

TERMS

PART 1

FALL 2023

Depression

(TOPOGRAPHY)

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
of loss*

Jayce Salloum
*untitled part 4:
terra incognita*

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
that I have sunken into*

TERMS

PART 1

FALL 2023

DEPRESSION (Topography)

Having previously explored the concepts of ‘vulnerability,’ ‘service,’ and ‘investment’ in its prior editions, the *Terms* program is dedicating the year 2023-2024 to the examination of the word ‘depression,’ with the aim of transcending the commonly psychological and pathological interpretation prevalent in everyday language.

Derived from the Latin word ‘*deprimere*,’ the word ‘depression’ traces its origins to the realm of physics, invoking the concept of compressing or applying downward pressure, and by extension, its outcomes: a sinking, an inclination, a retreat, or the formation of a hollow. Depression can be seen as the impression resulting from the

interplay of forces, something that yields and flexes under the influence of weight, pressure, intrusion, or gravity. Over time, this term has found diverse applications across various domains, including geology (referring to topographic or oceanic basins), meteorology (indicating low atmospheric pressure), economics (characterizing prolonged economic recession), medicine, and psychology (describing complex mood disorders and medical conditions).

The inaugural segment of this two-part series delves into the concept of depression through a geological and topographical lens, defining it as a terrestrial concavity or low-lying area shaped by natural processes or altered

by human activities. This edition offers insights from Peter C. van Wyck, professor in Communication Studies at Concordia University, who discusses grief, loss, and transience in relation to climatic and cultural ecology, recently marked by forest fires. Following his contribution is a 2005 video piece by artist Jayce Salloum, presenting narratives of the Syilx people (Okanagan First Nation). Lastly, Salloum’s work is analyzed from the perspective of topographic depression in a response by Camille Georgeson-Usher, assistant professor specializing in Modern and Contemporary Indigenous Art at the University of British Columbia.

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
of loss*

TERMS

1. W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* (London: The Harvill Press, 1998), 125.

This then, I thought, as I looked round about me, is the representation of history. It requires a falsification of perspective. We, the survivors, see everything from above, see everything at once, and still we do not know how it was.

W. G. Sebald,
*The Rings of Saturn*¹

|

JUNE 6, MUSKOKA

I am sitting here with eyes watering in the acrid, apocalyptic burnt-orange atmosphere of eastern Canada in the late spring of 2023. On a dock by a lake, I can taste the sublimated history. I have come here to write something thoughtful about “depression,” but it strikes me that it would be considerably more challenging to write about virtually anything else.

My thought had been to write about the strangeness of ecology today—ecology as the brooding repressed of theory. Once the impossible promise of return, a story of balance and harmony—all watched over by machines of loving grace—ecology today has moved through a mourning for the garden lost to a depressive bleakness

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
of loss*

2. See Stephen J. Pyne, *The Pyrocene: How We Created an Age of Fire, and What Happens Next* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2022).

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
of loss*

beset with planetary tremors of fire and famine, heat and flood. A bewildered ecology—in part anticipatory, for what is to become. Deeply nostalgic for what has been lost and impelled by an anxious awareness that the decisive accident(s) may have already taken place.

The smoke and the fires and the little I know suggest a slight swerve is in order.

II

SWERVE

One of the many competing and tiresome humanistic narratives—let’s say, origin stories—proposed to characterize our present moment—late-Holocene, Anthropocene, the Great Acceleration, and so on—the Pyrocene is a particularly visceral description of the climatic and cultural ecology of wildfire in the early twenty-first century.² And today, here in the woods, at a place first occupied by my kin well over a century ago, writing this short text, the atmosphere is freighted with fine particulate matter—indexed, we are told, by a PM_{2.5} concentration that is presently over thirty times the WHO guidelines for 24-hour exposure. Much of

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
of loss*

it today from the wildfires burning north of Val-d'Or, Quebec, some four hundred kilometers to the north-east—as a crow might fly—from where I sit.

The same air—cinders of land and forest and life—will choke New York City by tomorrow morning. And, of course, everything in-between as well. One way or another, all of us are downwinders. The words unprecedented, record-breaking, and extraordinary will saturate the news. The many thousands of Indigenous and other evacuees will be of regional interest. The loss of homes, land, and hunting and trapping areas will flash up perhaps briefly for those of us in the south.

Also, for those of us in the south, these fires will quickly dissipate into the atmospherics of daily life, our rhetorical reflexes always at the ready to dilute any trauma through metonymic tricks of statistics, scale and the motley list, and metaphoric narratives that shift the events themselves onto complex storylines of climate. Or bad luck. According to taste.

What I want to know is what becomes of all these topographies of loss. It is certain that material traces of all this will gradually become archived in the sediments of Crawford Lake, the latest contender for a Holocene/

3. Sigmund Freud, “On Transience (1915),” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* (London: Hogarth, 1953), 305-307.

See also Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1953), 237-58.

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
 of loss*

Anthropocene boundary point. But this is hardly legible, and of little comfort. Is it, I wonder, what an archive of tears really looks like?

III

MEANWHILE

Almost one hundred and ten summers ago, Freud was also invited to prepare a text for a publication—fundraising for German libraries—entitled *Das Land Goethes*.

Loss was on his mind too.

The essay he wrote in late 1915 was the remarkable, short and curious “On Transience.”³ It is in part about “the great riddle of mourning,” the transience of beauty, and of the redeemability of the destruction wrought by the war.

To develop the figure of transience, a literary device was called for. So Freud begins with a story. He tells of having gone for a walk through a smoke-less “smiling countryside”—evoking perhaps Quintilian’s “laughing meadow”—in the company of a “taciturn friend” (Lou Andreas-Salomé?) and a “young but already famous poet” (Rainer Maria Rilke?). There are very good reasons

4. Freud is known to have spent part of the summer of 1913 in the Dolomites, but here his companions cannot be identified with certainty. “Instead, it is known that the poet and the analyst met in a hotel lobby in Munich, during the Fourth International Psycho-analytical Congress in 1913...” cf. Matthew Von Unwerth, *Freud’s Requiem: Mourning, Memory, and the Invisible History of a Summer Walk* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), and Sigmund Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 176.

5. Sigmund Freud, “On Transience (1915),” 305.

6. Ibid.

7. See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 162 – “The tenacity inscribed in the intention of mourning is born of its fidelity to the world of things.”

to think that this walk never took place and was merely a plot device for Freud to work through his own conflicted feelings about the war—his three sons had already been drafted—and the possibility of cultural continuity in the face of annihilation.⁴ This need not concern us here.

The young poet was miserable. While he was alive to the *beauty* of his surroundings, he could feel no joy in it. “All that he would otherwise have loved and admired,” writes Freud, “seemed to him to be shorn of its worth by the transience which was its doom.”⁵

For the despondent poet, the beauty of the landscape, and—here Freud quietly shifts outward into a social and cultural register—“all the beauty and splendour that men have created or may create”⁶—was fated to extinction, vanishing with the turn of the seasons, or with time, to decay and to ruin. Overcome by the future destruction, the ephemerality and transience of things, the poet was unable or perhaps just unwilling to experience the beauty of the moment.

After all, as Walter Benjamin—the other great theorist of loss—suggested in a work from the same period, isn’t mourning just a deep expression of loyalty to the world of things?⁷

8. Freud, “On Transience (1915),” 305.
9. Ibid, 306.
10. Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press), 20. Emphasis added.

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
 of loss*

Freud was vexed by his morose fellow transients. “It was incomprehensible,” he declared, “that the thought of the transience of beauty should interfere with our joy in it.” After all, he said—summoning a deeply economic mode of justification—“transience value is just scarcity value in time.”⁸ To Freud, the scarcity of the possibility of enjoyment should elevate, not diminish, the value of that enjoyment.

Freud invents an apocryphal story as an allegory to discuss what he sees as the paradox of mourning. In this case, a kind of anticipatory grief where the future loss of a loved object—a landscape, a work of art, a civilization—is preemptively managed through a denial and a refusal. He describes this in terms of a defensive withdrawal of libido from the world of objects. A refusal to connect. A proactive defense—precisely not a deferred action—*against* mourning in and for the future, for an object not yet lost. “What spoilt their enjoyment of beauty must have been a revolt in their minds against mourning,”⁹ he surmises, suggesting, following Agamben, “the paradox of an *intention to mourn* that precedes and anticipates the loss of the object.”¹⁰

11. Freud, "On Transience (1915)," 306.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
of loss*

But then there is a melancholic passage where Freud lays bare the humanist circle within which transience has any meaning at all.

"A time may indeed come" he says, "when the pictures and statues [...] will crumble to dust, or a race of men may follow us who no longer understand the works of our poets and thinkers."¹¹ And then, stretching psychoanalytic temporality toward its very geotraumatic limits, "or a geological epoch may even arrive when all animate life upon the earth ceases."¹² That is, a world without us.

This short passage, travelling from 1915 into the deep time of planetary future, would seem to provide support for his companions' joyless outlook. But no. He writes, "but since the value of all this beauty and perfection is determined only by its significance for our own emotional lives, it has no need to survive us and is therefore independent of absolute duration."¹³

You see, it really is all about us.

14. Ibid, 307.
15. Ibid.

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
of loss*

Although he had failed to convince his dysthymic companions, Freud had made a clearing for his real preoccupation. “My conversation with the poet,” he tells us—somehow forgetting about the taciturn friend—“took place in the summer before the war. A year later the war broke out and robbed the world of its beauties.”¹⁴

It destroyed not only the beauty of the countrysides [...] and the works of art which it met with on its path but it also shattered our pride in the achievements of our civilization [...] and our hopes of a final triumph over the differences between nations and races. It tarnished the lofty impartiality of our science, it revealed our instincts in all their nakedness [...] It robbed us of very much that we had loved, and showed us how ephemeral were many things that we had regarded as changeless.¹⁵

16. Ibid.

And yet in spite of all of this staggering loss, Freud—himself a deeply melancholic poet of the unconscious—somehow rises up from the ashes of war as a model mourner, renouncing ruin and loss with a steady gaze toward a better future.

When once the mourning is over, it will be found that our high opinion of the riches of civilization has lost nothing from our discovery of their fragility. We shall build up again all that war has destroyed, and perhaps on firmer ground and more lastingly than before.¹⁶

It's not very convincing, really, but we can see the problem—at least the problem for us. Mourning in this sense is a kind of collective, psychological achievement, and historical progress is assured in spite of the oblivion and ruin and death from which it must arise.

So, suddenly the poet's aesthetic abstention seems much less remarkable, although not for Freud.

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
of loss*

17. Ibid.

18. By 1915 Freud had completed but not yet published *Mourning and Melancholia* and he would go on to further revise his theory of mourning and particularly melancholia in *The Ego and the Id* (1923).

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
 of loss*

“Mourning, as we know,” writes Freud, “however painful it may be, comes to a spontaneous end,”¹⁷ and then we can move on and love something else, something new. Health restored; libido is once again free to replace lost objects. And so it goes, a serial process of attachment, loss, mournfulness, and then some other happy attachments.¹⁸

The upshot is, in a word, capitulation—an ideological surrender cast as a normative psychological story. The successful work of mourning—understood here as a kind of obedience—tethered to a concept of progress and forgetting is set against the poet’s quasi-melancholic abstention. The poet—and perhaps too the elided taciturn friend—also capitulate, but differently. In order to avoid the real encounter with transience and ruin, their strategy is an aesthetic foreclosure—and refusal to mourn—the anticipated loss of objects in the future.

19. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 170. This is in part the function of the allegory of Klee's *Angelus Novus* in Thesis IX of Benjamin's "On the Concept of History"; that is, a demystification of the concepts of progress and history that normalizes transience and ruin to begin with. See *Selected Writings: 1938-1940, Volume 4*, ed. M. P. Bullock, M.W. Jennings, H. Eiland and G. Smith (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003), 389-400.

Peter C. van Wyck
*Topographies
of loss*

Maybe we ought to think this all a bit differently.

As the smoke clears, and with it the memory of the fires—like the memory of all the other calamities and losses—maybe the lesson here in fact arises from Benjamin, not Freud. That the “debris of industrial culture teaches us not the necessity of submitting to historical catastrophe,” a capitulation, as with Freud’s work of mourning, but rather, as Buck-Morss puts it, “the fragility of the social order that tells us this catastrophe is necessary.”¹⁹ Right.

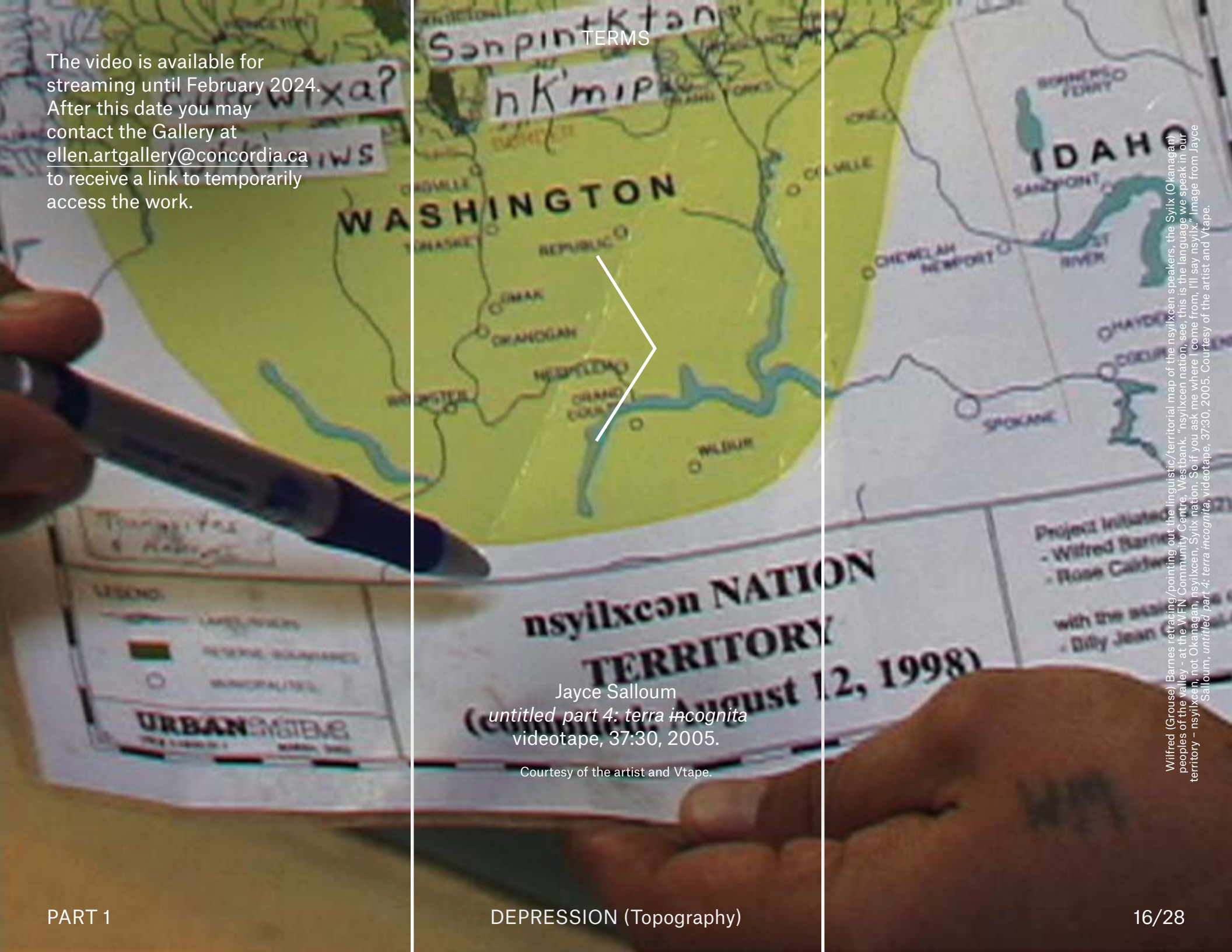
Melancholy here begins to look like an ethical form of resistance and memory; a political refusal to forget.

Baysville, Ontario
June 2023

PETER C. VAN WYCK is a professor, writer and researcher in the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University. His writings—arising from cultural and ecological concerns—address themes of nuclear and atomic culture, the lively temporalities of waste, landscape as site or representation, and locales of memory. His current book project is entitled *The Angel Turns – Six Memos for the End of the Holocene*.

Jayce Salloum
untitled part 4:
terra incognita

The video is available for streaming until February 2024. After this date you may contact the Gallery at ellen.artgallery@concordia.ca to receive a link to temporarily access the work.



Jayce Salloum
untitled part 4: terra incognita
 videotape, 37:30, 2005.

Courtesy of the artist and Vtape.

Wilfred (Grouse) Barnes retracing/pointing out the linguistic/territorial map of the nsyilxcən speakers, the Syilx (Okanagan) peoples of the valley - at the WFN Community Centre, Westbank. "nsyilxcən nation, see, this is the language we speak in our territory - nsyilxcən, not Okanagan, nsyilxcən, Syilx nation. So if you ask me where I come from, I'll say nsyilx." Image from Jayce Salloum, *untitled part 4: terra incognita*, videotape, 37:30, 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Vtape.

Camille
Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the
shape that I have
sunken into*

RESPONSE TO JAYCE SALLOUM'S
untitled part 4: terra incognita

If memory is a depression, might I cup it in the palm of my hand? The weight of it, like the water that inevitably fills a hole that has been dug too deep.

Being from an island, a lot of time is spent on ferries. I often find myself between land bodies, suspended over liquid mass, waiting to emerge into another space-time. Moving across the water almost feels as though you're entering a different dimension of time. While suspended on the ocean, I would often notice growing up how the water changed depending on the day—varying in temperature, shape, consistency, sound quality. It wasn't until later, however, that I realized how the ocean is always in a state of becoming *otherwise*; it is continually moving towards its next state of being. Meeting dramatically with other oceans. Changing from liquid matter of deep weight that holds its own universes, to cloud matter that similarly never rests, then to drops that we might complain about on our way out to dinner. The in-between states of oceans listlessly breathe us into a way of existing on the precipice, finding ourselves held tenderly

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
that I have sunken into*

yet forcefully as we navigate new atmospheres of our own universes.

The rocking of the waves shifts bodies side to side, simultaneously, yet distinctly. I remember a moment staring out at the ocean, wondering, who *the man* was *who sold the world*.¹ At the time I didn't realize that it was perhaps a reflection of losing oneself versus the literal selling of the planet that we live and rely on. But it made sense, based on how I had come to predict society's behaviours, that someone would have put themselves in a position where they would rule over others, and believe that in somehow "buying" the world, they might claim *terra incognita* in order to start anew.

Terra incognita was a term used in mapmaking when explorers were travelling across lands that were unknown or new to them. As many of us are aware, these lands were not *incognita*. They were places of being, intertwined and tangled relational ecosystems where communities had often lived for thousands of years. But seeing these lands as interconnected, relational places of being was instead approached by settlers with the sense that everything needed to change to make it *cognita* for few. Similarly, *terra nullius* was used as a land descriptor to determine

1. Noting the reference here to Nirvana's 1994 live acoustic cover of David Bowie's song "The Man Who Sold the World" for *MTV Unplugged* in New York.

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
that I have sunken into*

land that was void of previous inhabitation. Lands would have been deemed as such with goals of settling presumably with less guilt.

Jayce Salloum's 2005 film, *untitled part 4: terra incognita*, tenderly presents stories of Syilx people (Okanagan First Nation) with whom the artist met, revealing the raw history of settler land possession and assimilation tactics used against Indigenous peoples. It is not an angry recollection of the past, even in the face of all the atrocities that have occurred since. The stories Salloum recorded make the colonial project evident in how we live together now. As a long-distance runner, I have been told about the position of runners in many Indigenous communities; the role of *runner* is a position I am working towards. Runners would often cover great expanses of land to listen and learn from surroundings outside of communities, bringing back information and materials so their communities could adapt. Upon noticing incoming threats, runners would travel to neighbouring communities to warn them. In Salloum's film, the speakers outline how runners scouted and marked the land that would become the nation's reservation, ensuring that the community had everything they needed and that they

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
that I have sunken into*

were sharing the land with their new neighbours. Today, the role that runners have is less clear; we go out into the world to listen, learn, and then bring our findings back. But it is hard to determine what kind of threat we warn of now, as the biggest threat yet—the one that tried to rid us from this earth—is all around.

*We, Indigenous peoples, were not
the man who sold the world.*

We were/are the ones from whom worlds were stolen.

In his description of the video, the artist provides a contextual statement that further outlines the importance of pointing to that which disrupts the status quo of how society functions. The statement reads:

This videotape was originally commissioned by the City of Kelowna, B.C. (Canada) as part of their 2005 Centennial celebrations. After viewing the tape the City's Public Art Committee deemed it "not celebratory enough" and subsequently decommissioned the tape and the complete Temporal

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
that I have sunken into*

Transmissions project sponsored by the Alternator Gallery, Kelowna. Colonial legacies continue in daily life and the affairs of state. The subjects' voices threaten the status quo and thus are denied a place. The space of the tape is theirs, a discursive site to engage in. “terra ~~incognita~~” is now being used throughout the local school district by Aboriginal Liaisons & teachers of Native Studies courses.²

Sometimes, even when these histories are evident and clearly articulated, there is a strong desire not to look, which leads me to wonder if ‘*incognita*’ is simply a settler cognition and way of being to avoid guilt. The discomfort required to confront the reality of the past helps to understand how to move into the future, better.

Perhaps the gesture of forming a depression is how we might see the strategy for upheaval needed to pull at the layers of stagnant coloniality and settlerisms. The excavation of such stagnancies is an upheaval that many are not ready to confront—what has become overwhelmingly clear is when we point to the trouble, we become the trouble. In Sara Ahmed’s *Living a Feminist Life*, the concluding “Killjoy Manifesto” outlines how butting

2. Jayce Salloum, *untitled part 4: terra ~~incognita~~*, 2005, www.vimeo.com/71876226, [emphasis mine].

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
 that I have sunken into*

against the often-oppressive systems of institutions can cause unwanted disturbances of the status quo. The feminist writer shows that this work “not only causes a disturbance, it aims to cause this disturbance. To make something manifest can be enough to cause a disturbance.”³ For Ahmed, disturbing the habits of an institution sometimes means working against happiness, but it also entails becoming an instigator of trouble—one who troubles things. Working with the concept of trouble through Judith Butler, Ahmed presents trouble as a tool to disrupt imposing power structures. She states: “Trouble can be a consequence of what we are not trying to avoid. It can cause trouble if you do not aim to make not causing trouble your cause. Trouble can be what we are willing to be *in*.”⁴

In this sense, I wonder what would happen if whiteness troubled itself and instigated its own agitation instead of waiting for those of us who have been most affected by the domination of coloniality and settlerisms to do this work and to reset society to work better. But there is often a deeply seated desire to not be uncomfortable and, rather than embracing discomfort, to avoid it. The problem that I have with the use of the word

3. Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

4. Sara Ahmed, “Being in Trouble,” *Lambda nordica* 20, no. 2–3 (2015): 180.

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
 that I have sunken into*

“decolonization” is in the actions that the word requires that very few act upon. *Doing* decolonization would mean upheavals of everything we know today—an undoing and rewinding of all facets of life. This *doing* would be difficult, uncomfortable, potentially painful work that might never reach anything. It would require us all to move willingly into spaces of unpredictability where the only predictability will be that everything must change.

Salloum constructs his film as a relational mapping, with layerings of geographical terrain that both trace and are traced by stories. The work shines light onto beauty that remains, revealing how Syilx peoples continue to find love and joy despite being told that there was nothing left.

“Culture is not to be sold,” as one of the speakers in the film reminds us, “culture is to be handled, like a baby. Handled with care and it will always be there. Handled with love and it will grow.”⁵

Depressions

As I sway with each wave, lulling thoughts shimmer at the surface, moving between bodies of land, through water, over deep depressions, deeper than any of us can

5. Salloum, 34:25.

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
 that I have sunken into*

truly comprehend. Because I see that I am suspended above a universe. The shape it takes, the shape that I sink my body into and in the motion towards another shape which is that of anticipation.

i have an appetite for vibrancy

impossible to be contained

willingness sits beyond the piles of trash placed upon my brown skin that i now see as beautiful

the antithesis to stagnancy

The shape of anticipation rolls and sways. It pushes over and pulls under. Anticipation sits at the threshold, knowing that it is moving willingly into the trouble, perhaps as the trouble itself. Digging, digging, digging,

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
that I have sunken into*

through the systems that whisper how a man could sell the world. Anticipation tells us that we might find poetry in the catastrophe of a demolition, in a hole dug too deep. That, like the ocean, we are constantly moving towards our next state of being. Even though the colonial project decided how things should be, *without consent*, nothing can be settled, because matter is constantly in motion.

The ocean shows us that we are constantly becoming. Pushing against the edges, its motion over time changing the shape of coastlines, never stagnant.

CAMILLE GEORGESON-USHER is a Coast Salish / Sahtu Dene / Scottish scholar, curator, and writer from Galiano Island, BC and is Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary Indigenous Art at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, BC. Through her research, she is interested in how peoples move together through space, how public art becomes a site for gathering, and intimacies with the everyday. She uses her practice as a long-distance runner as a methodology for embodied theory and alternative forms of sensing place.

Camille Georgeson-Usher
*Tell me of the shape
that I have sunken into*

TERMS

DEPRESSION (Topography)
PART 1

FALL 2023

Concept:
Michèle Thériault

Developed by
Julia Eilers Smith,
Robin Simpson,
Michèle Thériault

Curator, Part 1:
Julia Eilers Smith

Essays:
Peter C. van Wyck,
Camille Georgeson-Usher

Artwork:
Jayce Salloum

Editing:
Julia Eilers Smith,
Michèle Thériault

Design:
Karine Cossette

Publication available in digital
and printed editions

© Peter C. van Wyck,
Camille Georgeson-Usher,
Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery /
Concordia University

Legal Deposit
Bibliothèque et Archives
nationales du Québec
Library and Archives Canada, 2023
ISBN: 978-2-924316-55-9

ellengallery.concordia.ca

How does a term circulate through society, and how does its dissemination within contemporary discourse inform us about the way that society thinks about itself? By what means do certain words instill themselves in language and the public sphere to the point of becoming commonplace? *Terms* is an online discursive and artistic program that individually unpacks a series of broad and polysemous terms that are commonly employed to address a range of sociopolitical issues in contemporary society. While some words

acquire multiple definitions the more they are used, they also often tend to become generalized and run the risk of having their meaning become diluted, confused, or unclear over time. Nevertheless, their continued presence in our vocabulary requires careful attention and analysis as to their etymological value, their semantic density, and their use across and beyond disciplinary boundaries.

For each selected term, a researcher from outside the visual arts publishes a text that examines it in its many variants, tensions, and ambiguities through

the specific lens of their field of activity. The word is then considered by pairing it with a resonating artwork shared on the Gallery's website. In turn, a writer from the cultural sector uses this same work as the starting point for a second text that draws from the first and from beyond to probe aspects of the term in its various dimensions.

