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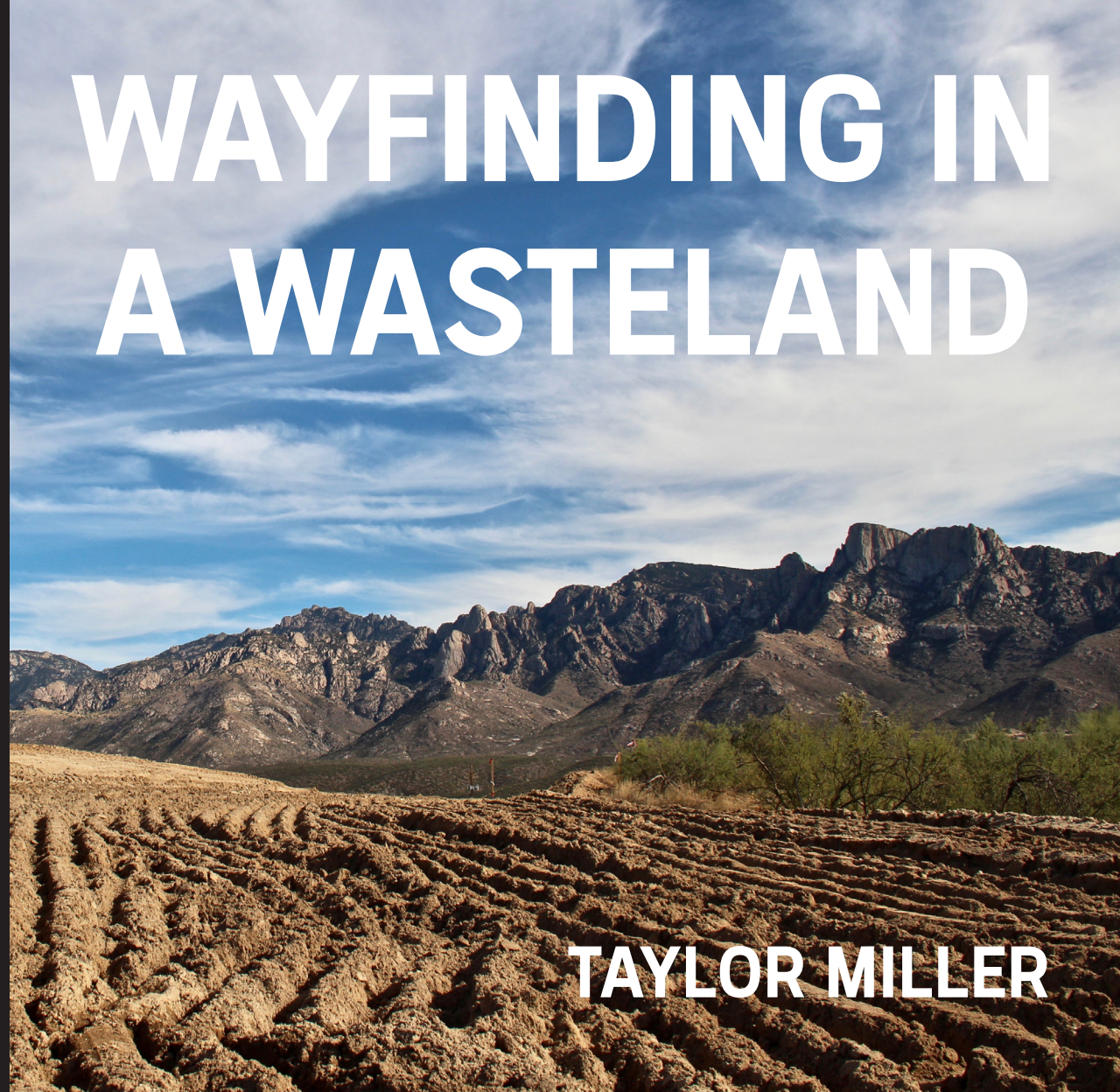

WAYFINDING IN A WASTELAND

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WAYFINDING IN A WASTELAND: AN EXPLORATION OF EMBODIMENT IN THE MASTER PLANNED COMMUNITY OF RANCHO VISTOSO

TAYLOR MILLER

Fifteen years ago, I fought it tooth and nail. Ten or five years ago, I fought it tooth and nail. And now I fight it tooth and nail. Every mile marker or year I grow older, a distinct kind of resistance. Hated Chicago, hated the way they all treated me (rather, ignored me)- sure mom and dad, anything, *anywhere* should be a welcome change. Back to the Sonoran Desert, where mom went to school and dad has dreamt of golfing 300 days a year. No new landscape changes the insecurities lodged deep within.

A distinct new sort of out-of-placeness, this time not only amongst high school kids, but amongst vistas from another planet. Everything is brown, barren, ugly. Inhospitable – the people and the plants. *In a matter of months I'll graduate and get the hell out*. "Out" was a plane ticket north—having driven with my parents from Illinois to southern Arizona

before my senior year of high school, an opportune moment when we were all desperate for a change of scenery. This landed me in another town where I felt I didn't fit in – Oro Valley, Arizona – the part of Tucson where no one worth knowing lives, where retirees shuffle between Safeway for groceries and Walgreens for a bag of prescriptions. Yes, "out" was Jackson Hole, Wyoming—where I could be loud, aggressive and alone amongst the mountains and finally expel my teenage angst under the most expansive skies. I left Oro Valley, my home and my parents, like an unattended dumpster fire. Grievances aired and frictions surfaced but were never fully attended to, so they burned and burned for years while I frolicked in the Teton mountains. Goodbye, Arizona. Hopefully see you never.

Never, until about four years into my foray, I skied into

a tree, cracking my clavicle and rendering my ski bum self all but use-and-purposeless. To Bozeman I go. With everything I own (mainly in the form of coats, socks and various types of skis) in the back of my Tacoma. Big Sky country will be just that—bigger, more off-grid, and hell, there's even Montana State University should I get bored. I could take my parents up on that offer for help with tuition, and major in downhill deviance.

Late July, the skies opened. A rain I'd never seen during this stint in the Rockies. I stood there in the bicycle shop where I somehow managed to make more than minimum wage. The front door was propped open, no customers in sight. It wasn't a warm rain, and after a winter of great snowpack, the ground certainly didn't need anything more. The drops fell angrily, telling me I was no longer welcome

here. *What are you doing, besides being your best brat? A high school diploma and bad shoulder, where do you think you can go?* It was the kind of cinematic internal reckoning that shifts a whole life trajectory. I sat on the shop computer and started filling out the application form for the University of Arizona.

In-state tuition might have been the topical draw, but there was a distinct new sensation of *going home* that I never really felt before. Home can't be Tucson, can it? After breezing through undergraduate studies as a photography-then-Art & Visual Culture Education student, and even finishing a semester early, I recall yearning in my final weeks of college life: I CAN'T WAIT TO GO. I despised those three and a half years for no reason besides feeling like I was missing *something*. Everything. I'll be in Los Angeles in no time.

Then up to the Bay. Then, off to expat. Nearly every moment in Jackson Hole and Bozeman was spent outside. In Tucson, barely a minute at all. The dry air. The brown plants. The heat. *The heat.*

Everything was fine, in hindsight, but during those days, I was Baudelaire's l'héautontimorouménos, the great self-tormenter. I pilgrimaged to San Francisco for some months following graduation, then central Mexico, then the Middle East. Thriving in a particular sort of twenty-three-year-old impatience and disquiet. If I am to be an artist, surely I need more brushes with conflict, and maybe more school. And certainly San Francisco Art Institute or California College of the Arts are the only places to go. But this time, money was a different kind of factor, and diving head first into $100,000 of debt felt impractical even in my most impulsive

flailings. Back to Tucson it is. This time, more curious of what it had to give. (A clear shortcoming of my not-so-distant youth, *what's in it for me?*)

Along this sinuous way, I picked up a partner, Chase. A new set of eyes through which to see Sonora. He was hesitant about this heat, but was eager to start a new life with me in the southwest, by way of Baltimore. There isn't time here to discuss finding oneself through someone else, should this even be possible. Yet, I attribute my slowing down, my experiencing each day a bit less hardened and increasingly opened, to him. Flash forward through a couple years, a couple thousand more miles on the truck, nights spent camping in the bed with a dollar store flashlight and the sound of cicadas, or the distant hum of I-10 lulling us to sleep. Up to the Grand Canyon, down to Ajo and Organ Pipe National Mon-

ument, the Chiricahuas, a side street in downtown Phoenix after a late concert. It felt like overnight, though not entirely sure which one, I discovered a new way to see and sense this land.

How could I think everything was just deadened and drab? How was I so oblivious to the treasure trove of carne seca, watermelon raspados and chiltepin notes waiting there all along, ready to excite and tantalize? Seemingly suddenly, everything was in bloom. Everything was a delicacy. And standing amongst the ocotillos and jojoba now felt like a solace worth fighting for.

What was it about this dusty, dry, just-isolated-enough place that found its way into our minds, into a new understanding of *home*? What accounts for a virtual 180 degree switch in emotional connectivity to place? I attribute

my newfound infatuation with Tucson to nestling into the downtown arts community, and building our space in a hundred year old adobe in Dunbar Spring. After holding various internships and jobs at organizations like Living Streets Alliance, MOCA Tucson, The University of Arizona Museum of Art, Casa Libre and more throughout my Masters program and the first two years of my PhD in Geography, nascent little roots began to mine their way through the caliche. The more these roots grew and anchored me into the city, the more I began to discover and assert my passions as well as work towards building stronger connections with those around me. Still, what accounts for the anger and isolation I initially experienced when I first moved to Tucson in 2006?

Even at a relatively naïve 17 years old, I understood my arrival in Oro Valley as a great disappointment. In the months

before our move from Chicago, I envisioned a great New West—an edgy yet relaxed new life on the frontier of America. Yes, there is still a swath of California before one reaches the coast. But everything west of El Cajon might as well be a whole separate island. The Southwest. I knew nothing, spare some photographs of sunsets and the Degrazia print hanging in our living room for some years. Cacti, sure. Sunsets, okay. Indians, probably.

My mom attended both Arizona State University and the University of Arizona while studying horticulture. For decades since, she carried visions of the landscape with her. The perfectly erect and expressive Saguaros as guardians to a relatively unknown desert. Dreams still filled with wafts of creosote dampened from a late summer monsoon. Some of this persists. Some. But the Tucson of the 1960s and 1970s

is nothing like today. She hadn't accounted for the suburban sprawl, mining and destruction that has occurred since her college days. Nor was she in touch with the strife caused by the US/Mexico border, displacement spawned by unsustainable density and the problems around indigenous sovereignty. And even if she knew this, I doubt the preparatory conversations would have occurred or that I would have asked the right questions—Chicago public schools are a virtual landfill of perpetual colonial narratives.

So we pulled up in the U-Haul to our new house in Oro Valley, after a long week of trucking through the Midwest and New Mexico. I cannot be as harsh here regarding where my parents chose to live as I secretively wish. They had all the right intentions of resettling me in the best school district they could, despite Arizona being one of the worst in the

nation for education. They strove for a smooth transition for everyone, and safety and affordability were of utmost importance while scoping the housing market.

At that point of arrival, I would have never known that the Rancho Vistoso subdevelopment, where they chose to set up shop and have lived for over a decade now, would lead to my endless interrogations of architectural theory, neighborhood planning and the production of space. I am not curious about why I presently feel at home in Tucson; it is pretty evident that the inclusive, dynamic, intelligent community I have sought out downtown has all the makings of a great place to live. What I *am* curious about is, why did I feel so out of place in Rancho Vistoso, and why are these sensations still blaring today?

As fitting a time as ever to turn to Charles Bowden's

(1986) *Blue Desert*. I think I purchased a copy after seeing it on a friend's bookshelf and feeling the urge to add to my nascent "Sonoran-centric" reading list. After collecting dust for a few years, I was curious to crack into it and observe how his thoughts piece into this grand puzzle. I am interested in more than how the protagonist moves through the desert, and what brushes they might have with other cultures and frights. There's no space for heroes or reconciliation if we cannot yet grasp we are the villains. That we are the ones tirelessly marring the land with zero concept of conquest and consequence. Bowden, once a journalist at the *Tucson Citizen*, documented his encounters without any sugar coating. And I appreciate this immeasurably. He was attuned to the nuances of contested sites, as well as how humans' mismanagement of resources and instincts are foremost responsible

for this age of the Anthropocene. He was keenly aware of the greed that drives nearly every facet of development throughout the southwest, and I find companionship in his perennial resentment and snark. “This book is about experience” (p. 1), he wrote, and in what follows, I reflect on some of his pressing passages and experiences as entry points for examining my out-of-placeness in Rancho Vistoso.

Wayfinding

I live about a twenty minute drive from Rancho Vistoso when traffic is light. But it might as well be on the East Coast, given how frequently I visit. *Mom, can you meet me at Time Market next week? My schedule is so slammed, I don't think I can make it up your way*. There is almost always a reason why I do not head north more often. A psychical barrier somewhere along Oracle Road, I think right around where it crosses with River Road, because even the mall *feels far*. Because right around there, there are no more adobe or early 20th century craftsman style homes. No more independent, small shops or hip cafes with decent espresso. There's a line

of demarcation where Olive Garden and Red Lobster are acceptable if not preferred places to dine, and where Volk FOR LEASE signs dot each half-empty strip mall.

I say with shame that I might only trek north every couple months. Sometimes, I think, what kind of relationship could I have with my parents it they lived closer? Or rather, if they at least lived someplace that inspired a bit more wonder and excitement? And if it wasn't just: straight from the driveway into the house to convene in the kitchen a while. Watch my dad watch some golf on television. Or chat with my mom on the patio about how there are no good restaurants to enjoy nearby. Of course, I could arrive with a more optimistic outlook, or encourage them to try a new hobby with me. But I'll be honest. It's draining. And in the image of many tired tropes, they are stuck in their ways.

So in this stalemate, the time I take to enjoy Oro Valley is all but nonexistent. Yet, it has developed into a hotbed of curiosity as in my graduate studies, there are a host of unlikely similarities between the Rancho Vistoso subdevelopment and how/where I research the Palestine/Israel conflict. In Jerusalem, I explore ethnoreligious networks of inclusion/exclusion and how these are evidenced at an embodied scale. There, I am foremost concerned with *the aesthetics of homelandscapes* and the ways in which the Israeli occupation of Palestine is manifest in the materiality of construction projects and land grabs. I explore these sites and sensorial encounters through psychogeography and wayfinding, and these methods are applicable for interpreting body-in-place, body-amongst-conflict in Oro Valley, too.

With foundations in Guy Debord's Situationists and

avant garde practices in the 1950s in London and Paris, we can better understand:

> If psychogeography is to be understood in literal terms as the point where psychology and geography intersect, then one of its further characteristics may be identified in the search for new ways of apprehending our urban environment. Psychogeography seeks to overcome the processes of 'banalisation' by which the everyday experience of our surroundings becomes one of drab monotony. Psychogeography concerns itself [with] the act of urban wandering, the spirit of political radicalism, allied to a playful sense of subversion and governed by an inquiry into the methods by which we can transform our relationship to the urban environment. (Coverley, p. 14)

I came into psychogeography well before my doctoral studies in geography, by way of studying wayfinding. As a Masters student in Art & Visual Culture Education, I took great inter-

est in Michel de Certau, Tim Ingold, Richard Long and others' fusion of art making, poetics, geopolitics, alternative cartographies and flâneur habits. Their hybrid processes are rooted in walking and tracing one's routes—all the ways in which they feel and analyze space as an embodied experience. Thus, a deeply personal, socio-politically informed aesthetic is developed in this cognitive mapping that highlights the psychogeographical contours and articulations of cities.

As Michel de Certeau noted, "What the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (O'Rourke, p. 1), which serves as a diagram for psychogeographic methods. Psychogeography, then, is a toolbox for experiencing, reading and interpreting space where (de)territorialization constantly occurs. Debord wrote on how these practices can examine the specific effects of the geographical environment, and recommended drifting[1]

(which I refer to as wayfinding):

> The practice of de-familiarization and the choice of encounters, the sense of incompleteness and ephemerality, the love of speed transposed onto the plane of the mind, together with inventiveness and forgetting are among the elements of an ethics of drifting we have already begun to test in the poverty of the cities of our time. (O'Rourke, p. 7)

Already harboring a sense of incompleteness and an urge to instigate and unpack interactions with/amongst Oro Valley, I return to the site with the imperatives of *Blue Desert* ringing between my ears, "This book proceeds, much the way I do, in a disorderly, relentless fashion. It is fat with contradictions but sounds one steady note: the land" (Bowden, p. 1). Though he moved through the Sunbelt a few decades before me, we both hold strong animosity towards those who slash and

burn the desert and we are drawn to the paradoxes of developers, bureaucrats and settlers on display.

Bowden ultimately asks of us, *can the land remain unchanged*? And my immediate answer is: no. Despite my minimal investment in cultivating community in Oro Valley, I am still connected enough to witness the rapid transformation of the space; how parcels of land once deemed "protected" have been auctioned off, razed, and built upon. I've taken for granted the vistas of the Catalina Mountains seen from my parents' home, now nearly entirely obscured by new apartments. Developments fiercely impeding on the watershed, fresh "FOR SALE" signs up on plots I presumed could not be sold. It is a plague so ravenous that I now assume there is no turning back. No hope for ecological preservation. No more emptiness.

Maybe all that is left to do is document what little remains, and the monstrous machines that leave the land scarred. How can I wayfind through Rancho Vistoso, and what am I hoping to glean on these routes? By reading these landscapes as text, I question how settlement in Rancho Vistoso is productive of an agglomerative, socioculturally homogenous space emblematic of The New West- one that is neglectful if not constantly embattled with the environment – and as body-in-place, body-amongst-conflict – I can analyze the visuality of these communities' dwellings and their interactions with the land.

Landscape

Before reading or deconstructing a site can occur, per chance it is best to address what is meant by *landscape*. For this, I turn to John Brinckerhoff Jackson's (1984) definition:

> Nevertheless the formula *landscape as a composition of man-made spaces on the land* is more significant than it first appears...for it says that a landscape is not a natural feature of the environment but a *synthetic* space, a man-made system of spaces superimposed on the face of the land, functioning and evolving not according to natural laws but to serve a community...a landscape is thus a space deliberately created to speed up or slow down the process of nature. As Eliade expresses it, it represents man taking upon himself the role of time. (p. 8)

He elaborates on how these synthetic organizations of space have been "so well assimilated into the natural environment that they are indistinguishable for what they are" (p. 8). It is possible to dive into the storied history of the land in Oro Valley – how it has been inhabited for nearly two thousand years by various indigenous peoples including the Hohokam and Apache, Spanish conquistadors, ranchers, gold rushers and post-WWII settlers. But in this moment, I am most concerned with the contemporary iteration of the town and its inhabitants, particularly the master-planned communities constructed following Oro Valley's incorporation in 1974.

Synthetic space is a fitting way to describe Rancho Vistoso, and this reverberates in its description:

> Rancho Vistoso is a master-planned community, approximately 7,600 acres in size. There are 31 neighborhoods developed by various builders offering a range from entry homes to million dollar estates. This community features 9 family parks, hiking trails, a baseball diamond, golf course, and offers courts for basketball, volleyball, and tennis. Also located within Rancho Vistoso Community Association is Innovation Park—a commercial development which includes biotechnology companies, shopping centers, dinner theater, gas stations, automotive shops and more. (Vistoso Community Association)

This subdevelopment is a landscape of idealized suburbia, presenting itself as self-sufficient and economically stratified. Laden in this blurb, though, are concepts of boundaries, homogeneity, inclusivity/exclusivity and mobility. To master-plan a community is to act as an omnipotent power over the land and its people; ravaging a site for scarce resources


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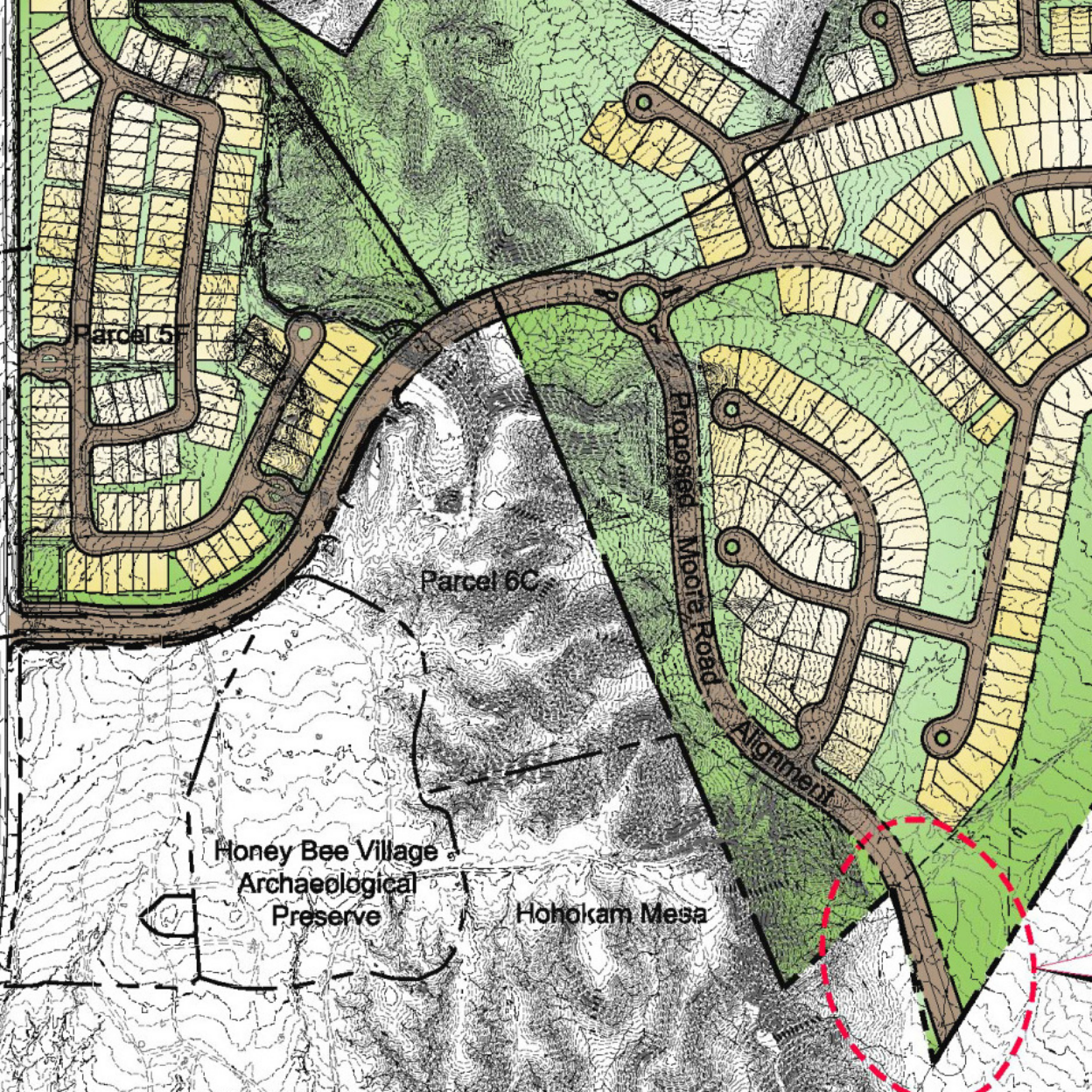
2


Parcel 5
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Proposed Moore Road Alignment
Honey Bee Village Archaeological Preserve
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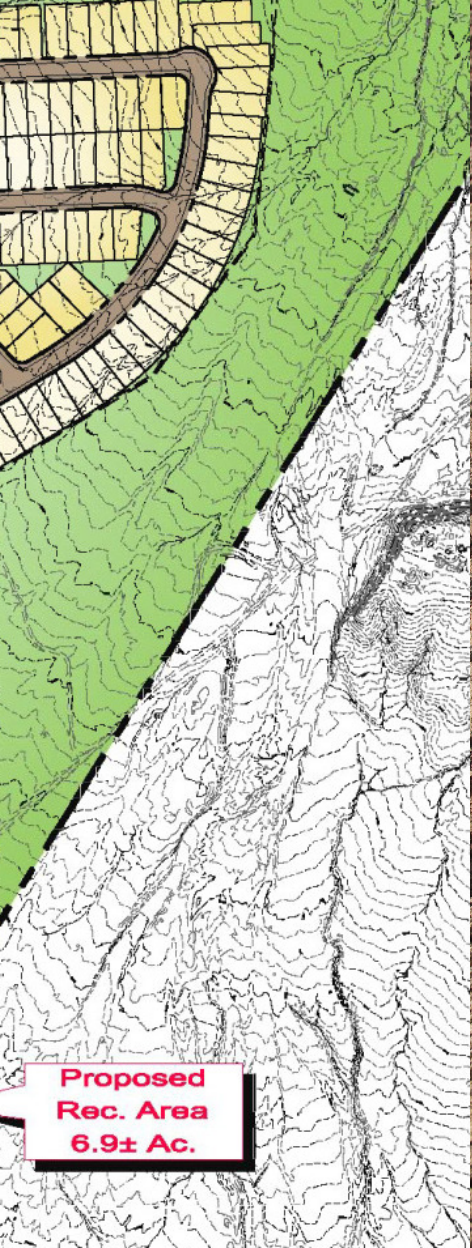
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(loudest here: sheer *space*) and deciding who is allowed into the club and who must look elsewhere. It is no community for gradual migration, nor economic and cultural diversity: BUY FAST. BEFORE THEY'RE GONE. Quantities are limited and only those with particular agency need apply (good credit, multiple cars, white skin). White skin? Yes. According to the 2010 Census, of the 41,011 people and 17,364 households in Oro Valley, 81.9% are non-Hispanic White.[2] In these neighborhoods of "million dollar estates" in close proximity to malls and biotech companies, we can hear echoes of Bowden, "The logic of my time is industrialism and everything will be turned to account, even the hard ground of the Pinacate and the Sonoran Desert that carpets this slab of the Southwest with thorns, sand, and the dreams of people long dead and gone" (p. 139). Sprawl and greed in Rancho Vistoso are vis-

ible in the landscape on a host of scales – from the ubiquitous FOR SALE signs on empty land, to the revolving door of corporations and chain restaurants occupying the strip malls (all roads in essence lead to Wal Mart, i.e. “Oro Valley Marketplace”) and the multiple vehicles parked in front of houses, because a three-car garage is not enough (or it is overflowing with junk, a common repository for all things Christmas). While some might view these as markers of economic prosperity, I observe an irreversible degradation of the land coupled with the construction of a homogenous community that is virtually impenetrable for marginalized families.

I obsess over the physical and psychical boundaries experienced in Rancho Vistoso precisely because of the deep seeded paradoxes discoverable in the space. This “community” is a series of neighborhoods designed for optimal com-

fort, relaxation and leisure – yet, these amenities are productive of an agglomerative, socioculturally identical space. These friction points are particularly noticeable in the high fences around each residential property, shuttered windows and unshaded benches and playgrounds. While these are all visual markers of delineation, this tension extends to all senses:

> In the contemporary Western world we assume that a boundary is the point (or line) of contact between two defined spaces, a way of regulating contact and communication with neighbors, even while it protects us against invasion or unwanted entry. We assume – and rightly from our point of view – that the boundary is like a skin: a thin surface which is in fact part of the body, part of space which it protects. We therefore assume that the boundary corresponds as closely as possible to the area of the content. That is why we have spent so much time and thought establishing

> natural or functional boundaries for every kind of space, boundaries which faithfully delimit a homogenous unity. (Jackson, p. 13)

Every kind of space in this landscape is cut, carved, leveled. A wall, stretch of asphalt, fence or minivan pervading our lines of sight; ever-present reminders of a frontier, tamed. Of our bodies, sedated and disciplined. It is here that Bowden reverberates: *I know no desert language. I am the interloper, the refugee, the tourist, the present that denies the past* (p. 135). This impulse to organize and control desert dirt and permeable peoples generates a distinct form of disharmony; a rootless existence of the Oro Valley suburbanite, one that I neither belong to nor am welcome.

New West

Wayfinding through Rancho Vistoso is not the simplest task; despite the "master planned" communities which advertise as family-and-retiree-friendly, it is a place increasingly hostile to pedestrians. Playing in or walking around the neighborhood is no friendly activity; the countless cul-de-sacs resemble a Foucauldian panopticon, where everyone's living room window faces the street and those outside are perennially subject to a scrutinizing gaze. If you linger too long, surely you're up to no good. Though I sought to wayfind closest to my parents' home in the "Las Colinas" neighbor-

hood, I could only handle a few minutes of walking down Arrowsmith Lane before an overwhelming sense of rejection and paranoia washed over. With camera in hand and two arms shellacked in tattoos, I felt as though every glance from a construction worker or resident was incriminating. Every step or look around was its own form of trespass.

Wanting to avoid altercation, I drove a bit north from Las Colinas to the newest neighborhood, “Mattamy.” Somehow, a cluster of homes called “The Colonies” seemed sensible amidst this unwieldy sprawl. But the latter decidedly languishes in ambiguity. The lightest scouring uncovers that “Mattamy Homes” is a Toronto, Ontario based home builder founded in 1978. The company, named for the owner’s eldest children, Matt and Amy, is currently Canada’s largest residential home builder and North America’s largest private-

ly owned home builder.[3] The company aligns with a "New Urbanism" home design concept, citing it is "rigorous about every single aspect of community planning. [They] acquire the land, design the homes, plan the streets, and create the people spaces—the walking and biking trails, parks, and other community features." And to guild the lily, the owner of Mattamy Homes sits as an advisor to Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, which has been criticized for close relations with the Canadian fossil fuels industry. *There is not much difference between the proud new Sunbelt cities and the old mining camps. They are both temporary Woodstocks of wanderers hell-bent on plundering. They will exhaust the place and then move on. I should say: we will exhaust the place and then move on* (Bowden, p. 36).

Here, I want to scream until I'm hoarse, claw my skin

until raw. We have resources available to us like never before – technology, infrastructure and access to materials that could lend to construction that leaves a smaller carbon footprint, doing substantially less ecological damage. We could build in ways that last for generations, so that our grandchildren needn't bat an eye over the solidity of the structure. We can harvest rainwater and solar energy. We can design complete streets that create ample shade for outdoor activities and are safer for kids to play in. Yet...none of this is happening. In fact, the Mattamy homes and surrounding neighborhoods function completely opposite. Angular, wasteful, toxic. Blaringly harmful to the sensitive desert ecology and all of the settlers on the land.

Rancho Vistoso is a space representative of the New West; more than mere geographical site, it is a "complex,

unstable signifier that has been given meaning by those who have lived within it, passed through it, conquered it, settled, farmed, militarized, urbanized, and dreamed it" (Campbell, p. 2). Furthermore, the landscape can be understood:

> The West-as-text is multilayered, 'an agglomerative space' where 'everything signifies ceaselessly and several times, but without being delegated to *a great final ensemble, to an ultimate structure.* The 'ultimate structure' or metanarrative, in terms of the West, has been a series of dominant stories or myths told over time and endowed with massive cultural power, such as the Promised Land, Manifest Destiny, Turner's frontier thesis, each of which sought to encompass and define the West. Taken together and over time, these myths contribute to the construction of a discourse that defines the West in the consciousness. (p. 6)

That despite decades of dispute and dispossession, the colonizing impetus is alive and well today in Oro Valley. Evidenced

in my wayfinding is the nonstop land grab and continual flex of human domination over the desert. To me, this concept of the New West is foremost identifiable by its materiality; cheap and hasty construction projects which mimic a quasi-Mediterranean, assuredly-unsightly aesthetic that is predicated on *containment*. Pets, weeds, children, possessions... everything packed into built-in cabinetry, isolated behind some sort of fencing.

Emboldened by psychogeographic methods, I walked and photographed my way through the in-progress Mattamy development, paying little mind to the security cameras flanking many light posts. Active in wayfinding is the interplay of power and vulnerability, as "walking means aligning oneself to some extent with a rebellious reclamation of common rights, with the dream of liberal freedom, with the

ideal of democracy. In a country where common lands [are] being increasingly privatized and enclosed, the walker re-claim[s] the right to use public footpaths" (O'Rourke, p. 19). Out-of-placeness is exacerbated in these spaces, because not only am I a visual embodiment of *an Other*—looking and acting outside of the community norms—but my staggering sadness while bearing witness to this environmental devastation amounts to immense hatred and distrust of Rancho Vistoso inhabitants, thus placing me outside of the logics of the master planned community. *Everywhere I look this night I hear the distant thunder of the twentieth century's rush into the desert, the last pocket of space left in the idea of the frontier* (Bowden, p. 139).

Blue Desert

Is it worth trying to reconcile with a landscape that is apathetic to your existence? Would it be more inviting if I passed fewer judgements, made fewer sneers, spent more time enjoying it at face value? Likely not. Rows of excavators along a ridge, the next acreage to be plowed and poured over with concrete, serve as bastions of neoliberal supremacy. They signal the start of an era all but devoid of environmental protections and regulations, where transnational corporations are the governing body and free market capitalism is the bubble in which all allegiances reside. Laying ruin to the land is nothing new, but the speed and force with which

developers degrade Oro Valley and the nearby Catalina Mountains feels unmatched. *Once the new people, my people, plugged into the shortages of water buried in the earth or fuels buried in the earth or metals buried in the earth, all these worlds exploded and old ways and old customs and old fears became historical footnotes and historical junk. We called this explosion progress* (Bowden, p. 136). There will always be more *getting* to do—more palo verdes and mesquites that can easily be uprooted to make way for another bank, another playground replete with Astroturf. Because our children should never know what it's like to eat a fistful of desert, as it was when the rivers ran. When open space becomes slim pickings, new housing projects can seamlessly become row houses or apartments or tenement blocks, and everyone can fight over the $10/hour line cook or Starbucks barista

position. A benchmark of both density *and* displacement.

If it reads bleak, that's because it is. I have little faith in the future of Oro Valley and its unsustainable growth. The insular, polarizing communities fostered in these neighborhoods have drawn a sharp line in the sand: only very particular races, creeds, and economic brackets can live there. Those interested in "alternative" lifestyles (read: queer, black, Mexican, poor, university-attendee or Precariat class) can/must set up shop near downtown. Or at least somewhere away from Us. This out-of-placeness I continue to sense when in Rancho Vistoso is reinforced by architectural and community planning decisions, the materiality of the site and the largely non-verbal distancing recurrent between myself and the suburbanites. While wayfinding and employing psychogeographic methods to read the landscape as text, I continually

question how settlement in Rancho Vistoso is productive of socioculturally homogenous space emblematic of The New West- a development that is neglectful if not constantly embattled with the environment. As body-in-place, body-amongst-conflict – I sense the community's incongruity with the land on multiple scales. *I am busy killing experience with categories and words and leads, striking at it like it were a serpent to be slain and made into a safe skin, perhaps a belt or hatband* (Bowden, p. 175). It is resoundingly clear while re-visiting this place and experimenting with embodied encounters that I am not welcome here; I am not far, but I remain foreigner.

Notes

[1] "One of the basic Situationist practices is the *dérive* [literally: "drifting"], a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. Dérives involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll. In a dérive one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a dérive point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones" (Debord).

[2] Wikipedia. *Oro Valley, Arizona*. Accessed 16 November 2017. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oro_Valley,_Arizona

[3] Mattamy Homes. *About Mattamy*. Accessed 17 November 2017. Retrieved from https://mattamyhomes.com/about-us.aspx

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