Marginal Walking

Taien Ng-Chan

Abstract

I propose the concept of marginal walking as a critically creative framework that nourishes and supports the spaces of the margins as a corrective and a prescription to the stresses of everyday racism, which is difficult to see or describe, but underlies every interaction in everyday public spaces. Drawing from my reflections on the increase of anti-Asian hate during the global pandemic of 2020 to 2021, I investigate how news of racist incidents circulates through digital networks that are entangled with quotidian places such as parks, grocery stores, and public transit. Through such concepts as autocartography and strata-mapping, as explored through my own research-creation practices as well as through participatory walks given by my artist collective Hamilton Perambulatory Unit (HPU), I look at how conscious acts of sensing and intervening in marginal everyday space can contribute to the creation of alternative narratives and knowledge that is necessary for change.

Keywords

ethnicity and race, cross-disciplinary methodology, new methods and methodologies, counternarrative, methods of inquiry, arts-based inquiry

I am located in the margin, I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance—as location of radical openness and possibility.

–hooks (1989, p. 23)

Introduction to the Margins

When the COVID-19 pandemic first hit in the spring of 2020, I began collecting in a text file incidents and articles about the increase of racism toward Asians. Anti-Asian hatred has always been a part of Western history and culture, from the Head Tax to Hollywood white-washing, but the racism was usually more disguised, minor, subtle, a faint echo of dissonance that has marked my location in the margins since childhood.

I begin here with my position as a second-generation Asian-Canadian, my own precarious proximity to power, and my own experiences of existence upon which my work is based. As a person of color (POC) as well as many other intersecting identities and roles, I am learning to understand how my location has affected my being: how I take up space. As an artist and researcher concerned with embodied space and movement, I am learning that these things matter. I begin by asking, what is it to be located in the spaces of the margins?

Some dictionary definitions: To be marginal is to be at the outer or lower limits; minimal for requirements; almost insufficient: marginal subsistence, marginal ability. Economics: marginal profits. Marginalized: to place in a position of marginal importance, influence, or power.

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Margins can be many things and have many uses. As bell hooks notes, they can be imposed by oppressive structures, but they can also be sites of radical openness and resistance. I began writing this in the last days of 2020, a year that has seen the cracks in Western society made deeper and exposed more clearly how our systems of capitalism and colonialism have been built upon these cracks that can no longer hold. 2020 began with Australia on fire and a worldwide pandemic shutting down the global machine. COVID-19 bore down hardest on marginalized peoples, as disasters usually do. By late spring, the murder of George Floyd ignited the largest civil rights movement since the 1960s, as the work of Black Lives Matter activists brought systemic racism into the center and made the margins more prominent.

Sociology: marked by contact with disparate cultures, and acquiring some but not all the traits or values common to any one of them.

The margins are where one can come into contact with Others. They can be zones of equal exchange or zones of exclusion and hypercontrol. They can be, as Walter Mignolo suggests, a “border space” where Western knowledge and subjectivity (what he terms the “horizon of expectations”) have been in contact with “other languages, memories, principles of knowledge and belief, forms of government and economic organization” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 497). This is where each space of the other can connect through common “relations of domination and exploitation within Western knowledge” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 497). Where is border space found? What does it mean to be located there?

Written or printed in the margin of a page: A marginal note.

The margins on a page can be small and of little use, or they can offer space to interject, intervene, inscribe Othered voices against dominant narratives. How does one find and expand the spaces of the margins?

Peripheral: When something is on the periphery of your vision, you can only see it when you’re looking sideways.

To be on the periphery can mean invisibility but also hypervisibility. If your voice, your presence is discounted, dismissed as unimportant, you are not seen or heard, but at the same time, you are always visible in the “mainly-white rooms” (Spahr & Young, 2015; Yú, 2015) that often comprise institutions of art and higher learning—you cannot hide. These are rooms I am most familiar with, where I have learned to look sideways to find the margins—they are not always easy to find, even if one is located there. Peripheral vision is a kind of power, then, like the ability to see ghosts—but only if one chooses it.

Just over a year into the pandemic, on March 16, 2021, a White man on yet another shooting spree in America killed eight people in Atlanta, six of whom were Asian women. This event, a culmination of centuries of exclusion, fear-mongering, and at the same time, hypersexualization of Asian women, has brought anti-Asian racism into the public consciousness, though it has been there all along. #StopAsianHate and #StopWhiteSupremacy (at least an acknowledgment of the conditions and systemic nature of hate) both trended for a time, but while hashtag activism might raise awareness, how deep does it go? For Asians and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) folks who have been aware all their lives, who have perhaps attempted to escape the margins or their own locations, grappled with their skewed senses of their own bodies, we need to do more.

In “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” bell hooks (1989) writes, “Understanding marginality as position and place of resistance is crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonised people” (p. 21). hooks sees marginality as “a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one’s capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of a radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds” (p. 20). This may be the most important task facing the world as we move forward, for we cannot make change if we cannot imagine what that change should be.

I suggest the concept of marginal walking as a critically creative framework that nourishes and supports the spaces of the margins as a corrective and a prescription. It is an everyday practice of finding and being in marginal space, of mapping the relations of power, intervention, and relational entanglement. Through such concepts as autocartography and strata-mapping, as explored through my own research-creation practices as well as through participatory walks given by my artist collective Hamilton Perambulatory Unit (HPU), I propose that the conscious acts of moving through, being in, and growing marginal everyday space can contribute to the creation of alternative narratives and knowledge that is necessary for change. Although art and research-creation projects may sometimes feel inconsequential, they can interlink and intersect with other social and activist projects into larger movements that cannot be ignored.

Pandemic notes:
April 3, 2020

It is more somber than ever today, the radio giving possible numbers of deaths in the thousands. We decide to start planning our meals better, no more going to the store every other day. I see a young woman and an even younger seeming man on the corner of King and Dundurn Street, outside the Money Mart, holding up signs that read: REPENT OR PERISH LUKE 13:5 and FEAR GOD, NOT COVID-19. I am surprised that they are so young, maybe early twenties or late teens. Someone crosses the street and begins talking to them, which also surprises me. I walk to the co-op grocery store where I wait to be let in as one of the five allowed, and play a sort of game in the narrow food aisles trying to get what I want while avoiding everyone else. In the vegetable section, one man comes within two feet of me without even looking.
May 9, 2020

I see this headline on a news site: “Asian woman punched in face at Vancouver bus stop in unprovoked ‘stranger assault’ (VIDEO).” Included is a screenshot of the incident, caught on surveillance camera. The Asian woman looks like she could be me: the clothes that she is wearing, hoodie up over her head, a knapsack on her back. I don’t watch the video.

**Objectives of Marginal Walking**

Marginal walking aims to mobilize anti-oppressive and anti-colonial concepts into everyday life. Particularly useful here are Walter Mignolo’s (2007) concepts of delinking and critical border thinking, which is “the method that connects pluriversal (different colonial histories entangled with imperial modernity) into a universal project of delinking from modern rationality and building other possible worlds” (p. 453). Part of the process of delinking is to show how the hegemonic colonialist project is one knowledge out of many, rather than a “universal” and natural frame by which to interpret, judge, and conceptualize all others. As Mignolo notes, “For decolonization to be fully operative, we must create alternatives to modernity and neo-liberal civilization” (p. 492). This, then, is a major objective of marginal walking: to create alternatives to how everyday life is currently structured and imagined.

Mignolo’s project of delinking complements the goals of critical cartographers and geographers, who have long challenged the construction of Western colonialist and capitalist maps and processes of mapping as “scientific” and “objective.” For instance, Doreen Massey (2005) gives us some directives as to shattering colonial and neoliberal logics by proposing that space be seen as “the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny,” and that these coexisting interrelations have their own trajectories and are always in progress: “a simultaneity of stories-so-far” (p. 9).

Similarly, James Corner (1999) writes about mapping as an instrument that can tease out new worlds from what already exists, particularly the important invisible forces such as weather, history, local stories, economic and legislative interests, and politics. This function is increasingly important in a world where it is becoming more difficult “to both imagine and actually to create anything outside of the normative” (Corner, 1999, p. 214). Corner’s interest in mapping, like my own, is as a creative and critical activity rather than in the map as a finished product.

These writers point to the importance of sociopolitical histories, interrelations, and entanglement, something that is also central to Indigenous world views. In *Towards Braiding* (2019), Elwood Jimmy and Vanessa Andreotti (with Sharon Stein) speak about settler-Indigenous relations through the metaphor of construction bricks as transcendent and knitting threads as immanence. They acknowledge that these metaphors are partial and limited, and that both can manifest in generative and nongenerative ways. The authors offer these metaphors as a framework for understanding their conception of braiding as “a practice yet-to-come located in a space in-between and at the edges of bricks and threads” (p. 21). Braiding is, like processes of space and self, “not an endpoint, but rather an ongoing and emergent process” (p. 22) where the adjacent edges and interfaces of interaction may generate new possibilities.

Whether periphery, border, edge, in-between, or margin, these writers illustrate the need for a blossoming of alternative imaginations and entanglements with space and relations. A variety of approaches is required to achieve this, through arts and culture, politics and activism, events large and small. Awareness of the margins must filter down from our conscious behaviors to our subconscious beings to become normalized so that such practices as braiding will be able to occur generatively.

**Groundwork**

Two main concepts form the ground for the development of a critical and creative practice of marginal walking: strata-mapping and autocartography. The first, strata-mapping, was developed through the HPU—Donna Akrey, Sarah E. Truman, and myself—to look at how space and place are constructed using the metaphor of stratigraphy, a concept that allows elements of place to be seen individually, yet still part of the whole. The HPU was founded in 2014, when the three of us came together to explore Hamilton, our adopted city; we experimented with wandering techniques such as the dérive (Debord, 1956/1996), games of chance using mobile app-based “serendipity generators,” and so on. Through our shared interest in walking, wandering, mapping, and making, we began to develop our strata-walk events, participatory workshops that use strata-mapping to lead its members through a consideration of some of the layers that make up place. As I have previously described,

Our series of prompts include suggestions on what to look for: texts in the built environment and what “systems” they belong to (street signs—civic, advertising—capitalist, graffiti—poetic or interventionist, etc.), architectural periods, smells, sounds, non-human animals, rhythms, light, electricity. The possible strata are infinite. Some variations have been tailored to address the specificity of the sites where the walks take place. (Ng-Chan, 2020)

Strata-walks are especially suited for detecting expressions of power in the built environment, similar to historian and architect Dolores Hayden’s (1995) technique of tracing how ethnicity and gender are intertwined into the landscape. She uses an example of the railroad in North America and the
hard labor and deaths of Chinese workers to bring out the underlying social narratives that can give places deeper meaning. She looks at how stories can map the segregation of African Americans in public spaces, where women’s access to certain institutions has been limited, and how the terrories of queer communities and the boundaries of class can be delineated in urban space. She makes the argument that mapping boundaries and points of access according to gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation is necessary to provide a fuller understanding of place. These strata must be considered in relation to each other with the acknowledgment that these are a fraction of the whole.

Variations of past strata-walks have focused on street names as vestiges of colonialism in three Commonwealth countries, traced signs of gentrification in Hamilton’s North End neighborhood, uncovered the hidden urban histories of development around Tokyo’s Olympic sites, and analyzed the evolution of a “city-image” (Lynch, 1964) around an island in the Detroit River. This last event, part of a 2-day experimental research-creation workshop called Buoyant Cartographies, explored multiple sensory, historical, artistic, and-colonial methodologies around mapping the international river border between Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario. Strata-mapping helped to focus, describe, and analyze the most prominent layers of meaning that were present in this particular cultural landscape, which, strongly influenced by Detroit’s spatial imaginary as “Motor City,” included narratives of rust and ruin, nostalgia, Prohibition and rum-running, music, renaissance, and gentrification. Not all meanings have visible traces, however, so the latter part of the workshop, held on Peche Island, focused as well on the invisible and digital layers of place.

Peche Island, a park belonging to the City of Windsor, was a place that I knew nothing about, apart from the general spatial imaginary that surrounds the mythic City of Detroit. Windsor, in contrast, had significantly fewer associations. My main goal here was to investigate how the process of building knowledge around a place was influenced greatly by the most widely used of internet services, Google Maps and Google search engine. Google often provides the first glimpses of information about a place, and subsequently helps shape our spatial imaginaries. Access to internet and location services, paired with the near ubiquitous smartphone in Western society and culture, has created hybrid, networked environments that interface between digital, social, and material spheres (de Souza e Silva & Sheller, 2015; Ling, 2008).

The internet search results for Peche Island provided stories about its colonial and precocial past that could barely be traced within the landscape itself. In particular, colorful oral histories about a curse on Peche Island, Indigenous origin stories, and local knowledge about the island’s status as Chief Pontiac’s summer home and hide-outs for rumrunners, as well as more official information about liquor baron Hiram Walker’s ill-fated attempts to build a house there, pointed to how settler histories have reduced and erased the Indigenous perspectives that could be glimpsed within these narratives. These glimpses showed where alternative histories might exist, which provided possibilities to then delink from the colonialist imaginaries (Ng-Chan, 2020). Strata-mapping is thus a useful framework that expands on body-as-sensor methodologies to include both online and onsite information, all of which then contribute to the city image and sense of place.

The framework of strata-mapping informs my conception of autocartography, which emphasizes a phenomenological approach to the layers of autobiography and social relations, to understand how the self is co-constructed in relation to space and place. “Like walking,” Karen O’Rourke (2013) notes in her influential book Mapping and Walking: Artists as Cartographers, “mapping is an embodied experience carried out from a particular point of view” (p. xvii). Informed by such theorists as Sara Ahmed (2006), autocartography maps out how things are oriented toward or away from the self, to sense how home and self are displaced. This displacement causes a dissonance that comes from having a bifurcated vision: the way I see myself and the way I am seen by society at large.

As a latchkey kid from a single-parent household, I was raised in large part by television and steeped in White culture. I did not for a long time understand why I was different, that my experiences as a POC could be described, shared, and attributed to something that, although near invisible, had very real effects. Systemic racism and White supremacy are difficult to see at first because they are so normalized, but then one begins to realize how deeply they are engrained as “common sense.” Their traces erupt in the environment as what I call fissures of displacement, the cracks in Western society through which BIPOC people—particularly Indigenous and Black peoples—fall. My idea of autocartography developed as a personal practice of learning how to sense the fissures, often in relation to others encountered in public spaces (Ng-Chan, 2018), since most racist incidents take place in public. But more often, dissonance is filtered down through popular culture, social media, and the 24-hr news cycle, which has a very real impact on everyday life.

Pandemic notes:

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

A headline on a news website tells me that a Korean consulate was attacked violently in Montreal. I don’t read the rest of the article.

April 10, 2020

The headline reads “T’es un Chinois, retourne dans ton pays!” (“You’re Chinese, Go Back to Your Own Country!”). An Asian-Canadian friend in Montreal has posted it on social media, writing about going out, hearing clicking
tongues despite the 6-feet distance, seen how people in line before and after were treated differently than her. And here in my neighborhood, another Asian friend posts about overhearing a conversation on Locke Street: *they eat dogs, they eat anything.*

Friday, May 30, 2020

I’m reading Carrianne Leung’s (2020) article called “Racism: The Other Pandemic” and the part I identified so much with was when she described her White friends as “shocked” or even conciliatory; even when they express anger or say “I’m so sorry you have to go through this,” their reaction makes me never want to talk about it to them because I don’t want their pity, and also because it’s so mundane, such a part of everyday life. “Why shocked? That they were surprised only emphasized the structural difference between their embodied reality and mine.” I don’t know what I want instead, though. Leung says, “I want you bruised too.” But how? What would that entail? It’s hard to talk about so we don’t.

Fissures of Displacement

*Can you sense the fissures that run through your city, your country, your world?*  
*Can you learn to see dissonance?*

My pandemic notes collect incidents and news of increased racism, which, in addition to a general anxiety around contagion, made me wary to go out. I never purposefully searched out this kind of news, only randomly stumbling on headlines, links, and posts by friends on social media. Otherwise, the sheer multitude of terrible news could be overwhelming. Phenomenologically, my attention toward these events, mixed in with lockdown haze, brought on a particular affect: gray and dulled in general, yet with sharpened pangs. Nothing as simple as any feeling could manifest. But this act of keeping count likely entangled my newsfeeds with my interactions and observations in public spaces, and led me to consider how digital networks figure into the strata of place and self. Sociopolitical events near and far are able to have impact nearly immediately, and simultaneously. Would I feel less afraid if I hadn’t read these headlines and posts? If I ignore them completely, will they disappear?

The kind of incidents that make the news tends toward spectacle. These are clearly racist, often violent, and easy to categorize. Fortunately, this high-intensity racism doesn’t occur regularly in my life; rather, it is the low-intensity kind that is harder to see. In “Locating the Critically Creative Quotidian” (Ng-Chan, 2018), I explore the distinctions between “high-intensity” identity and “low-intensity” identity: the difference between being “racialized,” demanded in some way to perform one’s identity or to have it pointed at (to be a target of, to represent, to diversify, to be a token of, or to speak for), and the everyday moments when one is not in a role, not in an identity, but simply being. Low-intensity moments happen every day but are not remarked upon because they are mundane, even boring.

It is often through relations with others that the fissures of displacement erupt, but even without human interaction, the built environment retains traces everywhere. I can map it out for you: the names of the streets that inscribe colonial history, the size of the houses and landscaped yards, access to leisure and green space. When I first moved to my neighborhood in Hamilton—seen as well-heeled, gentrified, ‘safe’—I often walked to a park on Beulah Avenue with my kid, though we didn’t know anyone there. The park was a convenient distance away, with play structures, a small field for running or throwing a ball around in, trees with picnic tables and benches, on which I would settle with a book while my child was playing. It was surrounded by lovely homes with big backyards. One time, one of the parents who often congregated together in bunches at this park came over to ask if I had a child playing there. Yes, I said, thinking he was just being friendly. Was he going to invite me to join them? No, he just nodded and went back to his group. It was only later that I thought to wonder why he would ask, and so what if I didn’t have a child? Maybe it didn’t mean anything. Maybe it had nothing to do with me. But this is often the way. It is hard to identify, hard to say for certain, but it doesn’t feel right. I was glad when my son grew out of wanting to go to that park. Sometimes the smallest of events—microaggressions—can make the fissures felt.

*Would you know what to do?*

Cathy Park Hong (2021) points out that racial trauma is understood by most White people as the high-intensity spectacle, but that what is harder to report and to understand is the stress of anticipation, which, for BIPOC folks, underlies everyday life (though certainly in a multitude of different ways). She writes about what she calls “minor feelings,” which occur when one buys into the stereotypes and lies that are told about one’s racial identity, particularly the myth that Asians are the model minority. The distance between the myth and the reality produces dissonance, illustrating the kind of low-intensity, micro-feeling that marginal walking investigates. It is the nature of everyday dissonance to be overlooked because it is so ordinary. I walk to the corner store, the Go Bus, the park. I walk home. Nothing happens, but the possibility is always there. Because most racist incidents take place in everyday spaces, most commonly parks, sidewalks, restaurants, grocery stories, and on public transit, this is also where marginal walking happens.

Marginal walking is a subtle act of mapping in the everyday landscape the strata of status quo and difference, hierarchies produced by White supremacist culture. Hegemony is invisible, so Whiteness is difficult to see at first, but when
you see it, it’s hard to unsee it. It is everyday life produced by capitalist society: the division of work and leisure, the commute, material goods, popular culture. Marginal walking occurs in the everyday, while shopping for food, taking the bus to work or school, and getting exercise or play. It occurs on the job for frontline workers whose workplaces are public. These are border spaces (Mignolo, 2007), where relationships are defined through the power hierarchies that have made Others. Our minds are colonized when we fail to take notice and care of our relations in border spaces, when we fall back on dominant narratives of the supremacy of vertical hierarchies and brick thinking. Everyone has an unconscious bias because we have been learning these dominant narratives all of our lives. This underlines the need for marginal walking as a practice of locating the fissures of displacement as a way to decolonize our minds.

Pandemic notes:

Thursday, August 20, 2020

I was waiting in line to pay at the liquor store, close to the entrance where a staff member was greeting incoming customers with the usual COVID-related questions: “Are you feeling well? Have you travelled recently?” An older White man said cheerfully, “Only to China!” He laughed heartily at his own joke. “That’s not funny!” I said, but he had already walked away. Intervention in the moment is hard: the moment passes too quickly, and I am slow to react.

Wednesday, November 25, 2020

I read a news story about a woman’s teenaged daughter, who sees another woman in a grocery store with a mask that has “Thanks China!” hand-lettered onto it in black marker. The daughter tells that woman it’s not appropriate to have a mask that says that.9

December 17, 2020

I see a photo posted by Chinese-born Montreal-based performance artist, Catherine Chun Hua Dong, who has made a unicorn head to wear when she goes out. “Nobody would attack a unicorn, right?”10

Marginal Walking: Unsettling, Delinking, Intervening

How does one “unsettle” the places where we live, to uncover the narratives that drive one’s unconscious reactions and biases, delink from the settler colonialist histories and “official” stories, all of which reduce BIPOC peoples and alternate worldviews to invisibility rather than presence?

bell hooks (1989) writes about what it means to maintain marginality, particularly if one lives at or near the center.

It was this marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives . . . . This is not a mythic notion of marginality. It comes from lived experience. (p. 20)

I am learning from hooks and many other Black and Indigenous writers and activists who have come before and taught Others so much in their struggles. I am figuring out why and how to intervene as an everyday practice.

Find the margins. Choose to stand there. This is a daily practice.

Attention to the margins develops peripheral powers to see sideways more clearly. Sensing and locating the eruptions, fissures, cracks, takes time and strength. Hence, marginal walking involves developing a bifurcated peripheral vision: for those at the center to learn how to see from the margins, to see White culture not as status quo or normal but simply as one of many, to delink and particularly, to decenter. The bifurcated vision is different for those in the margins who have always sensed the dissonance; for BIPOC folks, it is learning to use this sense as a source of power.

This is a lifelong practice: learning to intervene.

Interventions come in many forms. As Carrianne Leung (2020) writes,

There have been articles and blogs being passed around about what to do in case you are a “witness” to racial incidences, but not what to do if you are the one who is the target. I am not satisfied with this. I understand the politics of not putting onus on the victim to do anything at all because, of course, they are the one receiving harm. But I also need to reach for agency here. (n.p.)

Some forms of intervention:

1.

Practice these lines:

What did you just say?
Did you really just say that?
Why did you say that?

I rarely manage to say any of these things to anyone.
I need to rehearse. Maybe it will become a knee-jerk reaction.

2.

Make something. Send it out there:
A unicorn head. Drawings. Writings. Maps.
Engage the everyday fissures. Make more marginal spaces, grow.

Much of my work around walking and moving through space has been predicated on the art of taking notice, particularly of these fissures that displace. A marginal walking practice means not only to locate, map, and describe these
fissures but also to make them more noticeable, larger, impossible to ignore. Space and identity are entangled entities, each co-constituting the other. My everyday environment is made up not only of the physical spaces that my body is in but also the digital, networked spaces overlaid on top, that influence my perceptions of space. But these networked spaces are also where one can make interventions, highlight acts of solidarity and understanding. It is not enough, then, to just locate and to map. A practice of marginal walking must necessarily pair embodied movement through place with acts of intervention. Intervention manifests the choice to be in the marginalized space, which provides the impetus to shout, to resound.

**Interventions: Growing Marginal Space**

It is often through social media, particularly in pandemic times, where I find networks of solidarity. I find incidents of protest, of kindness, care, and play—it is too easy to forget how play can be a powerful form of resistance to oppression. Hence, digital and networked spaces can also play their role in creating border spaces where people have contact with Others and can connect through their common relations of exploitation and domination (Mignolo, 2007). It is vastly less lonely to know Others are out there, and that there are shared experiences, something I did not have growing up in pre-internet times. Because it provides a critical corrective, learning to see marginal space is crucial. Choosing to be in the marginal space—as an ongoing task and an everyday practice—is crucial. And learning to intervene in ways that open up the margins is crucial as well. What happens when margins grow?

hooks (1989) writes, “We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world” (p. 23). My own creative practice extends my mapping practice to represent alternative visions of place through sound and image, particularly explorations of locative media, which opens up possibilities for engagement through the mobile devices and digital networks that have become entangled with our everyday spaces.

With “mobile annotations” (Gordon & de Souza e Silva, 2011; Lemos, 2010) or “urban mark-ups” (Farman, 2012), geolocative media—the practice of attaching information to location—presents potential for new ways of highlighting the ephemeral layers of place. Smartphones and other mobile devices can connect histories, stories, and all kinds of media to places, to provide alternate views of the urban landscape, which “unsettles” it, allows for a multiplicity of stories-so-far. Locative media is one kind of intervention that could then lead to “emplacement,” which Jason Farman (2012) describes as the “counterpoint to displacement” and is linked to embodied engagement through the digital and physical hybrid landscape.

Many artists working with mobile and locative media are making intervention and disruption core elements of their work. For instance, in “Evoking a site of memory: An Afrofuturistic Sonic Walk that Maps Historic Toronto’s Black Geographies,” Camille Turner (2012) describes how her work embraces “elements of African Diasporic sonic, fantastic and spiritual traditions,” to evoke “a site of memory and desire within which participants recreate, reveal and transform the space that currently hides the Black presence” (p. 2). Turner’s piece *Hush Harbour* incorporates walking through space with headphones to experience Victoria Memorial Square, a park in Toronto that commemorates settler history, in a sonic intervention that remaps Blackness onto this urban landscape.

**Do you know the Indigenous name for the land where you live or work?**

**Do you know the treaty that your place falls under?**

The Ogimaa Mikana Project is an ongoing effort that restores “Anishinaabemowin place-names to the streets, avenues, roads, paths, and trails of Gichi Kiwengwng (Toronto)—transforming a landscape that often obscures or makes invisible the presence of Indigenous peoples.”

Through its website documentations and its material interventions in the built environment—including street signs, billboards, and spray paint—this project “considers the tension between visibility and invisibility to challenge settler colonial logic.” Similarly, websites such as *The Decolonial Atlas* and *native-land.ca* convey Indigenous and alternate cartographies, which present traditional territories, maps of treaty areas, and Indigenous place-names, and at the same time, unsettle colonialist ways of seeing the world. Through these networked and digital strata, I can expand my own relationship with where I live and work, knowing, for instance, that my home is on Treaty 3 territory, or that the HPU could also be called the Ohron:wakon Perambulatory Unit.

Interventions such as these have the effect of making the margins more visible, more felt, more known. They help to delink from colonial knowledge. It is not easy, not always safe, but intervention helps find community and solidarity. As filmmaker and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha (2005) notes,

Rather than having to wage war in a relation of dominance and submission (of who’s to remain on top) or of complementarity (the way one gender is expected to complement the other, for example), we can thrive and grow in a relation of multiplicity. To be an other among others can be a profoundly transformative experience. (p. 16)

Solidarity, then, is possible as an affect that grows a sense of belonging. Marginal space connects us like the mushroom networks holding the forest ecosystems together as channels of cooperation and communication.
The objectives of marginal walking are not only to produce alternatives to modernist, colonial, neoliberal knowledge but also to interweave and entangle one’s self with marginal worldviews, so that ideas of “normal” and “common sense” are not exclusionary, not a judgment about “not normal” or “not-white.” It is to practice marginality in everyday habits and being. Marginal walking is thus concerned with everyday motion, walks that are the liminal spaces between home and work, or maybe work itself for those who deliver, those who care for others, those who are on front line. Marginal walking is movement through running errands, child care duties, exercise, and air. Marginal walking is the mundane, but here is the space to form generative relations with self and place, to grow the spaces of the margins where processes of entanglement, interventions, and future unfoldings can occur. The everyday is for most of us, most of the time. Marginal walking can show us how to take full advantage of the everyday as a space of creative resistance.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

1. https://hyperallergic.com/562771/emerging-infectious-diseases/
2. According to Statistics Canada, a second-generation Canadian has one or both parents who were born outside Canada. https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TV=D=117200&CVD=117200&CLV=0&MLV=1&D=1
3. Asian stereotypes often align the “model minority” as being “white-adjacent” but always conditionally. For instance, see https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/08/the-whitening-of-asian-americans/563336/ or https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2020/01/15/asian-americans-people-of-color/
4. Italicized phrases in this section are from Dictionary.com
5. Serendipity generators are smartphone or web app-based tools that attempt to create prompts to “get you lost,” including Drift (http://www.brokencitylab.org/drift/) and Serendipitor (http://serendipitor.net/).
6. After a couple of years, Sarah began to focus on her work in WalkingLab with Stephanie Springgay, and we have since become collaborators on a range of walking projects.
7. In partnership with InTerminus Creative Research Group at the University of Windsor, and Float School at Emily Carr University of Art and Design.
8. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/asian-racism-hate-canada-pandemic-1.5959788
9. https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/teen-to-60-year-old-woman-your-mask-is-completely-inappropriate
10. https://www.facebook.com/centreculturecanadien/photos/a.198928306811739/3476297082408162/
11. http://camilletturner.com/project/hush-harbour/
12. The Ogimaa Mikana Project. https://ogimaamikana.tumblr.com/
13. The Decolonial Atlas. https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/

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