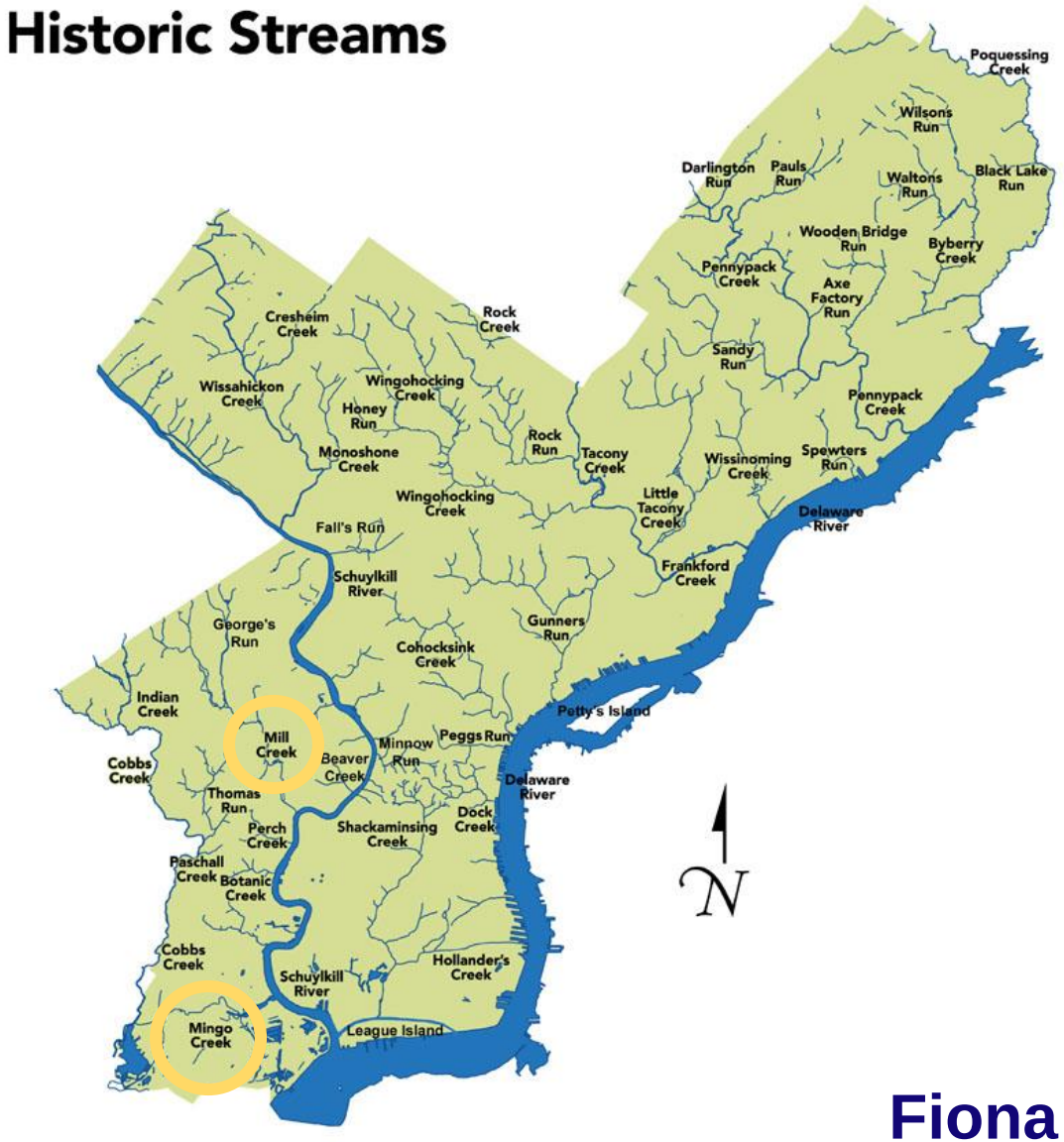
Memories





Fiona Jensen-Hitch

Theoretical and field context

- Broadly, I am researching how the urban water structure of Philadelphia has changed throughout the city's (pre)history, how this history has been erased from collective memory
- I am attempting to (re)make some form of these water histories through an ecopoetic project
- Through my final work, I hope to make visible and digestible this form of histories that have both been forgotten and are largely inaccessible

Critical works informing my project (select):

- Black, B., & Chiarappa, M. J. (2012). *Nature's entrepôt: Philadelphia's urban sphere and its environmental thresholds*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Corey, J., & Waldrep, G. C. (Eds.). (2012). *The Arcadia Project: North American Postmodern Pastoral.* Ahsahta Press.
- Christian, D., & Wong, R. (2017*). Downstream: Reimagining Water*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press.

Primary ecopoetry books informing this project:

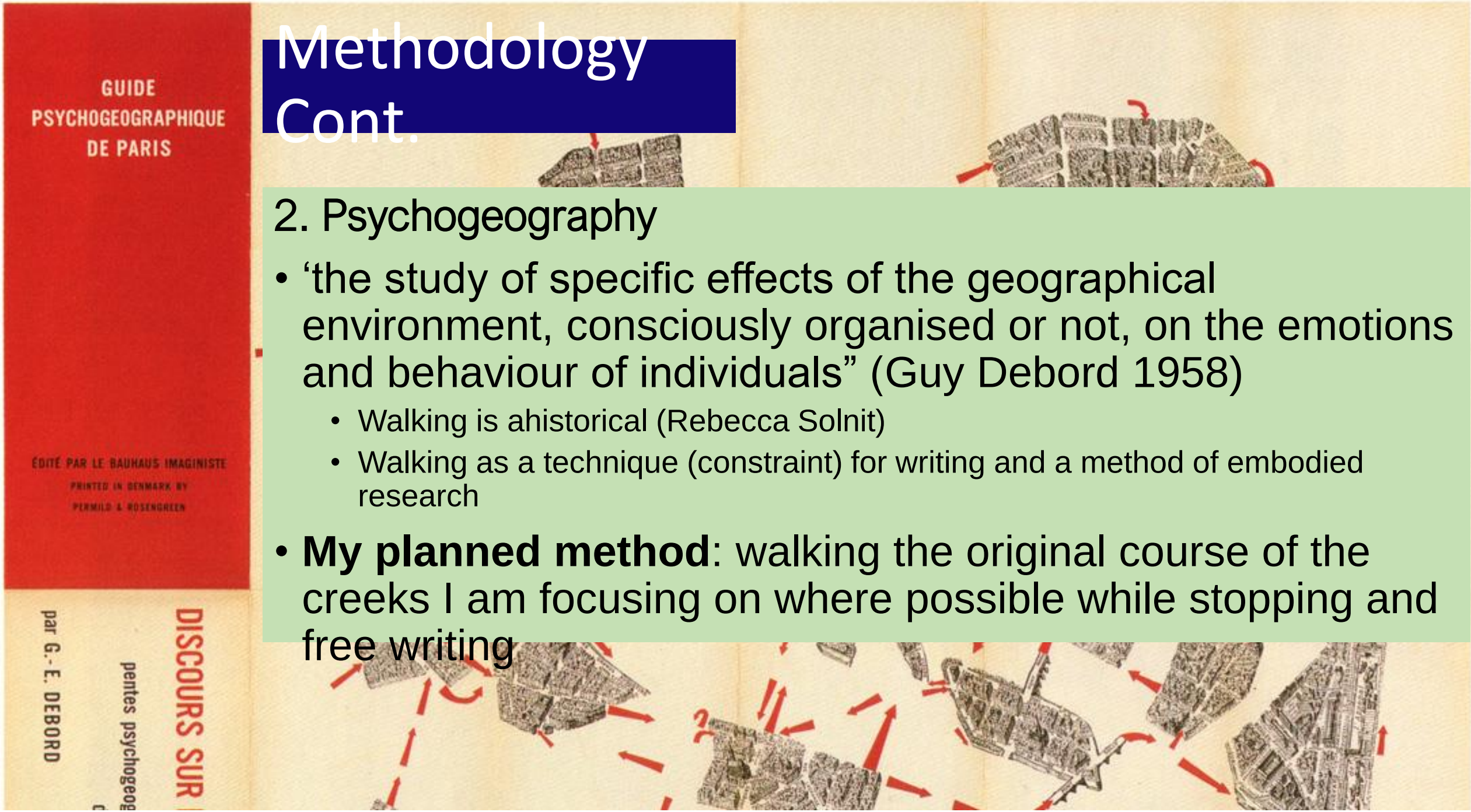
- Sand, Kaia. (2010). *Remember to Wave*. Tinfish.
- Wong, R. (2015). *Undercurrent*. Harbour Publishing.



Methodology

1. Archival/historical research: found language
   - Researching Philadelphia's water archives, historical maps and city records, historical writing concerning water in Philadelphia, and pulling forth language from such records

Methodology Cont.



2. Psychogeography

- ‘the study of specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals” (Guy Debord 1958)
  - Walking is ahistorical (Rebecca Solnit)
  - Walking as a technique (constraint) for writing and a method of embodied research
- **My planned method**: walking the original course of the creeks I am focusing on where possible while stopping and free writing

Methodology Cont.

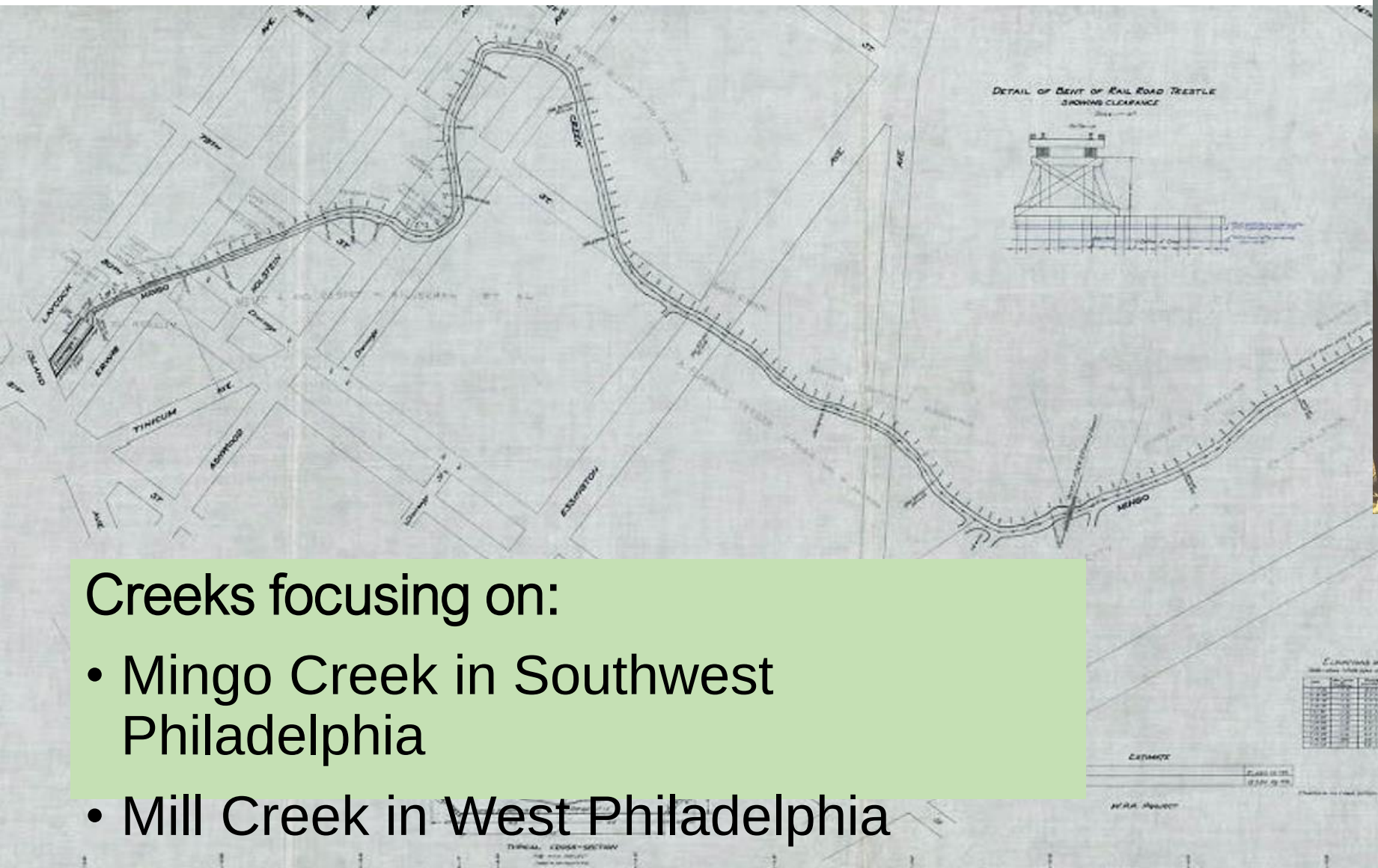
3. Genre framework: ecopoetry

- Ecopoetry emphasizes the connection between human activity and the environment that produces such activity

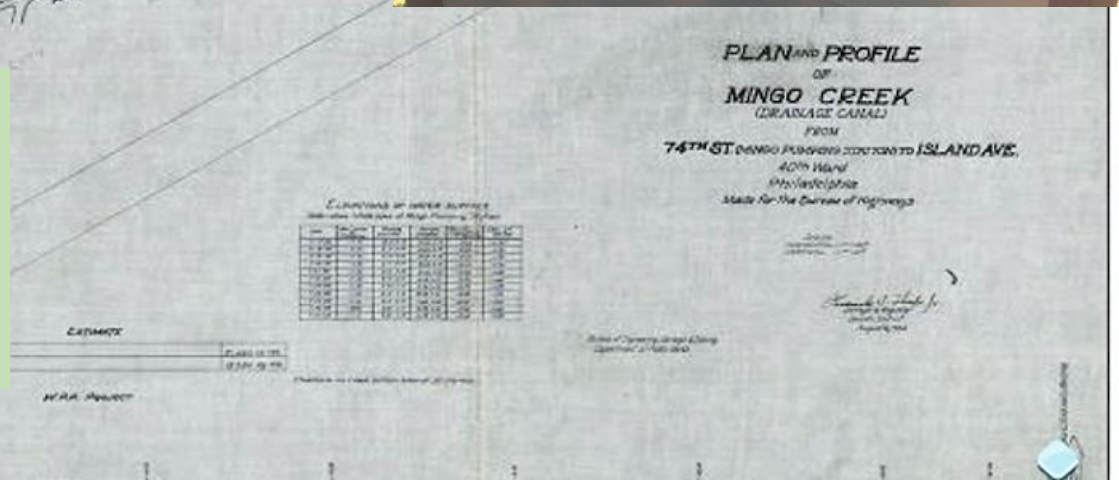
Intent

- The non-academic voice that poetry as a genre affords allows the content of the poems to be accessible to different audiences than those both accustomed to and removed from academic literature
- My project is built on and into the existing work of ecopoetry, intended to spread publicly unknown or unfamiliar data concerning water management
- I aim to engage new audiences by expressing information about water—a “liquid memory”—through my research lens

Findings so far







Creeks focusing on:

- Mingo Creek in Southwest Philadelphia
- Mill Creek in West Philadelphia

Problems/Questions

- Researching on two creeks to focus the lens of my project
- Incorporating my psychogeographic research method with the found language from the archives/written histories I've researched
  - Originally my intent was to only use found language but no longer sure about this
- Moving beyond poems? Maps (through psychogeography), videos, photos, performance etc.
  - How to know what is enough/how much is too much?
  - How far to take the psychogeography—freewriting only?

Ideas for Engaging larger publics

- “Drawing Dock Creek” (2014) by Winifred Lutz as an example of publicly performing Philadelphia history
- I am particularly interested in movement performance through site-specific dance, and if it is feasible will attempt to begin translating this project to a movement form