

The most multicultural city in the wealthy core of North America, Toronto, is also the site of the kinds of animal geographies analyzed by Jennifer Wolch. Understanding these geographies requires us to re-read Yi-Fu Tuan's classic treatise on people and their pets – *Dominance and Affection*. Not long ago, the CBC series *The Passionate Eye* broadcast “Cat Crazy,” a film about the increasingly contentious politics over cats. The fights include death threats among and between species, with case studies from Toronto and several other cities. The story is inherently urban, in an urbanizing world. The film is now playing on the flat-screen television while Peaches, terminally ill, meows at me to clean out the litterbox. We're watching the film on the DVR, that magical contemporary machine that allows what those in the biz refer to as “time shifting.” I see now that the film is also called “Cat City.”

Meow.

So let's get to work on that litterbox. Grab those rolls of paper towels. Gimme more. Generic, or Bounty? *It's the quicker picker upper*, my television-saturated brain reflexively tells me. *Reduce, reuse, recycle*, other voices remind me. Voices in my head. Indu!

Forestry is still a big deal in BC, I tell myself as the environmental politics – what has been called the “war of the woods” -- come into the building, into the suite itself. The building is not LEED certified. I know, we should reduce, reuse, recycle. The printer upstairs has printouts on one side of the paper flipped over for another run-through, another carbon electrocharge infusion that adds just a bit more to our footprint – but it's just one burst, unlike the endless blinks of the eye of the fancy new Retina display on the new iPad 3 that I see everywhere I look whenever I haul my fat ass onto one of those giant aluminum carbon-injection monsters that are always circling the globe. Five hundred thousand people are in the air right now, the HSBC ad told me the last time I walked through the International Arrivals Terminal at YVR. I once tried to calculate the carbon footprint of paper versus the new tablet devices. Carbon. Life. Death. Of the planet. Of us. And we know it. Whoever “we” are and whatever nuance of “it” we focus on. We all know it.

In one of the showers, there's a big juicy hunk of cat diarrhea. It's on one of those newspapers handed out for free by people at some of the SkyTrain stations in Vancouver. Free! Newspapers! Handed out by people who smile, extend their hand with a newspaper, and say, “Good morning!” I always look away, fearful of the annoyance that will be so clear in my eyes if I make eye contact. I'll be guilty if the look in my eyes causes hurt, so I look away. I see – I cannot help but see – human appendages of capital, because this looks like another assembly line, and the companies know they have to have people – real, live, smiling people – to break down the resistance to yet another source of infoedutainment brought to you by all our sponsors. We've all become callous, deadened to yet another flood of messages; it still seems to require a real live person saying “Good morning” to get people to accept another dose of advertising. Yes, as we move through the crowded SkyTrain stations, we – our attention spans – are the assembly line. So I look away. I never worked on an assembly line. At least I didn't think I did. So I don't know how to be an aggressive organizer on the assembly line.

The big plunk of diarrhea is on a story under the banner of “Healthy Living.” Obesity experts favour taxing sugar-filled foods, the headline deadpans. Crap-pans. I remember that there's a

recording of HBO's *Weight of the Nation* on our DVR – the one upstairs, separated from this scene in a little Hagerstrandian space-time path out the hall, up the elevator, and over to the other door. Peaches is watching from behind the couch while they are chasing down cats on the documentary. What does she know? Is she just the “soulless machine” invented by the philosophers of the eighteenth century when they couldn't cope with the angst of the new scientific evidence that made it clear that humans weren't God's special creatures?

Purina Max Scoop Multi-Cat with HealthGuard®. Diarrhea everywhere. Get the masks. I am going to write this down, HST style. Pierce, where is my typewriter?

Are they mad at us? No, they are not well. Peaches will get an injection. She needs it. But that Max Scoop isn't worth shit when they don't get close to the litterbox before losing it.

Now another chemical. Fantastic All Purpose Cleaner / Nettoyant Tout Usage. They are talking about euthanasia on the playback of Cat City; it's another city, not Toronto. Meow, Peaches says. Fantastic promises to kill 99.9% of bacteria in ten seconds. In the shelter, the cats are euthanized after 48 hours. If the shelter is full, the new arrivals are killed upon arrival. Fantastic kills fast, and so does the shelter. Meow, Peaches says. That's the reality of life, comes the voice from the television. I pull out extra sheets on the rolls of Bounty, more sheets, gimme more of this shit. Shit. Cat shit. Fuckin' Meow.

They did it. They had to. They had to put the cat down. For “humanitarian” reasons, on advice of a veterinarian. Tulsa was her name. She died on Tulsa time. It's all dominance and affection, species, life, and death. The ads recorded along with the film are a curious selection. Machines, chemicals, age and youth, life and death. The next ad: Tylenol. Then Keifer Sutherland telling us about the fuel-efficient Ford car named for what our age of introspection – our “interior observation” – promises to give us. Focus. The new Ford Focus. Now Sponge Towels. Now Tim Hortons. Another assembly line. The Canadian coffee-shop retail incarnation of ‘the body as an accumulation strategy’ for the 9-to-5 crowd. Starbucks is for those making other tradeoffs on limited budgets of money, time, or both.

A Purex ad shows an old woman with old wrinkly skin next to a baby with brand-new-to-the-world young soft skin. Toilet paper for both! the images make us see. We get the Purex, the kitties get the Max Scoop with HealthGuard®. Now there's a guy talking to his purring cat, not realizing that his office speaker phone is still on; at the other end, the guys on the conference call listen and smirk at his *you're-so-cute* voice. Cat Love. Whiskas, with extra protein. Now the Ford Focus is parking itself. The best way to believe it can do it, Keifer's voice tells us, is to *see* it parking itself. Active ParkAssist™. We can *see* where this leads; how long will we need the humans when the cars can now park themselves?

Meow, Peaches says. She wants us to leave. Down to the dumpster. Is this even allowed?

Then go back upstairs. Nudge. Wash your hands. Antibacterial soap. *Bugs don't need drugs*, the public service ads on the SkyTrain tell us. *Die, fuckers, die*. Wash Again. Does this stuff kill 99.9 percent too? Wash again.  $99.9 \times 99.9 = 99.8001$ , the calculator tells me. But really we

hope it's like this: kill 99.9 percent, leaving only 0.001, and wash again to kill another 99.9 percent, leaving just 0.000999, wash again and ...

tap tap tap

Why is this calculator saying I have a 99 percent probability of ... what?

All these books on the shelves. One of the titles asks, *Is God a Mathematician?* Another is about *Darwin Among the Machines*.

Wash again.

*Die, fuckers, die!*