

On Cartographies: Skins, Surfaces, Doings

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This special issue of *Liminalities* comes at a time of proliferating perforations in the membrane of cartographies, mapping, tracking, tracing, and embodiments (both human and more-than-human, virtual and corporeal). Our title, *Skins, Surfaces, Doings*, indicates our recognition of the interrelatedness of bodies and their membranes, the surfaces across which we move, and the doings that provoke the continuing return to maps and mappings of many kinds. This is not a special issue that seeks to “map the territory” of a (not new but) deepening area of research. Rather, it offers readers an assemblage of cartographic doings at the horizon, appropriately materialising in the space of *Liminalities*.

The collection brings together scholars who are not just thinking about maps, cartographies, and traces, but who also perform them in a landscape of images, essays, poems, animations, photographs, drawings, collages, video installations, diagrams, badges, a Prezi presentation, and a mountain climb. Even where words are employed as the creative tool for perambulation, readers must work to enter into the worlds of these maps (Barad). These performances take us flying up and over land and mountainscapes; search the depths of the ocean; step into the flow of rivers and coastlines; home in and into the bodyspacetime of relationships and families; imagine personal, virtual, and research transformations; and delve into the dispossessing and disappearing discourses of migration, racism, settler colonialism, haunting, and the fugitive. From the vast recesses of the heavens to the dark depths of the sea, the doings in this issue assert that what is marked and unmarked in our cartographic yearnings are not binary opposites (as they sometimes appear on paper maps) but rather (in our imaginaries) bleed like a cut finger, flash and fade like memories, and call out like a trail of breadcrumbs that marks the pulse of intensities and emotions (Stewart “Afterword”).

Cartography takes as its mandate the coordinate and the topography, the singular and the collective, the aesthetic and the epistemic. Kathleen Stewart tells us that such affective cartographies build “an idiosyncratic map of connections between a series of singularities” and gaze “outward to an ordinary world whose forms of living are now being composed and suffered,” and whose destinations are yet to be realized (*Ordinary Affects* 4-5).

Maps take us, as it were, to the edges of the known world, ever outward, the body always in tow. At these edges, we make and use maps to chart not only the journeys that get us “there”—that somewhere on the horizon—but also

those that seemingly leave us “lost” and searching. As Tim Ingold reminds us, even in the night sky, “we imagine the stars to be invisibly connected by ghostly lines into constellations...only by doing so can we tell stories about them” (49). Places and things and time are bounded and known by stories, by lines of narrative, if not always lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari 9-10).

Here maps are assertive objects in dynamic relation to their users and affective actors in changing landscapes. This interstice invites encounters with maps and mapping as dis/re/orienteering tools, geographic deviations, dynamic partners in “getting lost,” and/or navigational accomplices. Cartography is also, perhaps equally, the art of “mapping of the body’s inner surface, the surface of sensations, intensities, and affects, the ‘subjective experience’ of bodily “excitations and sensations” (Grosz 37).

Beyond mapping the sometimes difficult, sometimes thrilling terrain of emotional geographies, the pieces in this issue ask how we recognise the longitudes and latitudes of our experiences, and those experiences we have sought to avoid, detour, reroute. It celebrates the benefits of being disoriented, of disappearing, of “falling off the map.” It asks us to collectively question the role of bodies and embodiment in processes of becoming lost and (sometimes) found. It asks how maps might perform enactments of “a layered body, a body of many surfaces” —surfaces that may be permeated, punctured, land/marked, scarred — and “laid one upon the other” (Halberstam 1).

Maps, like all signifying systems, are representations. Like histories, they are not merely composed of so-called facts, but co-construct such facts and stories, and in doing so attach use-values to not only places but to the times and beings that move through and in them. For this reason, Mark Monmonier calls maps “intellectual weapons” in their constitution and construction of times, places, histories, and bodies (90). He writes, “Not only is it easy to lie with maps, it’s essential” (1).

Following Ingold, this issue explores the relationship between representations and realness, where lines may “appear on maps and charts as traces drawn with pen and ink, using a ruler and compass” but which “have no physical counterpart in the world” (49). The essays in the collection recognize that our modern hunger for representational order and the real conceals the “contingent, unplanned and irrational character” of our world (Turnbull 1) and they revel in the impossibility of defining the threshold between world and not-world, real and not-real, the map from the tracing (Deleuze and Guattari 13-14). The kinds of lines made by the essays, images, animations, and video renderings in this special issue present “us with an array of interconnected destinations that can, as on a route-map, be viewed all at once” (Ingold 73). The contributions here suggest that the only way forward is through performance, through doings that explore the risks of mapping and of not-mapping, and show how our ability to get lost and find our way out remain central to the experience of being alive.

Maps are more than artefacts that chart lives as “already lived” (Manning 196). They are the shifting, changing, and nomadic stories we tell ourselves and each other—stories that can be “mapped in infinite” and “deeply selective” ways (Solit 162), a view ontologically and epistemologically supported by posthumanist and feminist new materialist scholarship (see Ahmed, Braidotti, Barad and Bennett, amongst others). Thus even though, or perhaps because, it is easy, even essential to “lie” with maps, our efforts to put in motion our/an experience of the world—mapping as doing, the “activation for life-living of a process of shaping”—just might propose a “new mode of existence” (196).

These makers have engaged with cartographies as “lived circuits of action and reaction,” mapping “something coming into [new modes of] existence” (Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* 339-340). We offer you these cartographies as skins; entanglements with and along and through surfaces; as scratchings, habits, and durations; as performative enactments of affective and artefactual lives that activate life-living processes. Introductions are maps too, and we decline this opportunity to offer the foreclosed words of a traditional introduction. Consider this anti-introduction a now-map, an invitation to set out, to leap, to enter this world of maps with no maps. Place yourself here as a fellow traveller and find your own way through this collection.

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