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Volume 12, numéro 1, 2021

Structures of Anticipation

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1077900ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.SA.12.1.5>

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Éditeur(s)

York University

ISSN

1918-8439 (numérique)

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Citer ce document

Freeman, L. (2021). Lindsey A. Freeman. *Imaginations*, 12(1), 31–33.
<https://doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.SA.12.1.5>

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STRUCTURES OF ANTICIPATION

Guest Editors: Yoke-Sum Wong, Karen Engle, Craig Campbell

Issue 12-1, 2021

IMAGINATIONS:

JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES |
REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE
L'IMAGE

Publication details, including open access policy
and instructions for contributors:

<http://imagnations.glendon.yorku.ca>

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April 30, 2021

Image Credit:

Karen Engle (photography) and
Craig Campbell (digital production), 2019

To cite this article:

“Lindsey A. Freeman.” *Imagnations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies*,
vol. 12, no. 1, April 2021, pp. 31-33,
doi: 10.17742/IMAGE.SA.12.1.5.

To link to this article:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.SA.12.1.5>



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LINDSEY A. FREEMAN



Anticipation is a border (town).

"I have known for a long time that one does not go anywhere. It is the cities or countries that come or do not come to you."

– *Hélène Cixous, "Promised Cities"*

Windsor was even weirder than I thought it would be. That Patrick was a coveted Dungeon Master was one of the few things that made sense. I had anticipated a city more like Buffalo, New York, another border town, where I lived for three difficult years teaching at a small SUNY school. The chair of my current department pronounces it as "sunny Buffalo," and the disconnect always cracks me open, like good satire. Buffalo is a city too big for its current population: it's a place where even the architecture seems disappointed. Whereas in Windsor, the buildings look baffled, an effect of the hodgepodge of architectural styles and the inescapable comparison with Detroit.

To be in Buffalo, as an academic, meant that every first get-to-know-you chat included: "Let me show you the hotel where Michel Foucault lived when he was here." I had many drinks in this former-residence-of-Foucault hotel bar, where maybe upstairs he was reading Roland Barthes' *S/Z* and more. It's hard to imagine Foucault in Windsor, but I can dream him in Detroit. That's the thing about a border, if you can't conceive of something being on one side, you can usually do some mental gymnastics to put it on the other.

In Buffalo, a friend used a dating app and extended the area all the way to Toronto. When a potential date quipped, "Why would you come all the way up here?" she knew all bets were off if driving to somewhere more cosmopolitan for sex was going to be frowned upon. In some places you can get swiped right from here to eternity and still not get what you want.

In Windsor, sex was everywhere, but sensuousness seemed hard to come by. Strip clubs boasted girls with "New Effort" and egg roll specials—there's not a stronger way to say "no touching" in the English language. Meanwhile flyers on telephone poles promised men in kilts would powerwash your home, but "no peeking!" The senses were another harsh border, patrolled.

In this little notch where Canada sits below the U.S., it feels like everyone's a border guard of one type or another. One afternoon as I walked around Windsor and Detroit, in the span of a couple of hours I collected insults hurled from people I passed on the street: "faggot" in Canada and "bitch" in America. Georg Simmel's famous conception of urban coolness, the blasé attitude, cannot hold in such places. The blasé schluffs off individuals and hangs in the air like miasma, creating a diffuse anxiety, an agitated atmosphere that exposes you feeling it. This kind of space can create a desire for a hard shell, like Weber's steel casing, or a monster truck with huge wheels that could roll all over this Autophilic space on Sunday, Sunday, Sunday.