

DARREN PATRICK –

“H,i,g,h, L,i,n,e,” Architectonics

“NOBODY—AT LEAST NOT IN LATE CAPITALISM—IS SIMPLY ‘AT HOME’ IN THEIR HOMES, THEIR BODIES, OR ELSEWHERE.”

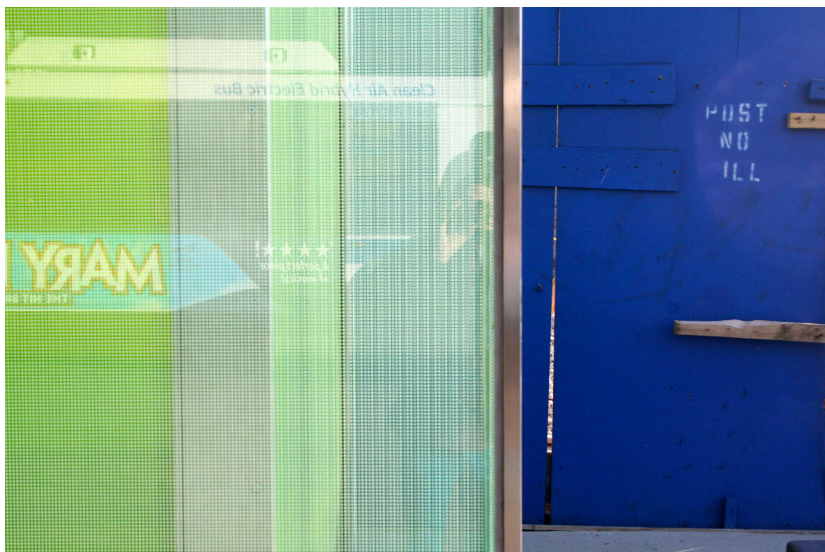
— LUCAS CRAWFORD, *TRANSGENDER ARCHITECTONICS* [1]

I lived in New York City between January 2006 and August 2010, a period straddling the dawn of the financial crisis and corresponding almost exactly to the years in which the first section of the “transformed” High Line was opened as a semi-public park and green growth engine. But, while I had spent years researching the socio-environmental history of the nearby West Side waterfront and Hudson River Park, I didn’t think much about the High Line until I left the city.

I had worked my way through school at a family-run architecture and design firm in Brooklyn; even subprime student loans didn’t pay the rent. Just before the housing market imploded, which dramatically affected my hometown of Cleveland, my bosses decided to close up shop and move out of the city. So in September 2008, after a year of staying on with the firm to transition their clients, I was jobless and heavily indebted, and the markets were

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[1] Lucas Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics: The Shape of Change in Modernist Space* (London: Routledge, 2016), 29.



“YRAM/MARY” under the High Line, April 2011. Photograph by the author.

collapsing. Because I qualified for unemployment, I spent that fall becoming deeply involved with intergenerational anti-racist community organizing work in Prospect Lefferts Gardens. But eventually, the checks stopped coming. I had gotten no callbacks from hundreds of job applications, apart from one horrendous interview at a hedge fund (which I tanked because I said my motivation for working there was to “peek behind the curtain”).

In December of that year, I finally got an offer for a job as a book-keeper at a for-profit real estate development consulting firm intimately involved in architecting the financial and zoning logics for “rescuing” the High Line from demolition. Working there was indeed a peek behind the curtain. After two years of taking long lunch breaks, I fled the city to complete a master’s degree in Budapest. Only then did I turn back to truly consider the High Line. My research quickly became consumed by what Michael Cataldi (et al.) would later call the “residues of a dream world.” [2] In April 2011, I returned to New York for a brief, but intense, period of fieldwork and began to build an archive of stories, images, and maps around the High Line. On my first visit to the beguilingly redesigned space, all I recall feeling was a profound ambivalence toward the good intentions and “crazy ideas” of its newfound friends. [3] What about its *old* friends, I wondered: the wayward plants, animals, and people replaced by the carefully curated urban “recycling project” of the “totally gay” High Line? [4] How to process the loss of these relations, the end of an ecology that I had barely experienced? My first attempt involved a queer ecological conversation with the wayward and maligned *Ailanthus altissima*, the titular Tree of Heaven from Betty Smith’s tale of an Irish immigrant girl in early twentieth-century Brooklyn (*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*). [5] The tree had been an opportunistic resident of the abandoned High Line and was not invited back after the redesign.

In 2011 I moved to Toronto, where I began a doctorate focused on elaborating the notion of queer urban ecologies that had coalesced during my work on the High Line. Initially, my research remained centered on the park, which was continuing its march northward and slowly colliding—colluding, perhaps—with mega-developments like Hudson Yards. Throughout the 2010s, critical academic commentaries on the space began to unpack more fully what anyone who had fucked, created, foraged, cultivated, or squatted on or under the High Line must have felt (read: known) in their bones all along—the Faustian bargain that had saved the self-seeded landscape from outright destruction was now paving the way for another kind of Death Avenue. [6] As Lucas Crawford puts it near the end of *The High Line Scavenger Hunt*:

OUR DEATH AVENUE / IS A GUILT-SLOW STREET STUDDERED WITH
/ THE QUIET COFFIN-NAIL QUERIES / OF HOW TO LIVE / WITH
SOMETHING / MOST OF US DIDN’T QUITE / OR DID QUITE / OR
DIDN’T QUITE / LIVE WITH. [7]

There’s that question, again: what about its old friends? Toggling between *not quite* and *almost* living with the ambivalences engendered by the greener and gayer High Line is perhaps the most evocative embodiment of what Crawford’s work in *Scavenger Hunt* offers to readers, especially in conversation with the earlier, and more conventionally scholarly, *Transgender Architec-*

[2] Michael Cataldi, David Kelley, Hans Kuzmich, Jens Maier-Rothe, and Jeannie Tang, “Residues of a Dream World: The High Line, 2011,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 28, no. 7 (January 2012): 358–89.

[3] Joshua David and Robert Hammond, *High Line: the Inside Story of New York City’s Park in the Sky* (New York City: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 13, 127.

[4] Erik Pipenburg, “Under the High Line, a Gay Past,” the *New York Times*, February 3, 2012, ArtsBeat edition, [link](#).

[5] Darren Patrick, “The Matter of Displacement: A Queer Urban Ecology of New York City’s High Line,” *Social and Cultural Geography*, vol. 15, no. 8 (2014): 920–41.

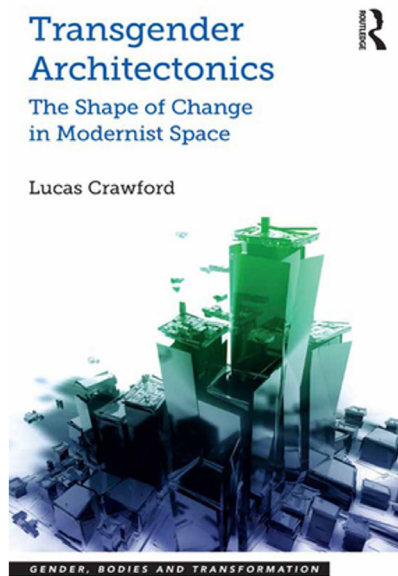
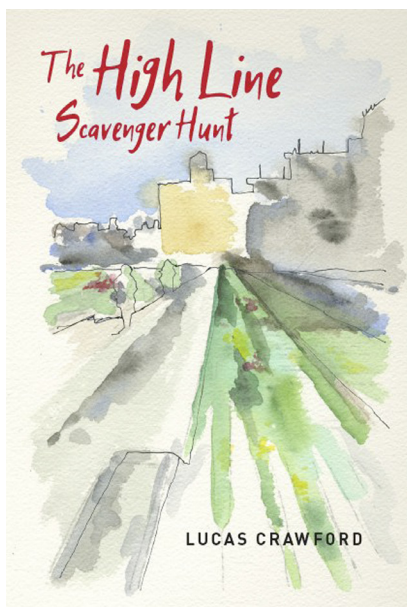
[6] See, for example: Christoph Linder and Brian Rosa, eds., *Deconstructing the High Line: Postindustrial Urbanism and the Rise of the Elevated Park* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2017).

[7] Lucas Crawford, *The High Line Scavenger Hunt* (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2018), 111.

tonics: The Shape of Change in Modernist Space. I recently discovered both books at a moment in my research and personal lives in which, despite having again turned away from the High Line, it seems to be generating newfound curiosity, especially on the part of queer and gender nonconforming academics and practitioners. At first blush, I was tempted to read these books as relevant mostly to anyone who hasn't quite learned to live with the atonal alternation between inevitability and impossibility that resonates in the wake of the High Line. But as I ambled through Crawford's expansive unfolding of the promises and perils of tracing a more transient current in writing on architecture and embodiment, I was carried far beyond parochial paeans to either decadent reliquary ruination or redemptive gut renovation. The conversation between the two books pulled at me like a tendon tugs at tired memory-bones, enabling a sorely needed movement toward "a transgender poiesis of architecture—a creative making of relations and bodies that doesn't merely occur *in* but occurs *with* public structures." [8] The play between Crawford's poetry and theory abounds in theoretical insight and linguistic creativity. Reading these two books together makes for a revelatory wander across disparate affective zones deeply informed—but never overwhelmed—by that fraught category of experience: the personal. Perhaps this is why I cannot resist plotting one more recent point on my own crooked trajectory as a nonbinary—maybe better, *gender ambivalent*—queer poet-writer well versed (always vers!) in academic drag.

[8] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 151.

Several years into my doctorate—even as publishers approached me with interest in my research on the High Line, which was gaining currency as a topic for critical geographers and urban studies people (mostly men)—my work took an abrupt turn to a public structure of a very different kind: Atlantide, an occupied and self-managed political space in Bologna, Italy. The building itself is one of two identical structures that comprise the Porto Santo Stefano, one of the ancient entryways to the medieval city center. Several collectives had called Atlantide home since it was initially occupied in the late 1990s, most notably Nulla Osta, a group of punks; Clitoristrix, a lesbian and feminist separatist collective; and Antagonismo Gay, a group of gay male separatists. In late 2007,



Left: Lucas Crawford, *The High Line Scavenger Hunt* [Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2018].
Right: Lucas Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics: The Shape of Change in Modernist Space* [London: Routledge, 2016].

Antagonismo Gay initiated a project called Laboratorio Smaschieramenti—roughly translated, a Laboratory for Unmasking/Demasculation. Initially a short-term project, the Laboratorio soon became a collective in its own right, marking the transition of Antagonismo Gay to an experiment in transfeminist and queer autonomy that continues to rumble along today. All this despite the fact that the municipal government evicted the collectives of Atlantide in October 2015, just after I had finished my initial work with the Laboratorio.

Among the many projects undertaken by the Laboratorio, the one I kept returning to as I read Crawford's work is a collective archiving praxis that we began in 2015. Like Crawford's "archival intervention into the narrative architectonic of the trans subject," the Laboratorio's impetus to archive in the context of transfeminist and queer autonomous organizing and knowledge production runs counter to the dominant institutional mode, a form that Crawford explores in *Transgender Architectonics* through readings of Derrida's canonical work *Archive Fever*. [9] Albeit in terms whose provenance derives from the political ecologies of the Italian autonomous left, our work tracks very closely to that of the "anarchive," an unruly practice variously invoked in *Transgender Architectonics* through references to Deleuze and Guattari and Ann Cvetkovich. [10]

[9] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 14.

[10] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 10-13.

In questioning the work of institutional archiving "modeled on the law of the ancestral house" and its attendant norms of both family configurations and bodily compartments, Crawford (re)imagines the spatial dilemmas of (r)evolutionary gender nonconformity and transgender modes of change by asking: "[M]ust forgetting (one's current gender attachments) always be traumatic? Must it be painful not to be able to masterfully archive/account for every single event of one's gendered life—or might it be liberating?" [11] Our work is distinguishable from Crawford's in that its point of political departure in praxis is the embodiment of a collective-subject, precisely *not one*. Still, a very similar question inhered in our initial work on the archive, namely: what kinds of spatial and political practices are necessary and adequate to sustain the incessant everyday, embodied, and relational work of changing and realizing new modalities of gender and sexuality? And: what does reclaiming and reconfiguring physical space have to do with it?

[11] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 8, 10.

In unearthing the actions and attritions of nearly two decades of organizing, we hewed very closely to the tendency in "queer archiving [that] consists in keeping things that would usually be thrown away." [12] In our first pass at the practice, we painstakingly perused, organized, and cataloged close to three hundred items that a founding member of both Antagonismo Gay and Laboratorio Smaschieramenti had ferreted away in basement boxes and long-forgotten drawers. Over several months, we spent many hours sitting with these items, recollecting the stories they prompted and acknowledging—first, among ourselves, and, eventually, in a more outward-facing way—the distinctive bodily changes wrought and struggled for in (the) movement over the years.

[12] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 13.

The work of constructing what we initially called the "Eccentric Archive" of transfeminist queer autonomy in movement was driven by a long-standing commitment to political and relational experimentation. [13] We eschewed any pretense of establishing a "correct" record of events as viewed from the "interior" of Atlantide. We aimed instead to make a space in which anyone could amble. This kind of archive is patchy; it takes shape through a series of proleptic gestures that reveal patterns of change and tendencies

[13] The Laboratorio, its context, and the landscape have all shifted since we began this work in 2015. Among other significant changes that followed from the state-led eviction, the Centro di Ricerca ed Archivio Autonomo di Alessandro Zijno/Alessandro Zijno Research Center and Autonomous Archive (CRAAAZI) established itself as a distinct entity from Laboratorio Smaschieramenti. The latter, nonetheless, remains intimately central to both the political and practical work of transfeminist and queer archiving.



Left: “No Vat: More self-determination, less Vatican,” making the Eccentric Archive in Bologna, Summer 2015. Right: “In the ass, yes, but not like this,” the entrance to Atlantide the week of the eviction, October 2015. Photographs by the author.

toward transformation otherwise largely indistinguishable from the everyday life of transfeminist and queer self-invention and self-mythologization. The effort it takes to (re)narrate the contents of an intervention scrawled in a notebook during an assembly ten years prior, or to squint at a film negative only to see the inverted image of a lost comrade, or to remember in which year a flyer was written for an event that proved to be a turning point for a particular campaign, slowly begins to reveal a constellation of bodily and political affects, moods, and bottlenecks on the long road to becoming otherwise.

There is neither finality nor unanimity in such work. It is, instead, a rare moment for gathering threads together to cast a provisional, nonlinear map that, as Crawford puts it, “throw[s] the narrative form of ‘the life’ [in this case of a collective and its ‘home’] into suspension in order to create new non-subjective modes of trans individuation.” [14] Such maps are not composed

[14] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 16.



Left: “Self-management is the only solution/NO,” the interior of Atlantide the week of the eviction, October 2015. Right: Bologna, City of Walls, the municipal police brick over the entrance to Atlantide hours after the eviction, October 2015. Photographs by the author.

of rectilinear vectors that iteratively establish “correct” individual or collective modalities of doing/feeling gender, sexuality, or politics. Instead, they entail a praxis of self-determination and collective subject-making akin to what Crawford sets out to accomplish in *Transgender Architectonics*, namely to speak to “trans people...who want new ways to navigate gender and not celebrations of existing ways.” [15] This is a multidimensional, bodily kind of mapping, one that snakes like a rusty ghost train past bedroom windows. What Crawford describes in a five-pointed “blueprint” tracks very closely to the work of exploring actually existing utopias like the ones created in Atlantide or on and around the abandoned High Line. [16] As Crawford has it, these spaces are like Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s Blur Building, held together through the strange magic of tensegrity, a force characterized by “the illusion of its stability.” [17] In the language of the Laboratorio and generations of autonomous activists, a similar force is at work in movement building, except it goes by the name *transversalism*. In the context of contemporary transfeminist and queer politics, such work reclaims creativity from the mantle of gentrifying state-capitalist ideology and puts it to work in liberating all beings from the deadly consequences of heteropatriarchal social relations. This work is important, so we must do it ourselves, together.

Crawford’s contribution to naming and explaining the spatial power of trans- is most expansively on display in *The High Line Scavenger Hunt*, the scrappy poetic counterpart to *Transgender Architectonics*. In both texts, the author forages for the materials for (re)invention. Crawford’s foray into the poetic anarchival atmosphere of the High Line materializes the question that sits in the subtitle of *Architectonics*: how to trace the shape of change when the matter at hand is anything but stable.

It is one thing to seek answers in the various gospels of social construction often quoted, less often read, still less often practiced in the flagship gender studies departments of North America. It is quite another to approach the materialities of an architectural beyond—“outside,” as it were—institutional archives in which the liberal individual subject is always already hard at work, even, and perhaps especially, when denied, decried, and subverted. Amid the detritus of a life, we see just what it means to grow gender—and, indeed, subjectivity—differently. We awaken into the ecologies of our interdependencies in a mode that echoes Elizabeth Povinelli’s “anthropology of the otherwise,” [18] David Wojnarowicz’s invocation of the “World,” [19] and Silvia Federici’s “re-encharmed commons.” [20]

The hinge between Crawford’s two books is, on one level, the High Line, which is where Crawford experimentally leaves the reader in the “Epilogue” to *Transgender Architectonics*. Here, Crawford picks up some of the most compelling aspects of the literary analysis that comprises the heart of the book. Take, for example, Crawford’s dive into diagnostic definitions of transness in Chapter 5, which addresses “an alternative theory of transgender affect, space, and time” by way of a reading of Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando: A Biography*. To set up the analysis, Crawford briefly traces a history of the shift in medical terminology from gender identity disorder (GID) to gender dysphoria. [21] In 2013, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* released its fifth edition, which no longer invoked the term “disorder.” [22] Despite taking a distinctive step away from the severely pathologizing and sometimes deadly definitions of GID, the medical reclassification of gender

[15] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 2.

[16] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 16. Crawford’s five points for “provisionally defin[ing] ‘transing’” in relation to architecture correspond, on the one hand, to five observations about DS+R’s Blur Building (see pages 4–5) and to the five core chapters of *Transgender Architectonics*. They are, in brief: 1. To situate “transing” as a process that is neither “specifically gendered” nor a once-and-for-all move but as one that signals “the very ubiquity of constant transformation for all”; 2. Transing is relational rather than individual; 3. Transing is not binary, but “an act of folding and refolding rather than containing”; 4. Transing should not be conflated with modes of subjective self-identification because “acts of transing...are happenings or movements”; and 5. Transing works “in direct opposition to the stability and fixity of bodily ‘homes’” to reveal the changeability of all structures, including “architectures (of the self).”

[17] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 3.

[18] Elizabeth Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 10–11.

[19] “First there is the World. Then there is the Other World. The Other World is where I sometimes lose my footing. It its calendar turnings, in its preinvented existence...Traveling into primitive [sic] cultures allows one a sudden and clear view of the Other World; how the invention of the word ‘nature’ disassociates us from the ground we walk on.” David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: a Memoir of Disintegration* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 87–88.

[20] Silvia Federici, *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2019), 188–197.

[21] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 89.

[22] For a helpful and critical summary of the changes to the DSM, see: Kelley Winters, “An Update on Gender Diagnoses, as the DSM-5 Goes to Press,” December 5, 2012, [link](#).

nonconformity nonetheless imputes a degree of interiority to the experiences associated with living beyond normative gender. At the same time, the category opens itself to a greater range of “disaffections” with regard to the expectations and demands imposed by social, medical, and legal regimes. Crawford’s reading of gender dysphoria through Woolf displaces gender across both time and space by emphasizing empathy, a kind of actually existing superpower, and evokes an inherently relational and collective poetry of the otherwises to normativity. What helped me navigate the impasse of my own encounter with diagnostic dysphoria—other than a brilliant postcard on a friend’s back window stating “my gender is not a diagnosis,” a radical embrace of gender euphoria, and the politics of gender strike—was my therapist’s explanation that, while imperfect, the renaming of the diagnosis was constructed with the intention of providing “an exit” from the diagnosis itself. [23] This explanation made sense only in a very literal way, like a sign on the door: Hegemonic masculinity? Please leave.

Crawford makes a sidelong exit from normative gender expectations by way of a pivot to poetry. Such a pivot works against demands for “transgender integrity” (see Chapter 7) that themselves obscure the displacements of gender by insisting on the *Cerberus*-like policing of the boundaries through an emphasis on anti-relational self-containment, rigid binary individuation, and, finally, liberal settler colonial sovereignty. Crawford’s *Architectonic* indeed critiques all of these things, perhaps most subtly the particularly settler colonial dimension of liberal sovereignty. Still, read in a broader context of writing on disability and queerness, the promise of an exit remains strange in a good way. In walking the line, Crawford’s trajectory across the two books evokes something of Eli Clare, whose *Exile & Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation* remains an exemplary work of politicized anti-memoir and queer ecological sensibility. Of leaving rural Oregon for an urban life, Clare writes in one of the book’s essays, “Losing Home”:

MY DISPLACEMENT, MY EXILE, IS TWINED WITH PROBLEMS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE INTERSECTION OF QUEER IDENTITY, WORKING-CLASS AND POOR IDENTITY, AND RURAL IDENTITY, PROBLEMS THAT DEMAND NOT A PERSONAL RETREAT, BUT LONG-LASTING, SYSTEMIC CHANGES. THE EXCLUSIVITY OF QUEER COMMUNITY SHAPED BY URBAN, MIDDLE-CLASS ASSUMPTIONS. ECONOMIC INJUSTICE IN THE BACKWOODS. THE ABANDONMENT OF RURAL WORKING-CLASS CULTURE. THE PAIRING OF RURAL PEOPLE WITH CONSERVATIVE, OPPRESSIVE VALUES. THE FORCED CHOICE BETWEEN RURAL ROOTS AND URBAN QUEER LIFE. THESE PROBLEMS ARE THE CONNECTIVE TISSUE THAT BRINGS THE WORDS *QUEER*, *CLASS*, AND *EXILE* TOGETHER. [24]

Crawford’s *Scavenger Hunt* brings the word *transgender* into Clare’s triad. Setting up the poetic work that would follow *Architectonics*, Crawford writes:

[23] I first encountered the organizing around a “gender strike” as a member of Laboratorio Smaschieramenti. Work to organize gender strike continues globally through the network Non Una Di Meno and, in addition to (trans)national assemblies and numerous local initiatives, typically involves large-scale, horizontal demonstrations on March 8, “International Women’s Day” and November 25, “International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.” Much of the material produced by this network is not available in English. For a recent statement regarding the adaptation of the strike to organizing against male violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence, see “The Inappropriate Weapon of Feminist Strike,” Non Una Di Meno, March 14, 2017, [link](#).

[24] Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2009), 48.

THERE IS IRONY, INJUSTICE, AND A MEMORIAL IMPULSE SHOWN IN [THE] JUXTAPOSITION OF INSTANCES OF “DIS-PLACEMENT”: THE GENTRIFICATION OF THE MEATPACKING DISTRICT FORCED THE AREA’S RESIDENTS, WORKERS, AND VISITORS TO ORIENT THEMSELVES ELSEWHERE, TO DIFFERENT SPACES, AND TO DIFFERENT LIVES IN ONE OR A MULTITUDE OF WAYS, WHILE THE “MELANCHOLIC” DESIGN OF THE NEW PARK DESIGNS ITSELF AGAINST STRAIGHTFORWARD ORIENTATIONS, DESPITE ITS LONG, THIN BODY...[CAN A TRANS HISTORY BE “TOLD,” VIA FEELING, IN A VISITOR’S TRIPPING TOES OR ROLLED ANKLE ON THE HIGH LINE IN 2015? [25]

[25] Crawford, *Transgender Architectonics*, 162–163.

Scavenger Hunt brings us to *this* High Line through a three-by-three structure in which the bulk of the poems are presented like the tripartite, phased unfolding of the resurrected High Line itself. Section I, “A Bone, A Tooth, A Ghost,” is marvelously backward-facing, sensual, and desirous, an anchor; Section II, “A Blueprint, A Blade, A Branch,” presents an extensive swarm of those elements of “design” that are enabled perhaps only through a transgender reading of the High Line, in Crawford’s sense; and Section III, “A Kaleidoscope, A Mirage, A Self,” is reflexively contrarian, affording us an iteratively askance view from the final stretch of track. In its own architecture, the book presents a kind of sacred geometry of poems that unfold through the anarchival layers of body, gut, earth, blood, spirit, experience, and memory prompted by the High Line.

The core sections of *The High Line Scavenger Hunt* are enfolded in two sets of poems. For the opening, Crawford offers a pair of poems cut away from the rest of the book like the fingertip from Crawford’s hand. [26] The book closes with more difficult-to-process material (“Indigestion I” and “Indigestion II”) before offering an epilogue in the form of a direct-address instructional poem, “Scavenger Hunt.” [27] The first poem in the book, “*Think Like an Architect!*” demands our attention like a teacher interrupting a conspiratorial whisper at the back of studio. This poem, which ends with an inventory of techniques of severance, even butchery, speaks of the accident of Crawford’s relationship to the High Line. The author writes “as a rural, trans, queer, and white Jewish poet who has followed the High Line project closely for many years as a critic of architecture and urbanism.” [28] Beyond these deep sources of knowledge, Crawford draws particularly on experiences “as a student of an intensive ‘Introduction to Architecture’ studio at Columbia” that is specifically named as “transphobic, ableist, ahistorical, and otherwise uninteresting.” [29] Students in the studio were asked to study the High Line. The author made an “all-thumbs attempt” to complete an assignment by designing a project “about / washrooms, the meat market, transgender history,” much to the displeasure of the teaching assistant. For the next assignment, Crawford revisits the “cursed” material prompt of the High Line, which is then “chopped,” “smeared,” and “slapped.” The professor informs: “NOW you’re starting to think like an architect!” [30] The severity of this opening encounter with the architecture is transduced into the following poem, “Summer 2009, Manhattan,” where the rigid pedagogies of gender again reveal their toll on the body:

[26] Crawford, *Scavenger Hunt*, 89.

[27] Crawford, *Scavenger Hunt*, 116-117.

[28] Crawford, *Scavenger Hunt*, 120.

[29] Crawford, *Scavenger Hunt*, 121.

[30] Crawford, *Scavenger Hunt*, 1-2.

IF YOU CANNOT WORK TWENTY HOURS A DAY,
 ABUSING THE CURVATURE OF THE SPINE
 WITH A MEDIEVAL TORTURE DEVICE
 KNOWN AS A DRAFTING TABLE,
 AND SURVIVE ON VENDING MACHINE CHEESE CURLS,
 AND LEARN TO USE THE TOOLS YOURSELF,
 AND STOP TALKING ABOUT GENDER,
 AND FORGET HISTORY,
 THEN YOU DO NOT
 DESERVE TO DESIGN
 STAIRWELLS FOR
 CORPORATE CLIENTS! [31]

[31] Crawford, *Scavenger Hunt*, 3.

How often have those of us on the receiving end of institutional reproductions of gender and ability felt the pull to “Be everyone. / Be nobody. / Don’t be / settled down”? [32]

[32] Crawford, *Scavenger Hunt*, 4.

Already in the opening of the book, we have a repertoire of (auto-) poetic methods that shape Crawford’s reconstruction of the High Line. Crawford’s turn to the living archive of transness in relation to the remaking of that structure takes us from the literary, with its attention to space, including the space of the self/subject/body, to the literal, in which the material of experience might be recoded. The link between the two planes evokes the relationship of railroad ties to the smooth unfolding of tracks across time and space. Here, it is possible to draw out a connection to the historical entanglement of the railroads with nationalist colonial narratives of the smooth unfolding of manifest destiny. In this matrix, the High Line marks the return of abject settler colonialism to the metropolitan center in the form of (re)naturalized—even gay—gentrification. The literal wisdom of Crawford’s poems is also on display in the painstaking “s,l,a,u,g,h,t,e,r,h,o,u,s,e,s, a,n,d, t,r,a,n,s,s,e,x,u,a,l,s,” and “H,i,g,h, L,i,n,e,” in which the disaggregated letters of both the “improper” nouns *slaughterhouses* and *transsexuals* and the “proper” noun *High Line* are remixed. Across its various techniques, the poesis of *Scavenger Hunt* gives insight not so much into the play between the personal (narrative) and the political (possibility) as into the connection between buildings and bodies that renders transgender modes of embodiment sensible and even (potentially) liberating.

The best architecture tends to exude its own poetry. Crawford’s delightfully ironic and sublimely perverse work pushes this tendency away from liberal obsessions with form. Crawford’s poems weave form and content like DS+R’s blending of the smooth new pathway with restored rails. Some poems trail across the page, counterweighting the post-redesign High Line’s “accessibility” with its tightly surveilled landscape (“Parkour III”), while others promenade gaily among the contradictions of curated urban wilderness (“Keep It Wild: Keep It on the Path”). Still others bleed and bend between nostalgia and pain (“FOUND: The Mineshaft’s Dress Code,” “Dress Code Infractions,” “Mineshaft I,” and “Mineshaft II”). The poems that speak most of the liberatory potential of an architectonics of transness succeed neither in the colloquial sense of *winning us over* nor in the regal genealogical register of *coming after*—which seems to track contemporary ideas of transness as “the next issue” for

mainstream liberals and institutional radicals alike. Instead, *Scavenger Hunt* operates in a mode of ecological succession and political secession.

Crawford's diversity of tactics works like a seed bomb—a whole landscape cast over inexplicable fencing that marks distinctions between genres and disciplinary approaches to lived and spatialized experience. Both books are impressive in their own right. Together, they witness the necessity, even the obviousness, of a mutual transformation latent in both architecture and transgender (anti-)narrative. The books invite us to stretch and to connect transness (a term I don't claim for myself but that orbits me, like a moon) and architectonic experience. Perhaps more simply, they ask how one can learn to live with buildings, places, terms, and institutions that weren't made for them and that aren't going to save them. As whispers of the "crazy dream" of "saving" the High Line reverberate off the walls of bourgeois boutiques and boring *boîtes*—and as I continue to sift through the anarchic archive that enables my own (un)doing of gender—I find in Crawford's poetry an adaptive reuse of Audre Lorde's perennially powerful words from "Poetry Is Not a Luxury":

IF WHAT WE NEED TO DREAM, TO MOVE OUR SPIRITS MOST DEEPLY AND DIRECTLY TOWARD AND THROUGH PROMISE, IS DISCOUNTED AS A LUXURY, THEN WE GIVE UP THE CORE—THE FOUNTAIN—OF OUR POWER, OUR WOMANNESS [OR TRANSNESS, OR REFUSAL]; WE GIVE UP THE FUTURE OF OUR WORLDS.
[33]

[33] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 39.

I'm not ready to give up, not yet.