

of fiction and faction

Cultivating a Revolution in Suburbia

Tiffany Schofield

A Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts

Graduate Program in Visual Arts

York University

Toronto, Ontario

April 2018

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Abstract

This paper extends upon the research that informed the development of the exhibition *of fiction and faction*, presented at the Doris McCarthy Gallery at the University of Toronto Scarborough from April 20–26, 2018. Considering issues of ecological uncertainty, sustainability, and community building within the suburbs, this project examines the potential for revolution in suburbia, using Scarborough as its speculative case study. In a two-channel video installation that comprises the exhibition’s main feature, two possibilities for collective action in suburbia are proposed: Scarborough Sourdough, a group of novice bakers establishing sourdough culture in Scarborough; and the Orange Jackets, a group of activists who don orange high-visibility hoodies and engage in direct action. Integrating actual places and events within an imagined narrative, this project attempts to form an alternative archive, complicating familiar notions of Canadian suburban life while foretelling possible futures.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to acknowledge my gratitude as a woman of settler descent for having had the opportunity to live and work on this land. For over 15,000 years, the sacred land on which this project was developed and exhibited has been care taken by many Indigenous nations, including the Anishinabek, the Huron-Wendat, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. This territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the region surrounding the Great Lakes. Through my work in this region, I aim to recognize and dismantle the colonial structures from which I benefit, and to seek alternate ways forward for Canada. I acknowledge that I still have much unlearning to do, and am grateful to be able to do it on this territory.

I would like to thank my supervisory committee at York University, Katherine Knight, Nina Levitt, and John Greyson, for their insightful feedback and guidance throughout this entire process. Thank you to the team at the Doris McCarthy Gallery, and the ongoing generosity and support of Ann MacDonald and Erin Peck, for making it possible to return this work to the community from which it came.

I am indebted to my team of collaborators, who generously gave their time, expertise, bodies, and voices to this project: Maria Patricia Abuel, Nedda Baba, Sonya Filman, Venessa Harris, Dorica Manuel, Sara Kay Maston, Alan Peng, Véronique Sunatori, and Jeff Zhao. Thank you to my family, who first instilled in me a love of local history, literature, and art. To the #Craftof2018, it has been a real honour to be part of such a strong, intelligent, and supportive community. Special thanks and much love to my Y+ fam.

This project was made possible with support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v
Chapter One: Formation.....	1
Chapter Two: Forging Communities.....	4
Chapter Three: Fuel Economy.....	7
Chapter Four: Fiction.....	11
Chapter Five: Fermentation.....	14
Chapter Six: Frameworks for Revolution.....	17
Chapter Seven: Feminism + Relational Activism.....	20
Chapter Eight: Final Thoughts.....	23
Bibliography.....	25

List of Images

Image 1. Tiffany Schofield, <i>of fiction and faction</i> , video still, 2018.....	1
Image 2. Tiffany Schofield, <i>of fiction and faction</i> , video still, 2018.....	5
Image 3. Tiffany Schofield, <i>of fiction and faction</i> , video still, 2018.....	8
Image 4. Tiffany Schofield, <i>Scarborough Sourdough</i> , Instagram feed (detail), 2018.....	12
Image 5. Tiffany Schofield, <i>of fiction and faction</i> , video still, 2018.....	15
Image 6. Tiffany Schofield, <i>of fiction and faction</i> , video still, 2018.....	18
Image 7. Tiffany Schofield, <i>of fiction and faction</i> , video still, 2018.....	21
Image 8. Tiffany Schofield, <i>of fiction and faction</i> , video still, 2018.....	23

1. Formation

We were born here, at the edge of the water,
in ravines carved out by glaciers.

At the eastern edge of what is now Toronto, an escarpment rises above Lake Ontario, the towering remnants of Lake Iroquois' former shoreline. The Bluffs act as the defining feature of the adjacent suburban settlement known as Scarborough. This is where I was born and raised. From an early age, my parents—both historians—instilled in me a sense of curiosity about this place and the stories it held. I knew its peaks and valleys intimately, where the roads curved, which trails led to the water. Driving the neighbourhood with my father meant enduring an ongoing monologue (and occasional pop quiz) on the provenance of every building and vacant lot. The previous lives of each site became visible to me, always suspended alongside its present, unassuming state. I learned that nothing came from nowhere, that this was a place with stories.



Image 1. *of fiction and faction*. Video still. 2018.

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes that, “Many places, profoundly significant to particular individuals and groups, have little visual prominence. They are known viscerally, as it were, and not through the discerning eye or mind. A function of literary art is to give visibility to intimate experiences, including those of place.”¹ Much of my work as an artist begins with this urge to give visibility to intimate experiences—*especially* those of place. While Tuan refers specifically to literary art, I approach the question of how those experiences can be expressed as an artist rooted in performative and lens-based practice. How does one come to understand a place? How can a place, with all its complexity, be articulated or re-inscribed elsewhere? And what is the value in doing so?

Through this line of questioning, I found myself returning to the writing of art critic and media theorist Boris Groys. His text *Going Public* was influential to my early research, articulating concerns I had yet to form coherently and providing direction for how this project could be enacted. In *Going Public*, Groys introduces the notion of the archive as a blueprint for the future. “By being stored in the archive as documentation, life can be repeatedly relived and reproduced within historical time—should anyone resolve to undertake such reproduction,” he notes.² The archive thus acts as a set of proposals that can be enacted or reproduced at a later date. I have always understood my work to be both of and for the archive; an attempt to recover hidden stories and contribute to an ongoing body of knowledge of a place.

In the context of this project, I use the *archive* to refer specifically to a documented form of knowledge, such as photographs, planning documents, newspapers, and written accounts of a site’s past. This definition takes its cues from performance studies scholar Diana Taylor, who distinguishes between the archive and the repertoire, the former composed of texts and narratives, the latter comprised of scenarios.³ The repertoire of embodied memory include gestures, movement, oral histories, and other

¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 162.

² Boris Groys, *Going Public* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010), 82-83.

³ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 16-20.

performative acts. Repertoire is enacted in the encounter with the place itself, and to document this encounter is to return it to the archival realm. To this effect, the written texts, fabricated objects, and two-channel video installation that comprise this thesis exhibition act as potential contributions to the Scarborough archive. It is an alternative archive, one which can enact what I will later come to define as imaginary pragmatics—a blueprint for the future of suburban revolution.

This support paper extends upon the research that informed the development of the exhibition *of fiction and faction*, installed at the Doris McCarthy Gallery at the University of Toronto Scarborough from April 20–26, 2018. The exhibition’s main feature is a two-channel video projection, which follows two fictitious groups of activists working in Scarborough. The video is accompanied by a series of objects that have contributed to, or resulted from, the speculative events that occur on screen.

The following text is interwoven with short anecdotes that have shaped the project’s narrative, presented as epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter.

2. Forging Communities

The city amalgamated when I was five years old. Growing up, I would visit the former city hall on business with my father. The building was adjacent to the mall, and both contained magical fountains. One was filled with fluorescent orange koi fish, and the other was outfitted with brightly coloured hot air balloons that would rise and fall above the water. I would run to the fountain's edge, joined on either side by other, equally enthralled young visitors to throw in a penny and make a wish. Only years later did I realize the mall and the civic centre weren't one and the same.

—

Where do we stage a revolution in suburbia?

In *Time and the Suburbs*, Rohan Quinby theorizes on this central question. Decentralization and fragmentation are key characteristics of suburbia, and those properties make gathering in public spaces a challenging prospect for the contemporary organizer. Where can radical politics find space in suburbia—a space that is central, communal, and accessible?

Shopping malls are hubs of youth culture in suburbia, and they hold much potential. In *Retrofitting Suburbia*, authors Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson profile a number of suburban retrofit projects. A large portion of these projects utilize “dead malls”—regional shopping centres that have failed to maintain their relevance. Reflecting on the case study of Park Forest, an influential early suburb in Illinois, the authors note, “the Plaza played the role of civic center and when the mall began to fail, the space of public life was diminished.”⁴ The Plaza was eventually retrofitted into a downtown model, and cited as an in-progress success story.

⁴ Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson, *Retrofitting Suburbia: urban design solutions for redesigning suburbs* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 119-123.

But what if the mall doesn't fail? In the case of Scarborough Town Centre, the mall has maintained active use over the years, despite the turnover of many anchor department stores. As teenagers, my friends and I would roam the mall every weekend, and the place felt like *ours*—but the mall is a privately owned public space, and its reason for existing is to serve corporate interests. In December of 2014, an ice storm swept across Toronto, leaving much of Scarborough without power. In the days before Christmas, families flocked to the heated mall, searching for a free outlet to charge their phones while last-minute shoppers flowed around them. At the time, it did feel as though a newfound community had come together to support one another in a time of need. Then, on December 25, the mall closed, leaving families without warm, secure shelter. We spent Christmas day in my friend's driveway, huddled together inside their minivan.



Image 2. *of fiction and faction*. Video still. 2018.

Suburbia tends to suffer from a lack of third places, a term sociologist Ray Oldenburg uses to describe informal public gathering places. Identifying the home as a first place and the workplace as a second place, Oldenburg defines third places as social spaces—a neutral ground where people can

regularly gather with ease and without great financial burden.⁵ In Toronto, these third places are often restricted by zoning bylaws that mandate the separation of residential, commercial, and industrial activities—bylaws which are most visibly enforced in the suburbs.

Third places are where community building occurs; they are the spaces where “people can encounter one another, and where new affinities can be met and forged.”⁶ This makes them ideal incubators for revolutionary potential. Those who grew up in suburbia know third places are often found in unexpected spaces—the alley behind the Dairy Queen, where the smokers congregate; the beach on a warm summer night; squeezed into the backseat of a friend’s car, more bodies than seat belts, driving around aimlessly.

What would it look like if the communities that occupy these liminal spaces came together and began a movement? *of fiction and faction* speculates two possible answers: Scarborough Sourdough, and the Orange Jackets. The former is a group of novice bakers, establishing sourdough culture in Scarborough; the latter, a group of activists who don orange high-visibility hoodies, engaging in direct—if ambiguous—action.

⁵ Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (New York: Marlowe; [Berkeley, Calif.]: Distributed by Publishers Group West, 1999), 14-25.

⁶ Andy Merrifield, *The politics of the encounter: urban theory and protest under planetary urbanization* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2013), 123.

3. Fuel Economy

I would drive along the city line with one of my first loves in the passenger seat. We discussed capitalism and its structures, and how we planned to overhaul them. We would travel these streets often; I liked that there were no streetlights, that it straddled some of the last remaining farm land that kept suburbia from feeling completely suffocated by residential subdivisions. Along one of these roads was an auto wrecker, and as we crossed the railroad tracks in approach our headlights lit up a reflective sign: PIGS LITTER, PEOPLE DON'T, it declared, a cartoon pig, popping its head out of a garbage can, smiling back at us. We laughed at the absurdity of it: the pig, an innocent scapegoat perched alongside the mounds of tires and other human-produced waste that lay on the other side of the fence.

—

Our revolution begins on ground level, with footsteps.⁷ Walking is an essential part of the process of getting to know a place. Peripatetic practice becomes a primary way of knowledge building; it is the first step towards an embodied understanding of a site. For me, this is a primary research-collection method, to spend time and duration with a site, to identify its sights and sounds, to navigate its topology, to make note of who and what is encountered. To walk upon the ground is to embed it within my own body, to have it become part of my tacit knowledge.

My real interest, though, lies in the connection between places and stories. Having spent my childhood in Scarborough, I had the opportunity to develop a relationship with the landscape over a long duration, and during a period of time when one is most actively on foot. In the suburbs, it is primarily the youth and the elderly who travel by foot or public transit; only able-bodied adults are given the key to

⁷ Adapted from Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 97.

“unlock the rigid geographic segregation” of the suburbs, as Philip Langdon describes it.⁸ That is, quite literally, the keys to a car. For suburbia to be resilient in the face of both climate change and social inequality, it must move away from auto dependency and towards a reduction in reliance on oil.⁹



Image 3. *of fiction and faction*. Video still. 2018.

Car culture is deeply entwined with the history of suburbia, but human movement in Scarborough far predates the invention of the automobile. On June 24, 2017, artists Camille Turner and Cheryl L’Hirondelle led a walking tour of Rouge National Urban Park as part of their *Freedom Tours*. Intended to “unravel the settler narratives of the park,” the tour acknowledged the significance of Indigenous presence on this land, which dates back 10,000 years and continues today. The walking tour took the form of a march along Reesor Road, with participants armed with hand-made signs, flags and t-shirts protesting

⁸ Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: a history of walking* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 252.

⁹ Peter Newman, Timothy Beatley and Heather Boyer, *Resilient cities: Responding to peak oil and climate change* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2009), 10.

environmental injustices.¹⁰ As the tour proceeded, the artists would stop along the route to call attention to sights and sounds that tend to go undetected—from bird vocalization to oil pipeline markers. Through both their conversation and their choice of action, the artists emphasized the transformative potential of walking in these spaces that have been commandeered by cars, and its capacity for education, connection, and resistance.

Less than three months prior to *Freedom Tours*, a five-alarm fire broke out just down the road at Standard Auto Wreckers. In theory, the auto wrecker is something environmentalists should support: an independently-owned business for recycling car parts. In practice, Standard Auto Wreckers has become a symbolic centre of environmental destruction in Scarborough. The auto wrecker represents much of what environmentalists criticize about the suburbs: its auto dependency and, by extension, its reliance on fossil fuels. At the auto wrecker, conspicuous consumption is on display in its post-consumer carnage, making visible what went unspoken in the mall.

Purchased in 1979, the land on which the auto wrecker operates is part of the Greenbelt, subject to strict environmental regulations.¹¹ Since 2015, the land is also part of Rouge National Urban Park, which positions it as a private business operating within a public space, and specifically a space earmarked for nature conservation and recreation. Its dubious connection to oil is also cause for concern. In 2010, oil and fuel were discovered leaking from the auto wrecker into the nearby creek, and fires that occurred in 2014 and 2017 were either caused by or complicated by the on-site oil pits.¹² It is also worth noting that the auto wrecker is located less than one kilometre away from Line 9, a controversial Enbridge oil pipeline.

¹⁰ “Camille Turner & Cheryl L’Hirondelle: Freedom Tours,” LandMarks 2017, accessed March 1, 2018, <https://landmarks2017.ca/freedom-tours/>.

¹¹ “Gold Standard: Standard Auto Wreckers has led by example since 1979,” *Canadian Auto Recyclers Annual Guide*, October 4, 2006.

¹² Andrew Palamarchuk, “Welding equipment may have caused big blaze at Standard Auto Wreckers,” *Scarborough Mirror*, April 7, 2017.

The Standard Auto Wreckers is a narrative link throughout the project, and its central presence suggests political and environmental motivations behind the Orange Jackets' actions. In the video, and physically present in the exhibition itself, is a fabricated replica of the *PIGS LITTERS, PEOPLE DON'T* sign. Designed from memory, the oversized sign amplifies the original sign's absurdity, generating a further disjuncture between fact and fiction. The sign, along with the other props that appear and reappear both on screen and in the gallery, are set pieces for the staging of a revolution.

4. Fiction

What's your favourite place to go here? I ask.

She thinks quietly for a moment.

I don't go places here.

I just move between houses, schoolyards, and libraries.

—

A difficulty I have found in attempting to document or archive the experience of a place is that there can be no effective primary source apart from the site itself, its physical presence. As Groys notes, “The process of documenting something always opens up a disparity between the document itself and the documented events, a divergence that can be neither bridged nor erased.”¹³ Each primary source is necessarily compiled of second-hand accounts, subjective experiences of a site by others. Thus the question of what means we have to represent a place as a thing-in-itself became prominent in my research.

In 2015, Trinity Square Video in Toronto presented a two-channel video installation by German artist Isabell Spengler, entitled *Two Days at the Falls*. In the first channel, a slow-moving camera pans 360-degrees around a studio filled with absurd constructions: fog machines, white foam, glittery sequined fabrics and metallic streamers in blue and silver overwhelm the cramped room. The second, identical in pacing and cinematography, presents a present-day scene of Niagara Falls. The first channel documents an imagined place constructed by the artist in her Berlin studio prior to visiting the Falls, a model of how she imagined it to be based on its depiction in various visual media and texts. This place was not fictitious, in the sense that it did exist in physical space and time in order for her to document it; it was an alternative. Having visited the Falls many times myself, this alternative place felt almost *more* real, or at least more revealing: it presented multiple temporalities, referencing figures and events from the past whose traces are no longer present on the physical site.

¹³ Groys, *Going Public*, 81.

With this in mind, I looked towards fiction as a way of discovering deeper truths about suburbia than could be revealed in facts and figures. I was rewarded with captivating writing that described suburban life with beauty and complexity in the works of many authors, notably David Chariandy, Catherine Hernandez, and Jordan Tannahill. These texts served as touchstones as I began to consider how fictitious speculation could be incorporated into this narrative in a way that acknowledged and engaged with its embedded reality. This led to my interest in fermentation, and specifically, sourdough.



Image 4. *Scarborough Sourdough*. Instagram feed (detail). 2018.

In *Fermenting Feminism*, artist and writer Jessica Bebenek writes that fermentation presents itself “almost too easily” as a metaphor. She continues, “Rejecting metaphor in favour of ‘the thing in itself’ requires extending our feeling, stretching our empathy towards understanding something, not based on its

use in relation to human comprehension, but towards attempting to understand it purely for *what it is*.”¹⁴

In parallel with this project, I began to cultivate my own sourdough starter, tracking its progress via the image-based social media platform Instagram. As the process grew more demanding, and other sourdough enthusiasts and local bakeries began to engage with the Instagram account, the project’s relationship to fiction grew increasingly complex.

The process of maintaining a sourdough starter necessarily stretches beyond the metaphorical implications of fermentation. Wild yeast adapts to the environment, meaning that even if a sourdough starter is obtained from a friend in another place, that starter will begin to capture the wild yeast of its new home. No matter its origins, any sourdough starter actively feeding in Scarborough would create specifically Scarborough sourdough. Its specific flavours and textures are made possible only through the starter’s active engagement with the cultures in the air already present here. Cultivating Scarborough Sourdough physically embeds the region of production into a tangible, edible manifestation.

¹⁴ Jessica Bebenek, “Something That’s Dead,” in *Fermenting Feminism*, ed. Lauren Fournier (s.l.: Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology, 2017), 6-7, <http://e-artexte.ca/28709/>.

5. Fermentation & Scarborough Sourdough

It's hard to stay, I say to her.

It's hard not to, she responds.

—

Transformation is a slow and unattractive process, but it is necessary to yield appealing results—and suburbia is in need of transformation.

Brenda Case Scheer, a professor of architecture and city planning, describes sites of suburban transformation in bodily terms, as tissues—static, campus, or elastic—with elastic tissues being those areas most amenable to change.¹⁵ These areas are located along paths that tend to predate planned suburban settlement, and are composed of retail, commercial and industrial uses, such as the strip malls that line major arterial roads.¹⁶ Scheer notes that in these areas, change is fast-paced and characterized by “rapid turnover in businesses; obsolescence, major remodeling and destruction of buildings; and the aggregation and subdivision of land to create new development opportunities...the elastic tissues are the only place that significant change can happen in a short period of time.”¹⁷ These characteristics inevitably mean that elastic tissues are the sites in suburbia most vulnerable to gentrification.

Elasticity also refers to the property of bread dough which allows it to regain its shape after being stretched. The term is defined separately from extensibility, which refers to the property of dough that allows it to be stretched. The latter term is also used in the context of architecture, referring to architecture designed to anticipate and accommodate growth. Applying these terms to Scheer’s analogy of suburban sprawl allows us to conceptualize potential ways of initiating change within suburbia that resists gentrification. Imagine suburbia as a ball of dough; more specifically, sourdough. To make sourdough, a baker must begin with sourdough starter, a culture of flour and water that cultivates wild yeast and

¹⁵ Brenda Case Scheer, “The Anatomy of Sprawl,” *Places* 14, no. 2 (2001): 33-35.

¹⁶ Scheer, “The Anatomy of Sprawl,” 34.

¹⁷ Scheer, “The Anatomy of Sprawl,” 34.

bacteria that ferment the sugars in the dough. Once established, sourdough starter can be kept indefinitely, as long as it is properly cared for and fed. The active starter is then used to create a leaven for the dough. A quality dough requires a sufficient balance of extensibility and elasticity; it must be extensible, in order to stretch it into various forms like a baguette, but it also must be elastic in order to support itself and hold its shape.



Image 5. *of fiction and faction*. Video still. 2018.

The transformation of a neighbourhood relies on a similar balance of extensibility and elasticity. Development stretches a neighbourhood in terms of its physical and social shape, and elastic tissues would be highly extensible in this regard. Elasticity would be the ability of the neighbourhood to regain its shape in the aftermath of these changes. It is the ability of a place to resist the harmful effects of gentrification; for its culture, identity, and existing communities to remain without being displaced.

The process of producing sourdough is inherently empathic and doing it well requires embodied knowledge; the starter's progress is monitored through sound, scent and taste, and in its early stages it

must be closely monitored and fed. This method could be employed as an approach to community-based research: with care, active engagement, and a willingness to commit for an extended period of time.

The process also requires an ongoing discarding of starter, in order to avoid excess. Alternatively, starter can be kept in the refrigerator, allowing it to hibernate for longer periods between feedings. Continuing the performative action of feeding the starter parallels how activist groups gain and maintain power: through consistent, ongoing feedings, and the ability to lay dormant, adapt, or split off. And once they have split off, sourdough starters (and activist groups) begin to feed in a new environment, with potentially different factors, taking on new and distinctive regional characteristics. In this way, sourdough starter can act as an embodied archive of a place—a repertoire, to be enacted by the next baker.

6. Frameworks for Revolution

On one of these night drives, as we wound along Sewells Road, we were confronted by a group of people standing motionless at the side of the road, staring back at us. All were dressed in fluorescent orange jackets with a reflective X, the only thing visible along this strip of unlit road. The fact of the protest was undeniable, but what they were protesting was unclear. The rest of the drive was spent silent, deep in thought.

I was most unsettled by my positioning in this scene: me behind the wheel, playing the role of antagonist, instead of on foot, shrouded in an orange jacket.

—

In *The Politics of the Encounter*, Andy Merrifield begins to construct a new language for revolution and social protest in the wake of the post-metropolis, a term Edward W. Soja has defined in an attempt to encapsulate the complex restructuring of the contemporary globalized city. This project takes up many of the concepts proposed by Merrifield, one of which is the notion of *imaginary pragmatics*—an “imaginative form of action and activism.” As Merrifield explains, “It’s not that ideas get tested with reality to see if they work (the classic definition of pragmatism) but rather to see if an experimental idea can be tested with one’s own imagination to find out whether it can be *made true*.”¹⁸ Imaginary pragmatics is the realm in which this project operates.

Early on, when I would describe my plans for this project, I was urged by various friends and mentors to watch Lizzie Borden’s *Born in Flames* (1983). Watching it for the first time in 2017, what struck me was how prophetic many of the scenes felt—for me, many of these figures, movements, and actions had already become real. I saw *Born in Flames* in the work of Black Lives Matter, the Occupy movement, Wikileaks, and more, though the technological means differ. It seemed impossible that the

¹⁸ Merrifield, *The politics of the encounter: urban theory and protest under planetary urbanization*, 115.

film predates the term intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in the late 1980s—its treatment of the complex intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are so thoroughly engaged with the theory. *Born in Flames*, it seems, was also engaged in imaginary pragmatics—and Borden’s ideas were made true.



Image 6. *of fiction and faction*. Video still. 2018.

With its representations of direct action, *Born in Flames* also employs the kind of performative protest described by art critic John Berger as “rehearsals for revolution: not strategic or even tactical ones, but rehearsals of revolutionary awareness.”¹⁹ Though Berger refers to mass demonstrations, I extend his proposal to include the fictional demonstrations that take place in film and video. The ability of these media to be distributed widely extends their potential for building revolutionary awareness, even further than Berger’s example. Berger also notes that “demonstrations express political ambitions before the political means necessary to realize them have been created.”²⁰ In this way, the sometimes ambiguous

¹⁹ John Berger, “The Nature of Mass Demonstrations,” *International Socialism* 34 (Autumn 1968): 11-12.

²⁰ Berger, “The Nature of Mass Demonstrations,” 11-12.

actions of Scarborough Sourdough and the Orange Jackets function as speculative proposals, expressing the ambitions of a revolutionary moment that has yet to begin.

7. Feminism + Relational Activism

I read a book once where a woman sees a field of monarchs and mistakes them for a forest fire. The way the scene is described is so incredibly beautiful. As I was reading, I thought, 'they should make this into a movie' - maybe if people could see that beauty, they'd feel something, some new kind of empathy for the earth. Or maybe I just wanted to see it for myself.

—

In Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Flight Behavior*, a disillusioned housewife living in rural Tennessee discovers that the valley behind their farm has become a site of overwintering for millions of monarch butterflies. This discovery attracts a team of university researchers concerned about the butterfly population in the face of climate change, and the novel's heroine, Dellarobia Turnbow, welcomes them into her home, eventually taking on a research position with the team. Though the eco-dystopian novel is fictional, the migration of monarchs is a real phenomenon, of which the discovery is credited to Professor Fred Urquhart and featured in the 2012 documentary IMAX film, *Flight of Butterflies*.

Fred Urquhart and his wife, Norah, lived in a house on Military Trail in Scarborough, just down the road from the University of Toronto Scarborough (then Scarborough College), where Fred taught, and only a block away from the house I later grew up in. Their home and property became the central node in a continent-wide network of tracking monarch butterfly migration. In the 1950s, the couple spearheaded a tagging program from their backyard, and Norah wrote articles published in the far reaches of Canada, the United States and Mexico, calling for volunteers to assist in the tracking of the tagged butterflies. The recruitment of these citizen scientists—for which Norah was chiefly responsible—eventually led to the discovery of the butterflies' overwintering site in Mexico. But Google "Norah Urquhart", and what pops up is the Wikipedia page for Fred Urquhart. Women tend to suffer most in this kind of misattribution, often because they lack the credentials of their (typically male) partners.

Considering the stories of Dellarobia and Norah Urquhart from a feminist perspective reveals parallels in their approaches and contributions to activism. In both cases, their ability to build community through hospitality and interpersonal relationships is the critical force behind their success as activists. A 1992 study by Paul Mohai of the gender gap in environmental concern and activism led to the formation of what has been called Mohai's Paradox. The paradox states that women tend to be more environmentally conscious, and express more concern about environmental issues than men, but are less engaged in environmental activism. Subsequent studies sought to identify the barriers that women face in conventional activism, and defined a term that better expresses women's involvement in the environmental movement: relational activism.



Image 7. *of fiction and faction*. Video still. 2018.

Relational activism is “largely unseen and unrecognized,” focused on interpersonal connections amongst individuals, and the embodiment of values within one’s daily life.²¹ This type of activism helps to sustain conventional activism, ensuring communities are strong, resilient and sustainable, and fostering

²¹ Sara O’Shaughnessy and Emily Huddart Kennedy, “Relational Activism: Reimagining Women’s Environmental Work as Cultural Change,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 4 (2010): 568.

long-term cultural shifts. Relational activism builds on the strength of the generous, accommodating attitudes women are socialized to inhabit, allowing them to assert influence amongst individuals. This makes women-identified activists powerful leaders at the grassroots level. It is for these reasons that all the members of Scarborough Sourdough and the Orange Jackets are women—for to speculate on who will initiate the revolution seems less important than to recognize who will work to sustain it.

8. Final Thoughts

Here at the bluff's edge
In strip malls and vacant lots
Suburban futures



Image 8. *of fiction and faction*. Video still. 2018.

“Revolutions are always politics made bodily, politics when actions become the usual form of speech,” writes Rebecca Solnit.²² *of fiction and faction* is a suburban revolution made bodily, an acting out of political ambition. Mapping out issues of environmental sustainability, collective action, and activism in the suburbs, this project attempts to form a constellation that will aid in navigating the potential revolutionary futures of Scarborough.

Piled on a long wooden table are loaves of fresh sourdough bread, surrounded by clamp-lid glass jars labelled *Scarborough Sourdough*, each filled with active sourdough starter. This is the final component of the exhibition: an opportunity for visitors to taste the bread, and if they wish, take home a

²² Solnit, *Wanderlust: a history of walking*, 220.

starter. The speculative world of Scarborough Sourdough and the Orange Jackets, only a sample of the complexity of suburbia, are embedded in each jar of starter. Given away freely, the starter has the potential to form new communities; that is, if it is cared for, protected, and well fed.

of fiction and faction attempts to offer new possibilities for community-building in suburbia, hinting at these potentialities. Perhaps, if the revolution is proposed, it can be built into the repertoire and incorporated into the archive—left to ferment, ready to be cultivated by a new generation.

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