

(note written for Western Front Journal. Two essays)

Object-Object. Person-Person. Person-Object. Person-Place. Placelessplace

spurse & rachel fouladi

There are attachments between objects where a literal description of the physical attachment of object A with object B can be provided, such as an arm being attached to a body, a roof being attached to the walls, a picture frame hung on a wall. That is one kind of attachment. We can attach with nails, glue, string, wire, gum, spit, screws, weights, cord, wire, welds, proximity, dowels... There are also other attachments where a description may be provided of a non-physical attachment relationship between sentient beings, such as that between parent and child, siblings, partners, close friends, animal and person. When we say, a person is really attached to someone else – we are not saying they are walking around with a physical cord between them ... yet we are saying that there is something visible in the invisible which manifests the relationship. In the case of person-person or person-animal attachments we are describing a close emotional bond between the two individuals under discussion. We are characterizing the desire for the two individuals to maintain a relationship with each other and to be close to each other. We are characterizing a relationship in which the partners feel safe when the other is nearby and responsive, share discoveries with one another, demonstrate a mutual fascination and preoccupation with one another. Perhaps we talking of bidirectional emotional strings? This attachment grows through shared experiences, give-and-take, response-reaction. (Obviously this relation could be quite distinct and appear similar – with the attachment being political, social, economic, ownership, chance, they take a similar bus, need similar dental products...). Besides object-object relations or person-person relations, there is also however the relationship that exists between person-object -- the child's relationship with her blanket, monkey (his name was Gora), ceramic bird (Tweetie), books (well, there were a few). (Though I don't have my blanket anymore, the story as told by my sister is my mother pretended it got lost – I didn't even know I had had an attachment relation with a blanket; I do know however that I still have my ceramic bird – it was the one thing I was allowed to bring with me (better said, I was allowed to choose one thing) when we left Iran early February 1979). The person-object relationship is an interesting type of relationship in that it is a relationship across categories, wherein the categorical separation between the person and object becomes replaced with a linkage. In this linkage it becomes hard to maintain the object status of the object (or of the subject for that matter – does the bird produce the “I” that I become, or do “I” produce the “I” that the bird allows me to become? Now clearly it could be argued whether these are true attachment relationships (how does the blanket call out to me?). The key question becomes who am I when the blanket calls out? Why did the bird forsake me? What agency or subjectivity – what creature -- would make me and then leave me? Is that possible? What has left? Am I who “I” am because of a leaving? According to some attachment theorists such as John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, parent-child attachments which develop at an early age, even within the first year, form a template for attachments developed later in life. It could be postulated that the other early person-person and person-object attachments are also precursor for attachments de-

veloped later. The paradox here is that attachment to something “other” happens *before* we have the cognitive capacities to recognize anything as distinct from ourselves. (Importantly, however, contrary to some attachment models these scripts are not etched in stone (c.f., Fraley, and recent work of Fouladi with Moller and McCarthy)). Typical models involve individual differences in attachment representations shaped by variation in experiences in early childhood, and that, in turn, these early representations shape the quality of the individual's subsequent attachment relations. One model assumes that the representational models developed in childhood are maintained and continue to influence cognitions, emotion, and behavior throughout an individual's life span. (We cannot say what we could mean by “representational models” – it is an immanent abstraction that produces a transversal point of emergent attachment). Another model assumes that existing representations are updated and revised in light of new experiences such that older representations are eventually “overwritten.” (Elegant mathematical analyses reveal that these two models predict very different things for the long-term stability of these individual differences). So what is the nature of person-person attachment relations, and what are the factors that influence person's attachment relations? There are a variety of methodologies which aim to assess the nature of person-person attachments – but there is debate at the adequacy of these methodologies due to the lack of evidence for the concurrent and predictive validity of these measurement technologies; nonetheless the work continues. What about the nature of this key person-object attachment relation? (Is this even an actual category? Does “subject/object” even exist as a phenomenological possibility for us? The ontological question of the possibility of “subject/object” relations seems an unfeasible metaphysical project. (We do not have the space to argue this here – but let us suspend the argument for the duration of this article). Could we ask what agency move across *the event* of a person meeting something? (How does the agency of a thing (itself an event) manifest?). The question leads to an infinite regress of attachments. *But that assumes a world of things*. But could not the act of attachment – this space inbetween have its own ontological category separate from what it attaches? The relation is itself an ontological category beside and within that which it joins. *X and Y* – where the “and” is not just the connection but is in fact the “becoming transformed” which exceeds both the original *X/Y*. It is the conjoined otherness of *X/Y* such that they are no longer either *X* or *Y* or *X/Y* – it is as if now $1 + 1 = M$. (Of course there still is an *X* and a *Y* and a *X/Y* – but now there is also something else. The disjunctive leap which is the event of attachment – an attachment that at once folds back in time and folds forward into the future to exceed time. With this “and of inbetweenness that ruptures” a terrain unfolds. Things arise. Things stretch out. “And” forms an “elsewhere”. This we could claim is the production of *place*. Place is that *which we cannot be separated from without changing everything*. The “I”, the “we” is an event of “place”. Let us try a brief experiment: An Interview. Ask people about places. It would not be hard to imagine how each of those individuals that were interviewed would rate each of the following statements – statements which are at beginnings of an attempt to think of relationship of person to place and community as an attachment bond, a recognition that there can be an affective bond between person and place integrally connected to a person's cognitions and perceptions of the place and a person's reactions to the place, with the consequence in the case of a strong attachment for the person to want to maintain closeness to such this place.

1. I feel this place is a part of me.
2. This place is very special to me.
3. I identify strongly with this place.
4. I am very attached to this place.
5. Being at this place says a lot about who I am.
6. This place means a lot to me.
7. This place is the best place for what I like to do.
8. No other place can compare to this place.
9. I get more satisfaction out of being at this place than any other.
10. Doing what I do at this place is more important to me than doing it any other place.
11. I wouldn't substitute any other place for doing the types of things I do at this place.
12. I plan to stay in this place.
13. I would be sad if I had to leave this place.
14. If could be any place, I would choose this place.
15. I "belong" in this place.
16. This place is a good place to be.
17. This place is the most ideal.
18. I would not be just as satisfied in this place, as in any other place.
19. This place says a lot about who I am.
20. I feel myself in this place.
21. This place reflects the type of person I am.
22. This place is part of me.
23. When I think of home, I think of this place.
24. I feel at home in this place.
25. I feel comfortable in this place.
26. Of all the places I could or have been, this is my favorite place.
27. I would be distressed, if I were not at this place.
28. This place is not perfect, but I still would not want to be anywhere else.

Ok, but what does this mean? In asking these questions one realizes that *place can have no image*. The calculus of place is a cast of the dice – but in the very moment of landing (attachment) place forms and reforms us otherwise. (Do we have an image?). We recognize place only in liminal moments (the blanket talks back, the rain speaks to you...). What we seem to call place – that which we are attached to as something recognizable – is something else. (An other politics of Identities?). Capital always speaks to us of place precisely because (1) it is what we cannot leave and (2) paradoxically because it is what we cannot recognize – capital surfs false recognition and our desire for recognition. (Now clearly, persons do not have the monopoly on relations to place, certainly and animals and plants have a clear relation to place. The rhizome that takes root. The dog that finds its way home after being plucked by a bird of prey. The bear that returns to its place. The salmon that finds its way home. How would each of them endorse the above statements? How can we ever recognize ourselves?) A hand reaches out

Rachel T. Fouladi and spurse (Rachel T. Fouladi is an Assistant Professor of Theory and Methods in the Department of Psychology at Simon Fraser University and an member of *spurse* a transdisciplinary art/architecture collective with current exhibitions at the Massachusetts Museum for Contemporary Art and the Maine State Legislature (for more information www.spurse.org)).

References:

Deleuze, G. (1953). *Empirisme et Subjectivite. Essai sur la Nature Humaine selon Hume*. Press Universitaires de France.

Camazine, Deneubourg, Franks, Sneyd, Theraulaz, and Bonabeau. (2001). *Self-Organization in Biological Systems*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Vandermeer, J. & Goldberg, D. (2003). *Population Ecology*. Princeton University Press.

Margulis, L. & Sagen, D. (2002). *Acquiring Genomes*. New York: Basic Books.

**(CONTINUO: MOVEMENTS ACROSS QUESTIONS OF ATTACHMENT) TO PLACE
SPURSE**

In the March/April issue of FRONT, we considered the topic of attachment through a meditation on varied attachments and posed a series of questions regarding attachment. Our writings were to be continued on p. 35 of that issue, but due to a typesetting error the rest of the piece was omitted and what was printed instead was our opening paragraph -- a sentence left incomplete. Instead of rerunning the entire article or simply providing an errata with the missing paragraph appearing from nowhere, the FRONT invited a continuo of our consideration of attachment in a dynamic world – a world of transversal movements through the emergent space of the relation.

(Let us continue: On pp. 20-21 of the March/April issue of the FRONT, we asked a series of questions about attachment to place, ranging from place dependency to place identity and the limits of identity based thinking in regards to place.)

But what does this all mean? In asking these questions one realizes that *place can have no image*. The calculus of place is a cast of the dice – but in the very moment of landing (attachment) place forms and reforms us otherwise. We recognize place only in liminal moments (the blanket talks back, the rain speaks to you...). What we seem to call place – that which we are attached to as something recognizable – is something else. (An-other-than politics of Identities?). Capital always speaks to us of place precisely because (1) it is what we cannot leave and (2) paradoxically because it is what we cannot recognize – capital surfs false recognition and our desire for recognition. (Now clearly, persons do not have the monopoly on relations to place, certainly and animals and plants have a clear relation to place. The rhizome that takes root. The dog that finds its way home after being plucked by a bird of prey. The bear that returns to its place. The salmon that finds its way home. How would each of them endorse the preceding statements? How can we ever recognize ourselves?) A hand reaches out...

To be in place is to move – to reach back out.

(there is the story of the physiology of the eye – our eyes quiver constantly – if you were to hold the eye absolutely still with some apparatus (which is what is done experimentally) we would not be able to see anything – a type of blindness. Movement is the co-production of this world – (our world?))

Let us be clear: “to have no image” is not blindness but to *see in and through movement* – to place oneself in the temporality of emergence – when and where something is happening – without it becoming fixed in an identity (a blindness vs a *working in the dark...*).

Substance (place) is a temporal character of modulations – intensities awaiting a form of capture and intensities emerging through capture/transformation (of use). (Think of a stone wall, the sun moves across the wall – one side is hotter than the other – this dynamic intensities is captured/transformed into a becoming place: a snake suns itself on one side, spiders use the shadows to become invisible and capture insects that come to feed off of the defecations of the snake, a bird perches above awaiting the basking of the snake...). Substance is expression in an inter-related modulation of forces. Capture is just the folding back of events upon each other – *the hand reaching out – the hands reaching out – a glance responded to... laughter without source...*