

Book Review

Springgay, S. & Truman, S. E. 2018. *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-Human World: WalkingLab*. London: Routledge. Pp 164

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Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman's *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-Human World: WalkingLab*, is not a book *about* walking. Rather, it is a *walking-writing* of itinerant and entangled concepts and a *thinking-in-movement-with* the collaborative research-creation events hosted by WalkingLab.¹ The book makes a significant, refreshing contribution to the burgeoning body of international scholarship that advocates that academic inquiry not only *can* – but *must* – be done differently.

Springgay and Truman's walking-writing troubles the tacit (often-unchecked) anthropocentrism, individualism, neoliberalism, ableism, and ongoing legacies of settler colonialism and onto-epistemic violence that proliferate in Euro-Western conceptions of, and scholarship on, walking. Following Juanita Sundberg's discussion of *walking with*, they advocate a shift to walking praxis that is relational, attentive, and ethically and politically accountable.² This is particularly apposite within the context of the fraught South African body politic where mobility and access remain vastly unequal, and many walking bodies are marked by precarity, violence, and erasure.

The authors identify four themes in walking scholarship: *place*, *sensory inquiry*, *embodiment*, and *rhythm*. Queering normative conceptualisations of both walking and research, they add to these by exploring notions of *Land and geos*, *affect*, *transmateriality*, and *movement*. Springgay and Truman situate walking scholarship in relation to posthumanisms, feminist new materialisms, affect theories, and non-representational theories, concurrently holding 'more-than-human methodologies' accountable to Indigenous, critical race, trans,

¹The authors use the hyphenated term *research-creation* throughout to refer to these events at the 'complex intersection of art, theory, and research' (Truman & Springgay, 2015: 152). Established by Springgay and Truman, WalkingLab is a collaborative international research network that interrogates 'what it means to move'. The website (www.walkinglab.org) serves as an archive of the network's activities; a hub that connects artists, activists, scholars, arts organisations and educators; and hosts online residencies, blogs, commissioned artists' projects, and additional open-access resources.

² Sundberg's use of *walking with* to 'foster geographical engagements open to *conversing with* and *walking alongside* other epistemic worlds' (Sundberg, 2014: 35, my emphasis) builds on ideas of *walking the world into being*, and an invitation and invocation to *walk with*, put forth by the Zapatistas movement in the 2005 *Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona* (2014: 40).

Here, I follow Robin Nelson's use of *praxis* to denote 'theory *imbricated within* practice' (2013: 33, my emphasis).



queer, critical disability, and environmental scholarship. They build on Isabelle Stengers' conception of *slowness* – not a quantitative measure of speed, but rather a 'process of unlearning and unsettling what has come before' (2018: 15) – and read these theories *frictionally* and *alongside* peripatetic studies and practices in the broader institutionalised disciplines of geography, ethnography, arts, and education. In each chapter, they also think-with particular WalkingLab collaborations and grapple with the difficulty of accounting for and translating multi-layered, affective experiences.

Chapter 1 brings place-based research into conversation with Indigenous Land-centred *ontoepistemologies* and critical studies in geography to 'think a different ethics-of-place' (2018: 17) and attend to the relational co-composition of geologic and human bodies.³ The authors challenge conventional go-along interviews, walking tours, and walking in 'Nature' – typically construed in relation to human-centred notions of control, consumption, care, and discovery. Importantly, they consider what it may mean for differently abled bodies to move.

Chapter 2 considers critical sensory inquiries and the affective turn in contemporary scholarship, foregrounding hapticality, more-than-linguistic ways of knowing, and the productive defamiliarising encounters provoked by synaesthesia. The authors eschew the assumed neutrality of the proximal senses and propose that sensory inquiry must 'take into account non-normative sensory experiences' (2018: 39).

Chapter 3 explores *transmaterialities* and diverse Trans theories in relation to affective labour and sonic walks. The chapter develops a critique of the archetypal 19th century figure, the strolling flâneur – 'a man of leisure, who is able to walk, detached and privileged in a city' (2018: 51) – and the trope of the *dérive*. These principally position walking as a leisure, meditative or deliberate activity. Moreover, many descriptions of walking as embodied practice habitually overlook power relations and invisibilise the way that mass refugee flights 'enact vulnerable, exposed, and brutalized embodiment' (2018: 50).⁴

Chapter 4 presents a re-thinking of participation beyond the rhetoric of inclusion. The authors suggest that traditional understandings of participation frame it as a 'democratic interaction where individuals come together by choice, and as a convivial mode of collectivity', but that this more-often 'operates as a symbolic gesture that fails to undo the structural logics of racism, ableism, homophobia, and settler colonialism' (2018: 66). Instead, they propose *immanent participation*, which cannot be 'reduced to the volitional act of an individual' (2018: 78) and is affirmative, yet not 'tidy, cohesive, and comfortable' (2018: 71).

Chapter 5 considers walking-with and walking-writing in terms of method and methodology, offering a robust literature review that situates ambulatory practices with/in contemporary scholarly debates related to the (im)possibility of representation, and the impasse between new empiricisms and more traditional approaches to phenomenology.

³I use Karen Barad's neologism, *ontoepistemology*, to imply the inseparability of ontology and epistemology – the entanglement of ways of being and knowing (see Barad 2007).

⁴Likewise, see Rosi Braidotti regarding the use of *nomadic*: 'Being nomadic, homeless, an exile, a refugee, a Bosnian rape-in-war victim, an itinerant migrant, an illegal immigrant, is no metaphor.' (2002: 3)

Significantly, Springgay and Truman challenge the 'assumption that methods are particular things' and argue that 'if the intent of inquiry is to create a different world, to ask what kinds of futures are imaginable, then (in)tensions attend to the immersion, tension, friction, anxiety, strain, and quivering unease of doing research differently' (2018: 83).

Chapter 6 focuses on *counter-cartographies* and *anarchiving* as alternatives to the exclusions and erasures enacted by conformist mapping and archiving practices. Relying on 'fragments of memories, oral stories, songs, marginal ephemera, and affects and emotions' (2018: 107), anarchives and counter-cartographies also suggest 'hauntings, spectres, regions, and relations' (2018: 113) rather than linear, regimented *chronos* time.

Chapter 7 is grounded in examples of projects that bring more-than-human walking methodologies in conversation with youth literacy and environmental education.

In Chapter 8 Springgay and Truman explore seven propositions for *queering the trail* and *thinking-in-movement* – propositions that also shape their own collaborative walking-writing practice. Walking, here, is not a 'break' from writing: 'We write as we walk. We walk a concept' (2018: 133). Their propositions encourage walker-readers to be attentive to the ordinary and overlooked, that which disorients, agitates, and provokes; to touch, to feel, to 'walk in a graveyard if you can find one' (2018: 138); to follow edges and contours.

Chapters 5 and 8 importantly expand on the concept of *speculative propositions*. Propositions are, crucially, not a 'set of directions or rules that contain and control movement' (2018: 83) and 'should not be taken as a formula' (2018: 130). Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's work, Springgay and Truman advocate beginning inquiry in the *speculative middle*. This entails a shift 'from a reporting on the world to a way of being in the world that is open to experimentation and is (in)tension' (2018: 87). They suggest that walking-writing, as a 'practice of muddling things, of making problems, and agitating thought', generates speculative middles – it 'complicates, stirs, and unsettles thought' (2018: 134). Speculative middles 'escape order' and are 'in excess' (2018: 93). Methods, then, can neither be predetermined nor separated; they are neither neutral nor innocent. Rather, methods are ways of 'becoming entangled in relations' (2018: 84).

One of the propositions centres on the notion of *with* – which includes considering the exclusions and erasures enacted by citation practices – and 'requires that we walk-write-think-cite as a political practice of co-composition' (2018: 138). *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-Human World* is meticulously researched and more-than generous in its citations, bringing to the fore often-unacknowledged contributions. This emphasis on collaboration, reciprocity, and mutuality is apparent from the very onset in the authors' acknowledgement, not only of human contributors, but also of the innumerable always-already more-than-human entanglements that shape their walking-writing. This is a book that should be walked-read *in companion*, and I am grateful that I have been able to do so.

Although some of the book's ambulatory potential is perhaps betrayed by the conventional linear structure, *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-Human World* nonetheless presents a powerful provocation for *un/learning* habits, *un/settling* inheritances,

and *un/doing* taken-for-granted categories, and compelling invocation to walk *queerly*. Readers of this journal who are unfamiliar with the concepts and complex theoretical terrain the authors cover may find the text difficult to access. This is, however, a book that invites you to carry ideas with you, like one carries a pebble in one's shoe. Follow an unfamiliar line of thought. Stray, circle back, retrace your steps. Walk slowly.

Reviewed by

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