Le Champ des Possibles:
notes toward a politics of enchantment

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ABSTRACT

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Kendra Michelle Besanger

Situated at an intersection between place studies and political theory, this thesis presents a yearlong exploration of le Champ des Possibles, a peculiar urban site in the Mile End neighbourhood, of Montréal, Québec. As a rail yard left to grow wild over several decades, it has become a site of revelry, urban agriculture, civic engagement, and artistic intervention: it is a vibrant and coveted urban wild place in the city. Place studies theorists such as Lucy Lippard, E.V. Walter, Henri Lefebvre, and Doreen Massey present place as a complex object of study; one that requires a heterodox methodology capable of incorporating the complexity of human experience, which is suggested to be central to the formation place. Similarly, the literary and artistic works of Italo Calvino, Becky Cooper, and Rebecca Solnit demonstrate a range of ways in which place can be told through narrative objects: stories, images, and maps. This thesis intervenes in contemporary place studies by moving away from subject-centred modes of analyses and toward an understanding of place itself as possessing agentic capacities. The central claim of this work suggests that cultivating an attentive, curious, and materialist approach to place forms a kind of praxis that holds the potential to interrupt our human-centred attention to place and place-based politics. From such praxis, we might learn how to pay attention and, ideally, care about the agency of non-human bodies, rhythms, and patterns. Such attention is an important component of what political theorist Jane Bennett frames as an urgent ethical project – one that might reframe the way we communicate, analyze, and act in a material world that is, always-already, a combination of human and non-human.

key words: place studies; spatiality; enchantment; vibrancy; storytelling; civic engagement; *in situ* praxis; urban; wild place;

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Finally, I dedicate this project to my five-year-old cousin Ty, whose sense of wonder and capacity to *set things side by side until a similarity dawns* I admire. I hope that we will continue to look for magical objects and fantastical creatures in wild places.

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Prologue

This is a project about a specific urban site located in a safe, gentrified, middle class, and well-populated neighbourhood in Montréal Québec. In this neighbourhood, I feel comfortable walking alone at any time of the day; there is access to reliable public transit; and there is an abundance of healthy food for purchase on almost every block. This site-specific research thus begins from a position of privilege.

The site specificity of this project means that the application of my questions and my method have come specifically from a place called le Champ des Possibles, in Montréal, within the time period that I have worked on this project. So, the questions I ask and the observations I make throughout this paper may relate to other sites in other cities but the purpose of this project is not to make theoretical or practical claims about cities in a generalizing way; instead, it is to encourage patient, localized, and thoughtful engagement in place. This said, my site-specific empirical research has guided me toward critical questions about research, more generally speaking. For example, how do we engage thoughtfully with a place, its politics, contradictions, secrets, lies, possible futures, and impossibilities and, all the while, remain good scholars, citizens, and empiricists?

This project has also been a journey into methodological territory I knew very little about before I began. I have experimented with various processes that track small, empirical details and, from these details, I have generated critical inquiries and observations. From this empirical and experimental work, I have initiated several discussions rooted in enchantment, and the agentic capacities of human and non-human bodies, including place. I call my heterodox methodology a materialist metaphysics of place.

Finally, a short note on writing about politics from a position of privilege: while I think that the scale of what counts as political agency and "activism" is much too large to be approached with sincerity in this project, I realize that in many places in the world (and here too, at times) "civic

engagement," "intervention," or "subversion" have violent, often, unimaginable consequences. Relatively speaking, my chosen site of study and the micro actions that exist within it have very low stakes. At the same time, the level of apathy and lack of engagement that are experienced and articulated in Canada (Québec is more frequently the exception to this) are acute enough that I think this project contributes to an important and urgent dialogue about urban space, perception,[1] and civic participation.

Action begins when we are able to see the same thing that we've always seen, a little bit differently. In his well-known book, *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger writes "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it."[2] Henry David Thoreau suggests that "we cannot see anything until we are possessed with the idea of it, take it into our heads, - and then we can hardly see anything else."[3] Finally, Jan Zwicky uses the term "seeing-as" to which she says: "all genuine understanding is a form of seeing-as: it is fundamentally spatial in organization."[4] I have used this process as an opportunity to try to see differently and, also to understand what and how others see. When we can begin to see differently, we can identify a way through and begin to create a place. I hope that this project is successful in creating "an opening [for] curiosity (rather than a closing down of knowing)."[5]

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[1] "A political act not only disrupts, it disrupts in such a way as to change radically what people can "see": it repartitions the sensible, it overthrows the regime of the perceptible. (Bennett, 2010, 107)
[2] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1972.
[3] Henry David Thoreau, "Autumnal Tints," in *Works of Henry David Thoreau*. Ed. Lily Owens. New York: Avenel Books, Crown Publishers, Inc (1906), 1981, 686
[4] Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*, Kentville, Nova Scotia: Gaspereau Press, 2003, 3
[5] I've borrowed this quote from an inspirational performance I witnessed in May 2013: Danielle Peers and Lindsay Eales, "Crippin' the Crutch: Body-Tools in Motion," Keynote at the *Differential Mobilities* Conference, May 11, 2013

Introduction

This project has come to form through my engagement with a peculiar urban place in a neighbourhood called Mile End, in Montréal. Some people call this place le Champ des Possibles while others refer to it as the field, the meadow, the tracks, or the Maguire Meadow.[6] It is a place that embodies physical and conceptual paradoxes and is ripe with important, critical questions about land use, civic engagement, and wild space in an urban setting. It challenges binaries between nature and culture; urban and wild; and empty and occupied. Le Champ is an inviting place and people go there to create, collaborate, rest, grow food, dream, sleep, make art, walk dogs, and participate in a wide range of other activities and interactions. They make it a home, away from home. It is a place of contradiction, contention, and civic participation. One of the reasons that this space exists as it does today is because it used to be a Canadian Pacific (CP) rail yard – lot #2334609.[7] Once CP stopped using the yard, the tracks were covered by (contaminated) fill[8] and, over the span of numerous decades, it was left to grow wild. By the nineteen-eighties, ownership had transferred from CP Rail to la Ville de Montréal but the city did not propose any type of development until 2007, likely, because of its contaminated status.[9] For years, citizens have used it as a throughway (from metros Laurier and Rosemont) and a place to hold parties and bonfires. In 2007, the city

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[6] These are the names I've encountered through my formal interviews and interactions in *le Champ*. All interviews have been conducted with the approval of the Concordia University Summary Protocol Form (SPF).

[7] See Roerich Project http://roerichproject.artefati.ca/about/; Sarah Gilbert "Field Custodian" *Mile Endings,* 30 September, 2009. http://mileendings.blogspot.ca/2009_09_01_archive.html

[8] Personal Interview, Sara Finley, February 2012; See Appendix I

[9] Earlier conversations with Emily Rose Michaud, indicated that contamination of *le Champ* was key to its preservation/abandonment. This story has travelled with me throughout exploration of le Champ but in May 2013, an interviewee (a member of les Amis du Champ) presented a different story. He thinks that the location the Carmelite nunnery, so close to le Champ, has been significant to its preservation. The story of the Carmelites comes to surface in more detail in Chapter 2.

announced a possible extension of St. Viateur East.[10] Mile End responded by initiating conversations about how to resist the proposal.[11] Starting in the autumn of 2008, ecological artist Emily Rose Michaud marked the space with a 95-meter land art installation built from mulch, rocks, and plants.[12] The installation consisted of three large circles, which is known as a Roerich symbol and was used to mark sites of cultural significance during World War II.[13]

Fig. 1 The Roerich Symbol in le Champ des Possibles[14]

Emily has explained that her installation was meant to spur dialogue and engage citizens who cared about the fate of the space. She explains the effect of her own work: "the project's efforts sparked

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[10] Christopher de Wolf, "New Life for a Garment District" *Urban Photo.* 4 July 2008 http://www.urbanphoto.net/blog/2008/07/04/new-life-for-a-garment-district/; Emily Rose Michaud, "Meeting with Helen Fotopulus." *Terraculture.* 22 January 2009 http://pousses.blogspot.ca/search?updated-max=2009-04-27T21:25:00-04:00&max-results=15&start=136&by-date=false

[11] For more information on the continuation of those conversations, see http://spacing.ca/montreal/2009/04/28/mile-end-citizens-take-participatory-planning-into-their-own-hands/

[12] Personal Interview, Emily Rose Michaud, February 2013; "Urban Encounters Abstract," June 2013

[13] Nicholas Roerich, *Virtual Museum*, http://www.roerich.ru/index.php?r=1280&l=eng

[14] Emily Rose Michaud, Terraculture http://pousses.blogspot.ca/2008/01/roerich-garden-project.html

change: Citizens gathered, defined their priorities and dreams, and the city's $9-million "development" plan was put under closer community scrutiny."[15]

Emily's living, growing, transformative installation, which was maintained for four years, was successful in fueling community activism. Through organization and persistence, the residents of Mile End have worked together to reclaim le Champ.[16] Arguably, one of the most important aspects of Emily's is its success in marking le Champ as an important community site containing unique and important urban biodiversity.[17] The Plateau-Mile End borough has now formally acknowledged the citizens' efforts. On May 22, le Champ was rezoned as a green space (*l'espace vert*).[18] Now, the borough, in collaboration with les Amis du Champ, will maintain it.[19] This small excerpt provides a glimpse into the site's history and complexity. Its beauty, potential, and the questions it provokes (in myself and in others) have attracted me to this site and compelled me to explore it through various media: photography, writing, interviews, archival research, and site-specific observation. Each of these are modes of creative inquiry that have come to material formation through notes, observations, insights, images, maps, and stories. Although all of these pieces do not appear in this final thesis, they have informed both my understanding and approach. I will now talk about the methodological approach I have taken throughout this project.

At the beginning of my site-specific, ethnographic, archival, and theoretical research, I was guided by two simple questions: (1) What is this place? (2) What are the politically significant questions that emerge from a place like this? These two questions were initial inquiries that remained fairly broad in order to allow my site-specific methodology to maintain malleability. With broad

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[15] Emily Rose Michaud, "Urban Encounters Abstract," June 2013
[16] See "A Meeting About the Field," *Imagine (le) Mile End*. 29 June 2009, http://imaginemileend.com/post/132610173/a-meeting-about-a-field
[17] See site work of urban botanist, Roger Latour http://www.floraurbana.blogspot.ca/
[18] Monique Beaudin, "Mile End Green Space Gets Protected Status," *Montreal Gazette*, 22 May 2013. http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/montreal/Mile+green+space+gets+protected+status/8421272/story.html
[19] Personal Interview, Anonymous, May 2013

questions in mind, I was able to embrace the details and characteristics of le Champ – the site specificities. Throughout the process, important queries have arisen: about the capacity of wildness to exist in the city; about the use and appropriation of public space; about what true public space looks and feels like; about the definition of the commons; and about land ownership, use, and access; and about the capacity of abandoned and reclaimed spaces to foster and produce political dialogue.

While many questions have influenced the formation of this project, the question that operates foundationally is one that Jane Bennett asks in the introduction of her book, *Vibrant Matter, a political ecology of things* (2011). Bennett asks "how would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (nonhuman) bodies."[20] I have come to realize, through process, that my own project has been an experiment in engaging patiently, and thoughtfully in place, while paying attention to all forms of bodies, rhythms, patterns, and changes.[21] Bennett "urges us to explore nature with feelings and emotions, to use all our senses" and recommends an arousal of the emotions. After all, "the foundation of learning is in what we love."[22] I thus suggest that spending time in place is one way to begin addressing the very urgent question posed by Bennett.[23] Additionally, le Champ, like most urban places, is home to a messy collision of the kind of vibrancy and bodies Bennett writes about and, as such, has something to teach us about the importance of non-human bodies, rhythms, and processes. This project, as a whole, suggests a strategy for responding to Bennett's urgent ecological question and is also an experiment in

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[20] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, *a political ecology of things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010, viii

[21] This is, perhaps, what Rachel Carson has referred to as a *sense of wonder*.

[22] Linda Lear, "Introduction" to *A Sense of Wonder*. Rachel L. Carson, 1965. New York: Harper Collins, 1998., 9

[23] While I think that while Bennett's work is doing an incredible amount of heavy lifting with her project at hand, I think that an incorporation of spatiality into her analysis of *things* could yield some important observations. I take this observation up again chapter three.

responding methodologically[24] to Bennett's important and provocative metaphysics. Arguably, it is an intervention in both the politics and practice of place.

Sources, Language, and Discourse(s)

Books of contemporary criticism are not really written; they are only composed. Images from the field and fragments from fiction are the pieces that form this particular narrative. But it is a story that could be told through infinite compositions of references and sources; it claims no particular or final authority. **Jill Stoner**

The sources I've engaged with and learned from throughout this project are interdisciplinary; they include academic papers, philosophical texts, fiction, conference talks and panels, podcasts, blogs, and public projects. I have used this range of sources for two reasons. First, my object of study requires an interdisciplinary approach – many modes of discourse are needed to approach its complexity. Second, I think it is important to activate various modes of discourse in one space. From the beginning, I have understood this project as a collective endeavor. As such, I hope that parts of this work will move out of this specific body of text and into a more publicly accessible form. I will speak about possible futures for elements of this project in my conclusion.

Part way through this project, I came to realize that urban places similar to le Champ lack a well-established language or set of concepts. Toward the latter half of the project, I began to encounter texts and projects that examine places similar to le Champ – texts that employ the kind of language I have since been experimenting with. Anna Jorgensen and Richard Keenan's publication, *Urban Wildscapes* (2012) and Graham Coreil-Allen's *in situ* and on-line project called *The Typology of*

[24] In a talk entitled "Artistry and Agency in a World of Vibrant Matter" at New York University (NYU) in 2011, Bennett mentions methodological approaches to the problems she poses. Listening to this talk influenced the framing of own project as a methodological response. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q607Ni23QjA

New Public Sites (2012)[25] approach urban wild places or *terrain vagues*[26] as places in need of a better lexicon. They argue for and demonstrate further critical inquiry than what current urban planning, critical geography, or cultural studies languages have to offer. From the research I have done, it seems that architecture and design language have taken the cultural and political richness of these kinds of places seriously.[27] They embrace interdisciplinary language to articulate the messiness and complexity of places as sites of study; they offer nuanced vocabulary, methodology, and unique engagements with such spaces; they also provide historical and cultural context for how these spaces have come to be.

Through content and form, Dung Kai-Cheung's Atlas, *The Archaeology of an Imaginary City* (2012), *Rebecca Solnit's Infinite City*, *A San Francisco Atlas* (2010*),* Becky Cooper's *Mapping Manhattan, A Love (and Sometimes Hate) Story in Maps by 75 New Yorkers* (2013)*,* and Jill Stoner's *Toward a Minor Architecture* (2012) communicate the way in which place is layered in meaning and also the way in which meaning can be assembled through multiple voices and told through various forms of narrative. These texts provide useful forms that offer creative ways to think about and communicate place. My opportunity to engage with such a fascinating and aesthetically attuned body of literature has been integral to this project and will inform the way that I approach the concept of place in the future.

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[25] See Graham Coreil-Allen's *The Typology of New Public Sites* http://grahamprojects.com/pdfs/nps-t.pdf

[26] My first encounter with this term was through Luc Lévesque's paper about le Champ des Possibles. See Lévesque, "The terrain vague as material – some observations" (2002) **http://www.amarrages.com/textes_terrain.html**. Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió also provides a definition of terrain vague, which I bring forward in chapter three.

[27] See David Gissen, *Subnature Architecture's Other Environments*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009; Jill Stoner, *Toward a Minor Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012; Elizabeth Grosz, "Architecture from the Outside," in *Anyplace*. Ed. Cynthia Davidson. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1995

Finally, a very short note on the term I've chosen to refer to le Champ des Possibles. I use le Champ throughout this work. Le Champ implies a shortened version of its 'proper name.' By referring to it as le Champ, rather than some category of place (*i.e.* a field, or a meadow) I can avoid categorizing it as something specific, which is the focus of chapter three.

Methodology

Background to my project (2009-2010)

In November 2009, shortly after moving to Montréal for the first time, I biked through what I then perceived as a big, empty, and slightly peculiar site.[28] At that time, I was living in the east Plateau and it was my 'shortcut' to Mile End. Upon my first encounter, the peculiar site struck me as odd but also appealed to me because of its vastness - it offered a break from the density of the city. At that point in time, I did not put too much thought into what that site was or why it was there. Six months later, during the spring of 2010, I returned to the site for a class project and learned that the site was not empty at all. Rather, it was used frequently by the community and was also at risk of being developed by the municipality. Two objects lead me to this realization. One was Emily's large installation, mentioned earlier; the other object was a poster hanging from a sign on the eastern edge of the field.

[28] I use the term 'site' here momentarily, as I express my interaction with *le Champ des Possibles*, before I came to know it as any kind of place. Place, as a concept, will be clarified in Chapter 1.

Fig. 2 The Roerich Symbol from ground level & a poster found on site, 2010

Through online investigation, I learned Emily's land art installation had prompted an urgent dialogue about le Champ and catalyzed community action in the form of organized "seed exchanges, guided botanical and historical walks, planting sessions," and group clean up days.[29]

After encountering those objects, which stood as signifiers of occupation, the information I unveiled about le Champ piqued my curiosity. In 2010, I interviewed Emily Rose, visited le Champ on numerous occasions, and examined online conversations. What I learned in that short amount of time presented itself as an opportunity for a larger research project.

Le Champ: 2011 – 2013

The methodology I have employed throughout this project is heterodox because le Champ, like all places, is heterogeneous. I have drawn upon phenomenological, ethnographic, literary, and theoretical strategies to form an experimental methodological approach. I refer to my methodology as experimental because coming to know a place involves spending time in place in order to respond patiently to the thoughts and feelings it evokes. To spend thoughtful time in place is not to impress upon the place; rather, have it impress upon you. Jan Zwicky writes "ontological attention is a form of love. When we love a thing, we can experience our responsibility toward it as limitless (the size of

[29] Emily Rose Michaud and Owen McSwiney, "The Field of Possibilities" 17 May 2011

the world)."[30] I have certainly felt, throughout the process, that a sense of patience, an eye for observation, and openness to serendipity have contributed to my love for this place.

An important methodological question that has propelled the course of this project is how does one come to know place? The more specific question that follows from this, of course, is how do I come to know this place – le Champ des Possibles? These questions invoked empirical experimentation and investigation. To explain my methodology further, I will discuss my various modes of *in situ* investigation,[31] which have taken place over a year of regular site visits.[32]

Empirical Work

During my visits to le Champ, I walked the site, took photographs, took notes, read, and engaged in casual conversations. I developed a fascination with minute changes that would only be noticed by someone who visited regularly.[33] This phenomenological approach intentionally follows the inductive work of practitioners such as Jane Jacobs, who wrote about the lived significance of "common, ordinary things."[34] Gordon Wait *et al.* speak to the embodied practice of being in space in order to come to know it:

When people, plants, animals and place are understood as relationally constituted within

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[30] Jan Zwicky, Wisdom & Metaphor Nova Scotia: Gaspereau Press, 2003, 57

[31] I consider that *in situ* work in *le Champ* applies to both my observations and engagements in the physical place that is le Champ des Possibles as well as to my attention to the discursive realm, which includes a range of online platforms including websites, Facebook, and blogs, and, finally, all of the interviews and conversations that I had about the site.

[32] In March 2012, I initiated my site visits. These moved from weekly to daily as the months grew warmer. As summer turned to fall again, I visited less frequently but consistently. Throughout the Winter of 2012/2013, I visited the site several times and in the summer of 2013, my visits continued but with less frequency than in 2012.

[33] Several people I interviewed confessed to taking great pleasure in noticing new objects; encountering an art installation; or just knowing they were there often enough to recognizing when even the tiniest detail changed. When I left the city or was not able to visit the site regularly, I felt a yearning for what I was missing. In 2013, my site visits were much less frequent and when I did visit le Champ, I felt less attached. I don't know it as well this year and yet a familiarity remains – as though it is an old friend that I am getting to know again, after some time.

[34] Jane Jacobs. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage Books, 1961, 1

> processes that are distinctly performative, then understandings of what is nature become embedded within ideas, values, desires and experiences of doing. Hence, regularly walking becomes a practice of 'holding' oneself in place, through the possibilities of making dis/connections with human and non-human worlds that sustain a personal sense of order.[35]

My observations from the site have informed the theoretical work I use to contextualize the site as a dynamic and socially created place.[36] Note taking became an important part of my empirical methodology. I have in my possession four notebooks filled with written meanderings: observational notes, poems, reminders, names, phone numbers, email addresses, and doodles. Michael Taussig writes, "the notebook is like a magical object in a fairytale. It is a lot more than an object, as it inhabits out hallowed ground between meditation and production."[37] Some of the content within these notebooks appears in this final document but the process of note taking itself was a skill that I learned – a patient, quiet, and situated kind of learning.[38]

I also took photographs regularly. The objects, detritus, and remains are traces of human interaction, which collect in le Champ and provide glimpses of unfinished stories. A large quantity of this detritus is simply just garbage that has collected there, through wind and weather. It has travelled from other spaces in the city. Of trash, Baudelaire writes, "here is a man whose task it is to gather the detritus of a day in the capital. Everything the great city throws away, everything it loses, everything it disdains, everything it breaks, he catalogues and collects. He consults the archives of

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[35] Gordon Waitt, Nicholas Gill, Lesley Head. "Walking practice and suburban nature-talk." *Social and Cultural Geography*. 10:1, 44.

[36] Mary Rowe, "Jane's Cup of Tea," *What We See, Advancing the Observations of Jane Jacobs.* Eds. Stephen A. Goldsmith & Lynne Elizabeth. Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2010., 313

[37] Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This, Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely my Own*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

[38] While I can identify the importance of these notebooks as a processed base endeavor in retrospect, I often felt a sense of urgency while in le Champ – a need to produce something that would be worthy of appearing later in my thesis. It took me several months to realize that having "a product" was not the point of this exercise.

debauchery, the clutter of refuse."[39] Zoe Leonard, an artist from New York City, documents her changing neighbourhood in the Lower Eastside of Manhattan through her photograph practice. She has been described as an "archivist of urban waste" and describes her role within her own practice as a "photographer as rag picker."[40]

Fig. 3 Bricks, Pink Scarf, Red Cardinal, Three Chairs with Picnic Table & Garbage, 2012

There are also objects there that are much more deliberate than the strewn garbage and found objects: art installations, gardens, furniture, fireplaces, apiaries, and more. I photographed and documented these deliberate acts of artistic urban intervention. Taking photographs began as a very

[39] Charles Baudelaire, *On Wine and Hashish* (1871), trans. Andrew Brown, London: Hesperus Press, Ltd., 2002

[40] Tom, Donough, "The Archivist of Urban Waste: Zoe Leonard, Photographer as Rag-Picker," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry*, 25, Autumn 2010, 18-29

practical way to document my daily interactions. Eventually, the collection amassed gained its own capacity to communicate.[41] The documentation of the field accumulated to form over an entire year's worth of images. These images continue to accrue on a blog I created in July 2012 (see, www.notquitegarden.blogspot.com).[42] I relate to Sher Doruff, who describes her method as a "critical appropriation of the politics of things [through which we] learn how to interpret the influence of things and relate to [them] in a creative manner."[43] In spite of (or because of) the wayward existence of such objects, I could not help but let them guide my experience of le Champ. Jane Bennett refers to this as "the call of things."[44]

In addition the objects I have documented, I have sought out and listened to people's stories. I have interacted with people on varying levels of formality. In addition to conducting twelve interviews[45] (each approximately one hour long), I have chatted casually with numerous people, both in and out of le Champ. Through these conversations, I have been able to collect stories, comments, and narratives around what the space is, who owns it, and predictions about what will happen to it. Speaking with people who interact with the space on a daily, weekly, or occasional basis has been a formative aspect of this project. Chapter two activates these stories in an ensemble in which individuals, objects, photographs and literature can converse.

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[41] At the *Urban Ecologies* conference in June 2012, my poster presentation included this interactive online archive of images.

[42] This online archive of images includes photographs, quotes, and notes. I decided to initiate the blog in order organize my photos and maintain them chronological. It functions now as a mimetic medium. If I refer to the photograph or sequence of photographs for that day, a flood of details from that particular day returns to me.

[43] Sher Doruff, "The Art of Publics: Fielding Misunderstanding" *Politics of Things*, Open 2012, 24

[44] Jane Bennett, "Artistry and Agency in a world of Vibrant Matter," talk hosted by the Vera List Centre for Art and Politics The New School, 27 September, 2011 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q607Ni23QjA

[45] Most of the people I interviewed are not originally from Montréal. A few come from British Columbia, one from New Brunswick, one from Wakefield Québec. When I talk to people casually about *le Champ,* those who know of it are usually very quick to share a story about it and/or from it.

Although I had hoped to meet all of my interviewees in le Champ, I realized quite quickly that I was not adept at initiating impromptu conversations with people.[46] In September 2012, I decided to put up fives posters in le Champ. The poster was a 'call for stories.' In response to this poster, I received two emails containing "stories from the field" – one of the people who contacted me also agreed to be interviewed.

Fig. 4 Torn Poster: Found in Autumn 2012

I also presented at a public discussion with the University of the Streets. This discussion, called "Density Interrupted: What do wild spaces in the city mean to us?" brought approximately thirty people into a café to discuss le Champ. This conversation was both an opportunity for me to present my research in a public space and to glean insights from citizens who care deeply for and are

[46] This certainly has to do with my lack of spoken French. In fact, my lack of French has influenced the shape of this project; consequently, I think that my project is not as strong as it could be.

invested in the present existence and future of le Champ. All of these conversations have brought both clarity and complexity to my understanding of the ontology of le Champ and have given me better insight into the public discourse that surrounds the space. Many of the stories that I've been told have been similar, with small (or sometimes large) variations on the details, dates, and "facts" (we do not experience places through "facts" or data). The multiplicity of narratives has given me insight into how our knowledge of places comes to exist – places are, indeed, connected to our daily vernacular. Other stories reflect more specifically on the individual who is telling the story, which brings the important element of personal narrative into the public space. Walter Benjamin explains that the story "does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the vessel."[47] I have come to observe that the stories that people tell of le Champ contribute to its identity. The ambiguous nature of le Champ leaves it open to interpretation and each story that is told about it adds another layer to its already complex ontological status.

In chapter two, I bring these narratives to life through the telling of my own short stories. These stories combine anecdotes, coincidences, images, and memories: they are collective. I have attended to the deliberate and the accidental, as well as the coincidental activities and objects that appear in the field and mark both the presence and absence of human interaction. My attention to objects (both material objects and those formed by concepts[48]) is a particular kind of methodology – one that gestures toward Jane Bennett's theoretical frameworks in *Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things* (2010) and *The Enchantment of Modern Life, Attachments, Crossings & Ethics* (2001). Bennett works

[47] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller, Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov, 5 http://slought.org/files/downloads/events/SF_1331-Benjamin.pdf

[48] The interaction between objects and concepts as well as the notion of concepts as objects is discussed in Chapter 3, through Mieke Bal's text *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities, A Rough Guide* (2002).

through a tradition that is being discussed as a reawakening of material vitalism. Her work "calls attention to magical sites already here. Not magical in the sense of 'a set of rituals for summoning up supernatural powers within a coherent cosmology,' but in the sense of cultural practices that mark 'the marvelous erupting amid the everyday.'"[49]

Plan for the Present Work

In the first chapter of this thesis, I engage with place, generally. I bring forth theorists who have worked with place as a concept and as a practice. Place-based studies are interdisciplinary by nature, they cannot easily be broken down into simple categories. For this reason, practitioners of place often talk about this conceptual messiness and interdisciplinarity in their writings on place. I have chosen to divide chapter one into small sections. In the first section, I explore a simple question: why place? I then engage in an epistemological discussion about place. I present a few of the (many) possible ways in which we come to know and communicate place and I provide an analytic distinction between space and place and discuss the way in which mediation of place is ever present in our experience of it. Maps and theory are used as examples of mediating factors. I then go on to explore three categories of place: cities, ruins, and parks. I have chosen each theme as being important to the character and details of *le Champ*. The first chapter also functions to establish the vocabulary and cultural context necessary to engage critically *le Champ* – as a Wild[50] space – in chapter three.

In the second chapter, I write from the field. I do so by writing stories that include my own narratives, the narratives of other people, maps, and photographs. This chapter reflects an empirical engagement with *le Champ* that emphasizes the multi-vocal ways that we come to know and experience place. My use of images in this chapter is a very early start to a further refined project

[49] Bennett (2001), 8
[50] Wild indicates Jane Bennett's Thoreauian Wild. I will flesh this concept out in chapter 3

that I would like to create, using text and image.[51] Ideally, I will continue to work with chapter two mode of communication that can travel outside of the form of this thesis and into a more public mode of communication.

In the third and final chapter, I use Jane Bennett's conception of Wild to talk about le Champ. Bennett's Thoreauian understanding of Wild provides a conceptual framework for many of the important points of discussion that have arisen through my empirical, theoretical, and written engagement with le Champ. Employing Bennett's concept of Wild calls forth her work with enchantment and vibrancy as well.[52] Through my categorization of le Champ, as a Wild place, I am able to critically explore its physical qualities, its agentic capacities, and the various ways in which citizens have translated their enchantment with the site into engagement. While the primary task at hand in chapter three is to categorize le Champ as a Wild place in order to flesh out the ontological and political significance of such an identity, this chapter also provides an exegesis of the ideas within Bennett's work that have been influential to this project as a whole. Chapter three is where I experiment with what it means to put practice into theory and theory back into practice.

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[51] I have been inspired by Jill Stoner's *Toward a Minor Architecture*, Roland Barthes' *Roland Barthes,* Dougal Sheridan's "Indeterminate Territories," Rebecca Solnit's *Infinite City, A San Francisco Atlas* and will look to these for guidance as I continue to work with chapter two.

[52] Mieke Bal's chapter, entitled "Concept" in her book *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* has been important to my understanding of the way concepts work in academic discourse. For Bal, concepts do methodological work, "they are never simply descriptive; they are also programmatic and normative"(28).

Chapter 1. Possible Places

The broad context of this literary landscape is like a vast archaeological site, but the retrieved fragments (like pottery shards in the ruin of a dwelling, or bones in a tomb) are small, perhaps seeming inconsequential. Each one is its own tactical line of force, and also a potential piece of a new assemblage. Though their lines may intersect, the fabric remains unfinished and inconclusive. Each line points toward where it may never arrive.
Jill Stoner

We all have places that we visit and move through; places that are common to us; that are special to us; places that we look forward to visiting; places we avoid. There are places that we always remember and places that we necessarily forget. There are places that remain unnoticed – until, perhaps, they begin to change. There are places that are changing so often, we hardly notice. Places are physical or material (mostly). They are lived (always). Their physicality changes through both growth and decay. Places are local: *we get to know a place when we participate in the local imagination*.[53] Knowledge of place assumes the experiential and sensory. When we speak with friends or family about place, we engage in a conversation many people are happy to participate in – place is quotidian topic of conversation. We chat casually about where we go, what it was like, who was

[53] E.V. Walter, *Placeways, A Theory of the Human Environment*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

there, and so on. It is something that we all feel. Our experiences, our imagination and imaginings, our dreams,[54] and our memories rely on the textured substrate that is place. Lucy Lippard explains:

> The lure of the local is the pull of place that operates on each of us, exposing our politics and our spiritual legacies. It is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere…The lure of the local is the undertone to modern life that connects it to the past we know so little and to the future we are aimlessly concocting. It is not universal (nothing is) and its character and affect differ greatly over time from person to person and from community to community.[55]

The creation of place happens through being in place: through storytelling, movement, interaction, the making of maps, occupation, and abandonment. Places come to form through human interaction but are never restricted to the present. Interaction with places also occurs through remembering, re-telling, storytelling, and imagining. As such, places exist as fascinating intersections of temporality: the past, present, and imagined futures can exist simultaneously through recollections, sensorial experience, and creative projections, into a future place.

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[54] "A dream consists of little more than its setting, as anyone knows who tells a dream or hears a dream told…" Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987, 255.

[55] Lippard, 7

Discussions about place lack natural boundaries. The sheer number of specific places we could possibly talk about is without limit and within each of those places there are countless subjective experiences, interpretations, details, textures, and stories. Places, then, are created through our experience of them, what Doreen Massey would call relations.[56] But human experience, which accumulates through subjective encounters, memory, and reflection, is a vast, complex, and convoluted area of study. So, how might we begin to talk about places, which, in themselves, are already so numerous and varied, and if we take seriously their connection to human subjectivity, are also infinitely complex?

The objective of this chapter is to provide an essay that guides through this complexity. It is meant to introduce the reader to place as something lived, dynamic, and always changing. My aim is to demonstrate familiarity with select theory and literature that embrace places as their main focus of study. The language(s) through which we can discuss spatial objects and interactions range from expert-based, scientifically embedded planning, mapping, and policy-based discourse, to fictional, literary wanderings through places that are both real and imagined; to critical and philosophical inquiries that pose ontological and epistemological questions. Disciplines such as geography and landscape architecture often discuss place as an object that exists apart from the subject discussing it

[56] See Doreen Massey, *For Space* (2005) and *Space, Place & Gender* (1994)

– a familiar and ever present Cartesian dualism.[57] Other work challenge this binary. Writers such as Italo Calvino, Rebecca Solnit, and Dung Kai-Cheung emphasize that every mode of communication of place acts in a mediating way and, consequently, creates imagined places. I continue this exploration with a relatively simple question: *why place?*

Why Place?

We have inherited an imagination so deeply ingrained that it is often not actively thought.
Doreen Massey

Even though places, and thus spatiality, are ever present, spatial analyses in discourses related to human experience are not always at the forefront of critical work. Doreen Massey reminds us that a large portion of historical and philosophical work is understood and communicated through temporal rather than spatial dimensions: "over and again space is conceptualized as (or, rather, assumed to be) simply the negative opposite of time."[58] In actuality, critical investigations of spatiality are integral to critical investigations of the world. Literature, critical geography, cultural studies, design and architecture, oral history, and ecofeminist writing often bring spatial analyses into their work.[59] Similarly, myth, fairy tales, and aboriginal stories are usually built from a lively sense and

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[57] This dualism belongs to a paradigm that understands the subject as possessing agency and the object as inherently inert, which is something that will be challenged in chapter three.
[58] Doreen Massey, *For Space.* London: Sage Publications, 2005., 17
[59] See Gruenewald (2010) He includes social ecology, human ecology, environmental justice, ecofeminisim, and writings associated with indigenous experience on his list (635) Lippard (1997);

understanding of place. Lucy Lippard writes "'finding a fitting place for oneself in the world is finding a place for oneself in a story,' [and] the story is composed of mythologies, histories, [and] idealogies…"[60] These disciplines and modes of narrative have contributed significantly to what we might identify as place-based studies or situated knowledge. Most importantly, they have brought awareness and vocabulary to a kind of experiential knowing that is set *somewhere*.

Along with Massey, Western critical theorists who are known well for the exploration of spatial analytics through cultural theory include Henri Lefebvre, Lucy Lippard, Michel de Certeau, E.V. Walter, Edward E. Casey, among others. Significant to a critical understanding of spatiality is recognizing that it is socially produced and is thus dynamic and affective. Massey says "space is not a flat surface across which you walk […] you're cutting across a myriad of stories."[61] Spatial dimensions are produced and reproduced through the human subjects that inhabit and move through them: *places are alive and they have something to say*.[62] Writing from a pedagogical perspective, David Gruenewald provides a clearly articulated logic to support the importance of seeing place and embracing its complexity:

Edward Casey *The fate of place: A philosophical history*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997; Lefebvre, (1974, 1976)

[60] Lippard, 33

[61] *Social Science Bites*: "Doreen Massey on Space" 1 February 2013 http://www.socialsciencespace.com/2013/02/podcastdoreen-massey-on-space/

[62] David A. Gruenewald, "Foundations of Place: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Place-Conscious Education," *American Educational Research Journal*, 40.3 (Autumn 2003), 627

> When we fail to consider places as products of human decisions, we accept their existence as noncontroversial or inevitable, like the falling of rain or the fact of the sunrise. Moreover, when we accept the existence of places as unproblematic - places such as the farm, the bank, the landfill, the strip mall, the gated community, and the new car lot we also become complicit in the political processes, however problematic, that stewarded these places into being and that continue to legitimize them.[63]

We can think spatially by spending time in place, talking to people about place, and transforming place; in doing so, we can make visible the invisibilities highlighted by writers such as Gruenewald. We must also become aware of the various designed elements that construct the spaces we inhabit and move through: "we tend to take our social space for granted and do not often think of it as a cultural product. Becoming aware of social places as cultural products requires that we bring them into our awareness […] and unpack their particular cultural meanings."[64] The prevalence of roads, parking lots, and highways is a simple example of urban design that reflects very particular economic prerogatives. Thus, being cognizant of the particularities of place makes visible the cultural and social construction of spatial dimensions. Once the lived spatiality of cultural and hegemonic norms

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[63] Gruenewald, 628

[64] *Ibid*., 627

is brought into view, a discussion about the capacities of citizens to exert agency in a spatial way emerges.

We study place to enrich our methodological approach to the world and to make visible the very real and material manifestations of political, economic, and social hegemonies. We also study place in order to understand the ways in which our own actions, as citizens who move through space and create place are always-already entrenched in spatiality. The politics we negotiate are always both material and spatial. The next section explores some epistemological access points through which we can come to know place.

How might we know place?

This section will explore *how* places are approached. Because the central component of this project involves a methodological experiment in coming to know place, a discussion about the vocabulary, frameworks, and methods employed by spatial thinkers (practitioners of place) is pertinent. Doreen Massey explains that thinking spatially requires that we think in a dimension of simultaneity and multiplicity: space cuts "through the myriad stories of which we are living at any one moment."[65] She continues on to say that spatial relations are material but never void of social

[65] *Social Science Bites*: "Doreen Massey on Space" 1 February 2013 http://www.socialsciencespace.com/2013/02/podcastdoreen-massey-on-space/

interactions or exchanges; in fact, that social relations themselves produce geographies.[66] Permeating through all of this are important and extraordinary power relations – issues of access, gender, ethnicity, land rights, and beyond.[67] Thus, Massey's insights provide an important point for a discussion of how we come to know. She interrupts the epistemic dependency on the temporal and, in doing so, provides an intervention in previous modes of thought that left spatiality out. We see, through Massey, that space can operate as an analytic entry point that presents us with a way to talk about power, social relations and connections, geography, and materiality as operating simultaneously in a way that time as an analytic category may not.

Massey makes it clear that spatial thinking is important and less present than it should be in critical theory and she is not the only one to suggest this I will explore some of the way in which theorists and writers analyze and communicate spatiality. After all, how we come to know place is connected to how we communicate it. I continue this discussion with a brief delineation between space and place.

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[66] For example, the public transit system (created through social and economic policies) creates a specific kind of geography for those who use it as their primary mode of transportation. In this example, accessibility becomes a salient part of the way in which physical geographies are produced through social and economic policies.

[67] Social Science Bites: "Doreen Massey on Space" 1 February 2013 http://www.socialsciencespace.com/2013/02/podcastdoreen-massey-on-space/

Space & Place

The theorists who have worked rigorously to flesh out the relationships and differences between space and place as concepts have produced a vocabulary helpful to this project and this distinction provides the foreground for my discussion of le Champ, which I mark as a place throughout chapters one and two. Generally speaking, "space" tends to point toward the universal and "place" towards the specific, or local. In the tradition of writers such as E.V. Walter, Lucy Lippard, and Jane Jacobs, I understand place as being created through multiple and diverse human interactions with space, over a duration of time.[68] We come to know and make place through our phenomenological experience and practice of it. An important component of my use of the term place later in this work is that it emerges through stories – both oral and written. Thus, formal spaces that might not appear to fall into the category of place (*i.e.* an airport) could become (or are) places if they are re-told through personal narrative(s). Graham Coreil-Allen's project, which was mentioned in the introduction, gives names to otherwise ignored sites. He writes, "by giving these places succinct and fun and poetic names, we can help start a discourse about our public spaces and

[68] Not all writers adhere to the place/space distinction in a way that articulates place as the more subjectively constructed category. Michel de Certeau asserts that places, not spaces, are less personal, less accessible and reproduce and materialize hegemonic forces. Ultimately though, de Certeau draws the distinction in a similar way, marking out boundaries by those who already have power and access already and those who must create access points through strategic and tactical interventions.

how we want to envision them for the future."[69] Coreil-Allen leads performative walking tours to these sites, telling stories and giving names to them as a mode of public engagement and discourse.

Even though we know that place is spatial, we also know that it is not the same thing as space. Intuitively, space seems like something more abstract, less personal and less local. Space seems like the kind of thing that we understand through a road map or a picture of a solar system; while place seems like that which we can become sensorially engulfed. Gruenewald suggests that a basic distinction between place and space is that we know space through a geometry that is embedded in Euclidean terms.[70] Space is also an appropriate term to use when speaking about the overall form, structure, or layout of a landscape.[71] Even if we conceptualize space as 'more abstract' (than place), Gruenewald reminds us that space is not simply about mathematically articulated points on a grid; instead, it "has taken on metaphorical and cultural meanings that describe geographical relationships of power, contested territories of identity and difference, and aesthetic or even cybernetic experience."[72] The space of a city has come to exist as a set of manifestations of economic, political, and social prerogatives, trends, and necessities.

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[69] Graham Coreil-Allen, in "Names vs. the Nothing" *99% Invisible,* Podcast #60*,* hosted by Roman Mars. 6 August 2012, http://99percentinvisible.org/page/3,

[70] Gruenewald, 622

[71] I find myself referring to le Champ as a space or a site when I am describing its location and form or layout.

[72] Gruenewald, 622

While there is often a place/space distinction in which place becomes the more localized, subjective, and accessible category, it should be noted that space is not the opposite of place: "The capitalist space-place relationship does not arise out of some kind of abstract concrete determination. Space is not a high level of abstract or neutral theorization separated from the more concrete, tactile domain of place…"[73] Andrew Merrifield, writing through Henri Lefebvre, provides helpful insights into the dialectical relationship between space and place. He explains "actual production, realization and distribution of surplus value is necessarily place-dependent and hence always vulnerable to political contestation."[74] Merrifield connects the two concepts to say that space is not an abstraction; instead, that it exists within capitalist space in a way that it is lived, situated, and practiced.[75] Merrifield's suggestion that the relationship between space and place is dialectic is important:

> The interaction between space and place here is a crucial one. Equally vital is that while we must distinguish between these different realms if we are to apprehend place construction and transformation, we must simultaneously capture how they are in fact forged together in

[73] Andrew Merrifield, "Place and Space: A Lefebvrian Reconciliation" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, 18.4 (1993), 520
[74] *Ibid*, 522
[75] *Ibid.*

> a dialectical unity. The material landscape and practices of everyday life occurring in different places under capitalism are inextricably embedded within the global capitalist whole.[76]

Providing a broad commentary on this distinction, Massey and Lippard both remind us there has been a tendency to dismiss locality studies. Massey explains "they do not align with "the universal, the theoretical, [and] the conceptual," which tend to be the masculine and dominant ways of thinking in Western traditions of thought.[77] Abstract discourses that are disconnected from place can produce problematic notions and practices of both space and pace. Studies that focus on place tend to draw from particular epistemologies that are tied to localized, experiential methodologies. Massey and Lippard both provide a commentary that situates the place-based writing as having the opportunity resist abstract and universalizing communication of spatiality.

So far, this discussion has fleshed out the distinction between space and place and explained, particularly through Massey, that all spatial entities are socially and culturally constructed and then reproduced through our experiences of and in them. Our knowledge of place is also shaped by the mediations that we experience. In the following section, I explore the way in which spatiality is mediated. To do so, I discuss maps and theory as two examples of spatial mediation. Nonetheless, when we think about the modes through which places are mediated, the map is a salient artifact and

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[76] Merrifield, 520.

[77] Massey (1994), 9

metaphor. We can imagine that stories, photographs, and creative renderings of places are all forms of map-making which communicate the complexities of place in a way that modern, utilitarian maps do not.[78] I use the next few paragraphs to discuss the mediation of place through creative mapping projects and theory. In doing so, I recognize that theory itself is a creative rendering, or mapping, of place and thought.

Mediated Places

Δ Maps

In this short section, I employ the map as an object that represents and reproduces the multiplicity of ways in which places are mediated. We rely on maps to understand the spaces we inhabit, move through, and visit and, in turn, maps shape they we inhabit and move through space. Most often, we use maps to orient ourselves or get from point A to point B. If the map we use serves its purpose and gets us to where we need to be, it is easy to take for granted how much information is actually left out. The functional, everyday-use kind of map is what I refer to as a modern map. In its capacity to negate or displace the territory it seeks to represent, the map becomes a contentious mediation of space and place. The use value designated by the language of

[78] Peter Hall, "Visualizing Resistant Practices," Keynote Talk, *Urban Ecologies*, OCAD University, June 21, 2013

conventional maps means that the topologies[79] of the lived, felt, dreamed, and desired details that relate to place are ignored, forgotten, or written out. *And desires are already memories*, Calvino says.

Working through objective, quantifiable units of measurement, modern maps communicate through useful representations of spatial units: "…mapping is an early example of how public space becomes appropriated through an abstract representation of space that is monumental both in its scope and in its ability to eclipse all existing or possible alternatives."[80] Modern maps also tell us more about space than they do about place. They have the capacity to reproduce a conception of place that often goes unquestioned in capitalist culture: "that space is not a dimension of the mechanisms of transformation but is instead natural, physical – [it is] unchanged and unchanging surroundings."[81] This, of course, is not the case. There is nothing unmediated about our spatial experience. Dung Kai-Cheung writes:

> No matter whether we understand them from the perspective of teleology or of utilitarianism, and no matter how scientifically and with what exactitude they are produced,

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[79] "When everything else has gone from my brain – the President's name, the state's capitals, the neighbourhoods where I lived, and then my own name and what it was on earth I sought, and then at length the faces of my friends, and finally the faces of my family – when all this has dissolved, what will be left, I believe, is topology: the dreaming memory of land as it lay this way and that." Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987

[80] Dennis Lago, "Communication Park," in *Alphabet City Six, Culture, Theory, Politics*. Ed. John Knechtel., Toronto: House of Anansi Press Ltd., 1998., 204

[81] Kristen Ross. "Rimbaud and the Transformation of Social Space." *Everyday Life*, 73, 1978, 104-120

> maps have never been copies of the real world but are displacements. In the end, the real world is totally supplanted in the process of displacement and fades from human cognition.[82]

Recognizing the mediating/displacing qualities and capacities of maps is important to the complex conversation about our spatial experiences and it is through such a discussion that we can begin to make visible the economic, social, and political forces at play in our experience of space. As mentioned earlier, it is through making these forces visible that we might begin to push back against them – in particular, through creative means.

Community-mapping projects and creative, critical mapping works such as Rebecca Solnit's recently published piece, *Infinite City* presents a series of creative, descriptive, and subjective illustrations of San Francisco. Her atlas tells multiple stories of one geographic place, revealing the infinite places that exist in one city, through time. Another striking example of this kind of approach to mapping is Becky Cooper's very recently published book *Mapping Manhattan, A Love (and Sometimes Hate) Story in Maps by 75 New Yorkers*. Cooper walked the length of Manhattan, handing out blank outlines of the outline and invited people to "map their city." The result is a beautiful compilation of seventy-five unique cities - composed of objects, routes, lovers, unknown neighbourhoods, regrets, anxieties, and first kisses. Each of these unique cities, a composition of different places, is situated

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[82] Dung Kai-Cheung. *Atlas, The Archaeology of an Imaginary City*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011,10

on the island of Manhattan. In the forward to Cooper's participatory project, Adam Gopnik writes that "maps and memories are bound together, a little as songs and love affairs are. The artifact envelops the emotion, and then the emotion stores away in the artifact."[83] Although the seventy-five maps in Cooper's book would not help us navigate New York City efficiently, these maps allow us to see a space and experience space differently. Cooper allows us to read New York City through other people's places: their memories, routes, tastes, and emotions. With reference to the earlier distinction between space and place, we can imagine the outline of Manhattan as the space and the etchings from the participants of the project as the places.

Alternative mapping projects trace subjective experiences of place and, potentially, reappropriate languages, symbols, and metrics of dominance. The mediation that occurs through modern maps is predominant and has a strong hold on the way that most of us see, understand, and move through space. Creative mapping projects give way to place-making endeavors that redesign, restructure, or perhaps just temporarily reappropriate lived spaces. Through the simple act of imagining something other than what currently is, normative spaces can be rewritten.

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[83] Adam Gopnik, Foreword. *Mapping Manhattan, A Love (and Sometimes Hate) Story in Maps by 75 New Yorkers*. by Becky Cooper, New York: Abrams Image, 2013., 4

Δ Theory & Language

Like maps, language presents a deeply complex but often unnoticed mediation of how and what we know. All places told through language are mediated but I will focus most specifically on theoretical renderings of space and place, which mediate our knowledge and capacity to communicate them. Theorists of place are practitioners of place.[84] Lucy Lippard writes "lived experience is central to […] writing and to the subject of place."[85] Although theory sometimes carries with it the reputation of being removed from the object, subject, or circumstances it articulates. John Dixon Hunt, author of *Greater Perfections, The Practice of Garden Theory*, suggests that there is (and should be) a connection between place and theory. He recommends a renewed dialogue and revised approach to the relationship between landscape architecture and the theoretical possibilities that emerge from a pragmatic mode of knowing.[86] E.V. Walter reminds us "*theoria* meant

[84] We are all practitioners of place. I have drawn insight and inspiration from writers such as E.V. Walter, Italo Calvino, Gaston Bachelard, Lucy Lippard, Jill Stoner, Peter van Wyck, Rebecca Solnit, Jane Jacobs, John Dixon Hunt, Henri David Thoreau, Robert Smithson. These works, among others, have guided my growing understanding of the inherent complexity of communicating place.

[85] Lippard, 5

[86] John Dixon-Hunt, *Greater Perfection: The Practice of Garden Theory*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2000, xii

seeing the sights, seeing for yourself, and getting a worldview."[87] Drawing from the etymology of the term *theoria,*[88] Walter explains:

> the term *theoria* originally implied a complex but organic mode of active observation – a perceptual system that included asking questions, listening to stories and local myths, and feeling as well as hearing and seeing. It encouraged an open reception to every kind of emotional, cognitive, symbolic, imaginative, and sensory experience – a holistic practice of thoughtful awareness that engaged all the senses and feelings.[89]

My project takes the methodologies of Walter, Lippard, and Dixon-Hunt into consideration. As such, works through a methodology that maintains a close interaction between lived experience and theory. Theory is, of course, also practice but when we theorize about practice (lived experience), we must consciously maintain a thoughtful and accurate grounding in that experience. Because this project has emerged from empirical observations that places are sites (and trajectories) of resistance and transformation, I am interested and aware of how our communication and mediation of those places contributes to formation and reformation of them.

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[87] Walter, 18

[88] "The word *thea*, coming from the same root that gives us the English word, "theater," meant a "view"; *theamata*, "things that are viewed" or "beheld"; *theorein*, "to contemplate" or "to behold"; and *theoria*, "contemplation." (Walter, footnote 19, 218)

[89] Walter, 18

In the next section I talk about the city as a complex spatial entity composed of many different places. My discussion of cities provides an important vocabulary and context through which I can critically engage with le Champ (as an urban place) in chapter three. Discussing the city also puts into action the how and the why of coming to know and communicating place. Finally, it sets up some of the necessary groundwork for Bennett's critique of modernity, which will be fleshed out in chapter three.

Cities

Every city has its deep ecology, its geometries of vacancy, inventories of waste, politics of space and consequent lines of flight.
Jill Stoner, Toward a Minor Architecture

Cities are enormously complex palimpsests of communal history and memory, a fact that tends to be obscured by their primary identities as sites of immediacy, money, power and energy concentrated on the present and future. Many people come to the city to escape the "local," the isolation of rural life, the rigidity and constrictions of smaller towns.
Lucy R. Lippard, The Lure of the Local

Cities are complex. They are made up of innumerable places composed of architectures, stories, memories, interactions, poetry and philosophy, routes and journeys, opportunities, broken hearts, hiding places, monuments, overpasses, underpasses, dangers, colours, rust, lead, bricks and mortar, *ad infinitum*. Cities are exhausting, energizing, smelly, disgusting, hot, textured, rhythmic, unpredictable, depressing, cold, electric places – they lend infinitely to the imagination. They are

invisible and obvious, discrete and overlapping: they are always both contradictory and harmonious. While every city is unique, all cities are similar in that they contain panoply of people, animals, movement, rhythm, objects, flows, and networks – each complicated by a perpetual state of change and transformation. Because cities are composed of numerous places, the most important part of coming to know and speak about a city involves spending time in it or talking to people who spend time in it. The range of theorists, essayists, urban planners, and fiction writers who have presented insightful, critical, and beautiful depictions and analyses of the city is immense. In this short section, I bring various languages together to highlight a few of the many possible ways people in cities are affected by and, in turn, affect the built environment. I discuss cities as geographic and networked entities and as products of modernity. I draw links between urban space and discursive space, primarily drawing from Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre. I also bring forward possibilities of civic engagement, through what de Certeau and others articulate as "spatial enunciation."

In thinking about the city through the kind of spatial criticality described earlier through Massey, we can imagine the way in which the architectures and topographies of the city manifest through spatialized ideologies.[90] While the vocabulary and frameworks that are employed to talk about cities vary from discipline to discipline, I have been most influenced by writers and artists who

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[90] See Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*. Trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas., Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*; Trans. Steven Rendall Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984

engage with place in a way that allows a multiplicity of voices to speak simultaneously. To try to simplify "the city" through abstract theory is really to miss the essence of what a city is, how it behaves, and how it should be understood. In this sense, I've wondered if fiction, photography, and documentary are better at communicating the city than theory. While the city is indeed composed of many things, it cannot be reduced to its individual components: "no one thing [can be] called 'the city' which we can simply reveal in all its breathtaking fullness."[91] Doreen Massey recommends "open intensity" as a way of looking at the city because it "enables us in general terms to imagine the complexity of [its] many worlds."[92] She suggests that this process-based mode of thinking about the city allows us to see complexity, to grasp the multiplicities and the disconnections, and to be aware of the "movement, fluidity, and 'mixity'"[93] that occurs within cities. I have incorporated the kind of openness Massey suggests throughout my empirical processes of coming to know le Champ as one place within a city of many worlds.

Cities form based on their geography but also contain within them a multiplicity of geographies. Port cities are different than inland cities. Western cities are different than Eastern cities. Yet, they also exist and function in spite of their geographies. That is, cities are networked

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[91] John Allen, "Introduction to Worlds Within Cities" in *Understanding Cities, City Worlds*. Eds. Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Steve Pile. New York: The Open University, 1999., 54

[92] Doreen Massey, "On Space and the City," in *Understanding Cities, City Worlds* Eds Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Steve Pile. New York: The Open University, 1999, 161

[93] Massey, "On Space and the City," 161

organisms that come to form through the interactions that take place within and across their geographic boundaries. Within the city, specific and ever changing movements of bodies and structures operate through flows, rhythms, and circuits, which create (sometimes invisible) geographies. For example, the route someone takes (to work or to a favourite place) can develop its own geography within the city.

Regardless of where they are located, cities everywhere have emerged out of very real and dynamic social, cultural, and economic conditions (material conditions). For example, the formation of the modern city, which is itself a stratum for specific kinds of spatial discourse, belongs to and reproduces a narrative about modernity, which materializes through language and design initiatives that are dominated by a rational, bureaucratic, and economically driven lexicon of design and operation.[94] The modern frame of mind[95] can be found in the architecture of our buildings, in our predominantly secular public spaces, and by the width and predominance of our roadways, which favour automobiles over bodies, bicycles, strollers, and wheelchairs. Walter explains that "a great deal of thinking remains confined to mechanistic, economic, or other abstract models, which may be

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[94] See Paul L. Knox, *Cities and Design*. London and New York: Routledge, 2011; Simon Parker *Urban Theory and the Urban Experience: Encountering the City*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004; Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*. Trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas., Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

[95] Massey suggests that the modern frame of mind involves a "particular ordering and organising of space which refused (refuses) to acknolwedge its multiplicites, its fractures and its dynamism" (2005, 65).

useful as far as they go, but they scarcely exhaust the many features of urban life, and they are remote from the human experience of cities."[96] He goes on to say that the "modern frame of mind, with slim patience for nonsense, encourages sweeping daydreams aside to stay unacknowledged as the rubbish of experience."[97] Connecting spatial articulation to language, Jill stoner writes:

> Within every building, proliferating layers of construction employ their separate syntaxes. This language has become heavy with modifiers and clauses, overwrought with the implications of competing aesthetic and functional decisions. These complex grammars are the thinly veiled relations of a competitive marketplace.[98]

The narrative of modernity is frequently characterized by what Jane Bennett describes as a "a place of death and alienation (when compared to a golden age of community and cosmological coherency) or a place of reason, freedom, and control (when compared to a dark and confused premodernity)."[99] Similarly, Henri Lefebvre writes "…the rise of rationalism accompanies the rise of capitalism (commercial and banking, then industrial), and the development of cities. This rationalism is attached either to the State or the individual."[100] The economic and rational modes of thought

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[96] Walter, 5

[97] Walter, 13

[98] Jill Stoner, *Toward a Minor Architecture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 97

[99] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, *Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001, 1

[100] Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 90

suggested by Bennett and Lefebvre, which are often described as being propelled by dreams of wealth and progress have been permeating since the Enlightenment but their manifestations in urban space, particularly in young Canadian cities such as Montréal is more specifically a product of modernism.[101]

Urban theorist Paul K. Knox suggests that "people's dreams are systematically shaped and appropriated for profit"[102] within spaces that emerge from modernity. This statement begs several questions about the affect of urban space on the psyche: Do all urban spaces appropriate our dreams? If the spaces we currently inhabit are products of modernity and, in turn, reproduce things such as commodity fetishisms, hegemonies, and capital and, if public spaces are also urban, where do we, as citizens who want to dream, create, ask questions, and think critically go to do these things? What kinds of urban places allow these things to happen? More urgently, what kinds of places might possibly promote and nurture such inherently beneficial and democratic activities?[103]

So far, I have explained the city as something that imposes particular types of movement, access, and thought on its inhabitants. However, to explain the spatiality of the city as exerting a unidirectional force tells a partial story. The other part of the story acknowledges the significance of

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[101] Shawn Micallef, "Modernism" in *Spacing Toronto*. Summer 2013

[102] Knox, *Cities and Design*, 30

[103] These questions will be investigated in more depth in chapter three; with specific reference to *le Champ des Possibles*.

citizens working in place through an array of micro (and macro) actions, which enunciate agency at the ground level. Through these micro and macro actions, citizens in the city participate and create embodied modes of resistance and articulation. Michel de Certeau's well-known essay "Walking in the City" is useful for imagining the way in which citizen-led gestures re-spatialize the city. de Certeau imagines walking itself as a gesture of enunciation: "the act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or the statements uttered."[104] A person who walks in the city, creates short cuts, changes pace, pauses at will, appropriates the topographical systems that form urban space.[105] de Certeau asserts that pedestrian pathways – our chosen routes – are representative of a type of ground level resistance in an always and already hegemonic space. An excerpt from Calvino's Marcovaldo expresses this beautifully:

> For the whole year Marcovaldo had dreamed of being able to use the streets as streets, that is, walking in the middle of them: now he could do it, and he could also cross on the red light, and jay-walk, and stop in the center of streets. But he realized that the pleasure didn't come so much from doing these unaccustomed things as from seeing a whole different

[104] de Certeau, 97

[105] *Ibid.*

> world: streets like the floors of valleys, or dry river-bed, houses like blocks of steep mountains, or the walls of a cliff.[106]

Through his analyses, de Certeau illuminates the agency of individuals who live, move through, and use urban spaces – spaces that are built from the top-down with very little input from the users of those spaces.

Henri Lefebvre also discusses the city as it relates to the citizens it inhabits. Lefebvre makes a distinction between the city (as a place and) urbanity or urbanism (as related to the study of experiences within the city).[107] He describes urbanity as the processes and movements that occur within a city - it is "an organic totality and [] a liquid and living phenomenon, which is activated in the urban dweller's experience of the city."[108] The rhythm of the city, which binds urbanity together,[109] "speaks more to our bodily and sensuous experience than it does to our rationality…In this manner the city's rhythm is the precondition for the steady and constant production of new experiential spaces."[110] He goes on to explain the relationship between rhythm, time, and the city:

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[106] Italo Calvino, *Marcovaldo or The Seasons in the city*. Trans. William Weaver. USA: Harcourt, Inc., 1963., 98

[107] See "Henri Lefebvre," in *Public Space – The familiar into the Strange*. Ed. Thomas Fjelstrup Nielsen. Trans. Dan A. Marmorstein. Copenhagen: JUUL, FROST ARCHITECTS, 2009/2011., 33

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] *Ibid.*, 34

[110] *Ibid.*, 35

> The city possesses a multi-temporality in itself, which consists of many pauses, currents and shifts that we experience in the course of what we learn in our everyday lives. Rhythm becomes relevant to the way that we understand subversive acts within the spatiality of the city…In this way, the city's rhythm constitutes an order and the coexistence of a series of different worlds and activities that are not centrally controlled or monitored top-down but are nonetheless being noticed and felt as the pulse that controls our lives, our movements and our actions in the city.[111]

Lefebvre and de Certeau's analyses of the significance of these gestures creates a conduit for important discussions about the potential implications of citizen led micro-actions that occur in cities and in places such as le Champ des Possibles, which will be discussed in chapter three. Civic gestures that utilize, contribute to, and negotiate urban space are important because they present an opportunity of something other than what the spatialized status quo has assigned. The reappropriation of concrete spaces by skateboarders, the reimagining of city space by artists and guerilla gardeners, and the reclaiming of streets by protesters who occupy arteries normally designated for automobiles exemplify this kind of spatial politics.

As entities planned within particular economic and cultural paradigms, the cities we move through are exemplars the prerogatives of progress and modernity. Planning prerogatives change

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[111] Lefebvre, 34

with time[112] and we are currently witnessing the transformation of cities in "smart" (through *wifi* networks) and "green"[113]spatial bodies. We are also witnessing the refurbishing of old, industrial buildings (or entire areas) as local industrial manufacturing has been exported.[114] It would seem that the discursive frameworks currently used to talk about "the city" will be significantly different five to ten years from now. This said, the writers I present here describe the city in a way that emphasizes its qualities as modern, rational, and progress driven. This depiction becomes relevant again later, through the exploration of Jane Bennett's frameworks, in chapter three.

[112] See Paul L. Knox, *Cities and Design*. London and New York: Routledge, 2011 and JUUL|FROST Architects, *Public Space – The Familiar into the Strange.* Trans. Dan A. Marmorstein., 2011

[113] Ontario College of Art and Design, Urban Ecologies Conference 2013: "Urban Parkscapes" panel discussion. 21 June 2013

[114] See Margaret Kohn, "Dreamworlds of Deindustrialization" *Theory and Event*, 12.4, 2009

Chapter 2. A Place of Possibilities

A sense of place is a virtual immersion that depends on lived experience and a topographical intimacy that is rare today both in ordinary life and in traditional educational fields. From the writer's viewpoint, it demands extensive visual and historical research, a great deal of walking "in the field," contact with oral tradition, and an intensive knowledge of both local multiculturalism and the broader context of multicenteredness.[115]
Lucy Lippard

…Objects that are memories of solitude and which are betrayed by the mere fact of having been forgotten…
Gaston Bachelard

At the beginning of John Steinbeck's novel, *East of Eden*, a character in the story explains that he "must depend on hearsay, on old photographs, on stories told, and on memories which are hazy and mixed with fable…"[116] Through similar circumstances, I use this chapter to share stories about *le Champ des Possibles*. Le Champ has been described as the last wild place in Mile End, if not the entire city.[117] The people, stories, objects (and the land upon which they accrue) have presented a challenge – how does one represent a site through the diachronic and synchronic complexities that are inherent to its very ontology? This chapter responds to this challenge by actively embracing an

[115] Lucy Lippard, "Being in Place," in *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multi-centered Society*. New York: The New Press, 1997, 33
[116] John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*. New York: Penguin Books, 1952, 8
[117] University of the Streets, "Density Interrupted: What do wild spaces in the city mean to us?" 5 March 2012

experimental mode of narrative description that has to come to form through poetry, drawings, memory, maps (old and new, official and unofficial) and online media.

Bryan Demchinsky and Elaine Kalman Naves suggest that all cities are built twice: "once of wood, brick, and stone and once as an act of the imagination. The imagined city is configured in words and pictures…"[118] They expand on this to say that "the interconnection of writer and place is so profound that each is identified by association with the other."[119] Many people have stories to tell about le Champ. I have assembled some of these stories and woven them through my own memories, observations, and imaginings. Through assorted voices, my hope is that a multiplicity of subjectivities can be heard.

In bringing together people's phenomenological experiences this chapter embraces an anecdotal form that folds various points in time into a narrative of place. The stories have emerged through subjective messiness and detailed observation; furthermore, they work to establish an empirical foundation for the questions I explore in chapter three. These stories might also be thought of as a map (or maps) of le Champ. Similar to maps, the stories indicate both how we see and what we see. Rebecca Solnit writes:

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[118] Bryan Demchinsky and Elaine Kalman Naves, *Storied Street, Montreal in the Literary Imagination.,* Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross, 2000., 9

[119] *Ibid.*

> A static map cannot describe change, and every place is in constant change. I map your garden. A swarm of bees arrives, or a wind blows the petals off the flowers, you plant an apricot sapling or fell a shattered spruce; the season or even just the light changes. Now it is a different garden, and the map is out of date; another map is required; and another; yet another, to show where the marriage proposal, the later marital battle, the formative skinning of a knee or sting of a bee or first memory, and the hours of time lost to sheer pleasure and reveries took place.[120]

Maps and stories can tell us what a place might be like. They tell us something about that place and, quite possibly, they also tell us about places that are similar. Zwicky writes, "both a metaphor and a geometrical demonstrations say: "Look at things like this."[121] Maps function in a similar way. Here, I present a set of stories about a place through a limited (but not limiting) set of subjective maps that have been written through visual and linguistic narrative.[122]

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[120] Rebecca Solnit. *Infinite City, A San Francisco Atlas*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012

[121] Zwicky, *Wisdom and Metaphor*, 38

[122] See Appendix II for a hand drawn map that compiles some of the stories of le Champ.

Mile End

Those who live in Mile End understand le Champ as belonging to the neighbourhood, in both spirit and geography. In 2012 and 2013, Mile End is a quaint, busy, and glossy neighbourhood. In the 1960s, it was an urban playground for the prominent writer, Mordechai Richler[123] and has come to be known as an incubator of musical and artistic talent. In 2007, local writer Marianne Ackerman called the Mile End's H2T postal code one of the five most creative post codes in Canada.[124]

Montreal's cherished thoroughfare Boulevard Saint Laurent,[125] often called "the Main," runs along what used to be the Eastern edge[126] of Mile End. The section of the Main that I describe

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[123] Many of Richler's novels are situated the Mile End neighbourhood. For example, Richler's *The Street* (1969) is set in many areas of the southern section of Mile End.

[124] Marianne Ackerman, "Where future greatness gets its break," 19 November 2007 http://www2.canada.com/components/print.aspx?id=6d7c1657-ebcb-49af-9e62-8d40d85e7161; See also, *Hill Strategies Research Inc.,* "Artists by neighbourhood in Canada," 4.2, October 2005. http://www.arts.on.ca/assetfactory.aspx?did=400

[125] "Nearly every self-respecting Montrealer knows that Boulevard St-Laurent is the "main street" dividing east and west in Montreal, but probably very few know that it has been the east-west spine of Montreal's street-numbering system since the city's boundaries were drawn up back in July 1792! At that time, the Island of Montreal was divided into three electoral districts: Montreal East, Montréal West, and the county of Montréal, consisting of the rest of the island. Later it came to mean French-speaking to the east, English-speaking to the west, and immigrants straight up the middle – tradition says that they got off the boat at the dock and just walked north." Betty Guernsey, *Montréal on Foot*. Montréal: Presses Elite Inc., 1980.,101

[126] Several people express that in "the old neighbourhood," the streets that fell East of rue St. Laurent seemed "really far away." The once *schmatta* district (garment district) was further removed from the core of the neighbourhood than those buildings are now. Fairly recently, these old

through historical anecdotes in the paragraphs to follow is much further south than the section of the Main that I crossed daily to reach le Champ (the intersection of St. Viateur and St. Laurent). Nevertheless, the story of the Main is important to the story of Mile End and thus also to le Champ.

Before it was boulevard Saint-Laurent, it was rue Saint-Lambert but when the city expanded its limits, "rue Saint-Laurent was declared the line of demarcation between the new east and west districts."[127] By the nineteenth century, boulevard Saint-Laurent had become "the main street of a burgeoning suburb known in French as Fauboug Saint-Laurent and in English as St. Lawrence Suburb. It was in this period that the street began to be called "the Main" or "la Main,"[128] which has been described as the city's "strong sinewy backbone"[129] as well as the place where "all the city [exists] in one street…"[130] It might also be understood as inextricably connected to Montréal's identity as "the official point of entry for Lower Canada"[131] – it runs right into the city's Old Port. If you follow St. Laurent north, Mile End begins around Boulevard St. Joseph, or Avenue Laurier, depending on who you ask.

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buildings have gone through a significant transformation and are now occupied by independent artists, UBISOFT, residents, companies, etc.

[127] Bryan Demchinsky and Elaine Kalman Naves, *Storied Streets, Montreal in the Literary Imagination.,* Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross, 2000., 125

[128] Demchinsky and Kalman Nave, 125

[129] Aline Gubbay, *Storied Streets, Montreal in the Literary Imagination*., 125

[130] Andrée Maillet, as quoted in Storied Streets, Montreal in the Literary Imagination., 125

[131] It was named as such in 1832. See Demchinsky and Kalman Nave, 125

Mordecai Richler wrote about the Mile End of his childhood as a predominantly immigrant neighbourhood. It was during World War Two that my friend Mendel Rubinson (now in his late 60s) moved here, after leaving a refugee camp in Italy. At that time, it was run down: "characterized by poor housing, high unemployment, under employment, low wages and inadequate education."[132] By the 1960s, there were close to 10,000 children under the age of 14 and by 1969, Mile End had been identified as a "priority" zone and a "grey area" in desperate need of revitalization. That same year, the Mile End YMCA set up an alleyway project: an afterschool program that would provide children with places to play (garbage ridden alleyways, but places nonetheless). The YMCA's creation of this program was a response to what they identified as a lack of green space in the neighbourhood.[133]

It is important to consider that before Mile End lacked "green space," it was "green space" – rather, it was farmland on the outskirts of the city. An origin story about the name Mile End references a racetrack that sat one mile from the old city's limits.[134] The city of Montréal officially founded the Village de Saint-Louis du Mile End in 1878. By 1891, the population of the village had reached 3,449 citizens, "many of them stonemasons or labourers, often unskilled hired by small,

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[132] Wilson, R.S. (YMCA Director), "Why an Alleyway Program?" Summer 1969, from The Concordia University Archives.

[133] Wilson, R.S. (YMCA Director), "Why an Alleyway Program?" Summer 1969, from The Concordia University Archives.

[134] Demchinsky and Kalman Nave, 135

locally oriented businesses."[135] It was an area of industry and manufacturing. Presently, most people identify the boundaries of Mile End to be north of either Avenue du Mont-Royal or Boulevard Saint Joseph, east of Rue St. Denis, west of Avenue du Parc and south of the train tracks that run parallel with Avenue Van Horne.[136]

Fig. 5 Map of Montréal, 1831 [137]

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[135] Pierre Anctil, *Saint-Laurent, Montréal's Main.* Montréal: Les editions du Septentrion, 2002., 35

[136] All interviewees have described the boundaries of Mile End fairly similarly but delineations become vague when discussing the Eastern edge. Some say that St. Laurent is Mile End's eastern border, which leaves le Champ in a kind of interstitial space between neighbourhoods. Others conceptualize the neighbourhood as including anything west of rue St. Denis. Most recently, I was told Mile End includes all of the streets on the West side of Parc Laurier (Personal Interview, Anonymous, May 2013). This becomes a very clear example of the way in which places are formed through stories and experience.

[137] George Haratio Smith, "Environs of Montréal," *Atlas du Paysage du Mont Royal*, Ville du Montréal, August 2012

Mile End has been described as "the mecca" and "the best neighbourhood in Montreal." Others contend it has passed its zenith. Some say that just ten years ago it was a much *cooler* place. Artists, musicians, and creative types lived here. And ten years before that, it was a place of street carnivals,[138] a place where kids could run around on roof tops, and young musicians could play their cellos on strangers' front steps.[139] Once a fertile chunk of land on the outskirts of the city, then a densely populated, poor immigrant neighbourhood, which morphed into something a bit vague or "in between."[140] And now, Mile End is a hip (perhaps, too hipster[141]) neighbourhood accessorized by bookshops, shoe shops, coffee shops, shoe-shop-coffee-shop-combination-shops, and high priced grocery stores. It has gentrified over the last ten years and, like all neighbourhoods, it is still evolving. There is no endpoint to the transformation of a neighbourhoods, they evolve, they change, and we love (and hate) them for that.

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[138] At the *Memoryspace* exhibit (October 2012), a Mile End resident's photographs provided a snapshot of public life in Mile End throughout the eighties. Neighbourhod gatherings, street carnivals on rue Hutchison and rue Waverly presented a narrative of an engaged community.

[139] In an interview on January 30, 2012, Sasha Dyck recounts his childhood in Mile End, in the 1980s

[140] This "in between" phase is the time when the artists move in – not so unlike the creativity that has existed in le Champ during its "in between" phase.

[141] This is a common sentiment about Mile End – from expats of the neighbourhood, from those living in other neighbourhoods, and, from those still living in the neighbourhood. It was a word

For some people, Mile End is hardly recognizable from what it was, ten to fifteen years ago. In December 2011, Sarah Gilbert, a resident of Mile End who blogged about the neighbouhood for three years, expresses her own love (and hate) for Mile End in her very last *Mile Endings* post:

> At noon every weekday St. Viateur St. is full of Ubisoftoids, packs of young game designers who pour out of the old Peck Building hungry for lunch, their appetites sustaining a dozen new local restaurants. Weekend mornings, the cafés are jammed with snaking lineups and fancy strollers, trikes and bikes parked three deep on the sidewalk.
>
> Just when I thought Mile End couldn't get any trendier, a recent study by Concordia and University of Toronto researchers set out to study its trendiness. For over a decade, such studies and cool-hunting articles have had the effect of changing the neighbourhood they're observing. The result: life in Mile End gets more chic.

Acknowledging the way in which artists 'culture makers' contribute to gentrification and change in urban neighbourhoods, Sarah confesses to being part of the hype:

> For three years, I wrote this blog. I started when our daughter Amelia was tiny and I spent all my time pushing her around the block in the stroller. Strolling with my baby made me

look at every fruit tree and old person in my neighbourhood with a new sense of wonder. I wanted to champion the details that fell through the cracks in media coverage of the area.

I'd lived here for 20 years and was obsessed with keeping track of what was lost every time a musty local business metamorphosed into something shinier. I wrote about Barry Shinder's 80-year-old cap factory, Norman Epelbaum's time capsule-like photo studio on Park Avenue, and the mysterious corsetières at Lingerie Rose Marie across the street. I was Mile End's E.B. White, or at least the self-appointed hyper-local bard of the disappearing family business.

Yet every ending also promises a new beginning. I wrote about those, too. Who could object to gardening in the hard-packed earth around tree squares? Or urban beekeeping? Old people may be disappearing from the area but there are more strollers than ever and the next generation of neighbours is set to stay here for a while. The community-building group Ruepublique[142] is full of committed people in their 20s. They seem to love the neighbourhood as much as I do and are working to improve the area's public street space.

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[142] Ruepublique has published a document entitled "Repense Rethinking St. Viateur Project Report Phase 1" July 2011 http://www.ruepublique.org/uploads/7/4/3/7/7437330/st-v_project_report_3aug2011_hi-res.pdf This is both interesting depiction of one of the main streets

> Then, I'm not sure when, or exactly why, but a sense of neighbourhood fatigue set in.
>
> I still walk around, but Amelia is almost four now. She pedals her own bike, and has her own opinions about what we do: ("Mom, this is not interesting to me.")
>
> I look at the aqua storefront of the brightly-lit new David's Tea chain on St. Viateur, or the shops on Bernard selling herbs and sea salt, or vintage glasses frames, and I think: "My work here is done. Everything has changed, there is nothing ungentrified left to keep track of." ("Mom, this is not interesting to me.")

With awareness that urban change is inevitable and a realization that even though her own perception and experience of Mile End has changed, she recognizes that there is still something here, for someone:

> But of course, cities and neighbourhoods are always changing. There is always something to notice.

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in Mile End and also an example of the kind of citizen engagement that often takes place in the neighbourhood.

> My chronicle of MileEndings may have run its course for now, but Amelia is alert to anything new that pops up on her radar, every string of Christmas lights, or the (fortunately brief) re-appearance of the gigantic Nokia-Virgin Mobile reindeer on St. Viateur.
>
> I imagine someday in the faraway future, a thousand trends and changes from now, she'll look back and remember how it used to be when she was a kid, the Mile End of the 2010s, back in the day.[143]

The neighbourhood that Sarah describes in this excerpt is familiar. Nonetheless, a few remnants of a different, younger, and less shiny Mile End survive. The old bagel shops are relics that continue to thrive in the present and the rival coffee shops, Café Olympico and Club Sociale are always bustling. And there are still a few cheap apartments left – if one knows the right people.

For some, the gentrification of Mile End has been a shift from an eclectic, artistic, bohemian neighbourhood to a neighbourhood where people "push their SUV size carriages and drink coffee all day."[144] Others see a vibrant, engaged community where people make eye contact, organize street

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[143] Sarah Gilbert, "Onward," *Mile Endings* 12 December, 2011. http://mileendings.blogspot.ca/2011/12/onward.html

[144] Personal Interview, Sasha, January 2013

fairs, and have a passion for where they live. One way or another, Mile End is important to the le Champ[145] - for some, it is an appendage to the neighbourhood and for others, a vital organ.[146]

For the past year, I have walked to le Champ from my apartment on rue St. Viateur Ouest. A few steps east of where I live is boulevard St. Laurent – remember "the Main" delineates between East and West. There is a noticeable change in the topography once you step onto the east side of St. Viateur, which hosts rows of massive industrial buildings.[147] Currently, St. Viateur East is described as having: "the highest concentration of artists and cultural workers in an urban area in Canada, with over 800 artists and cultural workers based there."[148] In earlier decades, many of these buildings housed Montréal's well known *schmatta* district:[149] North of Sherbrooke, in a long line

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[145] People who visit le Champ from other neighbourhoods may not affiliate it as belonging to Mile End. If one approaches le Champ from the East and does not travel further west than the large factory buildings, it really seems like a part of the Eastern edge of *le Plateau*. The outline of a neighbourhood and its contents are always connected to the bodies that move through it and to the stories that people tell about it. Memory and stories tend to loosen the rigidness of temporal and spatial boundaries.

[146] Through another metaphor le Champ was compared to an ear: "it is a place that listens, a place that collects stories, and an immensely layered, sonic space." (Unnamed person, Public conversation: University of the Streets, "Density Interrupted," March 5, 2012)

[147] In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs writes "Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them…If a city area has only new buildings, the enterprises that can exist there are automatically limited to those that can support the high costs of new construction…"(188).

[148] Anna Phelan, "Pied Carré: The Spaces Between Us." *Hour Community*. 7 July 2011 http://hour.ca/2011/07/07/pied-carre-the-spaces-between-us/

[149] B. Glen Rotchin has recently published *The Rent Collector*. It is a fictional account of the "new" *schmatta* district on Chabanel. Before it moved to Chabanel, the main *schmatta* district existed on the

stretching up St. Lawrence Boulevard to Bernard street, garment factories, some of them up to ten stories high, dominated the cityscape." [150]

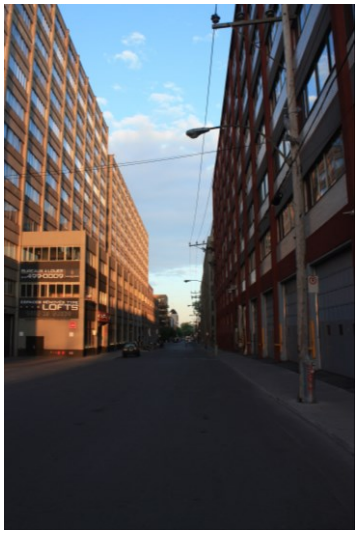

Fig. 6 Buildings on Avenue de Gaspe, looking North East & South, 2012

By now, the majority of the textile industry has moved: some of it has gone north, to the Chabanel area while most of it has travelled overseas. Continuing east, a seemingly impenetrable wall of large buildings presents itself along Avenue de Gaspe; these buildings tower ten stories high and house artists, filmmakers, restaurant kitchens, residential spaces, and more:[151] "the infamous 5455 de Gaspé building, with its prevalence of ateliers, jam spaces and festival offices, houses over 200 artists and cultural workers amongst its commercial lease tenants, making over 30 percent of the building's

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east end of St.Viateur – in the buildings that tower over the field. *Schmatta* is the Yiddish word for rag.

[150] Pierre Anctil, *Saint-Laurent, Montréal's Main.* Montréal: Les editions du Septentrion, 2002., 42

[151] Interview with Breagh MacLean, December 2012.

surface area dedicated to art or cultural endeavours.[152] A non-profit, community collective called Pied Carré has been fighting to regulate rent in these buildings, a few of which have been purchased by Toronto based company, Allied Properties.[153] Several people who rent studio space have told me that they have to move to the lower floors, where spaces have been designated specifically to keep artists in the building.[154]

Fig. 7 Entrance to le Champ from Rue St. Viateur East, 2012

There is an opening between two of the buildings that leads into a space approximately the size of two football fields, tucked in between a housing complex and Carmelite nunnery on Avenue Henri

[152] Anna Phelan, "Pied Carré: The Spaces Between Us." *Hour Community*. 7 July 2011 http://hour.ca/2011/07/07/pied-carre-the-spaces-between-us/

[153] See Allied Properties map: http://www.alliedreit.com/index.php?page=city_properties&results

[154] Interview with Breagh MacLean, December 2012

Julien (to the east); a meat packing building (to the south), and the still active CP train tracks[155] (to the north), and, of course, the old schmatta buildings along Avenue de Gaspe.

Le Champ des Possibles

Neigbours (Nuns), Desire Lines, Linden Trees, and Bee Stings

One day, while sitting at a picnic table in *le Champ,* a man struck up a conversation with me. He wanted me to understand the way "this place" operated: "It is kind of a no man's land," he explained, "we don't know what they're going to do with it; I think the sisters own it. Eventually though, they'll build condos."[156] The sisters inhabit the Carmelite nunnery across the street, on the east side of avenue Henri Julien. The sisters don't own le Champ, but there is a possibility that the sacred and private nature of their courtyard and residence has contributed to its preservation. Currently, a giant, impenetrable stonewall blocks any view into the Sisters' space. The thick wall protects the sacred space from the other spaces of the city. Michel Foucault writes, "a space that is

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[155] There is an ongoing battle between the CP police and commuters who wish to cut across the tracks in order to get from the Rosemont metro station to Mile End. Many people have been fined for cutting across the tracks. The "story of the tracks" is something that has been brought up to me in most of my interviews and many of my conversations. A group called Open/Ouvert has been working to bring attention and public dialogue to this issue for several years. Much of their work has occurred at "The Sculpture Park," further West, along Ave Van Horne but the politics of open access (and accessibility, more generally speaking) certainly resonate in le Champ. Evidence of this are the holes that are consistently cut open (and re-patched). I often photographed the overt politics of the contentious fence.

[156] Field Note: a chat with a stranger, June 2012.

other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled."[157] I often imagine the perfectly manicured gardens just across the street – other, of course, to the wild space of its massive, messy neighbour. Even though the wall is impossible to see through, it is not entirely impenetrable. In a conversation with Mile End blogger, Sarah Gilbert, one of the sisters explains the way outside objects make it inside the wall:

> "At the back of the garden we have pines, partly to protect us from the rowdy characters on the other side of the wall," Sister Marie-Denise recounts. "We find things they throw into the garden. They throw everything. Bottles, pizzas, cell phones.[158]

One way or another, the detritus of the noisy city makes its way into the silent and sacred space of the convent.

Regulations about the height of future construction project surrounding the convent protect the sisters from outsiders, onlookers, and curious members of the public (people like myself). One day, as they were rebuilding a piece of the wall, at the north end, I attempted to catch a glimpse of the gardens behind. A temporary stone structure put in place to quash the attempts of nosy

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[157] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 27

[158] Sarah Gilbert, "Neighbours Behind the Wall" *Mile Endings*. 7 January 2009. http://mileendings.blogspot.ca/2009_01_01_archive.html

neighbours prevented me from catching a glimpse. I am not the only person curious about this, of course.

Fig. 8 The Wall of the Convent, 2012

Sister Marie-Denise laughs about the way in which Internet mapping technologies have given members of the public access to this private space:

> "It's the mystery of it. It's just not knowing what's there,"
>
> "Mind you," she adds, "it's no big mystery. If you go on Google, or Mapquest, you're going to see it. There's a satellite picture.[159]

[159] Sister Marie-Denise, as quoted in Sarah Gilbert's "Neighbours Behind the Wall" in *Mile Endings* 7 January 2009. http://mileendings.blogspot.ca/2009_01_01_archive.html

This comment calls to mind a piece from Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane,* which suggests that we lack any way to qualitatively describe profane space and so we rely on the tools and concepts of geometry.[160] I cannot help but think of the "objective" cameras of Google maps trolling the city, taking photos of the entirety of Mile End as a neutral entity: no metric for anything sacred.

The convent was constructed in 1896 and "bears witness to the arrival of European religious communities that settled in central Montreal in the 19th century."[161] Although its physical and historical presence might seem like a site of permanence and stability in a neighbourhood that is undergoing constant transformation, it too has been a site of speculation for developers. In 2005, there were conversations circulating about the site being sold to a developer. In response, residents of the neighbourhood spoke up and it has since been marked as a historical site.[162] The convent and its garden sit inside and outside of the city simultaneously. Sister Marie-Denise describes the hidden garden:

> There's a row of linden trees. Then there's the maples, about 25 of them, mostly silver maples. There's a little apple orchard and two different types of plums and pears and

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[160] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane, the Nature of Religion*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers., 1957., 22

[161] Heritage Montréal "Sites emblématiques menacés – 2005 The Carmelites Convent http://www.heritagemontreal.org/en/le-couvent-des-carmelites/

[162] Heritage Montréal "Sites emblématiques menacés – 2005 The Carmelites Convent http://www.heritagemontreal.org/en/le-couvent-des-carmelites/

> cherries, not bing cherries but other ones, not quite as sweet. There used to be a chicken coop. One sister who came here in 1939 used to take care of the chickens. But in the '80s it was turned into a hermitage.[163]

Not only does the convent interrupt secular space, its edible gardens and the homesteading routines hearken a Mile End of centuries passed - an area of cultivation and harvest.

One day in early June, I wandered into a conversation with the person who had kept bees in le Champ for the previous two years. Gray told me that he also tended one of the many garden plots on site. In that moment, he was tending to his lettuce. He and his toddler son were there together and the little one was trouncing through the tall grass with a dog – not the least bit interested in the lettuce (or the story about the bees). I realized then that le Champ is more like a forest for dogs and children who are less than two feet tall.

He explained to me that bees fly in straight trajectories when they collect honey (this is bee lining,[164] of course). He knew this because he'd looked into techniques of honey foragers. One of the routes that his bees frequented was a line straight into the gardens of the convent: the bees love

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[163] Sarah Gilbert, "Neighbours behind the walls." *Mile Endings*. 7 January 2009. http://mileendings.blogspot.ca/2009_01_01_archive.html

[164] See a citizen science project called Bee Lining https://sites.google.com/site/beelining/; See also, Susan Brackney, *Planbee, Everything you Ever Wanted to Know About the Hardest-Working Creatures on the Planet*. New York: Penguin Group, 2009.,64

Linden trees (also referred to as Bee Trees).[165] The pathways are desire lines in the air that hover above the messy, crisscrossing desire lines on the ground - *these are the trails, routes, pathways, that become inscribed on the ground through use*, writes van Wyck.[166]

Fig. 9 Grass, Dirt, Rocks: Desire Lines, 2012

[165] The bees that gather the pollen from inside that garden and then fly into the apiaries in le Champ are reminders that the perceived hermetic nature of this sacred space is, again, not so well contained.

[166] Peter C. van Wyck, "The Ciphered River of the Streets" in *Wi, Journal of Mobile Media.* http://wi.mobilities.ca/the-ciphered-river-of-the-streets/ van Wyck explains that the term "desire lines" carries with it a mysterious origin story. Within a week of conversing with van Wyck about his research on the vague origin of the term, a friend of mine who had recently been visiting The Highline recommended a paper entitled "Desire Lines: Determining Pathways through the City," In this paper, Furman suggests Gaston Bachelard coined the term but he references Bachelard without providing a page number. This serendipitous cross-over was one among many during May and June of 2012.

As our conversation continued, he told me his beekeeping days were over – life just got too busy. In addition to the bee knowledge that Gray bestowed, he mentioned this place was antignostic – he was not the only person to tell me this place held its own kind of knowledge. As my lengthy conversation with Gray came to a close, I walked back toward the picnic tables and shortly after, another person approached me, walking from the North end of the field. His face was familiar: a neighbour of a friend. Cam asked if I had matches. He needed them because he was keeping bees now (near the tracks) and he needed to make smoke in order to subdue the bees. Cam was the new beekeeper, taking over the colony I had just learned about. Funny enough, the two beekeepers never crossed paths.

I then joined Cam and his friend at the apiary. Coincidentally, I knew his friends as well – Michaela, from Kamloops. I used to serve her breakfast weekly at the little breakfast café I worked at years ago. They experimented with the apiary, which is nerve racking to witness. Eventually, my Kamloops friend was stung. I iced her bee sting with my icy hands. This day, full of happenstance, serendipitous cross-over, and stories from everywhere reminded me once again of the peculiar way in which le Champ functions.

Pathways, Snow Caves, Glitter, Evergreens, Campfire Coffee (1 BUCK), Bonfires, & Birthdays

In the winter, the pathways that cut through the snow indicate the desire to get from one place to another as quickly as possible. These lines construct a topography that is unlike the meandering, overgrown, sometimes hidden pathways of the summer and fall months. In the winter, people seem not to stray too far or stay too long. There is a pathway on the north end of le Champ that cuts from the northeast to the southwest. There is another pathway on the south end that cuts directly east west. The pathway on the north end is likely used by the Rosemont metro passengers, while the pathway on the south end is used by the Laurier passengers. However, by the middle of winter, a massive snow pile cuts off the trail on the south end In line with the transitory nature of so many other things in le Champ, this snow arrives by truck, from other places in the city. I was told that there are secret ice cave parties in the centre of this mound. Apparently, someone digs into the mound and hollows out the centre. He then spends a few weeks perfecting and securing the cave and then, voila, ice cave parties convene.[167] I do not have any personal experience of these supposed ice parties but I did photograph a pink balloon on top of the mound once.

[167] Field Note: Chat with Darin Barney, Differential Mobilities conference, May 2013.

Fig. 10 Snow Mound, Pink Balloon, and Possible Party Site, 2013

While the ice cave parties could be easily missed by an unassuming passerby, *la forêt des Possibles* embodied a much more public architecture. In January and February 2013, a citizen group called RuePublique collected Christmas trees and brought them to le Champ:

After Christmas, give your Christmas tree a second life. RuePublique needs you and your trees for our *Forêt des Possibles* (in the Champ des Possibles).Create the *Forêt des Possibles* with us: a collective public space project for everyone.

Your trees will create a mini forest in the Mile End. The forest will be animated at weekends, with events for children, families, everyone!

The project, a winter public space in the Plateau, will take place between 6th January and the end of February.

Fig. 11 Forêt des Possibles, 2013[168]

The stand of coniferous trees lining one of the main pathways in le Champ emulated a strange displaced coniferous forest in the middle of a strange, displaced meadow. Unfortunately, the trees often fell victim to the winds that rip through le Champ - Christmas tree carnage. Eventually, the trees would be turned upright again – apparently, the caretakers of le Champ work all year long. Like many of the other installations and interventions that take place in the field, there was a feeling of emptiness (even longing)[169] when the trees were eventually taken away.

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[168] "Forêt des Possibles: Redonnez vie à l'hiver" *RuePublique* http://www.ruepublique.org/forecirct-des-possibles.html

[169] This is an emotion that I felt several times during my regular site visits. A new installation would pique curiosity and joy and the absence of it would evoke a sense of loss. In both situations, the element of surprise (I never knew when something new would appear or disappear) quite possibly

As evidenced by the Christmas tree carnage, the strong winds are a force to be reckoned with. Spending time in le Champ during the winter months becomes something to endure rather than enjoy. Not surprisingly, the cold months mean fewer gatherings.

Fig 12. Christmas Tree Carnage, 2013

Unless, of course, there is bonfire. Standing around a fire, drinking and chatting are common activities for those who have grown up rurally. But fires are not allowed in the city – certainly not in

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contributed to this sense of joy/loss. In *Placeways*, E.V. Walter reminds us that the "expressive energy of a place can match the force of rhetoric as well as the power of romantic love." This is philochoria – the love of place (146).

most parks.[170] Not surprisingly, le Champ defies this and is known, perhaps most commonly, for its nighttime bonfire parties. "Hipster Parties," I've been told. These used to happen on the North end of the field, near the tracks, where people could remain slightly hidden: "that was sort of a gathering area because it was sheltered from anything and…more than anything, sheltered from the police going by. I can't imagine that having a fire in the middle of the city is legal.[171] On an almost weekly basis, people gather and burn things – some say that anything will become food for the fire: "we'd like to have benches back there, we'd like to have different things that make it more livable but anything that [is made of] wood, gets taken and burned[172] and anything that's not heavy enough will get carried away or destroyed."[173]

A bonfire can also mean more than something to do on a weekend night. On New Year's Eve, a fire can signify a new beginning.[174] It can mean an opportunity to part with an object (or feeling) of consternation:

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[170] A recent article in the Montreal Gazette suggests that what expect from a park will change over the next decade. See Monique Beaudin, "Urban Parks Reinvented" 19 July, 2013. http://www.montrealgazette.com/health/Urban+parks+reinvented/8684719/story.html

[171] Personal Interview, Anonymous, November 2012

[172] My own experience in *le Champ* in 2012 suggests differently. It seemed that structures that clearly served a purpose (*i.e.* a picnic table) were left alone. However, in the spring of 2013, only one picnic table remained on site but by the summer, another had appeared.

[173] Personal Interview, Sara Finley, February 2012.

[174] Personal Interview, Sergeo Kirby, July 2012

> So, for a couple years running […] we'd have a gathering of friends and we'd light a fire in the snow and we'd all bring our little object that may not have been appropriate to enflame but we'd bring it to the [le Champ], drink some drinks, talk, gather, and have a sort of social event, and then we'd throw our item in the fire and that would launch us into the New Year. It's definitely an important space: to be able to have a fire where you're not allowed to have a fire. It is kind of illegal, illicit, and familiar at the same time.[175]

A sacred yet illicit fire burning in an unregulated industrial lot grown feral (a lot that neighbours a sacred convent that contains a pristine secret garden) provides a wonderful image of the way in which spatialities in cities crisscross and contradict one another.

There are also daytime fires. Campfires in the morning include coffee, Baileys, Nesquik, and warm winter jackets. I attended one of these gatherings in February but earlier, in the autumn, I had come across a hand painted sign that said:

CAMPFIRE COFFEE, ~~1 BUCK~~.
free

[175] Personal Interview, Sergeo Kirby, July 2012

Fig 13. Campfire Coffee, Tim Horton's Garbage, 2012

The sign was lying in the grass, looking forlorn. What I learned later was that a group of early morning gatherers had been transporting coffee making utensils from their workspaces on Avenue de Gaspe and were "selling" coffee to people cutting through the field on their way to work. In early December, I caught word one of these campfire gatherings was happening. The most incredible thing about being part of these ephemeral gatherings is that they are both public and private at exactly the same time. If you didn't know about them or didn't stumble upon them by coincidence, you would never know they happened. Well, unless you paid attention to the little pieces of evidence

and traces of occupation. Even then, you might only be able to make up a story about what might have happened there.

I've left things there too. A gold pom-pom hanging from a poplar branch: a simple and discrete object. It was the only piece of evidence marking a thirtieth birthday brunch for a friend. There were wild flowers in vases, serviettes like les carrés rouges, and, a brunch we had wheeled in from my apartment. We led her there blind folded and she made her way through the long grass and into the shade giving trees. It was a nice place to turn thirty, she said. A surprise birthday in a place she had only ever heard stories about.

Fig 14. Forks & les Carrés Rouges, 2012

Other birthdays have happened there too, of course. There was another blind folded girl. She was told to wear her prettiest party dress and be ready by sunset. And then she was led, blind folded and running, east along St. Viateur and into le Champ. There, she encountered a field full of

friends amidst transparent and iridescent balloons hanging from the poplars. The balloons were full of glitter and white feathers. Bubbly drinks were shared. Upon her entrance into the field, everyone lit the sparklers and used the sharp flames to pop the balloons. Glitter and feathers fell from the poplars. And then the group sat together, covered in party décor. Eventually, their friend wandered through, under the trees, playing Happy Birthday on his guitar. This summer, this same girl will crochet a wedding dress for someone. Maybe they'll marry in the meadow?

Another story tells me that on a separate, but perhaps similar, occasion, the East/West path was adorned with glitter. Apparently, the glitter caught the sun in the morning and, for a few days, the morning walk was particularly magical. Eventually though, that glitter was gone too. And just the dirt path remained.

Labyrinths, Poplars, Banjoes, and Harvest Parties.

On an evening in June, I went to le Champ to be alone. Instead, I encountered a sunset picnic that reminded me of a circus – there were trumpets, someone was wearing suspenders, and the low evening light cast long shadows. There was a banjo. There, I met someone named Faith. She is from Edmonton and told me that she likes desert landscapes and enormous, open skies (so do I). She shared several stories about le Champ and walked me over to the remnants of an art piece that she'd installed in April, when the grass was much shorter. It was a labyrinth made of garbage. Only a

few months earlier, I had encountered this structure - in the early phase of its short life. By the time Faith and I met, the spiral had almost disappeared amidst the lush, early summer vegetation.

Fig. 15 Garbage Spiral

She also told me a story about the poplars – that they are a "uni-organism" and that they can clone themselves. That's what poplars do, she said.

> *Consider that her leaves are hearts, sharpened and inverted into spades. Who else has strength to tremble, tremble and be wholly trepid, to be soft so she can listen hard, and shimmer, elegant and humble, in the merest wisp of wind ?*[176]

[176] Don McKay, "Poplar" in *Field Marks, The Poetry of Don McKay*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006., 32

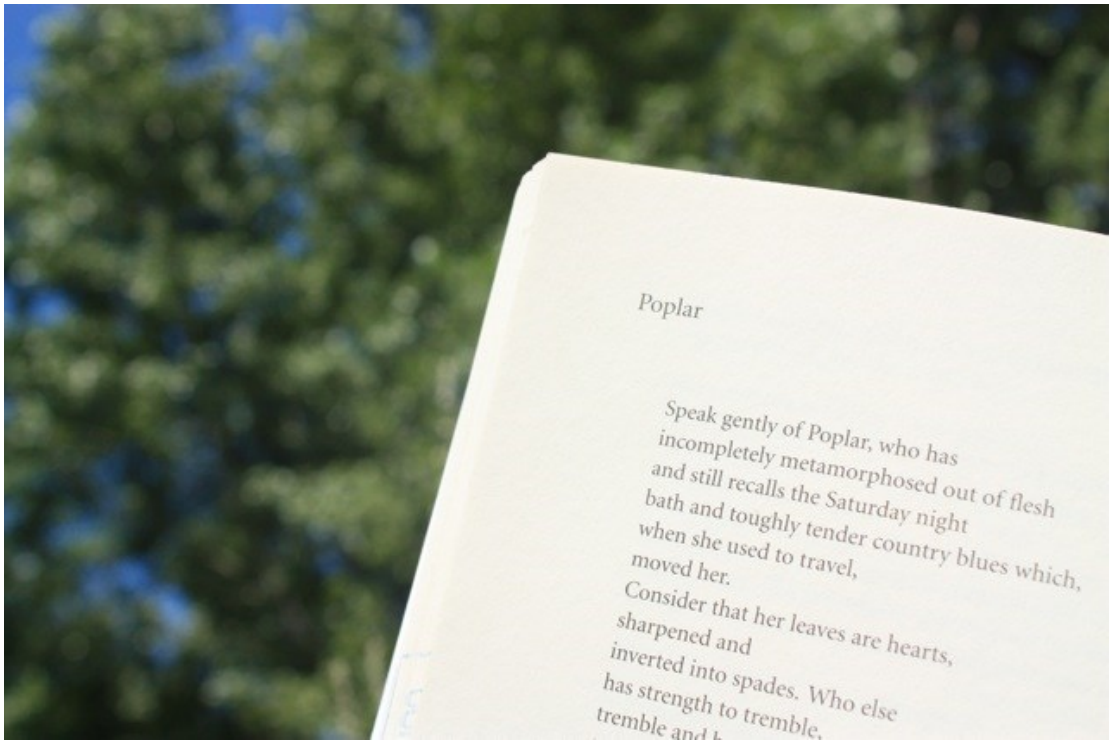

Fig. 16 Poem & Poplar 2012

She explained that, in fact, all of the trees in the meadow were probably the same tree. A few months later, during a garden vernissage at Concordia University's Loyola campus, I asked biologist, Dr. Emma Despland, who happens to specialize in poplar trees, if the tree can function like a uni-organism. It was a story that seemed mythical the first time it was told, but Emma confirmed that it was possible. Poplars do clone themselves. The best way to see if all of the trees in one space are clones (and not siblings) is to watch the way the change with the seasons. If their change is simultaneous, they are probably clones. As autumn set in, I watched the trees. I think they are siblings. Spring suggested a similar story.

As mentioned, the night that I met Faith, she was with a group of people. A guy playing a banjo was among the group. I learned later that his name is Mike. I met him on another occasion and he told me that he wanted to host a harvest party in mid September. He wanted all of the people who love le Champ to meet one another. Unfortunately, I knew that I would be away when it happened. The harvest party came to surface later, through a story sent to me via email:

> Recently I was there with a friend and we were going to check out the BBQ to see if any repairs were needed and to set up for a BBQ that evening when we ran into a fellow, banjo in hand, sitting at one of the picnic tables. As we worked he came over to introduce himself and was excited to talk to some more of the locals that had contributed to the space – we don't always get to meet considering there is not set schedule there. As we continued to work he started playing his banjo and singing (the guy was amazing). After we finished, he said that there was going to be a harvest party that evening for the gardeners of the space and he hoped we could come back, to which we replied that we were planning on having a BBQ so please bring along things to cook up. That night, with the sound of a banjo and guitar player (a interesting older fellow from London) playing in the back ground, we ate and sat around the fire meeting people that we had seen working in the space in the past but did not meet formally, and shared stories about the field and life generally....that's the thing

> about this space, it really has touched most people that have contributed in one way or another, and most seem to have an instant connection to the others that love it as well. I'm pretty thankful for the space and am happy to constantly give back and care for it because there are not too many places like it in the middle of the city.[177]

I encountered Banjo Mike (indirectly) one last time in the Spring of 2013. There were tiny signs placed in the gardens, put in place just a week or two before the official rezoning of the space. These announced a call for action. There was an urgency in the secretive, tactical placement of the signs: the gardeners would "need to organize" because "they" were trying to convert le Champ into a park.

Fig 16. Tiny sign with a political message, 2013

[177] Anonymous, Email Correspondence, September 21, 2012

In an ironic way, the signs that had been stuck within the now overgrown and feral garden beds speak to the messiness of any level of politics and also to the messy beauty of grassroots politics, in particular: *different wholes occupy the same space.*[178]

Fig. 17 Gardens, 2012 & 2013

[178] Jan Zwicky, 116

Picnic Tables, Bricks, Buildings, a (Sacred) Apple Tree, and a Pile of Apples

At some point, a large picnic table appeared in le Champ. And then another. Someone told me that Jacques[179] made the tables. These handcrafted objects changed the feeling of *le Champ* significantly. For the most part the tables never strayed far from the poplars and at almost any point in the day they were occupied. In the evenings, picnickers, often with elaborate spreads, set up to enjoy their dinner under the trees. During the day, people read, mark essays, chat, play chess, play cards, and enjoy drinks. In the summer, le Champ is a degree or two cooler than the rest of the concrete city; as such, it becomes a desirable place for those without air conditioning. In the late summer of 2012, a beautifully crafted brick fire pit appeared. This further marked the area under the poplars, as a gathering place within le Champ. The person who built the fire pit, I'll call him B,[180] explained why he built it:

> I knew people were building fires there and I [thought] we could have something safe.[181]
>
> Like maybe we could not burn down the field […] I grew up living in and around the woods

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[179] Throughout all of my empirical work, the people I have interviewed and chatted with have consistently brought up Jacques. To this date, I have never encountered him in person. Apparently, he is the maker of the "nice garden bed" and the picnic tables.

[180] B asked to remain anonymous. He was the first person to discuss the layer of messy politics between the "makers" on site and Les Amis du Champ. He explained his request for anonymity was related to these politics.

[181] In a different, also anonymous, interview, the fireplace was criticized as being unsafe; in particular, in its current location directly under the polar trees. The fire pit described above had been taken out by the Summer of 2013 but another, less carefully constructed pit replaced it shortly after.

> and building cabins and stuff like that. I was the type of kid that always wanted to do that type of thing and it just carried on through my adulthood, so it just felt kind of normal and I was lucky enough to have a friend that was ambitious enough to come and help me out.[182]

The fireplace keeps nice company with the picnic tables already there. Along with the garden beds, these structures added a feeling of domesticity in a feral place. B explained further:

> The fireplace was difficult to build, not because [of the structure itself] but because I don't have a vehicle and I wasn't going to pay for a cab to go get bags of concrete. So we literally took this old laundry cart that I have and wheeled it all the way to the home depot – which is a distance away and put two bags of concrete in it and rolled it all the way back and then realized we didn't have enough concrete and then would have to roll it all the way back."[183]

Like the concrete, the bricks have a story too. B explained that all of the bricks were 'locally sourced' – remnants from a building on the northwest end that had been torn down a few years earlier. The bricks, if not magically, then certainly mysteriously, replenished themselves:

> And, after we used all of the bricks…strangely enough, one week later, we noticed another pile of bricks in the same space. Well, I mean, people could dump those bricks anywhere. [But they were] in the exact same spot. So, I mean, it could have been just by chance…but it

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[182] Personal Interview, Anonymous, November 25, 2012.

[183] *Ibid.*

> was the same amount of bricks and it wasn't like it was just haphazard. [They were] was in a perfect little pile.[184]

The story of how these bricks continued to appear remains on of the secrets of le Champ. The way in which B described his motivation to make things and to give back to the le Champ is a sentiment that others have expressed. E.V. Walter calls this expressive. He writes, "surfaces of a city are covered with marks, stains, images, symbols, and messages"[185] and goes on to explain that "urban sensibility is molded within the framework that sorts out notices, warnings, orders, suggestions, requests, as well as mementos, from a wide range of official, commercial, communal, political, popular, and personal sources."[186] The feral topography of le Champ has undeniably elicited a feeling of freedom that is now written in its landscape through the installations, gardens, gatherings, and occupations that have left material residue in the grass and soil.

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[184] Personal Interview, Anonymous, November 25, 2012

[185] E.V. Walter, 152

[186] *Ibid.*

Fig. 18 Installation, 2012

Some of these installations are ephemeral and they disappear (with or without a trace). The installation in Fig. 18 showed up in mid November, just when I was thinking the cold weather would mean an end to surprise encounters in le Champ. When the wind blew, this particular installation reminded me of a sea creature, moving through the water. It was created to emulate a forest and, indeed, you could disappear inside of it. After a few weeks, this installation disappeared. It left an empty space that I had never noticed. Unlike this ephemeral, paper installation, a column apple tree is one of the more permanent interventions in le Champ. Another person I interviewed explained the way in which he and his family used le Champ for a sacred planting ceremony:

> [At] some point, we decided that we wanted to get a tree to christen my daughter and we decided to do it on her second birthday. At first I was thinking of all of the possible parks that we could plant it. We thought of the Mt. Royal but it is illegal to plant a tree in a park.

> […] It was kind of an odd concept to image being arrested for planting a tree. Usually you get arrested for doing the opposite but it's illegal to do anything – plant or un-plant. I spoke to my neighbour and she mentioned the Champ des Possibles and we decided that it was the perfect idea. It's in our neighbourhood and no one was going to mind.[187] We went to Jean Talon market and found a wonderful little column apple tree and me, my partner, our daughter, and the godparents (the philosophical father and political father and mother), all went with the apple tree and the placenta that was frozen and now thawing. And we dug a hole in the far corner, which was a bit challenging because the soil is not the greatest. [We put] the placenta in and then put the tree on top, covered it all up, and watered it for three days shortly after and then weekly, after that. And now there is a wonderful little column apple tree. There is probably no fruit on it just yet but I think that by next year, we are looking at fruit.[188]

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[187] Others have expressed this sentiment as well: "le Champ des Possibles" is a name that explains what you can do in there. It's a very explicit name, there's no hidden sense to it. If you want to do something, go and do it there […] somebody said that it's practically the only place left in Montréal, at least in central Montréal, where you can do anything you want without risking getting a fine" (Personal Interview, Nick & Marie-Eve, November 2012).

[188] Personal Interview, Sergeo, July 2012

He continued, expressing a lovely insight from his accumulated experiences in le Champ, which emerged from planting the apple tree and also from holding an illicit and sacred bonfire on New Year's Eve:[189]

> [For us] it was a kind of a ritualization - partly to show something to my daughter but also, partly as a way of ritualizing her birth, her name, and a way of creating community […] It's about community spaces and ritualizing community space and for us, of course, fire, and planting are both regeneration and revitalization so they are important.[190]

The description of the sacred nature of le Champ, as a break from the secular space of the city, was the first time I had thought of le Champ as sacred. Thoreau writes, "I enter a swamp as a sacred place, a *sanctum sanctorum*. There is the strength, the marrow, of Nature."[191] Following this conversation, I noticed that in one form or another the idea of "the sacred" appeared in several conversations. Sometimes it was overtly stated, other times, it surfaced, ever so slightly through language and description. Words such as "magic," "indescribable," and "unexplainable" indicate to

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[189] Thoreau writes a passage that connects the apple tree to a New Year's Eve ceremony. A tradition, called "apple-howling" was "practiced in various counties of England on New Year's Eve. A troop of boys visited the different orchards, and, encircling the apple trees, repeated the following words: 'Stand fast, root! bear well, top! Pray God send us a good howling crop: Every twig, apples big; Every bough, apples enow!" (Thoreau, "Wild Apples" in *Works of Henry David Thoreau*, 592).

[190] Personal Interview, Sergeo, July 2012

[191] Thoreau, "Walking," in *Works of Henry David Thoreau*. Ed. Lily Owens. New York: Avenel Books, Crown Publishers, Inc (1906), 1981., 394

me that one of the primary roles of le Champ is that it breaks from what Mircea Eliade calls the "homogenized space" of the profane, modern, urban landscape. Le champ thus offers people an experience of enchantment in a supposedly disenchanted world.[192]

I have since gone looking for this sacred apple tree on several occasions. One late autumn day, while in search of the tree, I found apples. The past year's secrets, in the form of objects, were becoming visible amidst the dying grass and thinning brush. The origin of these apples remains a mystery but they were the perfect accessories for a field already adorned in autumn.

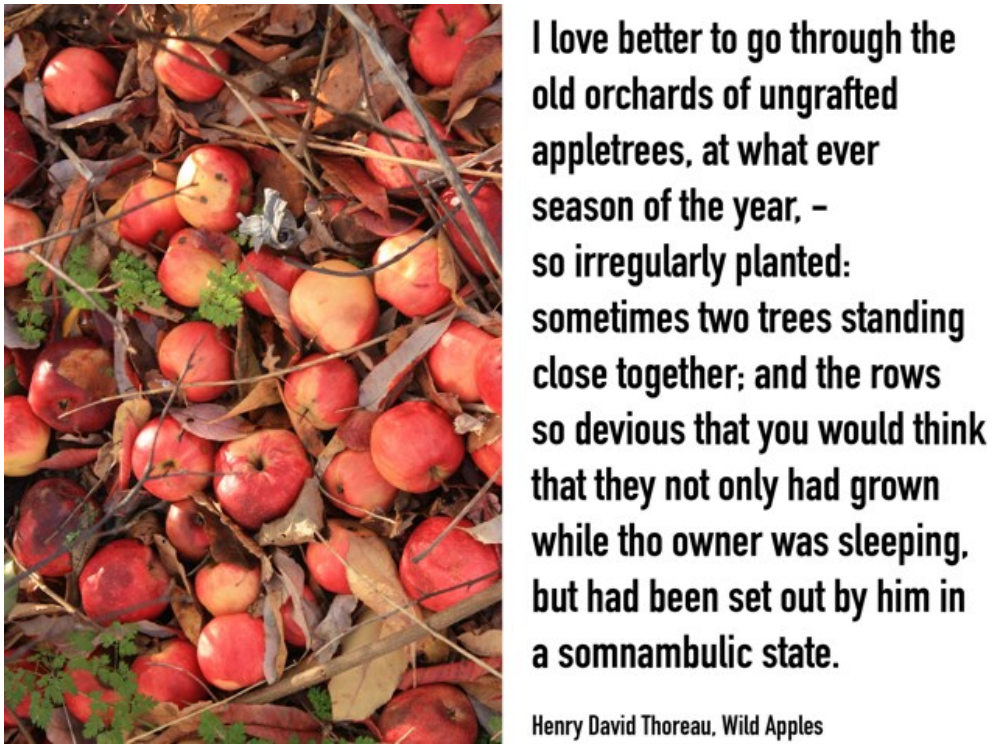

Fig. 19 Apples, 2012

[192] In chapter three, I take this discussion up in further detail through the work of Jane Bennett.

Trashy Magazines, Cigarettes, & Dogs

In September 2012, I put up posters in le Champ hoping to solicit stories from people who spend time there. One day, while putting up a poster, I found myself engaged in a conversation with a couple, both of whom were in their late forties or early fifties. They were there with their dog, who was running free - as dogs in this space do.[193] In a conversation that lasted about twenty minutes, they managed to say most of what is important about this place.

As I was pinning my sign to the picnic table, which happened to be covered in gossip and fashion magazines, the woman approached me:

"Oh, that's you," she said. "What kind of stories are you looking for and what are you going to do with them?"

"I am going to work them into my thesis," I said. "Somehow. I'm not sure how yet."

"Well, do you want to know what we do here? We smoke cigarettes and read trashy magazines," she said, cigarette in hand.

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[193] On a separate occasion, another interviewee, also a dog owner, explained to me that *le Champ* functions well as a dog park for people who detest the weird social expectations of formal dog parks. She described the people at le Champ as 'more laid back.'

Her husband chimed in: "Well, we also walk the dog."

She continued: "Because you can't do most things in regular parks. You'll get a ticket for everything. My son got a ticket for sitting on the bench. One hundred and twenty five dollars! Well, he's black. He probably got a ticket for that, actually. In regular parks, you can't do anything, and you can't smoke, and you have to go to certain places at certain times, and you can't let your dog off the leash. This is a wild space – that's why people like it. There aren't places like this anywhere else. "

I nodded.

"And this picnic table?" (one had a piece broken off that looked as if it had been recently repaired) "It didn't grow a new bench. First, someone hauled it in here. And then, someone took the time to repair it. People use this space," she explained "Just look at the gardens – even if we just used this space for gardening. No wait, that would change things too. Then there would be a fence. The fence would change all of the rules, all over again."[194]

[194] Another interviewee agreed with this. If the gardens continue to spread throughout le Champ, they'll change its topography and function. (Personal Interview, Sara Finley, February 2013)

Her husband eventually chimed in again. He explained why the site was important to working people: "If they put that extension in, the one they proposed a few years back, we would have to walk an extra 25 minutes, just to get to work. And the people who pass through (look at all of these people!), they would have to find another route and it would take them much longer to get to work. And the tracks, for example, every time they patch up that fence it gets cut open again. They don't talk to the people who use it."

She interrupted him (again): "But those guys, in their $400,000 condos, they probably don't like it here. We've been here long and we say go back to your other gentrified neighbourhoods."[195]

Eventually, this conversation came to an end. They wished me well and mentioned that my stories should go to the right people. The "right people" are those who will actually listen, they said. They reminded me that those with power don't seem to listen. Everyday use and the people who use[196]

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[195] "They," whoever they are, are not going elsewhere, they are moving even closer to *le Champ*. The property that is currently occupied by *les Viandes St.Laurent* has been sold and a condominium complex will move in, as the newest and closest neighbour to *le Champ des Possibles* (Personal Interview, Sarah Finley, February 2013).

[196] Arguably, accessible public spaces are important for everyone but, in particular to those who do not have access to recreation or leisure spaces that have fees attached to them. See a recently published "manual" on the importance of public space and the commons: "How to design our world for Happiness, The commons guide to placemaking, public space, and enjoying a convivial life." http://onthecommons.org/sites/default/files/how-to-design-our-world.pdf

the space: these are what are important about this place. The pathways (desire lines), the garden structures, the picnic tables, and the various art installations and/or interventions that continue to crop up and, even if ephemerally, mark le Champ as a place that people care for because, in one way or another, it cares for them.

Sprouts, Gardens, Grow-Ops, & Grassroots Politics

If a garden is a way of putting down roots, it is also a means of occupation: people tend to create gardens when and where they intend to stay. It is a way of making a place out of space, a way of becoming attached…
Erin Despard[197]

One spring weekend, we turned the kitchen cabinet scrap-heap into raised-bed planters. A few weeks later, strangers started adding to it. Someone built some picnic tables. Someone else added a brick barbeque. Plastic garden furniture appeared. None of us knew each other, and new things just turned up, almost overnight, adding to the magic of the space – benches made of cabinet drawers painted by 8 year-olds, a claw-foot bathtub for bonfires. One day I went to tend to my tomato plants and passed two men in their late 20's, hunched over a tree stump playing a game of chess. Sitting under a tree, a woman practiced Bach on her cello.
Farid Rener, Interviewee[198]

The origin story of the edible gardens in le Champ is not so different than the origin story of the handmade brick fireplace told a few pages earlier. Farid and I met in le Champ in late May,

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[197] Erin Despard, "Mobile Gardens," in *PUBLIC 41*., Public Access: Toronto, 2010., 149
[198] Farid Rener, "Servez-Vous: A Mile End Wasteland Turned City-Park" *Silo Magazine* 20 May 2013 http://silomontreal.com/2013/05/20/servez-vous/

shortly after I found a write up he had posted online.[199] Farid was the first to construct a garden bed in le Champ. He explained that he visited one day in 2012 with the intention of scoping out the site and deciding where the garden beds should go. Upon arrival, he noticed an abandoned dresser sitting near the entrance, along de Gaspe. As he approached the dresser, he also noticed two large plastic garbage bags sitting on the ground – they were full of soil. The dresser provided the perfect structure for a garden bed and the soil - well, it seemed like a gift.

Fig. 20 Garden bed, made of a found dresser, 2012

Similar to the magically replenishing bricks that B kept finding, Farid thought this pile of gardening objects too good to be true. Later that summer, a stranger approached Farid in le Champ. The stranger grabbed a pinch of soil and put it in his mouth. He then asked him where he had found the

[199] See Farid Rener, "Servez-Vous: A Mile End Wasteland Turned City-Park," in *Silo-Montreal* 20 May 2013, http://silomontreal.com/features/servez-vous/

soil. Farid explained his serendipitous encounter with the soil early in the spring. The stranger smiled and told him it was refuse from the various marijuana grow-ops along Avenue de Gaspe. The anonymity of le Champ also provides an anonymous site for illicit refuse.

In one respect, the gardens, which have only shown up in the last couple of years and are the most formally cultivated sections of le Champ, interrupt the wildness that has been described as characteristic of the space. Alongside the picnic tables, the gardens are evidence that people spend time in le Champ – they also signify that it is a place, not merely a transit route, or abandoned site. They communicate through a similar lexicon as Emily Rose Michaud's Roerich land art installation did because they mark occupation. In Emily's first blog post about le Champ, which appears on her *Terraculture* blog in December 2007, she explains the installation (the garden):

> The Roerich Garden is a temporary community-collaborative earthwork. It was created in November 2007 to oppose the 9M$ development plans in the Mile End. The arrondissement du Plateau-Mont-Royal plans involve extending St-Viateur further east towards Henri-Julien, expropriating and demolishing several resident homes along De Gaspé, as well as destroying most of the field and garden. Plans are said to begin as of 2009-

> 2010. The garden project is made as an homage to the field as well as to draw attention to its cultural importance.[200]

The materiality and cultivated nature of the gardens denote care and attention – the making and marking of place or, what E.V. Walter, might describe as a strategic kind of topistics.[201] Lucy Lippard articulates gardens as "mediators between nature and culture, [they are] communal places that encourage solitude and self reliance."[202] In line with the wild nature of the space, the edible gardens have been constructed in an ad hoc, anarchic, and guerilla fashion. Most of the gardeners do not know one another and there is no formal organizing body behind the various edible planter

Fig 21. Micro gardens (politics)

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[200] Emily Rose Michaud, "The Roerich Garden Project," *Terraculture,* 3 December 2007 http://pousses.blogspot.ca

[201] Walter, 155

[202] Lippard, 253

boxes or miniature greenhouses.[203] Water, soil,[204] and supplies have been trucked in by bike and those willing to travel to the garden on a consistent basis maintain the gardens.

By the summer of 2013, several of the gardens have grown rogue. The effort required to maintain the gardens may have been too much for some of the initial gardeners; or, perhaps, the transitory nature of this city has taken them to other places? Weeds, as we call them, have taken over. Interestingly, many of the vegetables have successfully reseeded themselves. Tomatoes, mint, marigolds, nasturtium, and garlic have returned for a second season but now, they fight for survival amidst clover, golden rod, milkweed, and various varieties of grass. The plants are only slightly contained by the decrepit structures that used to hold them in. Last year's garden remains are a fascinating example of how quickly plants find their way through, over, and into every concrete, wood, or metal, structure we set into place. There are new gardens as well, further west in the field. They are more discrete than last summer's gardens and I am less familiar with their cycle of growth. Hidden away, on the edge of the field they seem slightly more subversive. This feeling may have to do with the changing times or it may have to do with my own attention to them – they are a bit unfamiliar to me.

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[203] Personal Interview, Farid Rener, May 2013

The gardens have brought forth an interesting political layer, related to the larger and, perhaps, more public politics of le Champ. On May 22, 2013 le Champ was officially rezoned as a green space. However, the northern and northwestern corridors of the space have not been rezoned – they remain industrial and potentially vulnerable to development.[205] The Plateau-Mile End borough's mayor Luc Ferrandez has suggested to *Les Amis* that the current garden structures be moved to these corridors in order to mark occupation and urge a renegotiation of those particular parcels of land.[206] The contentious but potentially strategic nature of gardens articulates a weedy and wild nature that is inherent to both political organization and communication.

[205] Personal Interview, Anonymous, May 2013

[206] Personal Interview, Anonymous, May 2013

Chapter 3. A Politics of Enchantment

Around Mr. Palomar's house there is a lawn. This is not a place where a lawn should exist naturally: so the lawn is an artificial object, composed from natural objects, namely grasses. The lawn's purpose is to represent nature, and this representation occurs as the substitution, for the nature proper to the area, of a nature in itself natural but artificial for this area.
Italo Calvino, Mr. Palomar

Rodents in our national parks are protected; rats in our cities are exterminated.
Jill Stoner

Fig. 22 Dead Squirrel, Dead Leaves, Grass

So far, this project has situated le Champ in a relevant discursive framework and shared its particular phenomenological details. These details were conveyed through images, maps, and short stories: they provided a subjective mapping of place. While such depictions are not explanatory in themselves, they paint a picture of what kind of a place le Champ is and they do so through a mode that allows human subjects to speak through the kind of multiplicity and heterogeneity

recommended by practitioners of place such as Massey, Lippard, Walter, and Gruenewald. In this final chapter, I take subject-centered place studies a step further to suggest that le Champ is a place with agentic capacities. To do so, I borrow from the work of Jane Bennett. The primary task of this chapter is to provide a discussion of le Champ through Bennett's conception of Wild.[207] Woven into this discussion are her notions of enchantment and vibrancy, which I will explain shortly. Even though le Champ is often referred to as 'the field', 'the tracks', or 'the meadow'[1] – names that fit its physical topology, location, or qualities – I have not called it a field, a meadow, or categorized it as a regular urban space, such as a park. Instead, and as mentioned in the introduction, I have used a shortened version of its 'proper name' in order to avoid categorizing it. By theorizing le Champ through Bennett's conception of Wild, I experiment with a possible categorization of place that speaks to its agentic capacities and about the affect(s) those capacities have on people. This is different than the approaches presented in chapters one and two because it presents "the object" (the place) as agentic, rather than assigning agency solely to "the subjects" (the people). This approach to place moves, ever so slightly, away from the humanist tradition of place-based studies.

Plan for the Chapter

I first provide an exegesis of Jane Bennett's work. This primarily serves the purpose of fleshing out the overarching project in which Bennett's concepts of Wild, enchantment, and vibrant

[207] The capitalization of Wild references Bennett's depiction of a Thoreauian Wild.

are situated. I then go on to discuss some of the material and topographic significations that classify le Champ as wild (in the common way that we understand this term), drawing from Anna Jorgensen and David Gissen. Through these descriptions, I begin to conceptualize a definition for Wild in an urban setting. Following this, I discuss the way in which the Wildness of le Champ gives way to its agentic force: its capacity to enchant. To do so, I bring in a discussion of Bennett's notion of enchantment and also bring forward the work of other writers who talk about places similar to le Champ – places that, in their scruffiness, vagueness, Wildness, or indeterminancy, have enchanted people and provoked political engagement. Finally, I speak to a "politics of enchantment." I begin here with an introduction to Jane Bennett's project.

Jane Bennett: Enchantment to Vibrancy

In chapter one, I presented literature about place as alive and imbued with stories. For the most part, the liveliness presented by practioners of place is expressed as dependent on the human subjects who spend time in and/or make place. For example, E.V. Walter writes:

> A place has no feelings apart from human experience there. But a place is a location of experience. It evokes and organizes memories, feelings, sentiments, meanings, and the work of imagination. The feelings of a place are indeed the mental projections of individuals, but

> they come from collective experience and they do not happen anywhere else. They belong to the place.[208]

Place-based literature emphasizes the way in which place is known and constructed through human subjects: through stories, through maps, through photographs, etc. I embraced this epistemic approach to place in chapter two through the telling of various subjective encounters with le Champ. This framed it as a heterogeneous place, containing "a multiplicity of trajectories."[209] While these approaches are undeniably important to our epistemologies of place, I also see Bennett's work as an opportunity to think about place in a way that presents interesting political[210] potential.

Quite simply, Bennett conceptualizes material things in a way that highlights their agency and thus "presents human and nonhuman actants on a less vertical plane than is common."[211] Her framework, which places humans and nonhumans on a more horizontal and thus less hierarchical plane provides a relevant approach to take seriously the way in which the materiality of places affects[212] us and, in turn, opens an exciting opportunity for situated political praxis in place.

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[208] Walter, 21

[209] Massey (2005), 119

[210] My understanding of the role of politics here is a kind of micro-politics, which include "human dispositions, moods, and cultural ensembles." (xii). Micro-politics requires different modes of analyses than do socio-economic structures, global economies, or political organization. Small, intentional gestures count

[211] Bennett (2010), ix

[212] Although Bennett's use of *affect* streams from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, I do not specifically theorize affect here or pull from their work specifically. Instead, I refer to Bennett's use

I will step back from my discussion on place for a moment in order to provide a brief exegesis of Bennett's ten year project – I include her books *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (2001) and *Vibrant Matter* (2010), along with various papers and talks. I have attempted to understand Bennett's work through her trajectory of thought; as such, I weave back and forth between her work that spans the course of just over ten years.[213] In *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Bennett problematizes the disenchanted character that is usually attributed to our modern condition and the way in which such a sentiment has become axiomatic in political theory.[214] Bennett explains, the modern, rationalist way of thinking "has contributed to the condition it describes."[215] Speaking through a long history of Western political theorists, Bennett's tale of disenchantment goes a bit like this:

> [It] figures nonhuman nature as more or less inert "matter"; it construes the modern West as a radical break from other cultures; and it depicts the modern self as predisposed toward rationalism, skepticism, and the problem of meaninglessness. Its versions vary according to what is identified as the primary target of the disenchantment process […] disenchantment

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of the concept, while recognizing that affect has emerged from a rich theoretical milieu within academic discourse.

[213] Bennett identifies *The Enchantment of Modern Life* as having a focus on the subjective experience of things and *Vibrant Matter* as an attempt to shift away from the subject, to the object. I see Bennett's 2002 work and the background it provides as being an integral stepping stone to conceptualizing what she is working towards in 2010.

[214] Bennett (2001), 7

[215] Bennett (2001), 4

> can name an unhappy psychological state; the culture can be disenchanted, in that collective life no longer operates according to the cyclical logic of premodern or traditional forms and instead organizes itself along the lines of linear mathematics or rationality; or nature can be the object of disenchantment, in that a spiritual dimension once found in plants, earth, sky is now nowhere to be seen.[216]

In this story, we find disenchantment in the individual and the collective: in the psyche and through culture. It can also be understood spatially. Chapter one discussed the way in which the city is often understood as a manifestation of modern prerogatives that produce a disenchanted spatiality. Yet, if there is disenchantment, there are also possibilities for enchantment. The possibility of enchantment presents the possibility of unusual moments and engagements in a world otherwise composed of inert nonhuman bodies and circumstances. *A village needs these innocent stimulants of bright and cheering prospects to keep off melancholy and superstition*.[217] Moments of enchantment[218] provoke us to see our

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[216] Bennett (2001), 8

[217] Henry David Thoreau, "Autumnal Tints," in *Works of Henry David Thoreau*, Ed Lily Owens., New York: Avenel Books, Crown Publishers, Inc (1906), 1981, 676

[218] **A moment of enchantment**: "The weasel was stunned into stillness as he was emerging from beneath an enormous shaggy wild rose bush four feet away. I was stunned into stillness twisted backward on the tree trunk. Our eyes locked, and someone threw away the key. Our look was as if two lovers, or deadly enemies, met unexpectedly on an overgrown path when each had been thinking of something else: a clearing blow to the gut. It was also a bright blow to the brain, or a sudden beating of brains, with all the charge and intimate grate of rubbed balloons. It emptied our lungs. It felled the forest, moved the fields, and drained the pond; the world dismantled and tumbled into that black hole of eyes. If you and I looked at each other that way, our skulls would split and

surroundings differently than we otherwise might. Bennett refers to enchantment as a "state of openness to the disturbing-captivating elements in everyday experience. Enchantment is a window onto the virtual secreted within the actual."[219] It is also that which elicits the "surprise element that lurks in every object of experience, however apparently familiar."[220] Enchantment is a primary component of the "alter-tale" that she tells to resist the tale of disenchantment that has come to form through the makings of modern science, in particular.[221] Bennett's conception of enchantment is neither teleological nor dependent on a creator. She writes: "My quasi-pagan model of enchantment pushes against a powerful and versatile Western tradition […] that makes enchantment

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drop to our shoulders. But we don't. We keep our skulls. So. He disappeared. This was only last week, and already I don't remember what shattered the enchantment. I think I blinked, I think I retrieved my brain from the weasel's brain, and tried to memorize what I was seeing, and the weasel felt the yank of separation, the careening splash-down into real life and the urgent current of instinct. He vanished under the wild rose. I waited motionless, my mind suddenly full of data and my spirit with pleadings, but he didn't return. Please do not tell me about "approach-avoidance conflicts." I tell you I've been in that weasel's brain for sixty seconds, and he was in mine. Brains are private places, muttering through unique and secret tapes-but the weasel and I both plugged into another tape simultaneously, for a sweet and shocking time. Can I help it if it was a blank?" from Annie Dillard, "Living Like Weasels" http://www.courses.vcu.edu/ENG200-lad/dillard.htm

[219] Bennett, (2001), 131

[220] Bennett, (2001), 94

[221] Bennett explains that the "disenchantment tale figures nonhuman nature as more or less inert "matter"; it construes the modern West as a radical break from other cultures; and it depicts the modern self as predisposed toward rationalism, skepticism, and the problem of meaningless" (7). For more history on the material and philosophical evolution of a tale of a world that is learned through a human centered lens of rationality and strict objectivity, see Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's *Objectivity* (2007); Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (1951)

depend on a divine creator, Providence, or, at the very least, a physical world with some original connection to a divine will."[222] Indeed, enchantment might occur through our engagement with the materials we utilize and throw away or through the spaces we inhabit. Importantly, the possibility of enchantment is linked to the possibility to see, think, and act differently – ideally, more ethically. She reminds us, through writers such as "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Friedrich Schiller, Nietzsche, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau, and Walt Whitman […] if a set of moral principles is actually to be lived out, the right mood or landscape has to be in place."[223]

Bennett's articulation of Thoreauian Wild is linked to her description of enchantment in that the Wild "educate[s] his sense-perception"[224] and, eventually, "propel[s] a life lived deliberately."[225] She explains:

> The Wild is one of Thoreau' s key notions, but it is the exclusive property of neither natural nor cultural entities. It is lodged in a refined experience of all sorts of things. The Wild refers to the surprise element that lurks in every object of experience, however apparently familiar.[226]

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[222] Bennett (2001), 12
[223] Bennett (2010), xii
[224] *Ibid.*, 94
[225] *Ibid.*
[226] *Ibid.*

Thoreau's thoughtful, material, and, most importantly sensorial engagement with the Wild allows him to "cultivate a kind of sensibility, one subtle enough to discern the fascinating specificity of a thing."[227] Bennett thus invokes Thoreau as an important part of her ethical project: his "invocation and his finesse are parts of an ethical strategy."[228]

Nine years later she writes, "I will try to make a meal out of the stuff left out of the feast of political theory done in the anthropocentric style."[229] In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett builds upon her earlier work, which, as explained, focuses primarily on the human subject's experience of enchantment: of *being* enchanted. She focuses on the vibrant *things* that produce enchantment.[230] She thus shifts from the affect on the subject to the affective capacities of the object. Bennett coins the term vibrant to talk about the affective qualities of material[231] things. The essential quality of vibrant materials lies in their capacity to affect.

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[227] Bennett (2001), 94

[228] *Ibid.*

[229] Bennett (2010)

[230] Bennett, (2010), xii

[231] Bennett's materialism emerges from a trajectory of thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Franz Kafka, Henry David Thoreau, Baruch Spinoza and Walt Whitman, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Henri Bergson. She identifies herself within a materialism that is "Democritus-Epicurus-Spinoza-Diderot-Deleuze more than Hegel-Marx-Adorno." (xiii)

A thread that runs through Bennett's project, from 2001 until the present, is her establishment of both enchantment and vibrancy as conduits to a larger ethical project.[232] Through a proposed metaphysics, she provides an ontological approach that recommends that we pay attention to nonhuman forces and bodies – one that would create a political landscape that involves (and invokes) an "ontologically heterogeneous" public.[233] She also recommends "that projecting a moment of "naïve realism" into one's political theory may foster greater ethical appreciation of thing-power, an appreciation that [is tied] to an ecological project of sustainability."[234] She speaks directly to things, such as waste, electricity, and earthworms to suggest that our cultural system operates in such a way as to maintain our consumption patterns without properly acknowledging the very real material effects and accumulations that are part of these patterns. She goes on to hypothesize that a reimagining of matter as "not inert but vibrant"[235] might alter the way we think about the consequences of our actions, which are always-already implicated in materiality. Through

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[232] The ethical project Bennett frames in *The Enchantment of Modern Life* is taken up with rigor in *Vibrant Matter*. The earlier publication provides an in depth philosophical backdrop for her later publication. In *Vibrant Matter*, our experience of enchantment is evoked through the vibrancy of matter but there is less emphasis on the human and more emphasis on the thing.

[233] Bennett (2010), 108

[234] Jane Bennett, "The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter" *Political Theory* 32.3 (June 2004)

[235] Bennett, "Artistry and Agency in a World of Vibrant Matter"

this, she provides a methodological entry point for a discussion about vibrancy in things that are non-human or are partially human.

Bennett's project is an urgent one – in both its theoretical possibilities and possible material outcomes. My own project has benefitted from rigorous attention to the agentic capacities of nonhuman and partially nonhuman elements of existence. By employing Bennett's project *through place*, I suggest that her project might benefit from a situatedness or place-based approach. She does not spend a lot of time with "the where" of things.[236] Consequently, the very materials we are supposed to engage with remain a bit abstract, in their placelessness. By paying attention to things, rhythms, creatures, sounds, and change in place, we might build towards *doing* what Bennett is proposing through her metaphysics. We might put her project into practice, which, of course, is the essential feature of any ethical project.

In line with Bennett, I suggest that our appreciation of thing power is dependent on a situated attentiveness. Bennett's hope is that our moments of enchantment, those moments in

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[236] This is not to say that Bennett does not engage with place at all. In a paper entitled "Theory and the City" (in *Theory & Event*, 12.4, 2009), she discusses the importance of site-specific work and makes reference to work that takes seriously place and materiality. The importance of place has also come up in her public talks ("New Materialisms and its Critics," Workshop, Concordia University, Montreal, QC, 22 March 2013; "Artistry and Agency in a World of Vibrant Matter," The New School, New York. 27 September 2011). In the *Nature of Things, Language, Politics, and the Environment.* Eds Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, there are several pieces that engage with ethics and place.

which we render ourselves "more open to the surprise of other selves and bodies and more willing and able to enter into productive assemblages with them,"[237] will cultivate an awareness, a generosity, and a perception of the world as something less vertical, more horizontal, and much less anthropocentric than what we currently perceive it to be. Zwicky's words resonate once again: *ontological attention is a form of love*. Her justification for such an ethics is straightforward: "by becoming more responsive to other material forms with which one shares space, one can better enact the principle of minimizing harm and suffering."[238] Bennett does not seek an enchanted life; rather, she seeks moments of enchantment that can disrupt, provoke, excite, and encourage a sense of wonder.[239] While her current project finds this kind of enchantment in *things*. I suggest here that it can be found in places as well.

[237] Bennett (2001), 131

[238] *Ibid*., 157

[239] *Ibid.* (2010), 10

What is wild and how might it lead to Wild?

Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps.
Henry David Thoreau, Walking

Since the closure of the freight yard in the mid-eighties, the field has been left to develop under its own guidance and it now possesses enormous biodiversity and character. The biodiversity present is site-specific and parasitic of its industrial and cultural surroundings, as nature gradually re-appropriates the space using whatever means it can. Seeds have train-hopped here from all over the North American continent. The wind, birds, and animals (humans included) have each brought seeds and the space is now home to numerous species of plants and animals. It contains a mixture of local and foreign species.
Emily Rose Michaud and Owen McSwiney [240]

Having provided a brief introduction to Bennett's project, I now discuss wildness and wild qualities, as they exist in our common vernacular and imagination. My goal is to suggest that wildness in an urban setting has the potential to operate in a Wild way. As a vernacular term, wild carries with it brigade of cultural connotations, histories, and literatures. Often, the wild (as a place) is conceptualized as something that exists outside of the city or the town, far away from civilization and removed from built structures. This kind of wild place is always an idealized place, constructed and constrained by artificial binaries. As an adjective, we often use wild to describe the wilderness:[241]

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[240] Emily Rose Michaud and Owen McSwiney. "The Field of Possibilities." 17 May 2011**.** Paper presented at *DIY Citizenship Conference*: Toronto Ontario, 2011.

[241] And wilderness itself is what Jonathon Bordo describes as "as a picture, as a myth, and as an inheritance." ("The Wasteland – An essay on Manufactured Landscapes." *Material Culture Review* 63. Spring 2006., 93); See Wiliam Chaloupka and R. McGreggor Cawey, "The Great Wild Hope," in *The*

the dark, the uncontrollable, and the untamed.[242] While I do not engage with an in depth genealogy of "wild" (or wilderness), I acknowledge that we experience wild through our (culturally constructed) conception of it. The most important consequence of this is that wildness is never *out there.*[243] Richard Reynolds, author of *On Guerilla Gardening*, problematizes a conception of wild as a pure place, untouched by humans. He explains, "although describing the land as 'neglected' suggests that it was once cultivated and 'wild' implies it has never been touched by humans, never is a long time and human impact travels far into supposedly 'wild' places."[244] An urban wild place surrounded by buildings and in earshot of vehicle noise is not the same kind of wild place as a remote forest, hours from people and built structures. Thus, I invoke Anna

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Nature of Things, Language, Politics, and the Environment. Eds. Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka. Minneaopolis, London: University of Minnesotra Press, 1993.

[242] In *Primitives of the Wilderness*, Peter van Wyck provides several possible definitions of wilderness. The operative, economic conception of wilderness conceives of wilderness as a type of resource; the political understanding of wilderness brings in issues of ownership and zones of occupation; the third, which is often situated in environmental discourses, understands wilderness as "the place nature resides" (83). Levi Bryant explains that wilderness, "as an ontological concept …should not be taken to signify the opposition between civilization and nature, but rather two distinct ontological orientations: the vertical ontologies of humanist, correlationist thought where being is a correlate of thought versus posthumanist orientations of thought advocated by flat ontologies or immanence." Levi Bryant, "Wilderness Ontology," *Larval Subjects.* 2 June 2011. http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2011/06/02/wilderness-ontology/

[243] Modern conceptions of 'the wild' or wildness are engrained in essentializing binaries such as nature/culture, male/female, primitive/civilized, unruly/tame. See van Wyck, *Primitives of the Wilderness.*

[244] Richard Reynolds, *On Guerilla Gardening, A Handbook for Gardening without Boundaries*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008., 84

Jorgensen's suggestion that wildness should be understood as an idea that lends itself to a way of thinking about spatiality. It is not "a closed category that can be spatially located."[245]

Le Champ certainly embodies a kind of wildness marked by obvious signifiers. The grass grows too long, there is a lack of orthodox landscaping, and the paths are haphazard, often changing with the seasons. There is usually detritus lurking. Illicit bonfires with anonymous attendees occur nightly.[246] It is itchy; you can get stung there; it is muddy; your shoes will probably get dirty; it often smells; depending on the season, it will make you sneeze; and you can disappear into the weeds or behind the trees,[247] if you wish. Le Champ is also home to many non-human creatures that rely on its wildness for their survival: "over three hundred species of plants, insects and animals … [including] snails, poplar and cherry trees, peregrine falcons, foxes and groundhogs."[248] Such diversity tends to be rare but is not completely absent from urban centres.[249] Another feature of

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[245] Jorgensen, "Introduction" to *Urban Wildscapes*, 2

[246] For thought provoking work that brings the concept of Wild into legal frameworks and language, see Shaun Fluker's work, out of the University of Calgary. In particular, look for his forthcoming publication "Defending the Wild: Time to Think Beyond Legislated Wilderness."

[247] One of the people I interviewed recommended that I spend a morning laying in le Champ Because of the height of the plants, one can completely disappear, in the middle of the open space.

[248] Monique Beaudin, "Mile End green space gets protected status." *The Gazette*, May 22, 2013. http://www.montrealgazette.com/Mile+green+space+gets+protected+status/8421272/story.html#ixzz2UKLfdmkG

[249] *The Rouge*, an enormous urban wild park on the eastern periphery of Toronto, is soon to become Canada's first National Urban Park. The Rouge is forty-two square kilometers, which is thirteen times larger than New York City's central park, and offers a complex diversity of species within the Greater Toronto Area. An urban wildspace as massive as the Rouge is important to this conversion

wildness is the thick vegetation that tends to hide other bodies. Similar to the way in which a forest challenges our (urbanized) sensory capacities, le Champ can be unsettling, depending on the time of day or the weather. The overgrown weeds, noisy poplar leaves, and constant buzz of the neighbouring buildings create a sonic environment that makes it difficult to hear people or animals approaching. At dusk, the gigantic bushes and long weeds interrupt the line of vision. People are often made invisible without much effort at all. There is an element of unease in le Champ and this, of course, makes it wild too. The light, temperature, length of the grass, and thickness of the brush produce different affects and levels of vibrancy, depending on the time of day or year.

In the paragraphs to follow I work through the complexity of some of the materialities mentioned above. David Gissen's book, entitled *Subnature: Architecture's Other Environments.* Gissen provides an important critical discussion of the way in which materials are embedded in social and cultural norms and histories. Gissen's discussion becomes helpful to thinking about the way in which the materiality of le Champ interrupts the spatial norms of the city – through an interruption of its physical topography and the social expectations of how urban spaces should look. Gissen's book presents a discussion of the way in which the material things that we often identify as wild or natural have been constructed through complex social, political, and architectural histories. Earlier

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not because *le Champ* and the Rouge are similar spaces (they are not) but because, together, they provide a range of what we might consider wild. See http://www.rougepark.com/; http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/progs/np-pn/cnpn-cnnp/rouge/index.aspx

discussions in this work bring forth the way in which urban space has come to form through social and economic prerogatives, Gissen provides a demonstration of the way in which materials are also embedded in such prerogatives and social-economic narratives.[250] Plants, animals, pathways, cool breezes, long grasses, weeds, trees, and small hills lure people to le Champ. These features of the landscape and atmosphere tend to be scarce in the city – consequently, they appeal to the senses and to the imagination. They are what Gissen refers to as *subnatures*:

> subnatural forms of life become metaphors of new forms of subjectivity in modern society […] No form of life is inherently subnatural; rather relative to architecture, life becomes subnatural when it makes us question the dominant social role of architecture."[251]

Subnatures are those things that counter the spatialized norms that have come to signify our modern, urban world. They also seem to signify other temporalities. For example, "as a viscous substance, [mud] operates against modern concepts of circulation; it slows the city down, like slush. As something dark and often very deep, mud contains notions of history; it embalms things and contains the past."[252]

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[250] There is, perhaps, fodor for a discourse analysis of Thoreau's work through Gissen and other, similar architectural discourse.

[251] David Gissen, *Subnature*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009, 150

[252] *Ibid.*, 118

With reference to Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger*, Gissen writes, "nothing is inherently dirty or dirt like; rather, dirt is a social category that we assign to specific types of social relations." Similarly, mud signifies the mortar of a time that has come and gone; weeds suggest a lack of cultivation; and puddles can remind us of failed infrastructures and systems of management.[253] These examples are particularly salient with regard to the sense of wild we experience in le Champ because they illuminate the way in which materials that we often deem to be outside or far from us (*i.e.* wild) have important cultural and conceptual histories that move through discourses of planning and architecture. Our experience of materiality thus relies on cultural knowledge. This said, the cultural embeddedness of those materialities does not diminish the agency or the vibrancy of the material things – the affect proposed by Bennett.

Using weeds[254] as an example, Gissen says they "represent not only something wild but something 'unimproved.'"[255] By the nineteenth century, weeds confronted both landscape aesthetics and social conventions.[256] Gissen reminds us "weeds exemplified those uncultivated life forms lurking beneath the natural world, opening up paths to an alternative modernity rooted in the

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[253] Gissen, 103

[254] From his bean field, Throeau writes of weeds, "disturbing their delicate organizations so ruthlessly, and making such invidious distinctions with his hoe, leveling who ranks of one species, and sedulously cultivating another. (Thoreau, "Walden," in *Works of Henry David Thoreau*, 178)

[255] Gissen, 150

[256] *Ibid.*, 153

revolutionary potential of free nature."[257] A recent blog post written about le Champ captures the complex position that weeds have in our urbanized imaginations:

> Sans permission, les herbes, qu'on dit « mauvaises », ont envahie les lieux. Celles-ci ont comme principal défaut de ne pas être du gazon, défaut impardonnable qui leur vaut d'être constamment pourchassées. Pas assez lisses et trop sauvages, elles sont des intrus dans le paysage ordonné de la ville. Si certaines sont urticantes, la plus part sont inoffensives. C'est leur caractère anarchique et désordonné qu'on leur reproche le plus. Les chardons, les ronces et les pissenlits, opiniâtres squatteurs, ont pris possession des lieux, sauf aux endroits où des sentiers se sont improvisés avec le passage répété de ceux qui fréquentent l'endroit.[258]

The wildness of le Champ is not separate from the city; it belongs to the city. The city is never without wildness. Le Champ's power to offer an alternative place to the concrete, noisy, and fast paced rhythm of the city that surrounds it is also dependent its urban surroundings – it possesses the status of being something other than the city precisely because it is within the city. In fact, a place like *le Champ* would certainly not be coveted in the same way if it were located in a small city or town in a rural setting with close access to open landscapes, lakes, and mountains.[259] It has been described

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[257] Gissen, 154

[258] Felix Gravel "Le champ des possibles est à explorer," *Urabillard* 8 July 2013. http://urbabillard.wordpress.com/

[259] Having grown up in small cities, with access to vast landscapes, this comes from my own experience. It was also mentioned by several of my interviewees.

as "feeling like the country."[260] Its wildness is apparent because of the designed spaces that surround it. It provides refuge and it provides something other than what we come to expect from the urban landscape. It provides a place for the imagination.[261] It unsettles and interrupts and, in doing so, reminds us of other possible spaces – alternatives to the concrete, designed spaces we inhabit and move through.

Through Gissen, I have described how wild materials interrupt the city. Through their counter-modern material form, wild material always-already question the assumed urban norms that have been established through the concrete, steel, and brick structures of the city. The 'brick and mortar' of existence is wrought with political, social and economic histories, after all. These materials prescribe a particular mode of being, a specific rhythm of existence. Next, I explain the way these qualities operate together to form a place that interrupts the city and enchants its visitors.

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[260] Personal Interview, Farid Rener, May 2013

[261] For a short but beautiful essay on the capacity of a small wild place to indulge the imagination and enliven the senses, see Bridget Campion's "Grasshopper Lessons in my Field of Dreams" in *The Globe and Mail*, 12 July, 2013.

Le Champ Enchants, it is a Wild place

[Enchantment] is a state of openness to the disturbing-captivating elements in everyday experience. Enchantment is a window onto the virtual secreted within the actual. Enchantment is the model I am defending, as operative in a world without telos.
Jane Bennett

We should just have wild spaces – they become sacred through acts of creativity.
Emilie O'Brien, Interviewee

Le champ has been described as a sacred place, a free place, a magical place, and even a place that escapes language all together. Its vagueness has been emphasized as something that is inherent to its beauty and importance. Jan Zwicky writes, "the phenomenal experience often includes an awareness of not being able to give an account of the this – we can point, but not say. Even the name can seem hopelessly inadequate."[262] It has also been described as a refuge, a hiding place, and an illicit place. It affects people: it provokes excitement, adoration, affection, and even desire.[263] Using Bennett's definition, I suggest that Wild places in the city are, most importantly, those spaces that inspire social practices that, in turn, activate potential for enchanted civic engagement. More

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[262] Zwicky, 53

[263] Field Note: Walking through *le Champ* one afternoon, during an interview, the topic of desire filtered into the conversation. The person I was interviewing was finishing his MA as well. His subject is desire. I asked him if he thinks people can desire places. He said he'd never thought of it. I thought that funny, for someone who studies desire. He recommended Anne Carson's *Eros the Bittersweet*. I realize, as I finish this piece then my own desire for place is something that I've thought about but not articulated through writing. At this point, I think that my photographs communicate my own desire for place better than my words can.

specifically, I suggest that le Champ can be marked Wild because it interrupt prescribed urban norms through both its physical topography and the way in which users have been enchanted by it. We can recall Thoreau, who writes "in Wildness, lies the preservation of the world."[264] In the paragraphs to follow, I pull back from the specificities of le Champ and the qualities of wild in order to discuss the relationship between Wild places and enchantment.

Wildness in an urban setting enchants: it evokes surprise, awe, bewilderment, and curiosity. These places exist in vacant or abandoned buildings, after natural disasters, in empty lots, in streets, etc. Scruffy, vague, and unplanned spaces possess Wildness. Sites that lack top down mechanisms of regulation and design hold potential for creativity and engagement. Through this Wildness, they are able to provoke enchantment and, even better, enchanted engagement. Other writers have acknowledged places like this as socially and politically significant as well. For example, in an essay written by Adam Gopnik (2001) about the Highline in New York City, both Wildness and enchantment are present. Gopnik's piece, entitled "A Walk on the Highline, the allure of a derelict railroad track in the spring" describes the strange allure of a Wild place in the sky. He writes, "the weird thing is that the High Line is just a structure, it's just metal in the air, but it becomes a site for everybody's fantasies and projections. People see rats and derelicts where there aren't any, or else, like Joel, who's a visionary, they see the city the way it ought to have been." Gopnik quotes Joel, the

[264] Thoreau, "Walking," in *Works of Henry David Thoreau*, 390.

"poet-keeper" and photographer of the High Line who has "a particular affection" for it and speaks about it in a way that suggests enchantment: "I just pray that, if they save the High Line, they'll save some of the virgin parts, so that people can have this kind of hallucinatory experience of nature in the city."[265] Gopnik is writing prior the High Line's dramatic transformation into a swanky, linear park on the Manhattan skyline. Before this transformation, it was an abandoned railway that was left to grow fallow in the middle of a run down neighbourhood (the Meatpacking district). The familiarity here is almost uncanny but Montréal is not Manhattan and at this point in time, le Champ des Possibles is still a far cry from The Highline.

Dougal Sheridan, writing about urban wild spaces in Berlin,[266] employs the term *indeterminate* to the kind of places I name Wild. Sheridan defines indeterminate territories as "any area, space or building where the city's normal forces of control have not shaped how we perceive, use and occupy them."[267] He suggests that the spaces which are "not readily identified [or] included in the understanding of cities" actually exist in symbiosis with the rest of the city and, in the absence of direct, formal institutional control, have the potential to "affect cultural formation and

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[265] Adam Gopnik, "A Walk on the Highline, The allure of a derelict railroad track in the spring" *The New Yorker*. May 21, 2001

[266] Field Note**:** Several people have commented on the similarities between Berlin and Montréal. When I asked a close friend of mine what she thought about this, she said, "apparently they are of the same spirit" (May 2013).

[267] Dougal Sheridan, The Space of Subculture in the City: Getting Specific about Berlin's Indeterminate Territories." *Field: A Free Journal of Architecture*. 1.1 www.field-journal.org, 98

development."[268] Sheridan's case-study is centered on the counter-culture groups that have appropriated and transformed these places. He asks: "Do the opportunities offered by fragments of the city, in the absence of the deterministic forces of capital, ownership, and institutionalization affect cultural formation and development?"[269] The engagement that has occurred in le Champ and in places similar to it would suggest that absence and ambiguity do provide opportunities to sculpt something from the "ground up."

Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió uses the term *terrain vague*, which, she suggests, is often characterized by the indeterminate, the imprecise, and the uncertain.[270] She elaborates, explaining that while these terms may be "preceded by negative particles…this absence of limit precisely contains the expectations of mobility, vagrant roving, free time, [and] liberty."[271] Solà-Morales situates these spaces as exterior to the formal logics of the city discussed earlier. She defines these logics through the colonizing nature of architecture: "In essence, architecture [and urban design act as instruments] of organization, of rationalization, and of productive efficiency capable of transforming the uncivilized into the cultivated, the fallow into the productive, the void into the

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[268] Dougal Sheridan, The Space of Subculture in the City: Getting Specific about Berlin's Indeterminate Territories." Field: A Free Journal of Architecture. 1.1 www.field-journal.org, 97

[269] *Ibid.*

[270] Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, "Terrain Vague" in *Anyplace.* Ed. Cynthia C. Davidson. Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 1995, 120

[271] *Ibid.*

built."[272] The efficient and productive spatial prerogatives of the city discussed in chapter one come to mind. The suggestion here is that the top-down, formalizing logic of planned spaces imposes on its inhabitants but indeterminate spaces break from this logic and can, potentially, interrupt or even disrupt such spatial logics. Void and absence promise the possible.[273] These strange places exist outside the city's effective circuits and productive structures:

> From the economic point of view, industrial areas, railway stations, ports, unsafe residential neighbourhoods, and contaminated places are where the city is no longer. Unincorporated margins, interior islands void of activity, oversights, these areas are simply un-inhabited, un-safe, un-productive. In short, they are foreign to the urban system, mentally exterior in the physical interior of the city, its negative image, as much a critique as a possible alternative.[274]

The places described by Gopnik, Sheridan, and Solà-Morales seem to be what Jill Stoner, working through the language of Deleuze and Guattari, coin as *minor architecture*s. She writes: "minor architectures not only register a minor voice upon the major one; they also cause identities to collapse into one another. Works assumed to be finished are cast back into a state of becoming."[275] Gopnik's piece on New York's Highline was, at that brief moment in time, in the state of becoming.

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[272] Solà-Morales, 122

[273] *Ibid*., 120

[274] *Ibid*.

[275] Jill Stoner, *Toward a Minor Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012., 76.

Arguably, it now functions through the hegemonic discourses of value and capital, not through the minor discourses described by Stoner. I suggest that an essential part of Wildness, and its capacity to enchant, is that its state of existence must be indeterminate, interstitial, or vague.

What do we do in Wild places? (a politics of enchantment)

So far, I have introduced Wild as a concept that communicates the agentic capacities and enchanting qualities of le Champ. I will conclude this chapter by discussing a few of the ways in which people's enchantment with le Champ has effectively changed le Champ. In other words, how enchantment translates into action - what political scientists, sociologists, and cultural theorists call "civic participation," "community engaged practice," "place-making" and "grassroots political action." I think that the way in which people see, think, and talk about le Champ might be very close to what Bennett hopes for when she encourages "more intelligent and sustainable engagements with vibrant matter and lively things."[276] In one sense, le Champ is only a microcosm but in another, it is a microcosm for exactly the kind of micro politics Bennett proposes. In such politics, "a political act not only disrupts, it disrupts in such a way as to change radically what people can "see": it repartitions the sensible; it overthrows the regimen of the perceptible."[277] A quote from Emily Rose

[276] Bennett (2010), viii

[277] Bennett (2010), quoting Rancière, 106

Michaud illustrates what enchanted engagement with vibrant matter looks like, in a lived, practiced way:

> we really gav'er to the garden today...went from noon until 8:30pm. gained a lot too. the work had a real physiological effect on mood, mind and body. i became more grateful to this wild space. its truly precious and rare and i can see its importance the more time i spend there. this space gives back so much to the people who use it. i gain peace of mind whenever i go. it's a liminal and timeless place somewhere far from the monoculture of concrete and single strains of grasses found in other parts of the managed and pruned city. after the fourth hour of being in the air, and wild energetic quality of the meadow, my thoughts became whittled down to whispers.[278]

Emily's words here, in particular, her description of the "wild energetic quality of the meadow" having an affect[279] on her body and mind bring forth the kind of horizontality that Bennett suggests as being fundamental to her proposed ethical project. It suggests an engagement with vibrant materiality in a Wild place.

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[278] Emily Rose Michaud, http://pousses.blogspot.ca 14 June 2008.

[279] Of his own experience cultivating, Thoreau writes: "It was a singular experience that long acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over and selling them, - the last was the hardest of all – I Might addd eating, for I did taste. I was determined to know beans" ("The Bean-Field," in *Works of Henry David Thoreau*, 178).

As chapter two demonstrated, le Champ is layered in activity, interaction, and community-based appropriation. These are, quite arguably, the pragmatic and politicized outcomes that can follow from engagement with vibrant matter and enchanting places. In 2008, Emily Rose Michaud articulated her project goals as follows:

> Engage with the meadow creatively and document how people use and care about this space
>
> Valorize this living space before it is forgotten in silence
>
> Draw attention to the city's plans and provoke dialogue
>
> Reclaim the commons, activate unused urban spaces, re-enchant oneself with the natural world and living systems of the urban core
>
> Invite others to plant similar ideas in their own environments where needed[280]

The goals that Emily articulated in 2008 have now come to fruition. There is a rich online archive of peoples' engagement with le Champ. The place itself acts as a material archive of the events, installations, engagements, and interactions that have taken place in situ. Notable public dialogue, the creation of a nonprofit organization (NPO), and the evolution of numerous micro movements have successfully drawn the city's attention. In fact, the trajectory of what has occurred in le Champ provides enough material for another project all together. And now, le Champ has officially been

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[280] Emily Rose Michaud, "The Roerich Garden Project," *Terraculture,* 17 January 2008 http://pousses.blogspot.ca

"marked" (rezoned) in a way that will ensure it continues to exist as a permanent, and green, feature in the city of Montréal. At this point, the sustained Wildness of le Champ is something I cannot predict. In Appendix III, there is a map illustrating future possibilities of le Champ. Similar to the city that surrounds it, le Champ is a place of consistent change and the recent rezoning will see design interventions, a bike path, garbage cans, and a "green alleway" running along the south end, below what is currently the meat distribution building (les Viandes St. Laurent).[281] The meat distribution building will be replaced by condos shortly, which may change le Champ once again. Le Champ, after all, is an urban Wild place: it has to change.[282]

I hope that this approach to le Champ has illustrated it Wild place that, in its vagueness and vibrancy, has enchanted the people who were lucky or perceptive enough to be in the right place, at the right time (and then act). My hypothesis is that places are only ever temporarily Wild and that a certain ephemerality is inherent to the Wildness, enchantment, and wonder that places possess. Places provoke but never permanently.

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[281] Personal Interview, Anonymous, May 2013

[282] *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Politics happens from places and sites – constructed and privileged or deemphasized and repressed.
Chaloupka and McGreggor Cawley

I appreciate more than ever how vital communication is to the republic: not just the means by which we live together but part of what living together means. The wealth of words in which I was raised were a public space in their own right – and properly preserved public spaces are what we so lack today. If words fall into disrepair, what will substitute? They are all we have.
Tony Judt

A politics of enchantment in a place of possibilities.

As an intervention in the practice and politics of place, this project has responded to Bennett's 2010 question: how would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (nonhuman) bodies?[283] Her elaboration on this question asks how the act of assigning agency to material things (food, electricity, garbage, "the recycling," *etc.*) might provoke an effective ethical project. And yet, it seems that assigning agency to material things first requires that we notice these things – that we develop a capacity to see differently so that we might begin to act differently. Bennett suggests that an expansion of our ethical spectrum must register a broader span of things: "if matter itself is lively, then not only is the difference between subjects and objects minimized, but the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated."[284] And so, "the starting

[283] As quoted in the introduction to this work: Bennett (2010), *viii*
[284] Bennett (2010), 13

point of ethics is less the acceptance of the impossibility of "reconcilement" and more the recognition of human participation in a shared, vital materiality."[285]As I've attempted to think through Bennett's "radical" metaphysics, I am left with the question of how. Ethics, like politics, involves practice, so in an ethical project, "the how" is important. I cannot help but wonder if our understanding of "the how "requires us to revisit Bennett's 2001 project – the one that frames "enchantment as a state of openness of the disturbing-captivating elements in everyday experience."[286] Although she explains her early project as being subject centered rather than object focused, I see it as providing an important practical foundation for *being able* to consider the kind of horizontal materiality that she emphasizes as so important to the vibrancy of matter.

Yet, mine is not a project about ethics, it is a project about place. It is one that suggests, rather modestly, that spending time in place might produce a set of experiences and observations that alter that way we see when we move through space and interact with other bodies, human and non-human alike: "by becoming more responsive to other material forms with which one shares space, one can better enact the principle of minimizing harm and suffering."[287] Through spending patient, thoughtful, and attentive time in place, I have begun to see and think[288] through the kinds of

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[285] Bennett (2010), 14

[286] Bennett (2001), 131

[287] *Ibid*, 157

[288] I have observed that people who spend time outside – in the garden, in the Wilderness, or even moving through walking trails – in a regular (even regimented way) also see and understand the

things Bennett posits as so important to her ethical project. I have not "worked out" Bennett's metaphysics, nor have I constructed a concise critique of her texts – instead, I have simply thought through aspects of her project, while situated in a Wild place, in the presence of vibrant things.[289]

Fig. 22 Trash, Chicken, Sunflower (text: Jane Bennett (2010), 107)

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vibrancy of these kinds of things. I hypothesize that these are the people who experience a sense of wonder and are open to enchantment. The empirical "evidence" exist in personal narratives, of time spent in place.

[289] I have also attempted to think about Bennett's project as it relates to other bodies of discourse – ways of thinking and communicating that exist outside of the political theory discourses from which her works emerges. As it turns out, situating oneself (or others) in discourse is a more challenging feat than situating oneself in place.

Together, chapters one and two reveal the complexity and flux of place and demonstrate that knowledge of place (place studies) tends to rely on subjective experiences that are always-already mediated. The discourses we identify as "place-based" tend to situate the human subject as primary. They emphasize the social construction of spatiality. Ideally, these literatures also bring to surface the hegemonic/economic complexities that are systemically entrenched and enacted through design, planning, and policy. They remind us that nothing about spatiality is "inherent" or "inevitable." The emancipatory potential of these frameworks lies in our ability to recognize the social construction of place; if we can do this, we might begin to change it. In other words, if humans have made it, then humans can change it.[290] Massey explains:

> That thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated, [and] can be an essential element in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political.[291]

But even if we recognize the cultural, social, and economic configurations of spatiality and even if this allows us to imagine something else, how does the empowering potential of this realization play out, in practical terms? The burdensome reality of bureaucracy, paper work, policies, and procedures

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[290] This style of thought has, of course, emerged from the thinkers of the Enlightenment, who, through the creation of a subject who possesses rational agency, frees himself from the binding chains of religiosity and *telos*. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment.* Trans. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove Princeton, Oxford: Princeton Univesrity Press, 2009.

[291] Massey (2005), 9

are often so dense that they are impenetrable. These are inextricable from the socially constructed spatialities that we seek to change – or the places we would like to make. How do we break through a wall of bureaucracy, policy, and laws that compose a "rational system" that operates in an almost teleological manner? Our realization of the social construction of space gets us to a certain point but, quite possibly, leaves us (the "us" who are doing place-based studies or other situated politics) a far from accessing the full spectrum. Might the bricks and mortar of the city offer an alternative way through?

Chapter three responds to this and suggests a different way of looking at place, one that is less dependent on the existence of places as so distinctly human. It presents place itself as possessing agentic capacities. The existence and affect of Wild in the city exemplifies the potentiality that rests in these agentic qualities. They are the particularities, peculiarities, and agentic capacities that poets, novelists, and storytellers in general always-already perceive and communicate. The physiological affect that place has, the kind of details that poets and novelists are attuned to, often go understated in place-based work.[292] The light, the presence of plants, the temperature, and the soundscapes are

[292] I have recently become aware of psycho geography – which needs further exporation. Additionally, near the end of this project, I encountered a paper that discusses the famous architect Larry Hapin's employment Carl Jung's "psychological archetypes, grounded in place" in his community-based, participatory design of public spaces. Larry understood rational problems as being "muddied by subconscious fears and desires, which had to be externalized, both to expose their demons and capture their energy." Randolph T. Hester, "Scoring Collective Creativity and

(material) effects of materialities that physiologically affect us. So, even if space or place is constructed, it is constructed with materials[293] and through Bennett's arguments, we see that materials have vibrancy and the capacity to enchant. Thus, chapter three presents an intervention in the politics of place - but only if this intervention punctures the discourses that have not already recognized the powerful, enchanting, Wild, vibrant nature of places and things. If indeed a politics of place can intervene it must do so in the discourses that remain heavily embedded in rational, reductionist, and economically-minded discourse and practice. It must speak to "the right people."[294]

Looking beyond Montréal, we might understand the citizen-led initiatives that have happened in cities like Detroit[295] also suggest that the absence[296] of bureaucracy, law, etc. has created a context that is Wild and, consequently, also empowering. The absence of top down intervention has meant that citizens have had to work with the raw

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Legitimizing Participatory Design." *Landscape Journal: design, planning, and management of the land.*, 31.1-2, 2012, 135-143., 137. I would like to look further into this architect and his work.

[293] A geologic "guide" to New York City takes seriously the material histories of the built city: see http://smudgestudio.org/smudge/GeoCity.html

[294] This references the couple that I described in chapter two in the story entitled *Trashy Magazines, Cigarettes, & Dogs*

[295] For a visually rich, poetic narrative on the Wild nature of Detroit, see "Detroit Wild City" http://vimeo.com/2371774

[296] Natalia Radywyl's work explores the political potential of cites left destitute or abandoned or Wild as a result of natural disasters. See "Occupying the Commons" http://www.astudioforallthings.com/work/

materiality of the city and, by doing so, are working in an engaged, transformative way. The potential for change that rests in the bricks and mortar of the city is evidenced by what is currently being referred to as "place-making," "healthy cities" and "vibrant public spaces." A sincere engagement with the wide range of these discourses and practices open a window for another, large and exciting project.

A few comments on methodology (in hindsight)

At the beginning of this project, I knew that I was going to visit le Champ des Possibles regularly, with the intent of learning something. I was not exactly sure *what* and I was even less sure *how*. So, I established a routine of regular visits, which involved taking photographs, taking notes, walking around, and being aware of the way in which my daily rhythms and routines would inevitably change so as to include regular site visits. Initially, this practice required discipline. Fairly quickly, this practice grew into habit and, eventually, "skipping a visit" left me with a feeling of longing. In time, a few weeks of regular visits accumulated to form a few months, which then saw a change in the seasons. As I conclude this project and think of it retrospectively, I have begun to think of this process as the practice of philosophy in place. That is, if philosophy-as-practice is what Zwicky describes as "as a setting of things side by side until a similarity dawns."[297]

[297] Zwicky, 20

In retrospect, I understand this project as a two-phase process that involves (a) spending time in place and (b) writing about time spent in place. These are distinct practices. Spending thoughtful time in place is not so different than spending thoughtful time with texts. Before the investigations of the chosen "object of study," the person involved in those investigations is not exactly sure what they will find. Their initial questions will come to be sculpted by their findings and new questions will emerge from those findings. This is the nature (and beauty) of research. When we become lost in our research, in our observations, and our processes, time seems to fall to the wayside. Texts and place provide a spatial medium in which we may become engulfed, if we so chose. But places are also not like texts. Unlike texts, places change. These changes are temporal: hourly, daily, seasonal, and yearly. They are also material. The weather, the temperature, the number of bodies occupying the place, among various other material factors can alter a place. Italo Calvino's novel, Marcovaldo, which is organized by the seasons, exemplifies the inextricable relationship between spatiality and flux:

> At a certain point in the year, the month of August began. And then you witnessed a general change of feeling. Nobody loved the city any more: even the skyscrapers and the pedestrian subways and the car-parks, till yesterday so cherished, had become disagreeable and tiresome.[298]

[298] Calvino, *Marcovaldo or The Seasons in the city*., 97

Change as inherent to place means the person spending time in place must be okay with flux. Even better, they should embrace it and make it a part of the research process. I have learned that one way to do this is to pay attention to details and particularities. Zwicky explains:

> Ontological attention is a response to particularity: *this* porch, *this* laundry basket, *this* day. Its object cannot be substituted for even when it is an object of considerable generality ('the country', 'cheese' 'garage sales'). It is the antithesis of the attitude that regards things as 'resources', mere means to human ends…[299]

Zwicky's statement resonates with what I have come to understand as key to my own methodological approach, which I've suggested is a practical response to Jane Bennett's materially bound metaphysics - a response I've called a materialist metaphysics of place

Second, assembling a heterodox set of phenomenological observations into a written document has given me a first hand introduction to what Laurel Richardson calls *writing as a method of inquiry*.[300] She explains: "I write to find something out, I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it."[301] Thinking through my experiences in le Champ involved *writing about* my experience in le Champ. Through the writing itself, I encountered questions and challenges:

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[299] Zwicky, 52

[300] My conversations with Erin Despard throughout the duration of this project were also highly influential in shaping my understanding of writing as process.

[301] Laurel Richardson, *Writing a Method of Inquiry,* 517 ht"tp://www.sfu.ca/~decaste/867fall08/867pdfs/richardson.pdf

I learned. Because my goal from the outset was to engage with literature and critical theory in a way that would put these texts into operation in a way that remained as site-specific as possible (as opposed to "framing" le Champ through a case-study, for example),[302] my creative and critical engagement with le Champ "off site" changed the way I understood it and, perhaps more importantly, the way that I could communicate what I had experienced.

Underexplored Territory

I have also come to understand this project as the construction of a foundation for specific questions that need further exploration. First, I have researched (and written) much more text than what appears in this final project. My research and writing on specific places (*i.e.* park, ruin, garden) do not appear here.[303] My engagement with the literature affiliated with these places also sparked a question about the way in which the physical topography and practices that occur in places are connected to their names and or categories. In municipal and planning language, the categorization (or zoning) of a place directly interacts with the material place it signifies. Thus, the rules, practices, and priorities that belong to each category become enacted in a material, lived way – through legislation, funding maintenance, bureaucracy, bylaws, etc. Consequently, gardens operate differently

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[302] "The social sciences generally have little to say about "special places." These are "examples" or, even worse, merely "cases." Whether a set of behavioral laws or organizational patterns of institutional structures, there must be an explanatory principle under which each site fits – something must be exemplified at a site." (Chaloupka and McGreggor Cawley, 6)

[303] I will be including some of this writing on my blog: www.notquitegarden.blogspot.com

than parks; sidewalks operate differently than streets; and public spaces operate differently than private spaces. If something's name changes, eventually its physical topography, upkeep, and the practices that happen within it will change too. Specifically speaking, le Champ will be attended to by official bodies differently now that it is a park (differently than when it was an industrial space). After some written experimentation with this question, in relationship to my chosen place, I decided that it presents a problematic too large for this project. Nevertheless, I think these questions place discourse and lived places side by side in a way that provokes questions and calls for further exploration.

I also chose to leave aside the research I've done on grassroots politics praxis (*i.e.* "place-making" in its various forms: urban agriculture, occupation, artistic intervention). My decision to leave out discussions of contemporary political praxis has to do with the limitations on the length - I realized that I did not have the space to provide an adequate discourse analysis, which is the kind of approach to these themes that would been most valuable to my current project, as a whole.

I should also mention the theorists that been present throughout this work but with whom I have not directly engaged. The works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Bruno Latour, Franz Kafka, and Michel Foucault were ever present in the texts that I worked through but I did, deliberately choose to give priority to the voices of women theorists; in particular, Jane Bennett. The

work of Elizabeth Grosz, Donna Haraway, and Jane Jacobs were present throughout this process as well.

Finally, I will briefly mention what I see as a possible future for this work. I would like to work with aspects of this text in order move it into a more publicly accessible form. I will continue to work with the short stories presented in chapter two. With continued refinement, I hope that they might add to the large body of online work surrounding le Champ. Ideally, I will compile these stories in a digital book (using InDesign and then the online publishing program called ISUU). This document will incorporate text, photographs, and maps. I will also include hyperlinks so that the book remains situated and connected to the work that has come before it (and continues to emerge). Ideally, I would like to learn how to make the texts inter and intra linked so that the form of the document could operate in such a way so as to tribute what Massey calls the "existence of multiplicity."[304] Although I had hoped this final project would be presented in this kind of designed form, I have come to realize, through the process of writing this thesis, how much work is involved in finding a through line. It has only been through the writing of this work that I have now arrived at a point where I feel that I could produce something that would remain both visually appealing and critically situated.

[304] Massey (2005), 10

Why Place?

To think critically about and communicate place through concepts that, as part of larger discourses, have their own histories while remaining rooted in the subjective, lived experiences that are essential to place are challenging tasks. This project has been both an exploration of le Champ and an exploration in coming to know and communicate place. Not surprisingly, the question, "why place?" has been ever present. Perhaps place is important because it urges us to question the way in which we wrap theories, often from other places, around the things that we study. Or maybe it is relevant because it allows us to see, feel, and then begin to understand that contradictory nature, disharmony, mess, and beauty of reality, even though we are constantly being asked to manicure and categorize it into forms that make sense to our current paradigm of thought. Perhaps we should study place, or study in place, because an engagement with the people, the rhythms, the objects, the stories, the fantasies, and the secrets that belong to place (places are sites of imagination and power,[305] after all) are only ever revealed *in situ.* And it is only once we are in place that we may become alert to and affected by qualities that urge us to question the way that we see, think, and communicate. These are the kind of questions can become the groundwork for a lived metaphysics that is essential to an intervention in the politics of place.

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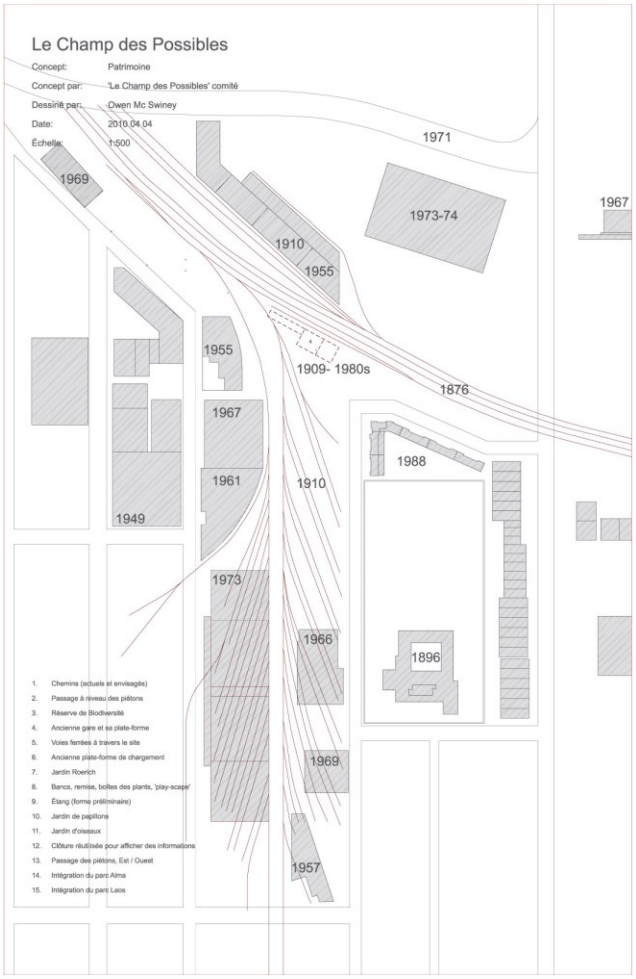
[305] Chandra Mukerji, "Space and Political Pedagogy at the Gardens of Versailles," *Public Culture* 24.3, 2012, 509

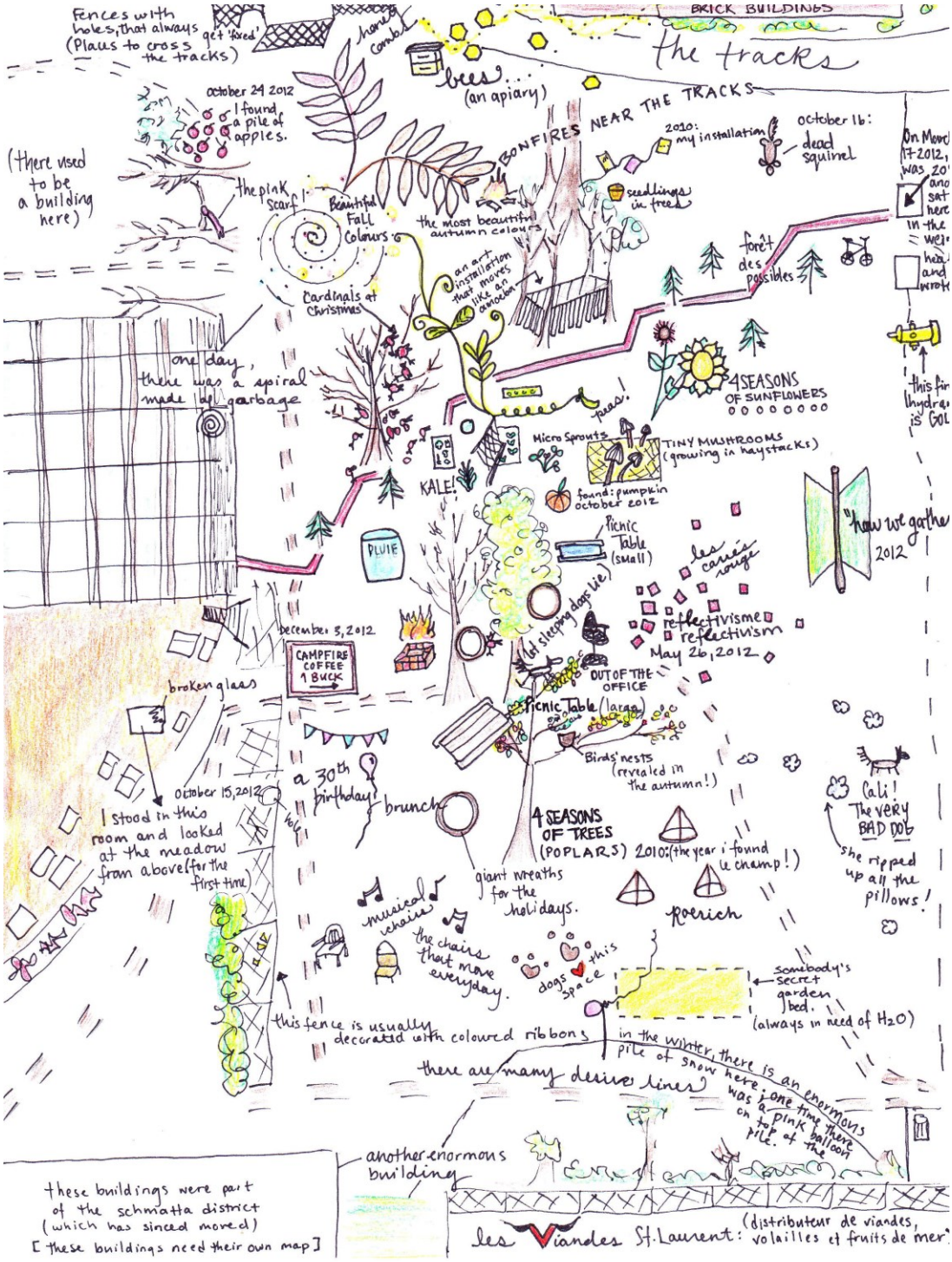
APPENDIX I: Map of Le Champ des Possibles & CP Railyard (1878-1911)



Gare CP 1878- 1911/14
QC photo aérienne 1969

*This image provided by one of the members of Les Amis du Champ and is being used with permission from the group

APPENDIX II: A Map of Vibrant Things



APPENDIX III: Possible Futures in le Champ

*This image provided by one of the members of Les Amis du Champ and is being used with permission from the group

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