and analyzing of geographical data. A GIS normally includes specialized mechanisms for input (digitizing) and output (printing or plotting) of mapped data. Early mentions of GIS can be found in the literature in the mid-1960s, but it was not until the mid-1980s that massive growth began. Presently, GIS is applied to a wide range of sciences and social sciences that deal with geographically distributed data.



an expansion of spatial thinking typical of critical human geographers, and similarly leads to different ways of dealing with space and spatialities. Cartographic myths often contribute to the legitimation of practices of displacement or erasure of the things and people maps claim unproblematically to represent. One of the most significant realms where this occurs is in processes of mental and physical colonization.

### cartography and colonization

**territory** *n.* 1. land under the control of a ruler, State, or city etc. 3. an area for which a person has responsibility or over which a salesman [sic] etc. operates. 5. an area claimed or dominated by one person, group, or animal and defended against others. (*The Oxford Paperback Dictionary, Third Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988: p. 845).

The Royal British Columbia Museum is represented in the legend of my *Discover Victoria on Transit* map by a small innocuous-looking square containing the number 25. Inside the actual museum, visitors are treated to various elaborate displays, the most ironic of which is a series of scenarios depicting 'traditional' First Nations' slices of life, including Aboriginal regalia and costumes. It seems paradoxical (and alarming) that these, and other 'Others,' get left off 'real' maps altogether except as tourist sideshows. Instead of Aboriginal peoples' and sacred places appearing on your average *City of Victoria* road map, they end up encased in museums next to Other fossils of *dead* icons/places/people who didn't *know* in the proper way, and who failed to *act* appropriately. Strange, how a First Nations' map of the same area where the City of Victoria

now stands would likely be regarded by most as nothing more than a curiosity of the distant past, to be immortalized on coasters or on laminated placemats.

Of all the different ways to map a given space, none are 'automatic,' in the sense that all entail considerable translations from what is mapped, to the map itself. As graphic tools of social conquest, maps contribute to the colonization of spaces perceived as empty and uninscribed, which in turn, provide an apt parallel for the acquisition and solidification of colonial power (Blunt and Rose 1994:9-10). Correlations between cartography and strands of imperialist history, colonization, and dispossession, operate within a broader and lingering framework of dominant assumptions and power inequities as they relate to cartography (Gregory 1994:171). The legacy of (Western) maps as tools of colonization, can be understood in conjunction with the map mythologies already discussed in that both justify particular worldviews. In this case, what results is the belief that the maps of non-Western or early cultures are inferior to European maps, or that these former maps are inaccurate, inauthentic, or simply irrelevant (Harley 1987:8).

My Victoria tourist map, for instance, offers a dominant cultural interpretation of what constitutes significant elements of Victoria's landscape. Varying perspectives or interpretations, when included at all, are superimposed overtop the supposedly authoritative version as sideshows or tourist attractions, and not as 'legitimate' worldviews. The process by which this superimposition occurs necessitates bringing the landscape in question within the scope of the colonizers' rationality in such a way as to

“make it at once familiar to its colonizers and alien to its native inhabitants” (Carter cited in Gregory 1994:172).

Another example would be the taken-for-granted understanding that Columbus was the first to ‘discover’ the presumably ‘uncivilized’ Americas. The ‘New World’ needed to be framed and (re)constructed, to be recognizable to European sensibilities as unexplored, unconquered, and rife with possibilities. The subsequent negation, in favour of a European intelligibility, of other cosmologies, symbolisms, and societies, as experienced by the numerous First Nations cultures already living there, was necessary to facilitate colonization and dispossession. In this case, conquest and colonization are understood as part of a systematic process of dividing up global space into separate and non-overlapping bits and pieces, based on an assumed homogeneity of culture (Western European), and ‘way of seeing’ the world (scientific) (Smith and Katz 1993:75). Typically, little or no consideration is given to the varying perceptions and experiences of the colonized peoples, nor to Columbus’ relations with the ‘natives’ (beyond, perhaps, his own personal transformations). Most significantly, the space of the ‘New World’ is afforded only one possible definition that extends to its occupants. The land, as perceived, understood, and experienced by indigenous peoples, is ignored. Similarly, the social geographies of race and gender, among others, playing themselves out among the colonizers and the colonized remain unaddressed.

The lack of attention to the social aspects and consequences of Western European cartography can, in part, be traced back to the seventeenth century when European map makers increasingly came to favour a standard scientific approach to their craft. The new

emphasis in map-making on verifiable 'truths' left little room for the role of social factors like gender, race, and class in cartographic communication (Harley 1992:234). Even a map as seemingly innocuous as the *Discover Victoria by Transit* that I described, privileges a certain view of the world by inculcating a dominant perspective. It is these inferred links between cartographic and colonial discourses that have been drawn out and criticized by theorists of colonialism like Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak.

As summarized in Chapter One, colonial concerns have spawned extensive *postcolonial* critiques of the surveillance, objectification, and naturalization of 'others.' Most significant to the correlations between the technologies of mapping and the reinforcement of colonial power, are claims of 'mimetic representation' that have historically sustained the colonial discourses used to "justif[y] the dispossession and subjugation of so-called non-Western peoples" (Huggan 1989:116). The falsely essentialist views of the world that result, are based on Western standards, knowledges, and experience. The long legacy of this association asserts its presence as strongly today as in the past. A related correlation between cartography and colonialist strategies is the dependence of maps on the status of the visual to sustain themselves in ways that often end up objectifying, or mis-representing, or altogether over-looking, what they claim unproblematically to see. Blunt and Rose assert that

the supposedly scientific 'space' discipline imposed by mapping legitimized colonization, enhanced the possibilities for surveillance (by offering only one definition of bodies and space) and facilitated imperial rule by helping to distance those exercising power from its consequences (Blunt and Rose: 1994:9-10).

The relationship between knowing and seeing has commonly been understood as disembodied, distanced and neutral. In this way, the (masculine) gaze of power or knowledge is said to reinforce an allegedly true version of landscape defined from a partial position while claiming universality (Carter cited in Gregory 1994:171).

The 'knowing gaze' of colonialism has another important parallel to the disciplinary power and surveillance imposed on landscapes by mapping: that is, the naturalization imposed on the body by geographical and other related discourses. These correlations seem "materially explicit" in the context of colonial domination and are inseparable from constructions of race, gender, and sexuality (Blunt and Rose 1994:11). The reassertion of the body as a site of contested meanings has been discussed elsewhere, but its relevance in the context of colonial impositions is particularly salient. Examples like that of Hotel California-woman, help to emphasize the ways that standardized constructions of, in this case, women, can be reproduced through combinations between visibility, and the intersecting discourses of geography, sexuality, and 'race,' among others. In the case of colonial contexts, the association of indigenous people (and women in particular) with colonized land, means that perceptions of both the colonized people and of the land itself are collapsed into the status of 'objects' of colonization (Blunt and Rose 1994:10). Where 'bodies' in colonial contexts become contradictory is in the potential for reproducing constructions of racial inferiority, or unproblematized gender differences that fail to consider the roles of complicity that women, and other assumed-to-be dominated people, play in colonization. As numerous postcolonial critics argue, it has become apparent that not only "white male bourgeois knowers" are capable of inflicting and

enforcing the all-knowing gaze on 'others.' Intricacies of power operate on different levels, enabling people through their situatedness in configurations of race, sexuality, class, or gender, to assert a structuring gaze while refusing other kinds of spatialities.

In the case of the Victoria transit map, the reproduction of an "exclusionary and ethnocentric discourse," should not overlook the roles of others (read: not privileged white men) in the perpetuation of eurocentric and colonialist mentalities (Blunt and Rose:1994:11). The imposition of dominant meanings on spaces and bodies often results in a fixity in the construction of otherness that overlooks what Spivak (cited in Blunt and Rose, 1994:11) cites as "the heterogeneity of Colonial Power [that] masks the roles women play, whether [and both] as colonizers or as colonized." The same can be argued for other 'others'' situatedness in configurations of power that end up demonizing difference, showing how pervasive societal ideologies, informed by, but not restricted to, the so-called master subject can be affected from an(other) position of situational-marginality.

Of cartography in general, Lefebvre (cited in Blunt and Rose 1994:15) asserts that the homogenizing tendency of maps, is always and everywhere jeopardized by the persistent presence of difference. The transparent space that characterizes maps, in its need for something external against which to define itself, carries within it, its own limitation (Blunt and Rose 1994:15). The imposition of meaning on spaces and bodies is thus never guaranteed and always offers spaces for resistance. These contradictions stop transparent space (and therefore maps) from becoming completely hegemonic in their prescriptions. Graham Huggan (1989:121) suggests a decolonization of the map as a tangible

manifestation of possible tactics of resistance. Map decolonization emphasizes the always-present discrepancy between the 'natural' object and how it is 'imitated' via the map, thus displacing the 'original' meaning imposed by West (or by whatever ideology or relation of power is being justified). Only recently have geographers and cartographers begun a sustained, and materially rooted critique of the cartographic conventions: "of positioning, framing, scale, absence and presence on the map, and, a critique of the absent omniscient cartographer" (Smith and Katz 1993:70). What remains to be further theorized are local colonizations effected through technologies of mapping. Attention to both the everyday displacements and dispossessions facilitated by maps, and equally to the subversive possibilities of mapping practices, can succeed in further strengthening the reformulations of cartography already underway.

### **everyday colonizations**

The "selection, definition, and generalization" of data involved in the process of map making imply a close link between cartography and the power of conquest and social control (Smith and Katz 1993:70). Common responses to these links by critics of cartography have been to counter with postcolonial criticisms and tactics. Nevertheless, as Inderpal Grewel and Caren Kaplan (1994:15) warn, a liberal appropriation of the term postcolonial from "a complex, historically specific concept into a literary and disciplinary signal for what comes after colonialism," has served to erase or minimize differences in geography, ideology, and decolonization. What can result is a denial of ongoing

colonialisms, as well as the erasure of the dynamism of contemporary liberation movements and instances of resistance. Grewel and Kaplan, write that

when the 'post' in colonial is read as a transcendence of power inequities between the first and third worlds, colonialism then becomes a phenomenon of the past (1994:15).

Added to the warning for increased attention to 'ongoing' colonialisms, I am arguing for equally heightened attention to everyday displacements (and contestations) associated with maps. Shifting and provisional intersections between discourses of race, gender, class, and sexuality, mean that the typically conceived unfolding and reproduction of colonial and cartographic discourses may not be as straight-forward as one may expect. Colonization, usually assumed to be practiced in the realm of 'elsewhere,' and the omnipotent colonizer, typically universalized as European and male, can serve to deflect attention away from complicities in, and perpetuation of, systems of oppression right under our own noses. Lefebvre (cited in Gregory 1994:403) writes that colonization is more than just a figure of speech. Its entanglement with strategies of occupation and (dis)possession means that, as technologies of power, colonialist strategies do not necessarily involve unidirectional, faraway, and masculinist impositions on an undifferentiated 'other.' Deconstructing the mechanisms of power woven into conventional cartographic discourse, aims to recognize links between an imperialist history of cartography and an ongoing present laced with colonialist mentalities, whether the spatialities in question are across the globe or across the street.

The possible implications for links between de/reconstructive map-readings, and a critical historiography of European colonialism (Huggan 1989:123) can similarly apply to



everyday occurrences like my hijacking of the Montreal subway map where different meanings of space and bodies can disrupt the homogenizing tendency of the map. In Iain Chambers (1993:188) discussion on *cities without maps*, he describes the importance of the map in learning to get around in a city, but that the 'preliminary orientation' afforded by the map barely begins to reflect the reality in which people find themselves: "Beyond the abstract one-dimensional indications, we encounter the space of the vibrant, everyday world and its challenge of complexity" (Chambers 1993:188). In this case, the everyday world to which Chambers refers, encompasses urban spaces and their links with and among genders, (sub)cultures, territories, social groups, and shifting centres and peripheries. It is here that the average North American city becomes a significant space for analysis and critical thought with respect to cartography.

For the purposes of this project, where the local and immediate context within which I write (and likely will be read) constitutes an urban space, attention to 'commonplace,' and apparently homogeneous mapped representations of this setting, can benefit from increasingly nuanced readings. As Chambers (1993:193) asserts, if you lack your own space, you are forced to negotiate networks of "already established forces and representations." It is within the often unobserved and overlooked politics of the immediate world of everyday popular culture, that more complex stories and ways of making sense are revealed.

Tactics like these, as Michel de Certeau (1993) insists, involve paying attention to frequently overlooked activities, perspectives, and experiences. *Walking in the City* is a description by de Certeau, of his meanderings amongst the streets of an urban setting that

reads in many ways like criticisms of the absolute portrayals of traditional maps. Aligned with the *flaneur* literature, typical of writers like Walter Benjamin, and now common in contemporary Cultural Studies, de Certeau presents an analysis of everyday urban life from the perspective of someone walking through it, instead of looking down upon it. He talks about the typically described *pleasure* of looking down on the city and *seeing the whole*, that gives the voyeur a totalizing and 'God-like' viewpoint. De Certeau asserts that such a God's-eye view gives only a skewed representation of the complexities of the social interactions unfolding within the city streets. To this solar eye-view, he contrasts the 'partiality' and 'blindness' of the 'ordinary practitioner' of the city who lives 'down below' in the streets (de Certeau 1993: 152-154).

De Certeau (1993:154) presents an ambivalent union of metaphor and materiality in his descriptions of "slippages of a migrational or metaphorical city into a clear text of the planned and readable city." What remains starkly underdefined are the relationships between his metaphorical movements, and the actual, materially-grounded places and maneuvers he describes. The 'paths' traced, and the 'stories' told in de Certeau's city are never qualified as referring, on the one hand, to conceptual configurations of power and subjectivity, or on the other, to actual lived spatial experiences. For instance, he speaks of the diverse meanings given to places by passers-by, that allegedly serve to destabilize the commonly-held understandings of place, and to redefine metaphorical and literal meanings (de Certeau 1993:156-157). However, he never gets around to telling us precisely who he is referring to, which places, and which meanings, making it difficult for the reader to follow his 'movements' through the city.

As problematized in Chapter Two, the insistence that attention to the everyday does not imply individualist, relativized experience. Again, de Certeau's (1993:158) highly metaphorical *rhetoric of walking*, composed of *turns of phrase*, and *stylistic figures*, may serve to give new meanings to places, and occasionally appears to involve some semblance of material grounding, but does little to illuminate the complex relationships between the social, the spatial, and embodied reality. While his walking tour of urban space aims to clarify varying perspectives lost through totalizing views-from-above, his analysis emerges as elitist, dis-embodied, and individualist. De Certeau aligns himself with the ordinary flaneur. Overwhelmingly though, his text reads as though he is the only flaneur soaking up the sights and sounds of city streets. More significantly, his lack of concrete, material referents makes it extremely difficult for the reader to extract any useful new ways to conceive of the spatial in their own lives. In spite of these criticisms, what emerges as important in both de Certeau's and Chambers' reconceptualizations of urban mapping, is attention to the role that maps play both in local erasures and (re)constructions. Challenging the 'God-like viewpoint' and 'skewed representations' of traditional maps, Chapter Four will cite explicit examples of local (urban) map reformulations that bring colonial criticisms to bear on present, local cartographic practices.

## Chapter Four - Mapping against the grain

“She looks like the real thing.”  
(Radiohead)

The anatomy section of my Junior High School Biology textbook boasted a deceptively simple human skeletal form. This generic body transformed before my eyes as pages of amazingly colorful and intricate transparencies showing muscles, veins, arteries, and organs, overlaid the skeleton one by one, making a new body at every turn of the page. For me, this particular chapter of my textbook always evoked images of maps with their simultaneities and intersections overlapping one another like the overlapping that occurs in the geographies of most places.

Ed Soja and Barbara Hooper (1993:192), among others, have drawn attention to the importance of learning “to read geographies critically, to deconstruct them, to identify revealing geographical ‘texts’ and ‘scenes.’” Like the transforming generic body in my biology textbook, Chapters One and Two of this thesis have shown how oppositional geographical discourses similarly succeed in emphasizing different layerings of spatial perspectives and experiences. By expanding the range of our geographical imaginations, the map, as one of the quintessential tools of the geographical trade, offers another avenue by which to achieve this goal. As discussed in Chapter Three, recent critical historiographies of cartography have added to these arguments by illuminating the technologies of power, legitimations of conquest, and assumptions of accuracy associated with maps. At the same time, through an emphasis on the situated and embodied nature of maps, a wave of map deconstruction has arisen that aims to show how “maps are discursively embedded within broader contexts of social action and power” (Pickles

1992:193). Ironically, the broader contexts of social action to which Pickles and others refer, often fail to draw attention back to complicities in, and perpetuation of, present and local systems of oppression. Expanding on the arguments in Chapter Three, this chapter will cite specific examples of local map de/reconstructions, both in Academia and in the non-Academic everyday that respond to this omission.

The goals of such cartographic reformulations are twofold. First, they show that what has been taken for granted and considered 'natural' and hence universal in everyday life is much more contested and heterogeneous than a casual glance might suggest (Chambers 1993:194). This has particular ties with critical human geographies where similar concerns over dominant ways of seeing and understanding the world often lead to inaccurate constructions of certain people as invisible, and the spaces in which they live as empty and uncivilized. The second goal is to debunk the assumption that the dispossession and social control linked to map construction and map knowledge is practiced somewhere else, and perhaps more significantly, in the past, thus denying ongoing colonialisms on both small and large scales. Coinciding with the arguments in Chapters One and Two about the importance of the everyday in critical human geographies, this second goal adds a Cartographic twist to forging links between displacement and the everyday.

Derek Gregory (1994:12) maintains that geographical reflections must "retain some connection with the ordinary meanings that are embedded in the day-to-day negotiations of lifeworlds." To these suggestions, I add that the exercise of further deconstructing cartography can be encouraged with both real and imagined maps. As both an urban dweller and as someone who works in Academia, the maps I use correspond with

these two significant spatial facets of my daily life. The first series of maps I discuss are existing maps of Downtown Vancouver, while the last constitutes a newly envisioned map the Geography Department at Simon Fraser University.<sup>1</sup> In both cases, as J.B. Harley (1992:241) insists, the maps in question “involve an essentially plural and diffuse play of meanings across the boundaries of individual maps.” In this sense, my arguments for increased attention to the everyday effects of Cartography, are also careful to emphasize resistance and oppositional ‘against the grain’ readings and uses of maps.

### **a more *livable* downtown?**

“The way you talk about choice, as if it’s something we’re all born with.  
This choice is for some. But not for everyone.”  
(The Blow Monkeys)

Recognizing the narrative types and qualities of maps can lead to a rejection of the cartographic claim to provide immutable depictions of the world. In challenging the alleged neutrality of maps and map knowledge, their intentions and agendas become apparent. Rather than figuring as the ‘literal face of representation,’ maps, through critical

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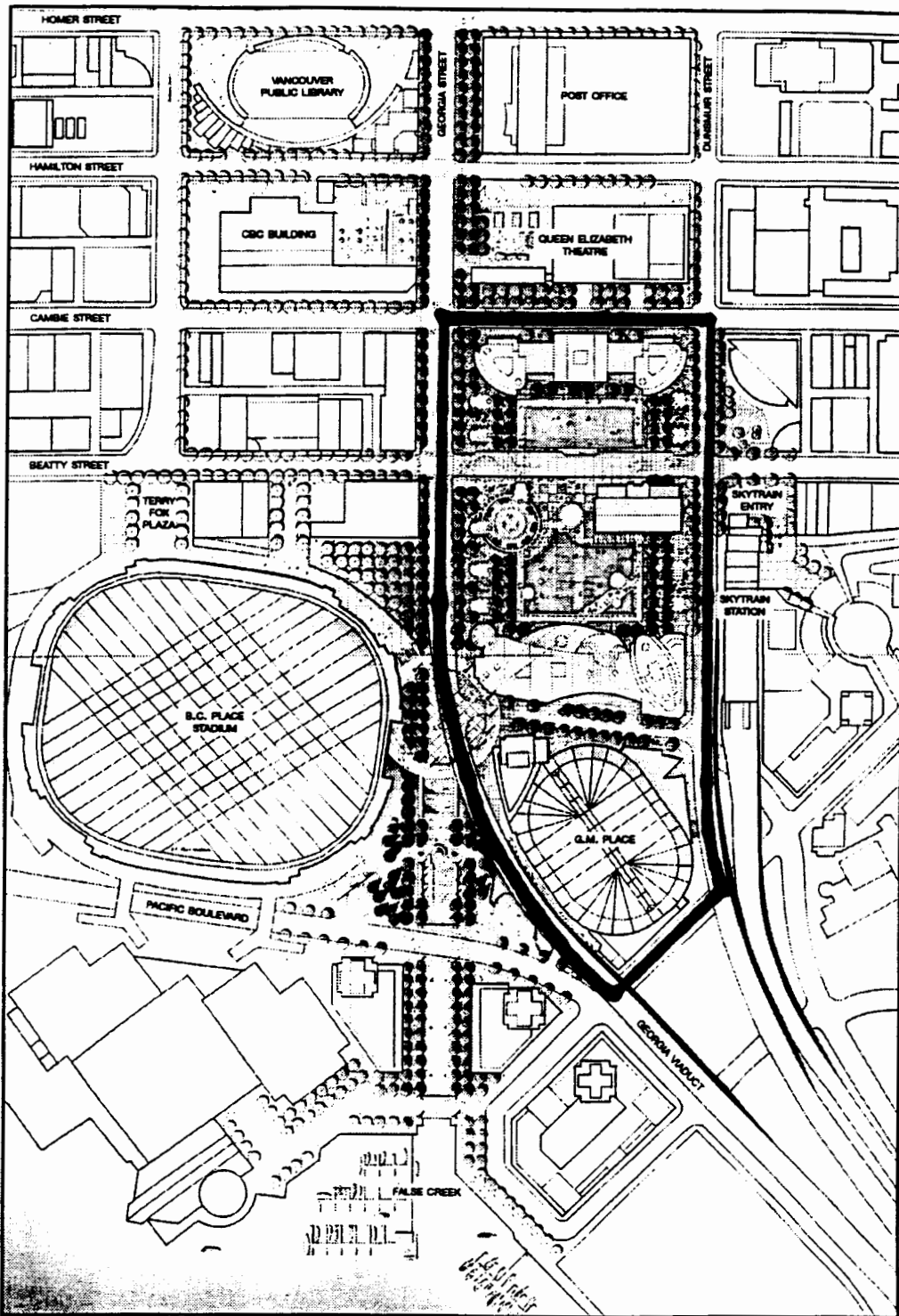
<sup>1</sup>My decision to engage with these debates on a non-empirical, theory-based basis risks the reproduction of detached and selective readings of the sites I discuss. I recognize the contradictions inherent in criticizing single-voiced analyses, while at the same time choosing to concentrate on a theoretical approach (fused with my own personal interpretations) without concrete ‘data’ to back up my discussions. However, it is my belief that decisions around carrying out effective non-hegemonic work must be emphasized as strategic and contextual. In this case, my methodological choices result largely from the nature of my involvement with the communities in question. Both in the case of Academia, and especially in the case of the Downtown Eastside, my personal involvement is such that to divulge aspects of my ‘insider’ perspective likely would have risked more of an exploitive dynamic than the (critical) perspective I instead attempted to forge. While certainly not claiming to represent an objective stance, my decision not to include as ‘data’ my experiences as a tutor at the Carnegie Centre in the heart of the DES, for example, leaves room for critical engagement with particular and specific sites (in this case, Academia and the DES), that emphasizes the *process* of opening up static constructions of space to new possibilities. Future possibilities for more empirically-based, and/or plurivocal approaches might include ethnographic surveys of the sites I discuss, the integration of interviews, or comparative statistical analyses.

readings, begin to answer to the social consequences of cartographic practices (Harley 1992:238). As Harley (1992:238) has repeatedly maintained, maps are a cultural text: "not one code but a collection of codes, few of which are unique to cartography." With this in mind, and corresponding in this case, with urban spatialities, this part of the chapter deals with the *creation* of place as shown in two maps of Downtown Vancouver. The first map (Figure 1) designates Vancouver's emerging 'cultural and entertainment district,' while the second depicts 'Downtown Vancouver Neighborhoods,' (Figure 2). Evoking questions of authorship, power, and representation, these maps contribute to the creation of distinctive places, while simultaneously showing the *absence* of others.

One place in particular whose absence is particularly worth noting, and at whose expense projects like the 'entertainment district' are being forged, is Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DES). In light of a legacy of gentrification and displacement in this part of downtown, and as an area especially vulnerable to expropriation and dispossession by business and other interests, the significance of noting the absence of the DES in particular becomes apparent.<sup>2</sup> Of the DES community, Shlomo Hasson and David Ley (1994:201) write that "the conjunction of poverty, old age, and physical and mental handicap [sic] has made residents like those of the DES among the least empowered in

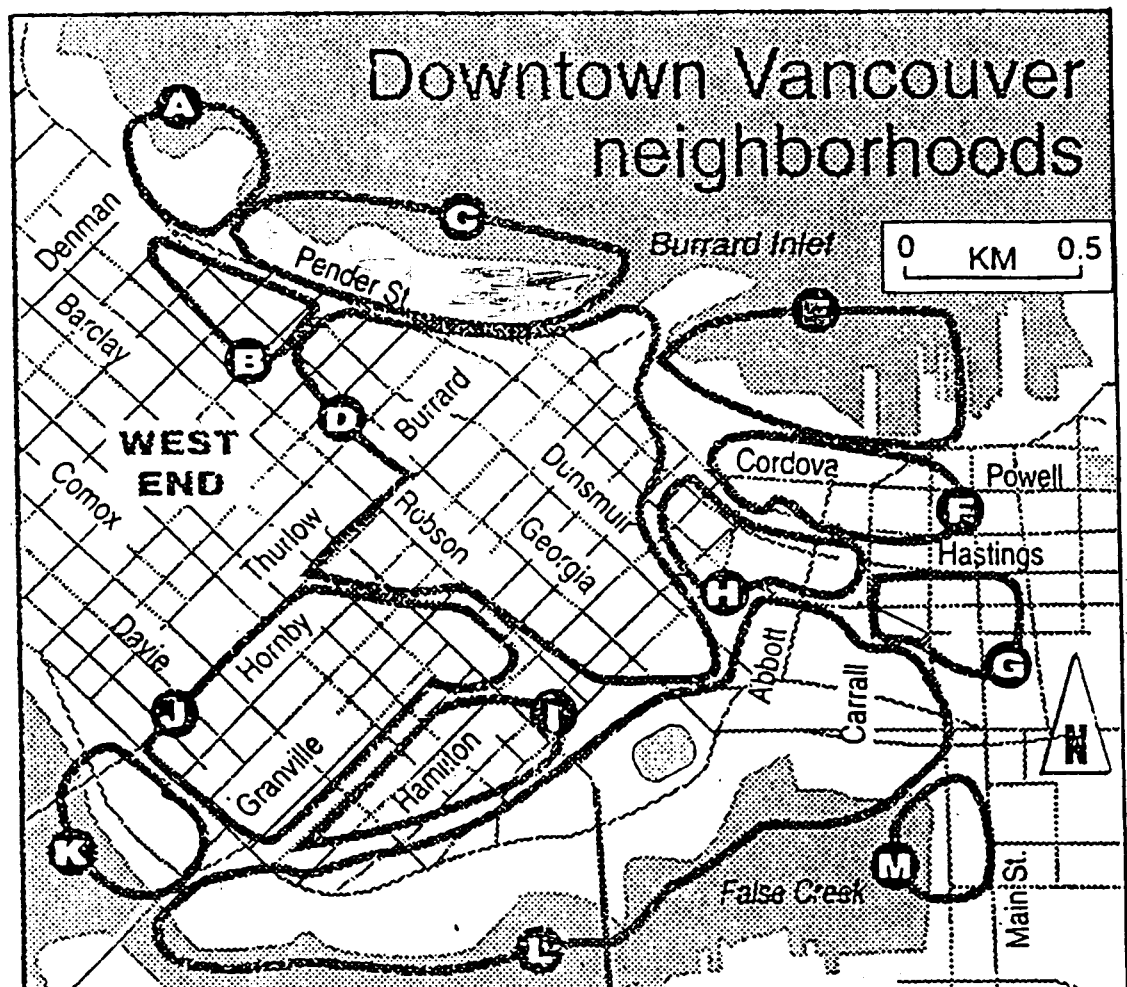
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<sup>2</sup>David Harvey (1973) argues that spatial form and urban geographies are integral to an exploitive social and economic system. He cites ghetto formation as an example of what results from a housing market that discriminates on the basis on class, race, and gender and yet also emerges as a convenient urban form through which certain (disenfranchised) people bear the costs of social reproduction (Johnston et. al. [eds.] 1994:366). In this sense, the DES emerges as a particularly good example of the exploitation and oppression inherent to capitalism. As stated in Chapter One, while I recognize the crucial need for rigorous and ongoing class analyses, my interest in opening up critical spatial analyses to intersecting configurations of difference and identity means that for the purposes of this project, my focus is to look at the privileging and silencing of particular viewpoints that occurs in the process of defining spaces, rather than to single out and focus on separate 'causes.' While another approach might be to look some of these factors in more detail, in this case, my focus acknowledges, rather than privileges, social class as one among many factors of social identity.



**Figure 1:** *Downtown Place*, Vancouver's emerging entertainment district.  
**Source:** Exective Summary, Concord Pacific Developments Corp., December, 1995.





- |  |                         |                            |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>A</b> Bayshore Gardens              | <b>F</b> Gastown        | <b>J</b> Downtown South    |
| <b>B</b> Triangle West                 | <b>G</b> Chinatown      | <b>K</b> Granville Slopes  |
| <b>C</b> Coal Harbor                   | <b>H</b> Victory Square | <b>L</b> False Creek North |
| <b>D</b> Central Business District     | <b>I</b> Yaletown       | <b>M</b> East False Creek  |
| <b>E</b> Central Waterfront Port Lands |                         |                            |

*Source: City Of Vancouver*

There's an old saying that the best way to make people powerless is to make them invisible. Maps are a good way of doing this.

**Figure 2:** Downtown Vancouver Neighbourhoods.

**Source:** DERA.

North American Society.” In light of such obvious discrepancies in power and agency, Figures 1 and 2, like all maps, need to be read against the grain for their silences, omissions and (mis)representations. A good place to start to fill in the cartographic blanks, is to look from another angle at how, and in which circumstances, the DES gets ‘left off the map,’ and which places assert their presence instead. In keeping with the theme of ‘creating place,’ and drawing attention to the role of maps in effecting *local* displacements, three consequences effected by the maps in Figures 1 and 2 (plus related maps and texts) will be discussed in relation to the DES.

First, the question of the selectively elastic boundaries associated with the DES will be considered, including how the absence of such definitions can in some circumstances, facilitate gentrification and dispossession. Second, the resemblance of traditional strategies of colonization to local stakings of territory like the one that occurs in Figure 1 in particular, will be discussed. Lastly, tactics of resistance to the effacing tendencies of some maps will be emphasized, with particular reference to Figure 2.

### **having a place to name**

Something as fundamental as identifying *where* a place is located (or not) and where it begins and ends, can justify its existence for particular purposes. In Chapter Three I talked about the association of maps with territory, property, ownership and legal codes as an alliance that facilitates disciplining and normalizing power. Denis Wood describes this correlation as the

great bundling of boundaries with which we have tied up the planet: maps of treaty organizations and national borders; maps of provinces, territories and states; maps of garbage collection routes and gas service districts; fire insurance and land-use maps (1992:11).

In their demarcation of boundaries and production of allegedly 'enclosed, self-sufficient unit[s],' maps bespeak a 'desire for control' expressed or implied by the power-group responsible for creating of the map (Huggan 1989:119). Figure 3 shows that the boundaries of the DES are shifting and varied even according to many of the services and agencies operating within the district itself. The continually (re)approximated, and seemingly elastic boundaries of the DES often facilitate the external (and selective) imposition of perimeters coinciding with the interests of the people in an 'official' position to determine their status, and not according to the residents themselves. Clearly the DES is a place, but according to whom and for what purposes?

The DES, Vancouver's original townsite, is the city's oldest neighbourhood. As far back as the turn of the century, and for a host of different economic, political, and social reasons, the DES became a predominantly working class community, the residents of which primarily found employment on the waterfront. At the same time, the DES became home to now long-established and distinctive Chinese and Japanese communities. Along the waterfront, canneries, sawmills, meat-packing plants, and metal-working shops served as processors or suppliers of many of the province's staple industries (Hasson and Ley 1994:174). Presently, the Ballantyne and Centennial Piers continue to generate heavy industrial activity in the DES that according to the City of Vancouver, stretches at least to Clark Dr. in the East and to Prior St. in the South (Figure 4).

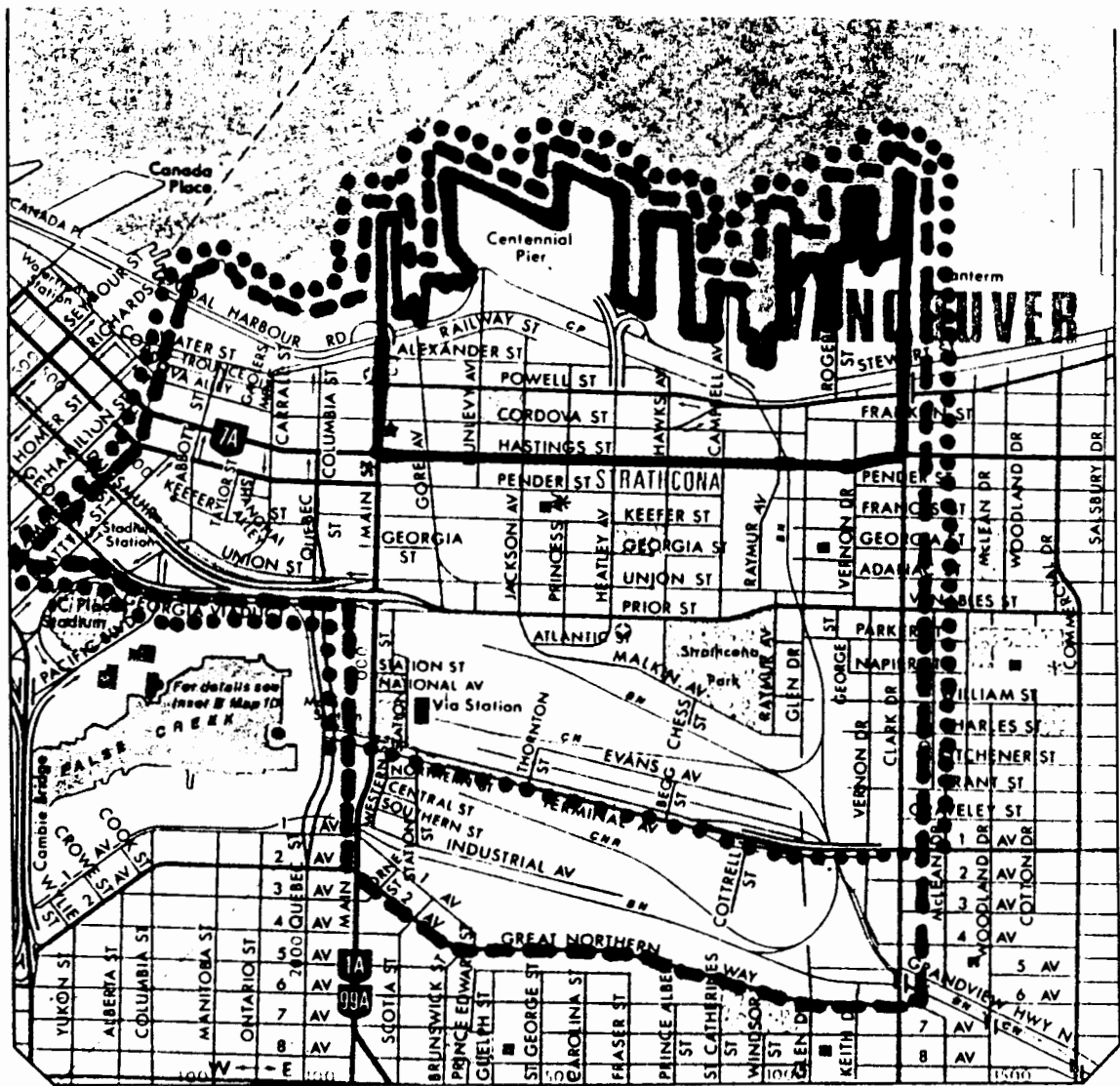


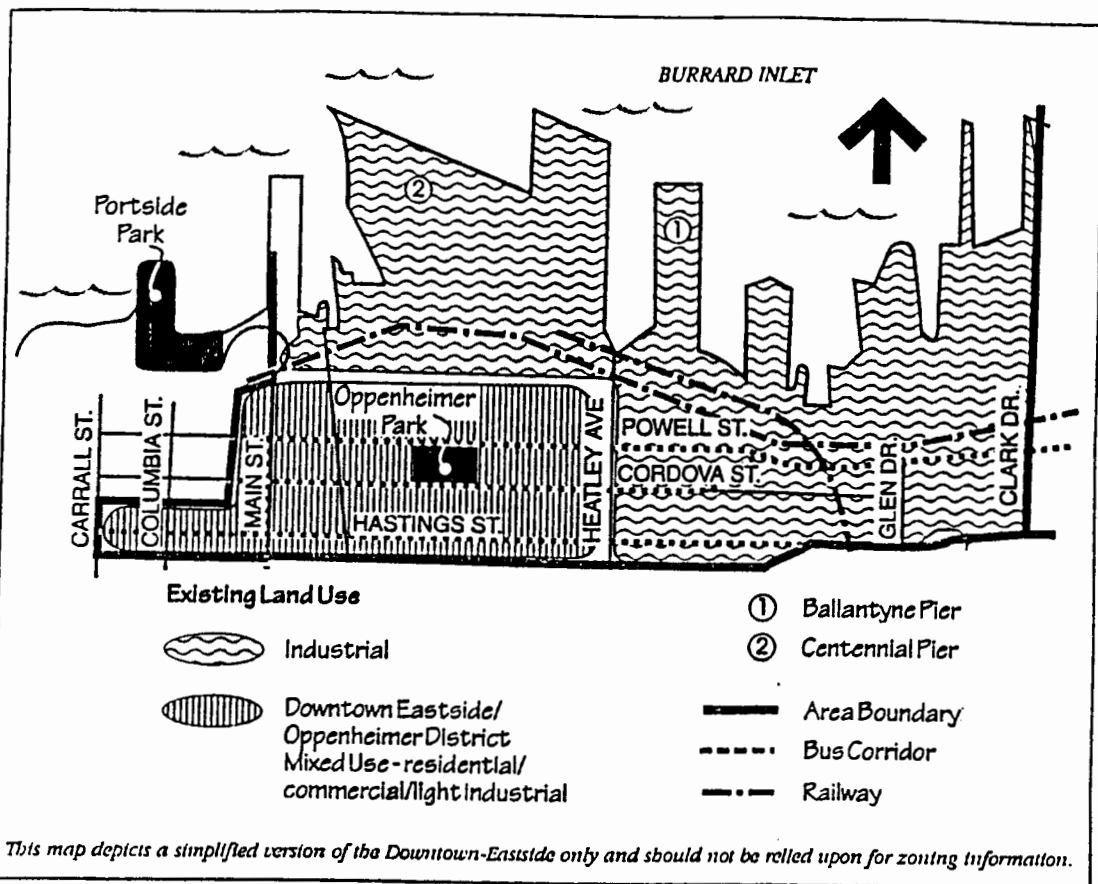
Figure 3: Boundaries of the Downtown Eastside

**LEGEND**

City of Vancouver Planning Department  
(Cambie St., Burrard Inlet, Main St., Hastings St.)

Downtown Eastside Safety Office  
(Cambie St., Burrard Inlet, Clark Dr., 1st Ave.)

Downtown Eastside Residents Associations  
(Cambie St., Burrard Inlet, Clark Dr., Great Northern Way)



**Figure 4: Downtown Eastside Land use**

**Source:** City of Vancouver Planning, Downtown Eastside: A Community Profile, No. 3.

City Hall zoning designations that cite the majority of the DES as heavily industrial imply two important characteristics about the DES: that residents ultimately can only be transients, and that as a district, the DES has very little residential space, and thus little community life (Hasson and Ley 1994:189). These attributes, combined with the selective invoking of the boundaries of the DES as a place at all, contribute to the construction of certain groups of residents as invisible, and the spaces in which they live, empty and uncivilized. Although the DES does encompass industrial areas, and although it includes in its constituency "the hard to house, the substance abusers, the transients," the community also encompasses a significant base of people who are permanent residents "for whom the district is not a short-term stop, but a home" (Hasson and Ley 1994:201). In this sense, the maps in Figures 3 and 4 point to the first of many ironies to do with the fluctuating status of the DES as a definable place. That is, a paradox emerges wherein maps are selectively offered up as proof of the existence of a certain kind of place (alleged to be generally inhospitable) that in other fairly similar circumstances fails to rate as a place at all (as is the case in Figures 1 and 2).

An example of external impositions of boundaries that capitalize on the construction of the DES as predominantly industrial and uncivilized space can be seen in the making of Vancouver's 'entertainment district' shown in Figure 1. Ironically dubbed 'Downtown Place,' this proposed mega-project emerges from an area of the city that, according to the map, alleges to be empty and presently unlivable space. In other words, what is, according to Concord Pacific Developments Corporation, tantamount to a non-place, *attains* 'placehood,' precisely as a result of its presumed emptiness, rife for

occupation and transformation. The developers of Downtown Place adopt and capitalize on the discourse of progress and betterment by promising “to complete the downtown core,” and to “revitalize the eastern end of downtown Georgia Street transforming an otherwise inhospitable area into a classic urban park.” This “Festival Park” atmosphere of Downtown Place will allegedly add “new appeal” to the eastern sector of downtown (*Downtown Place: Executive Summary: 1995*). What results is a selective (re)creation and (re)definition of spaces that serves particular interests, and that relies in particular, on assumptions that where the DES rates as a place at all, that it has little or no existing residential or community presence to disrupt. Indeed, according to Concord Pacific, things can only get better.

The discourse of ‘skid row’ has been instrumental in facilitating projects like that of Downtown Place. Focusing on the most obvious and stereotypical ‘skid row’ indicators: beer parlours, liquor stores, missions, high rates of homicide, aggravated assaults and robberies; the prescriptions and practices indicating that the DES is ‘inhospitable’ risk becoming self-fulfilling (Hasson and Ley 1994:189-190). Of this process, Hasson and Ley write that

in city after city, neighbourhoods have been usurped by more powerful public and private interests in incremental or major redevelopment, rationalized by outsider’s discourse of skid row (1994:201).

Under the guise of such a construction, the boundaries of the DES have repeatedly been contested over the years by corporate and business interests; not however, without sustained responses by DES residents to myopic and limited constructions of their neighbourhood as skid row. Often spearheaded by the Downtown Eastside Resident’s

Association (DERA), projects to redefine and reclaim the district “at the level of meaning” have aimed to challenge the discourse of skid row with the discourse of community. Countering the city’s limited boundary designations that often highlight only the most pronounced Skid Row characteristics, DES residents claim a far more extensive territory, calling particular attention to the stable aspects of the community, the loyalty of many of its citizens to it, and the many and varied community amenities (Hasson and Ley 1994:190).

Discrepancies like these over borders and meaning coincide with the interlocking external and internal powers of maps described in Chapter Three. That is, the way that all maps reflect and embody the biases and partialities of their author or patron, in conjunction with the reliance on the internal power of the map itself as an immutable document used to justify certain ends (Wood 1992:24). The initiation of programmes of mapping to match varying interests, and that privilege particular versions over others, is indicative of the scope of power and influence of the author and of the map itself. In the case of the DES, the fluctuating status of its boundaries, and of its very existence according to the maps in question, is a reflection of the interests of planners and city officials, and fails to consider the boundaries according to the people who actually live in the DES.<sup>3</sup> It is in this sense

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<sup>3</sup>As previously discussed, the way that maps are used to justify particular worldviews can be understood as coinciding with a legacy of (Western) maps as tools of colonization. What often results is the belief that the maps of non-Western or early cultures are inferior to European maps, or that these former maps are inauthentic or irrelevant (Harley 1987:8). Although similar assumptions can be associated with counter-hegemonic map construction, (i.e. that maps representing non-dominant perspectives are similarly inaccurate or inauthentic), it is important to recognize that even non-hegemonic maps and ‘territory’ identifications risk producing boundaries that could become static and inflexible. Further, the danger of co-optation by the dominant hegemony should also be considered. For instance, by using information provided by the City reflecting what is alleged to be the ‘reality’ of the DES, dominant agendas can be reinforced when important information is omitted or misrepresented.



that boundaries can have significant bearing on the portrayal of a place that reflects (or not) the many realities simultaneously present.

### *making place for whom?*

This leads to the second consequence effected by the maps in Figures 1 and 2 to be discussed in relation to the DES; that being the resemblance of traditional strategies of colonization to local stakings of territory. As already alluded to, depending on who defines the spaces in question and for what purposes, maps naturalize meanings about people and places, and determine who and what get left out or represented. Here, the links between the claiming of territories and the disciplinary and normalizing power of maps comes into play. Again, this is particularly relevant to Figure 1, depicting the emergence of Vancouver's 'entertainment district.' Of this birthing process, Vancouver author and playwright, John Gray (cited in *Downtown Place: Executive Summary:1995*) writes that Downtown Place will be "a Festival Park for breathing and walking. A spectacular destination. A more *livable* downtown" (*emphasis mine*). What Gray fails to distinguish, is for whom, and at the expense of whom, downtown becomes 'more livable.' Further, his 'more livable' downtown says nothing of the those *already* living in the DES, who have effectively been left off the 'Festival Park' map.

The apparent ease of occupation and colonization of the DES can be traced in part, to its already mentioned construction as empty and *unlivable* space. The sporadic identification of the DES as a discernible place, facilitates the selective creation of places

overtop existing ones. In a strategy resembling what might be imagined as traditional global colonization, a supposedly empty urban wasteland is 'discovered' and 'redeemed' by developers who subsequently "transform the street into the tree-lined grand boulevard it was *meant* to be" (*Downtown Place: An Executive Summary:1995, emphasis mine*). Further, developers boast that Downtown Place will "create many new opportunities for public enjoyment and civic betterment" (*Downtown Place: Executive Summary:1995*). Corresponding with the *internal* power of cartography, the power of the map itself is seen as a record of immutable 'truths' about the landscape, contributing to the supposed inevitability of the space in question becoming what it is 'meant' to be. In this way, Downtown Place becomes (yet another) New World of Vancouver, to be rescued from the savages, tamed, and made 'more livable.'

Although still technically considered 'West,' the fledgling entertainment district encroaches on the area of downtown (approximately, and many would have different estimations), generally considered to verge on the DES. However, when there is supposedly nothing and no one to displace, few, if any, consequences (or resistance) to occupation are expected to ensue. For a neighbourhood of poor, elderly, handicapped, and politically disenfranchised people, these contradictory impulses of decline and gentrification seem a daunting challenge to face (Hasson and Ley 1994:177). This challenge becomes acute when taken in conjunction with the skid row discourse so often used against the DES. As already discussed, framing the DES uniquely as a downtrodden skid row environment can easily lead to the conflation of gentrification with the 'betterment' and 'evolution' of downtown.

Currently, there is an air of urgency as to whether the DES can survive the encroachments of mega-projects like Downtown Place that are quickly surrounding the area. Expo '86 marked a transition in political organizing by DES residents where resistance shifted from opposing "local slumlords to national and international public and private corporations" (Hasson and Ley 1994:198). However, the legacy of commitment on the part of many DES residents to self-determination and to the preservation of their neighbourhood means that resistance to strategies of dispossession may be more substantial than developers might expect. Map re-readings and reconstructions can be included as some of the many and varied tactics employed by DES residents in this capacity.

### **the DES against the grain**

Maps, in their preoccupation with borders and non-negotiable measurements, share some characteristics with certain descriptions of borderlands as sites of exclusion, domination, and divisive constructions of difference (Pratt 1992:243-244). However, like Gloria Anzaldúa's use and conception of borders, an element of resistance is not to be overlooked. While the "historic opportunity" promised by Downtown Place to "complete the downtown core" ends up obscuring local displacements and omissions by selectively invoking map constructions and map knowledge to serve particular interests, this should not downplay or leave out the possibilities for resistance, and against the grain readings of other city maps. Iain Chambers (1993:188) writes that "the very idea of a map, with its

implicit dependence upon the survey of a stable terrain, fixed referents and measurement, seems to contradict the palpable flux and fluidity of metropolitan life." Like my refiguring of the Montreal Metro map, oppositional cartographic readings can include not only the creation of new maps, but also the appropriation of existing ones.

As a population particularly susceptible to dispossession and displacement, residents of the DES have a legacy of active political grassroots organizing that includes coalitions between organizations like the Carnegie Centre, DERA, and Co-op Radio, among others. DERA, in particular, has a strong history of political organizing in the DES. The underlying philosophy of DERA is that of "community control for community change." In this way, DERA opposes exploitation, is equally wary of paternalism, while privileging local knowledge about the DES. DERA, in conjunction with other area organizations, have engaged in a range of tactics to "lobby, to be visible, to make community needs known" (Hasson and Ley 1994:184-185).

A recent rallying call of political organizing in the DES among various groups and organizations, centres on the fate of the Woodward's building, around which an ongoing tug-of-war between developers and DES residents is taking place. The points of contention are over the need for community services and affordable housing being created in and around the now-vacant Woodward's building, instead of condominiums and retail stores. City councillor, Jenny Kwan (cited in Klein and Cook 1995:23), comments that in the Downtown Eastside and Downtown South "the mega-developers are getting anything and everything they ask for. Condominiums are claiming more territory. Existing tenants will be, over time, displaced." While City Council is allowing private developers to bid on

space in this potentially lucrative city block, there is a concomitant lack of attention shown to various grassroots plans for the Woodward's building.<sup>4</sup>

Of the many and varied grassroots tactics undertaken by DES residents to call attention to their own displacements, some include public meetings, and a campaign of painting where the windows of the Woodward's building were regularly 'decorated' with scenes of the neighbourhood. Actions also undertaken include walking tours of the area to view conditions and needs first hand (Hasson and Ley 1994:185-186), petitions, rallies, pickets, and most significant for this discussion, the reappropriation of existing maps. In keeping with Iain Chambers (1993:188) assertion that while "maps are full of references and indications, but they are not peopled," most of the tactics mentioned involve the goal of drawing attention to the fact that the DES is not only a community, but that it is *peopled*. With particular reference to the map of 'Downtown Vancouver Neighbourhoods' (Figure 2), the DES fails to be shown as a discernible 'neighborhood,' or as a 'place' at all. To counter this implicit claim, DERA has layered this existing map with the following text: "There's an old saying that the best way to make people powerless is to make them invisible. Maps are a good way of doing this." What results is a double-whammy effect where the colonizers' own strategies of erasure are exposed and made to speak for themselves. The effect that such a layering of implicit and explicit map knowledge can have is to question the finality and immutability of maps, and to highlight their absences. The map of 'Downtown Vancouver Neighborhoods,' if taken at face value, shows the *Bayshore Gardens Hotel*, (Figure 2, Area A) as more of a 'neighborhood' than

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<sup>4</sup>According to DERA, negotiations over the fate of the Woodward's building are ongoing between the BC government and developers with no deal signed as of August, 1996.

the DES. The interests served by designations like these are obviously not those of DES residents. However, by pointedly questioning absences and omissions, emphasis is shifted onto the varying uses, perceived worth, and 'civilization' of the spaces in question. This tactic ties in significantly with oppositional geographical discourses in that attention is drawn to underrepresented social realities while expanding common spatial understandings to include previously overlooked or undervalued places and people.

In this capacity, another against the grain map of the DES might concentrate on what is left off the map indicating that there is thriving community life in the DES that challenges constructions of the DES as empty or inhospitable. As shown in Table 1, the possibility of mapping some of the community amenities, services, and community markers listed, would indicate anything *but* an 'uncivilized' district. Such a tactic similarly shows oppositional geographical discourses in action in bringing about more textured versions of spatialities, and in making explicit, the power of maps. This can happen equally by questioning existing maps, by concentrating on what is left off the map, by (re)appropriating maps, and as will be shown next, by creating new envisioned maps.

### **remapping academic geography**

To paraphrase David Harvey's (cited in Johnston et. al., 1989:174) summary, a *geographical imagination* necessitates the recognition of the role of space and place in people's own biographies; it involves an understanding of how transactions between individuals and organizations are effected by the space that separates them, and

<b>City Services</b>	<b>Address</b>
Downtown Community Health Clinic and Health Support Services	412 East Cordova Street
Vancouver Police Department	312 Main Street
Chinatown Police Community Services Center	18 East Pender Street
Fire Stations	900 Heatley Avenue 199 Main Street
Carnegie Centre Branch Library	401 Main Street

<b>Associations and Services</b>	<b>Address</b>
Crab Tree Corner	101 East Cordova Street
Downtown Eastside Resident's Association (DERA)	#4-9 East Hastings Street
Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Coalition	320 East Hastings Street
Downtown Eastside Women's Centre	44 East Cordova Street
First United Church	320 East Hastings Street
Japanese Community Volunteers' Association	378 Powell Street
Japanese Language School Association	475 Alexander Street
Lookout Emergency Aid Society	346 Alexander Street
St. James Social Service Society	329 Powell Street
Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement Day Care	255 Dunlevy Avenue
New Pui Tak Day Care Centre	#415 - 350 East Pender Street
Raymur Place Day Care Centre	920 East Hastings Street
Shon Yee Day Care	618 East Hastings Street
St. Francis Xavier Daycare	717 Princess Street

<b>Parks</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Size (ha)</b>
Oppenheimer	Powell, Cordova, Dunlevy and Jackson Streets	0.97

<b>Recreation and Leisure Facilities</b>	<b>Address</b>
Carnegie Community Centre	401 Main Street
Downtown Eastside Seniors Centre	509 East Hastings Street
Dugout Drop-In Centre	57 Powell Street
Evelyn Saller Centre	320 Alexander Street
New Hope Centre	217 Dunlevy Avenue
Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre	920 East Hastings Street
Strathcona Community Centre	601 Keefer Street

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Address</b>
Seymour Elementary	1130 Keefer Street
St. Francis Xavier School	884 East Pender Street
Strathcona Elementary	592 East Pender Street

**Table 1: 'Signs of Life' in the Downtown Eastside**

**Source:** City of Vancouver Planning, Downtown Eastside: A Community Profile, No. 3

encourages the creative fashioning and use of space including an appreciation for the meaning of the spatial forms created by others. In this sense, projects of re-mapping can encompass not only critical re-readings or reformulations of existing maps, but also the exercise of imagining other spatial possibilities by *envisioning* new maps.

The site of Academic Geography itself, as the place where the hybridity of spatial politics is just as easily commodified as it is ignored, invites questions about the geopolitics of its own everyday practices. Like Women's Studies, critical human geographies navigate an often contradictory balancing act to closely-enough resemble traditional Academic inquiry as to merit 'legitimacy,' while risking appropriation and depoliticization in the process. This means that Women's Studies and critical human geographies share not only common analytical concerns, but also spatial ones: that is, how to survive, and carry out effective and self-reflexive work, in an environment sometimes hostile to their presence.

From its inception, feminists and other critical theorists in Women's Studies have responded critically to the contradictions of Academia as a site of contested meanings and assumptions about the spaces, bodies, and knowledges that constitute its formation. The growing presence and influence of critical human geographies and geographers in a traditionally masculine-defined field, has altered both the nature of, and who occupies, the physical spaces of Geography Departments. As discussed in previous chapters, queer, feminist and postcolonial geographers, among others, have been instrumental in effecting changes to the methodologies, assumptions, and premises of Geography. These changes have affected not only traditional Geographical discourse and practice, but also the physical spaces of Geography in terms of presences and absences in the Department,



assumed scope and composition of Academic Geographical work, and who carries it out. In this sense, critical human geographers are similarly well-positioned to apply their own theoretical and practical innovations, to a mapped re-reading of the geopolitics of Geography Departments.

In a conventional sense, a map of a Geography Department might depict this Academic space as located within the larger layout of the campus in question. It might show the corridors, washrooms, offices, lounges and labs which comprise the physical spaces of Geography (Figure 5). A more textured version of the same map, would endeavor to integrate the bodies who work and interact within these spaces, their effects on other bodies, as well as the geographical knowledges produced there. By reading the gaps and silences of Figure 5 as an example of how the Geography Department at Simon Fraser University has been conventionally mapped, and by imaging new and recent expansions of G/geographical concern, an altogether different map would emerge.

### **layer one: bodies and spaces**

Linda McDowell (1990:330), in an article called "Sex and power in academia," proposes several policies aimed at improving the position of women and others in Academia. Among them, she suggests that institutions could collect a comprehensive set of statistics on the position of so-called minority groups. She asserts that if such a statistical record were regularly updated and circulated, the mis- and/or under-representation of women and others would be increasingly visible. McDowell maintains



that this would allow for closer monitoring and progress towards more accurate and equal representation of various bodies in certain Academic spaces. Although this approach is far from new, and has long been proven insufficient on its own as a means to incite change or to better reflect social realities, the gathering of gender data has nevertheless been an approach undertaken by Women's Studies, affirmative action proposals and other projects concerned with representation. Table 2 shows an example of such a breakdown in the form of the gender segregated bodies who work within the Geography Department at Simon Fraser University as of January 1995.<sup>5</sup> On the surface, these numbers reflect what Linda McDowell (1991:323) and others have observed as the poor representation of women in the structures of power of a discipline that attracts women in almost equal numbers to men in its undergraduate, and in most cases, graduate programs.

Harkening back to my old biology textbook, consider a body-count like the one Linda McDowell proposes to be the first layer that could be added to a skeletal map of a Geography Department. What difference might such a supplementary layer of additional bodies make? A truly effective emphasis on the variable ways that maps can be produced and read should include criticisms of the common assumption that the physical presence of women and others in academia is enough. The idea that women and others simply must be included equally in existing institutions and decision-making structures amount to additive

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<sup>5</sup>Significantly, numbers corresponding with factors like disability, race, or ethnicity were not available. In addition, the table does not include such workers as Janitorial staff, Departmental Assistants, and secretaries, whose functions, while important to the operation of the Department, are rendered invisible by the times that they work, who performs them, and/or by the perception of the jobs in questions as menial and unimportant labour. While recognizing these omissions, I chose to reproduce this table to show not only the limitations of merely counting bodies as a means to emphasize the mis- or under-representation of certain people, but also to point to the significance of who is *not* counted at all, and hence not considered to be legitimate participants in, or contributors to the spaces in question. In this case, the table indicates who is considered to be a 'valid' member of the Academic community.

	female	male
Undergraduate students majoring in Geography	233	277
Graduate Students	27	30
Sessional Instructors	1	5
Faculty	4	19

**Table 2:** Numbers of female and male students, sessional instructors and faculty in the Geography Department at Simon Fraser University (January 1995).

**Source:** Human Resources, Simon Fraser University.

arguments which assume that the structures themselves require no modifications beyond those which would 'naturally' occur if women (as a homogenous group) were included on an equal basis with men. Moreover, it assumes the centrality of gender as the primary concern of all women (and marginalized men), thus downplaying or dismissing the varied and provisional configurations of subject positionalities that may include, but are never limited to, gender.

Simply plotting bodies onto a skeletal map of a Geography Department leaves unexamined what Geraldine Pratt and Susan Hanson (1994:6) describe as "the ways in which gendered, racialized and classed identities are fluid and constituted in place -- and therefore in different ways in different places." Further, such a body-count could serve to isolate and tokenize certain bodies, and to perpetuate existing stereotypes. An analogy would be the way that my Star Trek experiences would likely not have been substantially altered by the mere presence of more women on the Enterprise, without a concurrent overhaul of everyone's roles, agency, communication and contributions. Although in the '90s, there is now a woman at the helm of the Star Trek Voyager, this move does not necessarily represent a substantial challenge to the masculine space of the Bridge. As Lynne Hissey (1995:32) points out, Captain Katherine Janeway's character is portrayed as being torn between 'hearth and helm:' between her responsibilities to her 'family' -- the crew -- and to her job as a Star Fleet officer. Of this all-too familiar scenario, Hissey (1995:32) writes that "men captaining Federation starships are bravely exploring new worlds. Women at the helm are lost and just trying to find their way back home."

Similarly, merely factoring women and others into the spaces of Geography Departments does not necessarily go very far in contesting existing configurations.

### **layer two: 'visibilities'**

In conjunction with other tactics, a useful extension of work that focuses on embodied presences in Academia *can* be, as Linda McDowell suggests, to document presences and absences in the spaces of academia. However, looking at ways that the spaces of the Discipline of Geography have been transformed by the bodies who work there and the work being done, necessitates a more nuanced and comprehensive reading of the layers of these spaces moves beyond immediately apparent visibilities. For instance, while the pocket subway map described in Chapter Three clearly identifies stations, junctions, and train-routes organized by grids and coordinates, such a traditional cartographic reading of the resulting connect-the-dots says nothing of the concrete and imagined geographies of my *metro* experiences; including the presence of, and interactions between, the various other embodied spatialities present on the subway system. Similarly, even if the skeletal figure 5 were to have bodies plotted into its corridors and offices, the many and varied factors that produce and reproduce particular meanings about these spatialities would not be apparent.

To return to our map in progress, this layer would reflect the changes of boundaries and assumed limits necessary to include previously overlooked bodies and spaces of critical geographical work. The map's borders would necessarily broaden to

encompass off-campus spaces in the community previously not considered because of combinations of assumptions about what constitutes 'real' Geographical work, about who does it, and where. The alternative sites I am describing could range from differently-conceived Academic spaces, like people's homes where reading groups meet, or where Academic geographers do their work because of parenting activities. Or, they could include community-based spaces like community centers, radio stations, neighborhood associations, or local publications; where activist work is carried out in conjunction with, or in addition to, critical geographical inquiry.

Although the association of Academia with spaces and activities like these is by no means new, their appearance on the map serves to reinforce the idea that these are not peripheral activities carried out in the spare time of critical human geographers. Rather they comprise aspects integral to critical geographical work, that serve to challenge the immutability of traditional Geographical knowledge, practitioners, spaces, and activities. Critical reading groups, home seminars, feminist and/or radical Geography journals, outreach work, e-mail, community activism, sessions at conferences, and Academic guerrilla activism are just a few of the ways that critical human geographers have re-defined how and where they work. As a result of many of these factors, changes have been made in the composition and circulation of G/geographical knowledges, that highlight counter-sites of knowledge production and producers. Mapping these spatialities onto the skeletal map of a Geography department like that of figure 5 would help illustrate the ways that the spaces of Geography have been, and continues to be transformed. As well, it

would contribute to an already-mentioned epistemological shift in the way(s) the spaces, activities, and people associated with Geography departments are commonly understood.

### **layer three: 'invisibilities'**

Reading maps as texts can bring to light their social constructedness and their possibilities for multiple interpretations by both producers and consumers (Blunt and Rose 1994:10). Like oppositional geographical discourses, map re-writing (and reading), in this most literal sense, can succeed in drawing attention to previously obscured specificities about people and spaces, and to re-think naturalized claims about spaces and bodies. Nevertheless, a critical questioning should be undertaken of the status of the visual in maintaining surveillance, objectification, and fixity in the construction of Otherness. As discussed in Chapter Three, a careful reading between the lines, or between the mapped coordinates as the case may be, should be undertaken with the aim to acknowledge the silences and omissions of maps, and to synthesize them together with other information communicated through the map. Like the maps of the DES earlier in this chapter, attention to the *un*apparent and the supposedly invisible, can add to our map without being treated as an assimilation to, or integration with, perceived norms. Rather, the gaps and silences to be layered onto the map, should be understood as integral to the goal of producing a richer and more complete account of the spaces and bodies in question.

By invisibilities, I refer for example, to some academic Others' varied perceptions and experiences of the spaces of academia. Predominantly informed by systems of power-



knowledge, these experiences can include harassment, intimidation, indifference, or limited exposure to opportunities for publication, career advancement, or funding. Academic invisibilities can also include enabling and constructive spatialities like those of reading groups, informal exchanges of information, interdisciplinary work, and physical spaces of collaboration. Alliances and progressive spaces of cooperation can be equally as *invisible* to the untrained eye, and just as meaningful as another layer of our map in progress.

Far from trying to replace authoritative tales with (more intricate) authoritative tales, this part of the process should emphasize the fluid and simultaneous nature of mapped information. What is important here, is the process of responding to the partiality of experience and perspective, without aiming for an allegedly definitive final product. For example, the tensions encountered between the visibilities and invisibilities of bodies, place, and landscape through my subway map experiences depend largely on my subject position. The ways that I conceive of the layering of 'map-able' information, reflects my perceptions and understandings of the spaces I pass through, and the ripples I create by virtue of my presence. Some of these ripples may, in fact, be perceptible only to those whose experience I affect. In this way, I am always and everywhere telling only my part of the story. My mobility alone makes a qualitative difference to my understandings of space and place from, for example, a worker who spends eight hours a day in a food kiosk deep in the viscera of the city. Likewise, factors like the time of day or night that I might wish to travel, can limit my underground excursions, and because of concerns over safety, change my spatial understanding of the same subway station where the kiosk worker spends her or his days. Taken together, these seemingly disparate perceptions can combine to produce a

more textured/textual understanding of a place, highlighting common concerns, spaces of conflict, or potential alliances.

The importance of recognizing what theorists like Griselda Pollock (1988:68) have cited as “the overlap between purely ideological maps and the concrete organization of the social sphere” can translate into maps that endeavor to represent the commonly under-represented partiality of perspective. As a fundamental tactic of oppositional geographical discourses, attention to underrepresented socio-spatial realities privilege everyday geographies. Although these geographies tend to fall outside the realm of what is considered empirically-based, and hence ‘mappable’ information, their inclusion can bring to light the narrative qualities of maps and their possibilities as communicators of the seemingly invisible, or, what is often unacknowledged by the dominant gaze.

Included in the realm of the supposedly unmappable are Academic G/geographical knowledges themselves. Himani Bannerji et. al., in *Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site of Feminist Struggles* (1991:10-11), point out how often unexamined assumptions about the production of what is considered knowledge in Academia remain disconnected from the location of the “producers” of the knowledge, and from the various other participants in the spaces of Academia. Similarly, Geographer David Sibley (1995:119) asserts that the success or failure of ideas is affected by the contexts in which they are produced. Further, he writes that power in Academia is reflected in the existence of hierarchies, that is, the hierarchical organization of the purveyors of knowledge and in a ranking of knowledges (1995:122).

Purveyors of, in this case, non-traditional geographical knowledges, risk invisibility or perceived redundancy if they do not closely enough resemble mainstream Academic discourses (Sibley 1995:127). As an already-discussed concern of both critical human geographies and Women's Studies, the existence of knowledges produced by these dissident groups, while always risking appropriation, can nevertheless make the point that there is more than one way to 'know' and to perceive space. To map this information would be to draw attention, through the integration of symbols, diagrams, or even text, to the different ways that Geography, as a body of contested knowledge, can be practiced and understood.

The relations of power in Academic spaces and the ways that critical human geographers are positioned differently, physically and figuratively within these spaces, are important considerations when dealing with Academic knowledges, with the socio-spatial relations among people, as well as with the material conditions of Academia. Overall, the layering of this information onto our map can bring about a richer and more textured socio-spatial map of Academic Geography.

### **cartography deconstructed**

The reconceptualization of map constructions and map knowledge discussed in Chapters Three and Four must critically challenge both an absolute view of landscape and a singular notion of the subjecthood of its inhabitants. However, it should take care not to fall prey to the kinds of absolute categories of analysis they are trying to divorce. Derek

Gregory (1994:7), for example, writes that it is "surely presumptuous to claim that images of maps, landscapes, and spaces are always advanced as unproblematic by those who use them, while images of location, position and geometry - are not." Gregory asserts that it is in fact possible to use images of maps and spaces, *and also* images of location and position, while insisting that geographies of knowing make a difference. The recuperation of maps as potential vehicles of resistance does not presume the wholesale inadequacy of existing maps in recognizing their own silences and omissions, nor does it infer that talk of location and partiality automatically subverts hegemonic ideals (Gregory 1994:7).

Attention to local displacements and erasures effected by maps can highlight the use of maps as colonial strategies, and to show how resistance to dispossession can similarly occur on a local scale. Further, maps provide another important textual opportunity for women and others that builds on the legacy in Women's Studies of seeking better and more inclusive representation in different aspects of cultural production and participation. The de/reconstruction of maps has other benefits, four of which are worth mentioning here. First, such a tactic contributes to the already-established tradition of critical human geographers of documenting counter-histories of the discipline of Geography and geographical knowledge. Examples range from the Women's Atlas of the World discussed in Chapter Three, to the re-mapping projects undertaken in the context of the DES, to remapping the site of Academic Geography itself. Like so many similar projects in this vein, such documentation can serve to maintain and strengthen counter-hegemonic versions of truth, and is in line with the goal of folding critical geographic strategies upon themselves. This process is not unlike my revelations over the anatomy

chapter in my biology textbook, where I learned that there is always more than meets the eye.

Second, maps like the alternative ones I have described, challenge the idea that there is a single scientifically verifiable definition of spaces and bodies. Corresponding with many of the goals of critical human geographers in drawing attention to underrepresented social realities, maps also offer alternatives to the myth of a linear 'progression' toward better and ever-more accurate delineations of reality as referred to in Chapter Three. This is accomplished while simultaneously throwing into question the assumed authority and finality of the map itself.

Third, deconstructing and reinterpreting maps lends itself toward a realignment of the historical significance of maps that, rather than invalidating their study, allows cartography to become "enhanced by adding different nuances to our understanding of the power of cartographic representation" (Harley 1989:16). This point affirms Gregory's (1994:7) assertion that existing maps are not necessarily wholly inadequate and exclusionary, nor does it presuppose that 'making it onto the map' will alone, assure a redress of unequal power relations.

Fourth, mapping can be reinforced as a unique form of spatial representation because of its potential to be interpreted as visual and/or textual (Barnes and Duncan 1992:5) thus producing an opportunity for enriched and mutually-beneficial readings of other forms of representation and meaning. J.B. Harley said it well when reflecting on the implicit intertextuality of cartographic knowledge and practice:

If we accept that cartographic representation is ineluctably a form of power, then we will take more care about the categories of objects we show in our topographic maps. If we accept that silence is an affirmative

statement, we will be more careful about their omissions. And if we accept that all maps are rhetorical utterances, we will care more about their composition because that too, when linked to content, makes a persuasive statement about the way we prioritize our world whether we intend to or not (1990:12).

Ultimately, through an ongoing and sustained critical deconstruction of Cartography and the G/geographical discourses associated with it, maps can continue to be read for their intertextuality, where varying, simultaneous, and sometimes contradictory discourses perpetually surface and submerge.

It now seems not-so coincidental that in grade school, perhaps as a result of selective memory, the failure to return all my textbooks resulted in my inadvertently pilfering an *Atlas Larousse Canadien* from Social Studies class. I still have that old atlas on my bookshelf and have pulled it out regularly over the course of writing this thesis to consider the limitations and possibilities woven through spatialities, maps, and geographies. Inevitably, my thoughts return to questions about the fate of knowledge about space and society that has been produced by members of non-dominant groups. Considering why certain methods and practices are neglected, appropriated, or altogether ignored by the Academic establishment suggests that

both the practices which result in the exclusion of minorities [sic] and those which result in the exclusion of knowledge have important implications for theory and method in Human Geography (Sibley 1995).

Responding to these concerns, what I have shown in this thesis is that the contestation and refiguring of Geographical applications and concerns coexists with, and is only critically possible through a concurrent deconstruction of the discourses and practices of Geography itself. Further, by virtue of my interdisciplinary positioning, I have shown how Women's Studies can benefit from increased incorporation of spatial concerns into its frameworks of analysis while also indicating the debt owed by critical human geographers to the feminist and other critical theorists who have informed so much critical geographical work.

In the first half of the thesis, I highlighted the tensions between dominant and oppositional G/geographical discourses as the differing ways of seeing and understanding

the world espoused by traditional and critical G/geographers respectively. Chapter One reviewed feminist, queer, and postcolonial geographies as three areas of current critical human geographical thought. I argued that these critical geographies pose a challenge to traditional Geography in the formers' philosophy of responsiveness to the urgencies of daily life that particularize underrepresented social realities. The everyday and location-specific knowledges drawn out by critical human geographical inquiry counter the supposedly common-sense understandings of Geographical 'progress,' of autonomous individuality, of 'History' and of 'Space' (Chang 1994: 100). At the same time I warned that attention to the everyday and the particular should be careful not to stray into individualist traps that downplay or ignore the inherently relational nature of both oppression, and of collective resistance.

In Chapter Two I reiterated that critical human geographers have enriched G/geographical debates through an awareness of the intrinsically power-based nature of spatial arrangements that link social, political, and economic relations. Nevertheless, I showed that one of the ways that critical human geographers can reinforce their positions is to better differentiate between and among the different types and qualities of space they refer to. As a concern common to both Geography and Women's Studies, I showed that problems arise when little or no distinction is made between metaphorical and material positionings. I argued that the failure to draw out the relations of spatial language to material lived conditions, can have far-reaching consequences. For example, uncritical presumptions of (literal) mobility, combined with an undifferentiated (metaphorical) 'touring' mentality, can serve to deny lived realities and struggles, and to mask the



influence of power and privilege. The reverse is also true, that material conditions must be brought to bear on the social meanings that forge their construction in the first place.

In the second half of the thesis, I argued for a further deconstruction of cartography, as one of the fundamental practices upon which Geography is based, and the map, as one of the quintessential tools of the Geographical trade. In Chapter Three I showed how maps, in their assumed role as 'mirrors of nature' (Pickles 1992:193) influence the social construction of reality by falsely claiming exhaustive depictions of space and place. In this sense, I argued that maps should not be assumed to be "unproblematic and comprehensive representations of the world" (Pickles 1992:194). I showed that it is important not only to consider the circumstances around which a thing is 'put on the map' in the crudest sense, but also to question *who* does the mapping. Tying in with many of the goals of critical human geographers, I argued that these transformations encourage an expansion of spatial thinking that leads to different ways of dealing with space and spatialities. Also in line with critical human geographies, I suggested that re-readings of maps have succeeded in breaking the assumed link between selective versions of reality, and representation.

In Chapter Four, I cited specific examples of some map reformulations discussed in Chapter Three. I showed that what has been taken for granted and considered 'natural' and hence universal in everyday life is much more contested and heterogeneous than a first glance might suggest (Chambers 1993:194). This has particular ties with critical human geographies where similar concerns over dominant ways of seeing and understanding the world often lead to inaccurate constructions of certain people as invisible, and the spaces

in which they live as empty and uncivilized. Further, I argued that the assumption that the dispossession and social control linked to map construction and map knowledge is practiced somewhere else, and perhaps more significantly, in the past, denies ongoing colonialisms on both small and large scales.

### **space becoming critical for women's studies**

The ideas and possible applications that I have linked together in this thesis have provided me with both a solid base in geographical theory and a springboard from whence to proceed to various other geographical debates. Before moving onto more detailed and applied geographical inquiry, what I hope a project like this one can accomplish for Women's Studies is twofold. First would be to provide a theoretical resource for Women's Studies that augments and expands the already implicit spatial elements in feminist and other critical debates. As shown throughout this thesis, increased attention to the roles of space and spatialities in the (re)production of social life can incite imaginative ways that people might collectively endeavour to change material conditions of daily existence. For Women's Studies such an explicit incorporation of the spatial can result in more encompassing and sustained challenges to the ways the people, space, and place are commonly understood, and that answer to the undertheorized importance of space in the Discipline. An example would be the way that space, while potentially an important concept to feminist schools of thought like ecofeminism, has not been dealt with

theoretically beyond preliminary considerations of the problematic relationship between women and nature.

This leads to the second, and related way that this thesis can contribute to Women's Studies. That is, by providing a practical how-to guide for encouraging the importance of space in lived, material contexts. Although my questions about critical human geographical practice are, for the purposes of this project, predominantly located in an Academia, this is in no way meant to imply relevance only to this limited context. Rather, Academia is just one site, where a collection of oppositional tactics and varied perspectives that already spills outside of traditional Academic boundaries can combine to meet the aforementioned goals.

One last consideration involves assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the decision to incorporate my own spatial anecdotes throughout this thesis. Recognizing the limitations of this tactic while attempting to avoid self-indulgent vanity ethnographies was a challenging task, but in the end, I believe they constitute an important addition to this work. Overall, what I perceive to be the weaknesses of c/siting myself can be summarized as follows:

- My local knowledges of places are partial and sometimes cursory.
- There are risks of displacing others into the peripheries of our own making (Probyn 1990:176). Although I tried to locate myself as honestly and accurately as possible, even when (or especially?) these depictions gave away the privilege of my mobility, the danger still exists of misrepresenting others' realities. This is counter to what I perceive as

an equally problematic poverty/working class chic, or a 'ranking of oppressions' (Moraga:1982), where the more of one's identity that can be located on the 'margins,' the more authenticity of speaking voice one can claim, and the more non-compliance in structures of domination one is assumed to have.

- The potential exists for appropriating 'other' voices inaccurately or irresponsibly, resulting from, or contributing to, the 'exoticization' of subjects.

The strengths of incorporating my own spatial anecdotes can be summarized as follows:

- The stories offer immediate examples of complicated, and sometimes inaccessible, concepts that serve to counteract typical assumptions of distance and objectivity.
- The idea that the seemingly ordinary, or everyday, has a significant place in critical thinking can bring about better understandings of the role and significance of spatial debates both within, and apart from, Academic inquiry. This tactic is in line with the goal of folding spatial concerns back upon themselves.
- The contradictions between movement and limitation provide very particular depictions of spatialities, that rather than positing distanced and uncritical observation, add depth to common understandings of

places and people by situating myself squarely within the spatial configurations I describe.

- The importance of privileging the lived aspects of human spatialities are emphasized not unproblematically as vanity ethnography,<sup>1</sup> but as narratives within which the idea of a “multiply placed/linked subject” serves to fracture margin/center dualisms (Grewel 1994:235).

The combination of texts and contexts that I recounted in the running thread of my own spatial anecdotes through this text represents an attempt to responsibly grapple with these methodological issues through a sustained process of self-critique, and by positioning myself alongside other authors. My process of selecting the number and types of anecdotes, their details and applicability, coincides in most cases, with ordinary instances in my own life of coming to better understand many of the complex spatial concepts and experiences that I discuss throughout my thesis. Rather than constituting a disembodied perspective of the roving explorer who represents while escaping representation, my anecdotes emphasize the embodied, contingent, and relational aspects of human geographies and spatialities.

The contradictions between my own mobility and constraint, between occupying ‘dominant’ positions and marginal ones, are such that I felt the benefits of including these anecdotes outweighed the potential risks. Further, the spatial anecdotes that I chose to

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<sup>1</sup>Vanity ethnographies are problematic inasmuch as they constitute surveys conducted from a position of privilege that leave the ‘core-identity’ of an individual unaltered and that fail to acknowledge and question one’s own mainstream position (hooks 1992:23). As bell hooks (1992:23) writes, vanity ethnography resulting from a ‘touring’ mentality occurs when “the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other.”

incorporate into the text differ in two important ways from uncritical vanity ethnographies. First, the anecdotes I included were specified as not inferring *the* single definitive (or dominant) illustration of the spatial concept or experience in question. Rather, they were offered to show the multiplicity of possible interpretations of, and interactions between the spatial. Mine was clearly cited as not constituting the most accurate or nuanced perspective, but rather one perspective among many. Second, instead of uncritical celebrations of my mobility, the anecdotes I included set out to encourage an expansion in spatial thinking. In this sense, the emphasis was clearly placed on the *process* of specifying the many different types of, and interactions between spatialities, and not any allegedly final outcome. Neither of these differences completely precludes the possibility that my anecdotes will be read by some as insufficiently situated, as irresponsible, or as indulgent. Nevertheless, what should be emphasized in this instance is my critical awareness of the potential problems, my willingness to continually re-consider my motivations, and perhaps most importantly, my conviction that these anecdotes can contribute to the reconfiguration of new and socially relevant ways to deal with human spatialities.

From this concern stems what I believe to be the biggest test of the potential success of critical human geographies, that being their actual social currency apart from theoretical speculation. Theorist Kathleen M. Kirby (1996:9) asks how it might be limiting to address space and spatial practices armed with what sometimes seems only to be language. Rhetorically, Kirby answers herself by affirming that the theoretical turn to space stems from “the delicate reference that category promises with concrete reality” (Kirby 1996:9). For both Human Geography and Women’s Studies, this challenge is part and

parcel of their respective (and overlapping) goals: procuring alternative visions and versions of the world that are enacted and relevant to social life.

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