**Crude, Cowboys, and Communities: Exploring the Politics of Migration and Displacement Surrounding the Oil Sands Resource Development**

In 1995, the Canadian Oil Sands Trust was formed to oversee the development of the Oil Sands in Alberta, Canada. As the third largest concentration of proven crude oil in the world the development project surrounding the Oil Sands has produced a number of circuits of migration both in terms of corporate capital investments as well as skilled workers migrating to Alberta, Canada to support the infrastructural projects connected to the oil sands. This paper explores the simultaneous arrival of temporary foreign workers at the infrastructure projects while native communities are dislocated from their traditional lands. This study sees the politics of speed and space as some of the key tendencies that are both at play and at stake within discussions of resource extraction. This analysis will work through different readings of speed politics (the political nature, structure, and trends around speed) and the transformation of acceleration of flows to examine how resource development has interconnected the social, political, and environmental politics of Athabasca, Cold Lake, and Peace River areas of northern Alberta with other transnational sites. The paper then evaluates the long term impacts these development practices are having on the social and economic wellbeing of native communities, the peoples of Alberta, and the implicated temporary foreign workers. Overall, this work evaluates what potential consequences political shifts in environmental policy, physical structures, and living spaces mean for future global resource development and the populations implicated in the development practices of the Oil Sands.

Speed has always been a central concern in regard to the structure of the Oil Sands. What is at stake in the development of this resource industry is not merely an ethical political question but one of what normative structures of social order are being produced through the maximization of speed of extraction and the mobility of bodies and capital flows. The intensification of routes of interconnection from pipelines to the flow of oil tankers are just as much about capitalist development as it is about the national settler project that is Canada. I advance three arguments along this line of analysis. First, the intensification of development produces a deterritorialized social space that is dependent upon the dislocation of certain bodies while increasing visibility of others to the extent that containment is not the goal, but, rather, circulation within surveillance. This is achieved by valorizing the local and the hyper-visible site through which transnational flows move through and inhabit while occulting the logistical predominance of sea, sky, and non-urban spaces that are deterritorialized. Second, the speed of movement is premised upon a political trajectory that makes the Oil Sands the only alternative for a Canadian future at the expense that speed of extraction yields reveals the finite nature of the industry. Third, the Oil Sands development has alternated between the production of various groups as the apotheosis to the liberal modern development of the environment, which has seen the production of fragmented spaces of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, the tension between the rate of extraction and the promise of a national futurity is less a tension of ethics and politics, but a problem around the totalization of industry as national destiny at the expense of other possible pathways of being.

Before we can begin our study of the Alberta Oil Sands and its interconnection with the political, economic, and social landscapes it has created and the pathways of movement it has sculpted it is necessary to examine three key thinkers of speed politics: Paul Virilio, Michel de Certeau, and Frantz Fanon. While these texts are not normally read together in regards to questions of speed and politics there is a core question of how space and movement are produced, maintained, and reproduced for each thinker. By reading their texts together, *Speed and Politics (*Virilio), *The Practice of Everyday Life (*de Certeau), and *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon), it is my intention to craft a self-reflexive epistemology of movement. Rather than merely reiterating the politics of speed I am attempting to read both space and embodiment into Virilio’s understanding of late-capitalism. The reading of movement that I hope to craft here takes spatial, temporal, and postcolonial analytics into mind to read speed as a political project that has multiple outcomes. Three questions animate my reading of these texts: (1) what is the driving force behind speed; (2) how do orders of acceleration operate; (3) who do the politics of openness benefit in each reading of speed? Positing answers to these three questions will allow for a deeper comparison of the elements that divide these thinkers and allow for elements of their theorization to be drawn together. Space, time, and speed have been central structures in the development of capitalism and settler colonialism. Within these frameworks the discourse of openness and closure have become the central mode of discussing liberal multiculturalism and the juridical-legal frameworks of permeation that undergirds colonial violence experienced by indigenous peoples of North America, specifically, Canada.

Virilio opens his study of the politics of speed by asking: “Can asphalt be a political territory? Is the bourgeois State and its power the street, or in the street? Are its potential force and expanse in the places of intense circulation, on the path of rapid transportation” (30)? He grounds his work in state as the central force governing speed and the subjugated flows and closures bound up within the legal and physical infrastructure the state controls. He notes that: “Just as for the laws on speed limits, we are talking about acts of government, in other word of the political control of the highway, aiming precisely at limiting the ‘extraordinary power of assault’ that motorization of the masses creates” (51). In short, he situates the government as the law making sovereign as the principal force reshaping space to direct the potentials of the urbanized masses through speed. His central reading of speed suggests that speed is not just a political tool of the sovereign but that speed within warfare becomes the governing logic that reshapes the entire mode of being for distance. War on various fronts via logistics and spatial reconfigurations becomes the goal of statist politics as a result of a never ending impulse for the conquest of time. The drive for permanence within his framework highlights as the War on Time, which can be read as a war against Time itself (reducing the temporal distance taken to arrive at a foe or goal) or it may be read differently as the war as functioning on time. He notes, “this kind of Assault is, first launched against Time and can be realized theoretically even when the material means are lacking” (52). Obviously, in the text a war against time is part of his reading of technological modernism. However, the innovation of the road, the ship, and the plan ensures a logistics that war is always on time and military infrastructure has the ability to strike. He sees the bourgeoisies and their military planners and later engineers as the force shaping and reshaping society and global movements (35). However, it is the leaking of the impact of totalized control of time through space that proves useful for the questions being asked in this paper. As Virilio states: “The war of attrition marks a new threshold: bourgeois society had believed it could enclose absolute violence the ghetto of the army zone but, deprived of space, war had spread into human Time-the war of attrition was also the war of Time” (76). For him, the creation of war machines (structures and relations to master time through the destruction and deterritorialization (dislocation/ displacement) of space) does not remain bound within one sphere of society. While his reading of this project of totalized war always culminates in totalitarian violence is logically deterministic as it means the same result always comes about. However, the leaking of the logics of speed proves useful for my study as it shows that military logics do not remain contained in their respective sphere but transform other sectors to their mode of operation. With can see this with the spread of security logics and risk assessment metrics. Hence, we can see for Virilio the nationalist project is the central force behind speed and the logics of war are the governing force behind the state’s control of speed politics. The question of timelessness and dislocation are the two central concepts through which speed and politics operate for Virilio. I will now turn to examine these topics.

Virilio’s formulations of deterritorialization connects the logic of penetration with the logic of domination. He draws the right of the road as a central project for controlling the masses and expanding power within modern Western society. He reads the right to the sea as an emerging logic that allows for the blockade to surpass direct contact between rival armies and surpass territory through mobility. He writes:

“This is another way of parceling out the universe: rather than confronting each other on the same terrain, within the limits of the battlefield, the adversaries choose to create a fundamental physical struggle between two types of humanity, one populating the land, the other the oceans. They invent nations that are no longer terrestrial, homelands in which no one could set foot; homelands that are no longer countries. The sea is open, the joining of the demos and the lament of freedom (of movement). The ‘right to the sea,’ it seems, is a particularly Western creation, just as, later, the “right to air space’ (61).

The moment of both dislocation from space as multiple vectors and trajectories of possible movement become open in this new strategy of hyper-mobility reconfigures how society is structured and how war is won. On the micro level the logic is fragmentary and fracturing. It means creating superior positions of control but also distribution that allow for total flow of possible movements. In this way space and fixity is to be conquered by movement. Time is conquered by possibility of shortened space. National spaces as practices of speed are able to leak into other geopolitical spaces and relations. However, within his formulation one relation remains constant. Speed remains a resource to be maintained as deceleration or cessation of speed produces of destructive disruptions within global capital. He defines this when he states: “Stasis is death, the general law of the world. The State-fortress, its power, its laws exist in place of intense circulation” (89). The overarching schema which spreads throughout the Western and global formulations of late-capitalism depends for him on continuous movement. Yet, this logic requires the perpetual reconfiguration of space or destruction of space to facilitate movement. He notes that: “Dromocratic intelligence is not exercised against a more or less determined military adversary, but as a permanent assault on the world, and through it, on human nature. The disappearance of flora and fauna and the abrogation of natural economies are but the slow preparation for more brutal destructions. They are part of a greater economy, that of the blockade, of the siege; strategies, in other words, of depletion” (86). Taking superior positions in terms of speed requires destruction of non-speed resources such as ecology, life, bodies, and other modes of time. His reading fundamentally denies the possibility of coexistence. The question of perpetual assault verses drawing in becomes a tension within his work. As various groups from migrant populations, the Western proletariat, and various national bourgeois of former colonies are drawn into these capitalist relations of speed. However, there remains a lack of nuance as Western time is figured as a totalized entity without different rhymes and impulses bound within its logic of “progress.” Virilio points to a breakthrough in speed as both a tool for establishing permanence within progress of national and social projects, but this remains over-determined as it figures the state as always able to utilized new technologies in a wholly efficient manner to survey, control, and displace. For example, in regards to his reading of “progress” he outlines: “With the realization of dromocratic type progress, humanity will stop being diverse. It will tend to divide only into hopeful populations (who are allowed the hope that they will reach, in the future, someday, the speed that they are accumulating, which will give them access to the possible-that is, to the project, the decision, the infinite: speed is the hope of the West) and despairing populations, blocked by their inferiority of their technological vehicles, living and subsisting in a finite world” (70). Scarcity becomes the controlling logic of progress. As speed increases the finitude of the world is realized but this leads to the deepening of the logic of progress in arriving at a future state of being not-dependent upon scarcity. This could also be read as a death impulse within his reading of Western society and capitalism. The opening up of different sites of movement requires the destruction of spaces and times through the super-positioning of movement on a particular axis. Virilio points to the highway, ship, and plane as granting access but also containing different logics of destruction to prior modes of being. Within these deterritorializations certain lines of movement within the field of leading technologies are rendered hyper-visible and central to the success and “progression” of Western being. This singularization Virilio documents is the operation of the power of speed to secure a “future” that the proletariat and other classes can “buy into” or be “bought off with” within his reading.

Centrally, Virilio points to the bourgeois as the key figure behind the state and the relation that first sparks the spread of capitalist logics to speed. However, his reading of capitalist social relations rather than focusing on speed of production look at the practice of space and time as the key to domination. He even goes so far as to claim that: “there was no ‘industrial revolution,’ but only a ‘dromocratic revolution;’ there is no democracy, only dromocracy; there is no strategy, only dromology. It is precisely at the moment when Western technological evolutionism leaves the sea that the substance of wealth begins to crumble, that the ruin of the most powerful people and nations gets under way” (69). He illustrates this pattern of development first in his tracing of the right to the road as a key site of national movement/ national space. He comments: “The advent of bourgeois power with the revolution of the communes can already be likened to a ‘national war of liberation’ since it sets, on its terrain, a native population against a military occupier…” (35). The bourgeois conquest of the proletariat is the first movement within the state by first taking the cities. As he goes on to note: “The political triumph of the bourgeois revolution consists in spreading the state of siege of the communal city machine, immobile in the middle of its logistic glacis and domestic lodgings, over the totality of the national territory” (39). Rather than the power of the urban over the rural it is the power of the bourgeois over the proletariat. He notes, “The city is but a stopover, a point on the synoptic path of a trajectory, the ancient military glacis, rail, road, frontier or riverbank, where the spectator’s glance and the vehicle’s speed of displacement were instrumentally linked” (31).

The national remains the central governing force within his framework. This proves rather challenging for reading his piece in the context of globalization as it implies one singular axis of control as opposed to multiple speeds intersecting and colliding across different levels of sovereignty. He states “The State’s political power, therefore, is only secondarily ‘power organized by one class to oppress another.” More materially, it is the polis, the police, in other words highway surveillance, insofar as ,since the dawn of the bourgeois revolution, the political discourse has been no more than a series of more of less conscious repetitions of the old communal polircetics, confusing social order with the control of traffic” (39). Specifically, the states “totalitarinism goes hand-in-hand with the development of the state’s hold over the circulation of the masses. But wait, we have glossed over the most important part of Virilio’s writing the state of siege as contrasted to the state of emergency. He points that the drawing in of bodies to these nationalist speed projects is not a closed project but one dependent on openness. He explains, “surplus populations disappear in the obligatory movement of the voyage. The increasingly numerous bodies rejected by the poliorcetic order become physical force moving nowhere, unseen zones, the immeasurable interstices of the strategic schema, the tolerated movement of perilous pilgrimages” (99). The dislocation produced by the disruptions of capitalist development give rise to migrant populations. Critically, he points to both ableism and the logics of security as bound within the politics of speed. The produced perceptions of infirmity and “unable” bodies is a tool of power within the politics of speed for disciplining various classes. For example he states, “Economic liberalism has been only a liberal pluralism of the order of speeds of penetration” (136). Openness within liberal discourses centers on the structure of speed of change as much as it does on nationalist projects of control. Discourses of productivity and “fitness” become part of the national performance of speed through immigration policies. Specifically, he notes that, “(a)long the migrant’s trajectory, there is the path of military proleatianization, the two having often been confused ever since Antiquity” (102). The drawing in of migrant populations is premised upon their ability to be drawn into the workforce and integrated into the national military project. However, the temporal trends of capitalist productivity have entered into a different mode since the time of Virilio’s writing. The neoliberal reforms have depended reactionary racist politics across a number of Western countries and altered the speed of integration in favour of the performance of Western “progress” and speed of acceleration towards greater technologies of speed. Rather than a totalized command and control state the seepages of speed into society through the states military industrial complex has deepened. Instead of the state of siege which he uses to describe the earlier military conflicts of the Middle Ages, his writing on the state of emergency documents a different reason for speed. The logic becomes one of gaining of time for an elite global class. He notes “the essential object of strategy consists in maintaining the non-place of a general delocalization of means that alone still allows us to gain fractions of seconds, which gain is indispensable to any freedom of action” (153). Dislocation becomes the desired product of the global economic and political system. In short, time and space are disrupted in favour of movement to gain the micro-progresses of time and efficiency for certain groups within late-capitalism.

De Certeau takes a very different approach to the study of movement and space than Virilio. De Certeau examines the practice of everyday life and the constructions of space and movement through a Foucauldian framework that draws upon Bourdieu. Overall, his approach to the examination of speed examines how discursive practices structure narratives of movement while also constituting spaces such as the frontier and the interior. His reading of power remains generalized within institutional practices and circulating among individual performances of the discourse of movement (46). Within his analysis of speed as a series of spatial stories or discourses that give meaning and order to movement, de Certeau points to the city as the primary site of creation of larger ideas and tropes of movement (94). The city becomes both laboratory and ordering narrative to provide context for what space should be. He notes that: “Administration is combined with a process of elimination in this place organized by ‘speculative’ and classificatory operations. On the one hand, there is a differentiation and redistribution of the parts and functions of the city, as a result of inversions, displacements, accumulations, etc.; on the other there is a rejection of everything that is not capable of being dealt with in this way and so constitutes the ‘waste products; of a functionalist administration (abnormality, deviance, illness, death, etc.) To be sure, progress allows an increasing number of these waste products to be reintroduced into administrative circuits and transforms even deficiencies (in health, security, etc.) into ways of making the networks of order denser” (94-5). In contrast to Virilio, it is evident in de Certeau’s reading of institutional production of spaces that serve circulation that they are not run by a military logic of war against space but a logic of creating ease of motion that contain aggression. The ordering logic of movement for both requires the generalizations and then “forgetting” of space as a specific concept. As de Certeau puts it “the rationalization of the city leads to its mystification in strategic discourses, which are calculations based on the hypothesis or the necessity of its destruction in order to arrive at a final decision…the functionalist organization, by privileging progress (i.e., time), causes the condition of its own possibility-space itself –to be forgotten; space thus becomes the blind spot in a scientific and political technology” (95). To put it simply, while the urban site is valorized within the liberal trends de Certeau observes there is a tension between the ideal and the actual. The mythic city is to be preserved via calculation while the existing city is contaminated and possibly degraded as it is disordered and antithetical to the narratives of hierarchy which circulate within liberal societies. He notes “The language of power is in itself ‘urbanizing,’ but the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counter-balance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power. The city becomes the dominant theme in political legends, but it is no longer a field of programmed and regulated operations. Beneath the discourse that ideologies the city, the ruses and combinations of power that have no readable identity proliferate without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to administer” (95). Speed can be read within de Certeau as movement within a governmental framework that valorizes progress while disciplining, containing, and destroying orders that disrupt circulation and purity.

These orders of acceleration are produced by speech acts for de Certeau. Simply, he notes “At first isolated in the area of verbal communication, the speech act turns out to find only one of its applications there, and its linguistic modality is merely the first determination of a much more general distinction between the forms used in a system and the ways of using this system (i.e., rules)” (98). His reading of movement is possessed by identifying boundary making orders and spaces that are simultaneous internal and external. As he comments in regard to travel stories, “[t]hese narrated adventures, simultaneously producing geographies of actions and drifting into the commonplaces of an order, do not merely constitute a ‘supplement’ to pedestrian enunciations and rhetoric’s. They are not satisfied with displacing the latter and transposing them into the field of language. In reality, the organize walks. They make the journey, before or during the time the feet perform it” (116). Discourse establishes mental orders that give space meaning and structure movement through space. Spatial stories are narratives that give meaning to space while also functioning to reproduce spaces, times, and movement patterns. As he notes “space is a practiced place” (117). The urban center and the local require performance and invocation through movement. He notes that “a space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operation that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities” (117). Structurally, de Certeau points to the same stories that give meaning to space as also creating closures between bodies (125). He describes this as a founding function within stories. He states “this founding is precisely the primary role of the story. It opens a legitimate theater for practical actions. It creates a field that authorizes dangerous and contingent social actions” (125).Within this founding it works through binary elements to produce orders of progress and degeneration of spaces and times. One such dichotomy exists between the frontier and the bridge. As he describes: “the relationship between the frontier and the bridge, that is, between a (legitimate) space and its (alien) exteriority” (126). He goes on to note: “bodies can be distinguished only where the ‘contracts’ (“touches”) of amorous or hostile struggles are inscribed on them. This is a paradox of the frontier: created by contacts, the points of differentiation between two bodies are also their common points” (127). This reading of mapping within spatial stories that produce the everyday quality of life displays the uneven logics used to create spaces of inclusion and exclusion within liberal orders. The conflict between foreign and domestic or external and internal create tensions only in contact within space and time. Openness is thus secured within the city through similarity rather than difference. A possible reading of de Certeau’s logic of liberal interaction in the urban is that difference is spatialized as requiring containment due to a logic of purity being situated in a spatial and temporal narrative of progress. Thus, logics of openness are secured through closures even when difference is accepted. The politics of openness and circulation benefit those who are designated as internal (classifiable, intelligible, and counted).

With Fanon we do not arrive a reading of speed, but a reading of space and the logics of movement through space as structure by settler relations qua race. Hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion based on whiteness as an ordering structure produce positionalities within space once again via contact, interaction, and proximity. However, the racialized structures of settler colonialism are both internalized and structural within the Algerian state Fanon describes in *The Wretched of the Earth*. As he famously describes the colonized world as a “compartmentalized world, this world divided in two, is inhabited by different species. The singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never mange to mask the human reality” (5). Fanon’s study of colonialism saturates movement as a spatial relation supported via white settler temporal narratives of “backwardness.” Fanon’s reading stands in stark opposition to that of Virilio and de Certeau as these scholars situate movement as reconfiguring space while Fanon posits space as giving order to time and movement. He states that: “the ‘native’ sector is not complementary to the European sector. The two confront each other, but not in the service of a higher unity. Governed by a purely Aristotelian logic, they follow the dictates of mutual exclusion: There is no conciliation possible, one of them is superfluous. The colonist’s sector is a sector built to last, all stone and steel. It’s a sector of lights and paved roads, where the trash cans constantly overflow …The colonist’s feet can never be glimpsed, except perhaps in the sea, but then you can never get close enough. They are protected by solid shoes in a sector where the streets are clean and smooth, without a pothole, without a stone. The colonist’s sector is a sated, sluggish sector, its belly is permanently full of good things” (4). A set of spatial relations that are practiced and performed by colonists. The militarized control of space is used to secure the futurity of colonists rather than the colonized. Conversely, within the native sector “the shanty town, the Medina, the reservation, is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people. You are born anywhere, anyhow. You die anywhere, from anything. It’s a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together. The colonized’s sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light” (4). The compression of space seems to be a dominate thread within his discussion of the colonized’s sector as architecture, mobility, and resources are compressed to ensure destruction. There is thus an alternation between two forces of speed within Fanon’s discussion of violence. First, the movement of extraction of resources such as bodies, vitality itself, or raw materials from the colonies at an increasing rate that cuts paths into the interior and rewrites space for movement out of colonial spaces to the metropolis. Second, the stasis that is imposed to control native populations and supress resistance. This can be seen in the (re)writing of history undertaken by the settler who erects statues for generals and engineers while crafting narratives of discovery and exploration (15). These two speeds are secured through political, military, and police forces to contain resistance. However, as he points out “Artillery shelling and scorched earth policy have been replaced by an economic dependency” the transformation of colonies into a market for the metropolis (27). The compression of space and the extension of time via the checkpoint or barricade creates a fragmentary experience of time that de Certeau and Virillio gloss over. The reading of time and space as structured by racial hierarchies premised upon the construct of whiteness centers the body as the foundational center of movement rather than space as generalized or deterritorialized. Openness and closure of space be it national or local is then read deeply in regard to a narrative of progress as structured by race. The illiberal nature of liberal multiculturalism can be read not as a desire to exceed but rather as part of the ossification of difference still premised upon stasis identities used to discern inclusion and exclusion.

Overall, this reading of spatial, temporal, and locomotive practices yields a major challenge: how can the processes of embodiment and deterritorialization be read together to understand the Alberta Oil Sands? The displacement of space Virilio describes as part of state strategies functions at the scale of the state (international). De Certeau describes the localized politics of space produced through narrative. Fanon examines institutions, discourse, and readings of the body that open or foreclose potential pathways of movement. However, space is not permanently ossified within Fanon. Spatial relations are fluid and the stasis he describes between colonizer and colonized is tenuous at best as his discussion of revolutionary violence in Algeria reveals. Perhaps both de Certeau and Fanon share a number of ideas in common about the city being valorized as an ideal type of modernity while also simultaneously being denigrated as a space of mixing flows. Flows are structures that transform spaces they come into contact with be they people, capital, or products. Space is continually rewritten just as the body is singularized and rewritten by its contact with other spaces and bodies. Taking the scale of the national it is possible to make visible the pathways of movement that a nationalist project attempts to craft in regard to progress. However, working from the embodied spatial dimension it is possible to draw out the contradictions and tensions between nationalist discourse and hybrid practices that emerge through interaction. With these two scales worked out it is now possible to examine the Alberta Oil Sands.

**Part I: Invisible Aliens- Circulation Within Surveillance**

The Oil Sands have been about the creation of hyper-visible spaces and bodies at the expense of others. The intensification of development has been more about occulting power relations than about making visible the new formations and dependencies it has created around circuits of migration and displacement. The circuits of migration created by temporary foreign workers working both on the Oil Sands and in surrounding service industries has become a dominate narrative that obscures precarity of inter-provincial labour migrants within the Canadian context. The movement of thousands of persons across boarders has become a key optic that obscures the boundedness and precarity of the non-status migrant workforce who has stayed beyond their contract and residence visas. The visibility of the “lawful” temporary foreign worker as migrant from the exterior has occulted and given meaning to both the “unlawful” migrant labourer and the domestic intra-provincial labour migrant.

The Oil Sand is fundamentally about dislocation and displacement as a war against time requires the destruction and disruption of spaces in order to maximize efficiency read as progress. The very technologies that make the extraction of oil from the ground are about remaking space. The *Alberta Oil Sands Industry Quarterly Report* for winter 2015 describes: “Canada’s oil sands resources are often referred to as “the oil that technology made.” Without intensive production technology development, the industry would not exist as it does today. These technologies still continue to be advanced and optimized, improving recovery and reducing environmental impacts.” (GOA 3). As the report specifies: “There are essentially two commercial methods of in situ (Latin for “in place,” essentially meaning wells are used rather than trucks and shovels). In cyclic steam stimulation (CSS), high-pressure steam is injected into directional wells drilled from pads for a period of time, then the steam is left to soak in the reservoir for a period, melting the bitumen, and then the same wells are switched into production mode, bringing the bitumen to the surface” (GOA 2). The act of extracting the oil literally melts the earth with steam mixing dirt and fresh water from the Athabasca River with this industrial process. As a Government of Canada document notes:

“Mining operations take much of their water from the Athabasca River in Alberta. The federal and provincial governments manage this water use by setting a limit on the water that can be withdrawn from the river. A maximum of 3 percent of the Athabasca River’s annual flow is allocated for use. Of this, only 2 percent is allocated to oil sands operations, and less than 1 percent is actually used. The Lower Athabasca River Water Management Framework ensures that during low flow conditions, withdrawals never exceed 10 percent of the natural river flow. To protect the quality of the river water, no production water is returned to the river. Instead, it is transferred to tailings ponds and then recycled into the production process. The Government of Alberta has established performance standards to reduce the accumulation of tailings that result from the oil sands mining process.” (GoC “Oil Sands” 2).

The diverting of a river’s flows, creation of tailing ponds, and transformation of river water into production water is both about “creation” and “isolation.” Environmental products are harnessed and then redirected in ways that fundamentally recreate the landscape and isolate spaces as toxic and unlivable. As the Tar Sands Solutions Network remarks:

“The rapid expansion of the tar sands is creating a world-class pollution problem. Industry uses as much fresh water as a large Canadian city and almost none of it is returned to the natural environment. Ninety-five per cent of this water is so polluted it has to be stored in toxic sludge pits that cover 176 square kilometres, held back by two of the three largest dams on the planet. An estimated 11 million litres of toxic wastewater leaks into the Athabasca River every day.” (TSS).

The logics of quarantine and denial of circulation proves essential as the water after its industrial transition would be useless as water until purified. The capture of natural flows (speed of circulation) of nature allows for the acceleration of human industry in this context. From tailing ponds to manmade dams designed to contain toxic productive water the role of both allowing for the circulation of certain flows at the expense of others remains the dominant logics and this does not remain contained with regards to various populations.

The transformation from one form of circulation to another is not merely a strategy in how nature is harnessed by industry but how different classes of labour are harnessed to produce a narrative of national destiny through the rate of extraction. As Bob Barneston and Jason Foster note that between 2000 and 2011 there were approximately 230,000 temporary foreign workers admitted into the Province of Alberta (3). According to Barneston and Foster, the number of temporary foreign workers increased from 11,392 to 38, 994 in 2008 with a drop off to 25, 542 in 2011 (3). They point to the increasing reports that upward of 100, 000 temporary foreign workers have not returned to their respective countries of origin and that employers are actively exploiting both pools of labour (7). Similarly, Nelson Ferguson points to the increasing interconnections between Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and the Oil Sands as domestic Canadian workers from Nova Scotia travel to the Oil Sands and back monthly in an effort to garner income. The use of temporary foreign workers has been a trend of the new millennium around the extraction industry of the Oil Sands with migration from Atlantic Canada and labour from other provinces as the norm. The flexibility and exploitability of migrants who are dependent upon employer support to remain and return to Canada upon the next contract allows for a more dependent work force as Barneston and Foster observe (6). The shift from one source of labour to another and the subsequent public backlash against temporary foreign workers plays on the creation and rapid reassertion of interior and exterior as forms of political capital. Temporary foreign workers are deployed both to discipline the labour market and solidify the desires of the national project of establishing dominance over a class of racialized workers within the international labour force. The same government that accelerates the entrance of temporary foreign workers then seeks to curtail their entrance in an effort to maintain domestic dreams of Canadian economic might and labour force and migration mobility. This occurs while also squeezing the precarious populations of migrant workers who remain around the Alberta Oil Sands through lack of legal support in citizenship claims and renewed security practices. As Carrie Tait, Josh Wingrove, and Joe Frisen report: “Roughly 65 ironworkers were let go from their construction jobs at the Kearl oil sands mine near Fort McMurray Tuesday. These Ironworkers Local 720 union members allege they were replaced by temporary foreign workers and, in response, turned to the government to investigate and made public complaints Thursday” (The Globe and Mail). Similarly, Colin Freeze notes:

“For more than a decade, migrant workers have kept Alberta communities such as Fort McMurray humming. Because the municipality’s unemployment rate has long been below 4 per cent, the city’s businesses have paid premiums for low-skilled labour as city residents headed out to high-paying jobs in the Oil Sands. The concentration of temporary foreign workers in the low-skilled jobs surrounding the oil sands from retail to fast food represents the simultaneous visibility of racialized bodies when they move into spaces of employment around the Oil Sands and invisibility when they are confined to the precarious sectors of employment.” (Globe and Mail)

As Freeze goes on to note: “According to new rules announced by Employment Minister Jason Kenney in June [2014], businesses have to get down to a maximum workforce of 20 per cent TFWs by summer, and 10 per cent by 2016. This could reduce the low-wage TFW workforce ‘by 50 per cent in the next three years,’ according to a government statement” (The Globe and Mail). As Gillian Steward reports:

“On average a worker in a fast food outlet in Fort McMurray — and there are lots of them in a place where at almost any time of day there is a long line of pick-up trucks waiting at the drive-thru — earns $14 to $17 an hour. If it’s part-time work, which it usually is, that works out to $400 to $500 week at the most… In the oil and gas sector in Alberta where wages are mostly driven by the fierce competition for all kinds of labour in the Oil Sands industry, the average weekly wage as of December 2013 was $2,067, up 73 per cent from 2001….Construction workers in Alberta earn an average weekly wage of $1,586 — an increase of 83 per cent since 2001.” (The Star)

The discrepancy within wages is as much about speed and cost associated with progress as it is about racialization of work. The visibility of temporary foreign workers when they do cross interior boundaries of wages also brings to light the invisible intra-provincial migrations or the long commute of workers from other provinces and the structures that force these workers to make this trek. Speed becomes about closing off spaces of discussion and visibility to ensure progress is maintained at a steady rate. The invisibility of these circuits of migration is also the invisibility of the land that these circuits pass through and the question of title to the land and Canada’s relationship to the environment.

**Past II: Environmental Futurity and Canadian Destiny**

The collapse of the now is part of a political strategy that perpetually proposes progress as something that can only be reached through the disruption or destruction of the needs of the now in favour of the future. Reaching out of recession or achieving economic and political success on the world stage. The sacrifice of the environment in the present becomes the acceptable and ethical loss to preserve a future destiny that is actually quite uncertain given the finitude of non-renewable resources. In 2011, **Mike De Souza noted that “**The federal government has acknowledged that it deliberately excluded data indicating a 20% increase in annual pollution from Canada’s oil sands industry in 2009 from a recent 567-page report on climate change that it was required to submit to the United Nations.” (Financial Post). While De Souza points to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions per barrel, he also notes that: “Overall, Environment Canada said that the Oil Sands industry was responsible for about 6.5% of Canada’s annual greenhouse gas emissions in 2009, up from 5% in 2008. This also indicates a growth in emissions that is close to about 300% since 1990, which cancel out many reductions in pollution from other economic sectors” (Financial Post). The occlusion of data around the negative externalities of the Oil Sands and the suppression of data has become a dominant trend within the political structuring of the Oil Sands. The omnibus bill C-45 amended 50 pieces of legislation including various laws on environmental protection and opened up various freshwater rivers, lakes, and streams and formerly protected pieces of land for potential use by industrial capitalism by removing basic protections and restrictions on environmental assessment. Similarly, Canada’s 2011 withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol reveals a deeper commitment to the extraction industry than environmental goals of sustainability.

The narrative of future success at present expense can be seen across the discourse made by government officials. Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper comments "The oil sands are a very important resource for our country, it's a source of economic growth and jobs across the country, not just in the West, but in Ontario and Quebec, too… It's critical to develop that resource in a way that's responsible and environmental and the reality for the United States, which is the biggest consumer of our petroleum products, is that Canada is a very ethical society and a safe source for the United States in comparison to other sources of energy" (Steven Chase, Globe and Mail). The narrative of ethical oil becomes the new center piece next to progress figuring both economic success as due to Canada’s moral, ethical, and cultural advancement. The assumed demand when numerous politicians within the United States are attempting to reduce dependence on foreign oil can only be read as a nationalist strategy within Canada. The Government of Canada notes that:

“Canada has the third-largest oil reserves in the world, after Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. Of Canada’s 173 billion barrels of oil reserves, 170 billion barrels are located in Alberta, and about 168 billion barrels are recoverable from bitumen. This is a resource that has been developed for decades but is now gaining increased global attention as conventional supplies—so-called “easy” oil—continue to be depleted. The figure of 168 billion barrels of bitumen represents what is considered economically recoverable with today’s technology, but with new technologies, this reserve estimate could be significantly increased. In fact, total oil sands reserves in place are estimated at 1.8 trillion barrels.” (GOA 2)

The continued situation of Canada in relation to exterior others who are deemed to be unstable and unethical is used to produce a narrative of cleanliness that makes the speed of extraction and destruction of the environment justifiable. Proposing the Oil Sands as the only alternative for Canada’s economic and political success seems strange given the role divestment narratives of Shale Gas extraction in the United States and elsewhere are playing out. The removal of environmental regulations to further strengthen the creation of the Keystone XL pipeline despite numerous environmental and indigenous protests has proved fruitless due to President Obama veto. The Northern Gateway pipeline still hopes to open up the Asian-Pacific market. The displacement of risks and environmental costs of both pipelines to other American states and the Province of British Columbia reveal the displacement of other spaces of movement in favour of the hyper-visibility of the Oil Sands as ethical and productive.

**Part III: Land and the Politics of Speed**

The production of space as inherently Canadian despite contestation around legal title drawing into question the relationship of indigenous peoples and the project of national identity Canada seeks to cultivate. The Government of Canada describes that: “In 2010, Aboriginal companies performed C$1.3 billion in contract work with oil sands companies (not including construction-related jobs) and more than 1700 Aboriginal people were directly employed in oil sands operations” (Aboriginal Peoples 1). Situating the valuation of the relationship of Aboriginal peoples and Canadian corporations may not be the best estimate of the structural relations of speed operating in this process. The government of Canada points to the fact that “Most oil sands development activity occurs in a 142 200-square kilometre (km2) (54 900-square mile [sq. mi.]) area in northeast Alberta. After more than 40 years of development, oil sands mining has impacted 761 km2 (294 sq. mi.) of land. Approximately 23 000 Aboriginal people live in the oil sands areas, with 18 First Nations and six Métis settlements located in the region. Thousands more live off reserve land and outside of settlement areas.” (Aboriginal Peoples 1). Jen Preston points out that numerous provisions of Treaty 8 which covers much of Alberta remains unfulfilled by the Federal Government (48). The history around the settlement of Alberta and Western Canada remains mired in a history of social Darwinist through unrecognized rights to the land and self-government. Foundationally, Canada’s ratification of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has not been respected in duty to consult indigenous peoples in regards to unceded land or infrastructural projects which may impact their territories. Both the Keystone Pipeline and the Northern Gateway Pipeline represent a problematic legal process that has not engaged indigenous peoples as both projects cut across disputed lands. The flow of capital is read by the Federal governments as partnership while indigenous populations see their inherent rights to self-determination and basic rights of bilateral consultation as being obscured. Bill C-45 and its amendments to the Indian Act of Canada have attempted to remove the duty to consult and the regulation of various environmental regulations of Crown lands. These practices have attempted to erode basic treaty rights that indigenous peoples hold legally within Canada due to numerous Supreme Court rulings. The structure of law is figured as superfluous to the overall goal of extraction. The necessity of circulation requires that fixity be created in the form of reserves and an attempt to include indigenous communities within the process of extraction via financial assimilation. Rather than casting indigenous populations as inherently tied to the land and defenders of the environment, it is shrewder to draw attention to the legal structural marginalization and the question of ownership of the Oil Sands themselves. The need to direct monies to indigenous populations and “include” them within this project is premised on the logic of spatial control and laying claim to the land through administration of the private sphere. Rather than the circulation of different cosmologies of time, the only logic that can be actualized within this current framework of liberal inclusion that designates indigenous populations as an equity category, on their own lands, is that of capitalist acceleration. Progress becomes a logic of both obscuring indigenous rights within a globalized logic of migration and discernment while also classifying them as a possible threat to progress. Preston points to a 2009 Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs institute report that situates indigenous activism linking with environmental terrorism may be the greatest threat to the Oil Sands (51). As Preston goes on to note: among the authors of the report are academic Tom Flanagan, “members of the Canadian Armed Forces,” private sector interests connected to the oil sands, banking officials (51). The interlinking of security practices of detaining indigenous protestors and surveillance of various chiefs who advocate for action against the Oil Sands reveals the logics of circulation require security to ensure continuous flow. The work of various interests related to the Oil Sands and state security apparatus to further marginalize the voices of indigenous populations displays this trend. Overall, the logic of openness of Canada’s oil supply to the world requires the silencing of dissent and the continuation of a legal regime that violates international and domestic law.

Ultimately, I have argued that the Alberta Oil Sands represents a performance of speed as national destiny through the dislocation of geography, bodies, and other scales of time. The Oil Sands have produced a number of new interconnections and linkages that draw upon older structures within Canada as a settler society and Capitalism. I pointed to three general trends surrounding the formations the Oil Sands have given rise to. First, the extraction industry has worked to render certain bodies and spaces hyper-visible while obscuring both racialized bodies and spaces of risk produced along the axis of various pipelines and the transportation vectors along the seas. Second, the political interlinkages of business and state interests with military industrial projects works to perpetuate a structure of circulation that allows for the production of certain futures at the expense of others. Finally, I argued that the Oil Sands maintain the current governmental system that locks in the constitutional order that deprives indigenous peoples of their legal rights within Canada. Overall, the structures that maintain speed as a non-political question rest upon structures of race and capital and are not easily divorced from an intersectional framework of analysis. The narratives of progress which undergird the narrative of a prosperous Canadian future where the full potential of the Oil Sands rests foundationally upon the deterritorialization and dislocation of images of environmental destruction. The promise of a brighter national future is founded on the death of the local site of its own genesis.

Works Cited

# De Certeau, Michel. *The practice of everyday life*. Trans Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

# **De Souza,Mike.“**Canada leaves out rise in oilsands pollution from UN report.” Financial Post. 30 May, 2011. Web. <http://business.financialpost.com/2011/05/30/canada-leaves-out-rise-in-oilsands-pollution-from-un-report/> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

# Chase, Steven. “Harper's embrace of 'ethical' oil sands reignites 'dirty' arguments.” *The Globe and Mail* 7 Jan. 2011. Web. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/harpers-embrace-of-ethical-oil-sands-reignites-dirty-arguments/article563356/> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

Fanon, Frantz. *The wretched of the earth*. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

Ferguson, Nelson. “From Coal Pits to Tar Sands: Labour Migration Between an Atlantic Canadian Region and the Athabasca Oil sands.” J*ust Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society* 17 (2011): 106-118.

# Freeze, Colin. “Success eludes recent migrants as Fort McMurray braces for TFW fallout.” *The Globe and* Mail 28 Dec, 2014. Web. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/alberta/success-eludes-recent-migrants-as-fort-mcmurray-braces-for-tfw-fallout/article22223446/> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

Government of Alberta. *Alberta Oil Sands Industry Quarterly Update.* Winter 2015. Web.[*http://albertacanada.com/files/albertacanada/AOSID\_QuarterlyUpdate\_Winter2015.pdf*](http://albertacanada.com/files/albertacanada/AOSID_QuarterlyUpdate_Winter2015.pdf)(Accessed: March 27, 2015).

Government of Canada. “Aboriginal Peoples- Oil Sands - A strategic resource for Canada, North America and the global market.” *Natural Resource Canada*. Feb 2013. Web. <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/sites/www.nrcan.gc.ca/files/energy/pdf/eneene/pubpub/pdf/12-0655-OS-Aboriginal-eng.pdf> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

--. “Oil Sands - A strategic resource for Canada, North America and the global market.” *Natural Resource Canada*. Feb 2013. Web. <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/sites/www.nrcan.gc.ca/files/energy/pdf/eneene/pubpub/pdf/OS-brochure-eng.pdf> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

--. “Energy Security and U.S. Economic Benefits- Oil Sands - A strategic resource for Canada, North America and the global market.” May 2013. Web. <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/sites/www.nrcan.gc.ca/files/energy/pdf/eneene/pubpub/pdf/12-0653-OS-Energy_Security-EconoBenefits_us-eng.pdf> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

# Koring, Paul. “Obama vetoes proposed Keystone XL pipeline bill.” *The Globe and Mail* 24 Feb. 2015. Web. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/obama-keystone-pipeline-decision/article23180005/> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

# Osborne, Rodney. “Behind The Keystone XL Smokescreen - Pipelines Are Booming!” *Forbes*. 23 March. 2015. Web. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/christopherhelman/2015/03/23/behind-the-keystone-xl-smokescreen-pipelines-are-booming/> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

# Panetta, Alexander. “Canadian oil extraction is an ‘extraordinarily dirty’ process: Obama.” *Macleans* 6 March. 2015. Web.<http://www.macleans.ca/economy/canadian-oil-extraction-is-extraordinarily-dirty-process-obama-says/> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

Preston, Jen. “Neoliberal Settler Colonialism, Canada and the Tar Sands.” *Race & Class* 55.2 (2013) 42-59.

Renaud, Marie-France. “Committee Clerk Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.” House of Commons Ottawa, ON. Web. <http://wcel.org/sites/default/files/publications/WCEL%20Submission%20to%20ENVI%20on%20Bill%20C45%20November%207%202012%20.pdf> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

# Steward, Gillian. “Oilsands wages driving push for temporary foreign workers.” *The Star*, 23 June 2014. Web. <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2014/06/23/oilsands_wages_driving_push_for_temporary_foreign_workers.html> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

Tar Sands Solutions Network. “Air and Water Issues.” Web. <http://tarsandssolutions.org/tar-sands/air-water-issues> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

Tait, Carrie, Josh Wingrove, and Joe Friesen. “Iron workers will be rehired as Ottawa promises review.” *The Globe and Mail* 7 Feb 2014. Web. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/allegations-foreign-labour-replaced-laid-off-workers-sparks-investigation/article16745731/> (Accessed: March 27, 2015).

Virillio, Paul. *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*. Trans. Mark Polizzotti. New York, NY: Columbia University, 1986.