



Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences

2010

## Derrida and Luhmann in a theatre of posthumanism, review of What is Posthumanism? by Cary Wolfe (2010)

Cecchetto, David

---

### Suggested citation:

Cecchetto, David (2010) Derrida and Luhmann in a theatre of posthumanism, review of What is Posthumanism? by Cary Wolfe (2010). *The Goose* (8). pp. 31-33. ISSN 2291-0948 Available at <http://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/842/>

*Open Research is a publicly accessible, curated repository for the preservation and dissemination of scholarly and creative output of the OCAD University community. Material in Open Research is open access and made available via the consent of the author and/or rights holder on a non-exclusive basis.*

*The OCAD University Library is committed to accessibility as outlined in the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) and the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) and is working to improve accessibility of the Open Research Repository collection. If you require an accessible version of a repository item contact us at [repository@ocadu.ca](mailto:repository@ocadu.ca).*

LITERATURE, ARTS, ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE IN CANADA



ISSUE 8  
FALL 2010

# Editor's Notebook

PAUL HUEBENER



L. Szabo

**R**ichard Pickard opens this issue of *The Goose* with his thoughts on the inaugural ALECC conference, and points out that the time ALECC members spent at Cape Breton will continue to inspire ongoing discussions and actions. Likewise, just as the recent conference provided a chance to welcome new members into the world of ALECC, so too is *The Goose* continuing to expand. I am delighted to welcome a new member to our editorial team: Naomi Smedbol is a master's student in Environmental Studies at York University, where she is researching ecocriticisms of North American literature with a particular focus on the West Coast. Naomi joins *The Goose* as a copy editor, and brings editing experience from her work on the *Victorian Review* and other projects.

While Naomi's editing skills are a welcome addition to *The Goose*, I have also been thinking recently about the more general importance of slow, careful reading, particularly in the context of digital text. With the publishing industry now undergoing a digital transformation intensified by the popularity of tablet-style reading devices, those of us with a special interest in literary culture are having to relearn and reevaluate how reading works. My thinking about this owes much to a comment I heard at an event last year. In October of 2009, the journal *Canadian Literature* celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a conference – actually, their term “Gala” was more appropriate – at the University of British Columbia. Speakers were invited to offer their thoughts on where the study of Canadian literature and culture might be heading, or ought to go, over the next 50 years. Of the many approaches that participants brought to the table, several involved the role that ecocritical thinking needs to play in understanding all aspects of Canadian places and cultures. But as *The Goose* now marks its own anniversary that starts with a five – yes, its *fifth* anniversary – I am especially intrigued by Larissa Lai's suggestion from the

Gala, that we “direct our critical eyes towards the structure and circulation of journals with the same kind of attention that we think about land.”

As an online journal, *The Goose* is happily at home with the advantages of digital publication: easy access for readers, quick links to publishers and booksellers, respectable turnaround times for articles, a small ecological footprint for the actual production and distribution of the journal, and big full-colour photos. (Have you zoomed in on Dianne Chisholm's astonishing photo of Haida Gwaii on page five of the Spring 2010 issue?) However, as Lai points out, the very instantaneous nature of digital publication risks losing something of the “pleasurable and engaged slowness possible in print.” Daniel Coleman, too, has elaborated on the connection between slow reading and critical engagement, writing that “the conversion of thoughtful citizens into impatient consumers requires that we live in constant distraction, that our restlessness be fuelled by a sense of present dissatisfaction and endlessly deferred fulfillment.” Reading, then, “is counter-cultural mainly because it requires quiet time, being slow and meditative, and it is active rather than passive, being imaginative and dialogical. These qualities run in the opposite direction from the one in which Western commodity culture is heading.” Or, as Greg Garrard memorably comments in the *Times Higher Education*, “Slow reading, like slow food, is about savouring rather than gobbling.” Can we learn to read an online journal *slowly*? As more text makes its way from single-purpose books to all-singing digital devices, will we continue to put time aside *just* for reading? What can an online journal do to engage readers not just repeatedly, but enduringly? We would love to hear your thoughts.

Perhaps one way to overcome the difficulty of putting time aside specifically for reading is to designate particular *places* for reading – libraries, bookshops, even a chair. Richard Bachmann, the longtime owner of A

Different Drummer bookstore in Burlington, Ontario, says that “in addition to selling books, we’re here to slow the world down. Books—like thinking, like love—require time and attention. That is why, as we frequently hear, the bookshop is considered to be a place of refuge.” As the separation of contemplative reading from the continuous buzz of electronic media becomes increasingly difficult to achieve, we may need to become more diligent in creating our own places of refuge, however small they might be. Whether our texts are displayed in ink or pixels, if we are to remain critically engaged readers—interpreters, in the broad sense—we must learn and relearn how to make times and places just for reading.

Ultimately, I hope, it is the content of a publication that earns our attention, and this issue of *The Goose* is rich in ideas and images. Inviting us on a remarkable tour of *stálaw*—the waterway also known as the Fraser River—Rita Wong asks us to remap the landscape of Canada around the continent’s watersheds. Through her eyes we cross the borders that provinces and nation-states have imposed on hydrological forms, and see current tar sands operations in relation to ancient river systems. In a wide-ranging critical essay, David Heinimann responds to the debilitating anxiety surrounding environmentalism, and finds that the moral and legal idea of “duty of care” is essential in bracing ourselves against the possibility of ecological collapse and martial law. Are the world’s legal systems equipped to prosecute the worst contributors to global warming? Should we abandon sustainable development and instead focus on provisioning ecological supplies as we sink inevitably into militancy? Heinimann urges us to contend with uncomfortable questions.

This issue also contains a remarkable diversity of poetry. Basma Kavanagh embraces the impossibility, and the necessity, of capturing plant and animal life in words; language itself both apprehends and inevitably releases its slippery subject. “We squint” at the forms of two

steelhead trout, as “... you hover, still / in this song, two / long gray notes / held, tuned / to the open- / ing moment, / moving / water.” In a series of linked poems, Tim Lilburn aims to “bring forward the suppressed mystical imagination,” articulating a form of resistance against “the old imperial gestures” that “remain still vigorous among us.” This mystical imagination through which we might respond to cultural and ecological colonialism calls to mind both the earth itself and its shadowy double, the underworld. TV Mason, encountering a Northwestern Crow “on a low stone wall overlooking English Bay,” delights in the playfulness of the crow, whose crouching and bouncing become the play-making moves of a basketball star. As the fragile line between these worlds crumbles, the stone wall itself threatens to become liquid.

Watch, too, for photography and art from Velcrow Ripper, George Poitras, Basma Kavanagh, and Lisa Szabo. Dianne Chisholm offers photos from a 10-day trek in Auyuittuq National Park, Baffin Island, while Vancouver-based artist Lex Hedley provides a watercolour painting, “Estuary III.” The original painting was showcased in the “Birds in Art 2010” exhibit at the Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Wisconsin, and will be part of the exhibit’s American tour from January to October 2011.

As usual, ALECC members are releasing many new creative and academic publications. Pam Chamberlain has edited the anthology *Country Roads: Memoirs from Rural Canada*, focusing on stories of rural childhoods, and featuring contributions from Pamela Banting and Luanne Armstrong. Pamela Banting also has an article, “Geography as Intertext: Toward a Non-Representational Reading of Thomas Wharton’s Novel *Icefields*,” appearing in *Process: Landscape and Text*, edited by Catherine Brace and Adeline Johns-Putra. Leigh Matthews’ new book, *Looking Back: Canadian Women’s Prairie Memoirs and Intersections of Culture, History, and Identity*, is

now available. Tammy Armstrong has published her fourth collection of poetry, *The Scare in the Crow*, which explores human-animal relationships through the lens of a horseback riding trip across southern Iceland. Christine Lowther's new book of poetry, *My Nature*, explores the author's "nature" amidst questions of social and environmental friction. Brian Cameron Taylor's philosophical and historical investigation of the self, *Anti-Social Engineering the Hyper-Manipulated Self*, is forthcoming in December. Anne Milne has two new articles: "New Directions in Labouring-Class Studies: Ecocriticism" appears in the Fall 2010 issue of *Key Words*, the journal of the Raymond Williams Society; and "Sentient Genetics: Breeding the Animal Breeder as Fundamental Other" appears in the *Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* Fall 2010 special issue on Animals. Harry Vandervlist's article "The Challenge of Writing Bioregionally: Performing the Bow River in Jon Whyte's *Minisniwapta: Voices of the River*" will appear in the forthcoming volume *The Bioregional Imagination*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty, Karla

Armbruster, and Thomas Lynch.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Goose*. Even if you choose just one feature, I encourage you to read it slowly.

#### Works cited

- Coleman, Daniel. *In Bed With the Word: Reading, Spirituality, and Cultural Politics*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2009. Print.
- Garrard, Greg. "A Novel Idea: Slow Reading." *Times Higher Education* 17 June 2010. Web.
- Lai, Larissa. "Journals in Digital Space: Electronic Circulation, Cultural Commons, and Intellectual Labour." *Canadian Literature* 204 (Spring 2010): 137-40. Print.
- Strecker, James. "The Best Bookstore in Canada? We Have Two of Them!" Interview with Bryan Prince and Richard Bachmann. *Mayday Magazine* 51 (June 2009): 6-7. Print.



Mount Asgaard, Baffin Island

Dianne Chisholm



# LETTER FROM ALECC'S PRESIDENT

RICHARD PICKARD



L. Szabo

**A**LECC's inaugural conference, held in August 2010 at Cape Breton University in Sydney, Nova Scotia, was by all accounts a great success. Approximately seventy-five of us gathered together to spend a few days talking and listening and field tripping together, and we came pretty close to building a single three-day multi-threaded conversation.

The executive had constantly in our minds Bill McKibben's call to "make it count" when we go to the effort, expense, and carbon emissions of a conference, and we were really excited by just how well it all came out! The financial picture is still being finalized, but it seems that we've made a small profit from the event. As with most academic organizations, ALECC had that as one of our hopes from the beginning, to earn enough through the conference to support our work toward the organization's stated aims.

Personally, my own conference highlight was the antiphonal reading by Harry Thurston and Anne Simpson. Without a safety net, Anne and Harry took turns reading poems that responded to or seemed inspired by the poem we'd just heard, by the other writer, thus intensifying our experience as an audience of the poem being read in reply as well as our recollection of the one we'd just heard. To me it was a two-person demonstration of what can happen when we come together as an ecological community, a microcosm of what we'd hoped to achieve with the conference as a whole.

I know that I deepened some connections with ALECC members, started ongoing conversations with others, and resumed some relations that had been interrupted; a conference can't exist outside the thread of our lives, and as pleased as I was by everything, our survey results tell me that I'm not the only one who was happy at CBU. (And on that note, the post-conference survey results will be very useful as the organization plans its future events, as well as its future more broadly. Thanks very much to all who

responded.)

Now that the conference is behind us, three particular statements of obligation are owing:

- First, ALECC's treasurer Jenny Kerber deserves enormous thanks for her hard work, as well as hearty congratulations for surviving it all with such good grace!
- Second, we need to thank CBU's host team, particularly Afra Kavanagh and Sheila Christie, who did so much to make this event a successful launch for ALECC as a physical community, rather than an online one. Simply put, we could not have succeeded without their commitment and support.
- And third, I want to thank all the presenters, keynote speakers, and panel moderators, for their energy, their passion and their wisdom. I know that some of you are working to publish or otherwise distribute more widely your work presented at CBU, so I send you best wishes with that project, and I'd also note that ALECC would appreciate hearing from you about subsequent publication.

Where does ALECC go next? Well, apart from October's "Under Western Skies" conference in Calgary, and the 2011 ASLE conference in Bloomington, Indiana, the executive has been discussing a few different ways that we might help to develop and sustain a distributed community at the intersection of environment and culture. I expect that we'll be co-sponsoring panels and local events across the country, as well as hosting online discussions of one kind or another: webinars, Skype audio-conferencing, and possibly even remote field trips. We need to keep talking to each other, and to others, and the large national event certainly isn't the only way ALECC can support those conversations.

Further out, ALECC will be holding its second national event in 2012, with similar goals



of community-building and “making it count.” The location is yet to be decided, but we’ve already received some expressions of interest from institutions who’d like to host us. They’ll have a hard act to follow, after the Cape Breton experience, but I’m already looking forward to seeing what else we can accomplish when we

come together in place!

Best wishes,  
Richard Pickard  
President



L. Szabo

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



Edge Effects  
Tim Lilburn



Regional Feature  
Rita Wong



Book Reviews



Poetry  
Travis V. Mason



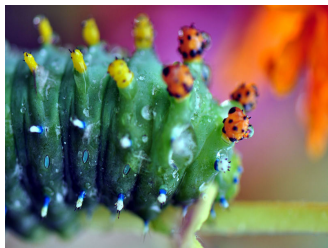
Poetry  
Basma Kavanagh



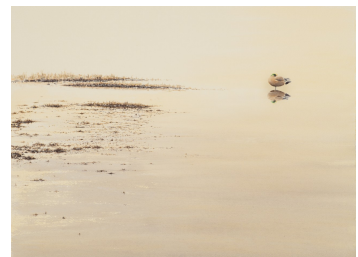
Ecological Martial Law  
David Heinemann



New Publications



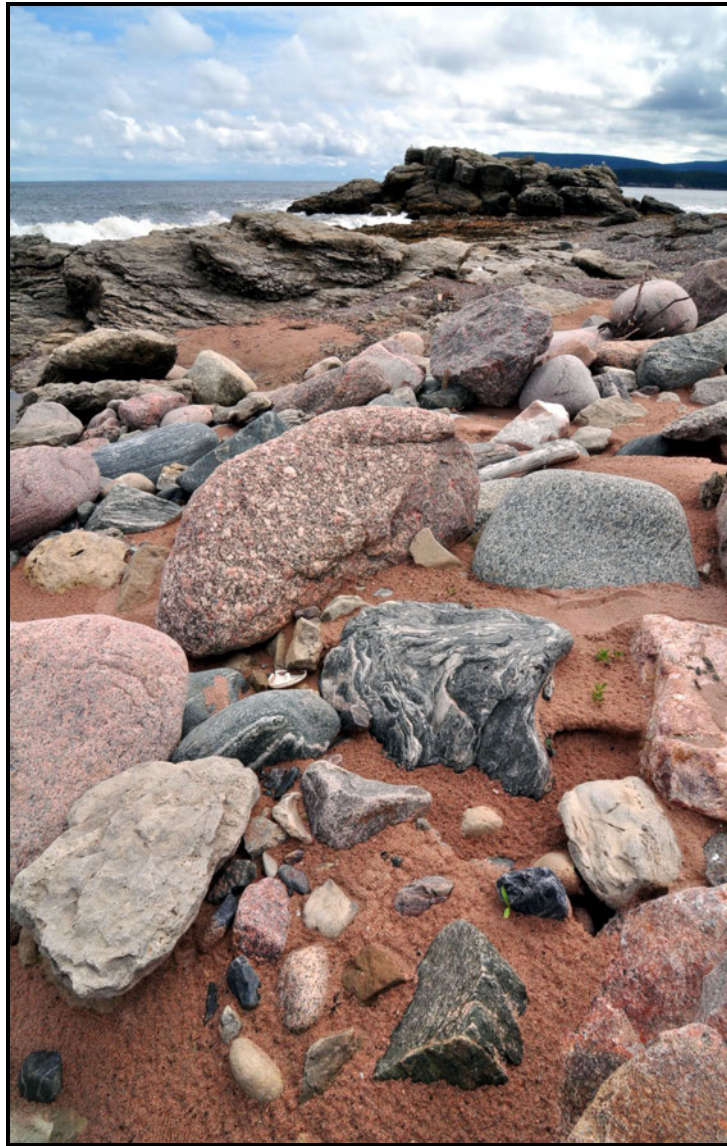
Acknowledgements



Parting Glance

# EDGE EFFECTS

TIM LILBURN



L. Szabo

# *Assiniboia*

## **An Argument**

*The voice speaking this will be eroded, male*

“Assiniboia” was the name given by the Provisional Government at Fort Garry to the land formerly traded into by the Hudson Bay Company, which it had called Rupert’s Land and sold, along with the North-west Territory, somehow to Canada in December, 1869. This expanse included all lands drained by rivers flowing into Hudson Bay, the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. The name also indicated for members of that government, Louis Riel and the others, a particular style of rule, an imaginal state, polyglot (Cree, French, Blackfoot, English, Michif), local, mixed race, Catholic-mystical, which lasted a few months, late winter to early summer, 1869-1870, reappearing briefly in Saskatchewan in 1885. Both governments were destroyed by armies from central Canada.

Some introductions are in order, since many unusual figures appear in the land, an aspirational, theophanic land, that follows – Suhrawardi, 12<sup>th</sup> century Persian philosopher and contemplative; Sara Riel, Grey Nun (Sr. Marguerite-Marie) from the late 1800s; Calypso, god, keeper and lover of Odysseus; Honore Jaxon, classicist and activist from the old North West and Riel’s secretary; the Cabri Man, immense stone effigy on a valley floor in hills north of the confluence of the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan Rivers. This list of players is not complete; here the polis, this re-peopling of Western Canada, is more than the living and the human.

It is perhaps surprising how many of the old imperial gestures remain still vigorous among us. One small way to move against them, from the settler side, is to bring forward the suppressed mystical imagination, chthonic, convivial, in the European cultural tradition itself in a certain insistent form. The army that wins, indeed, is a mystical one. The poems gathered here are its armourer.

## Dionysos

Pentheus, nothing I say moves you in the slightest.

*Bakkhai*, Euripides

### Turtle Mountain

#### *A Stranger*

The first time I came through here  
—this is how clueless I was—first gorge  
West of the Livingstone Range, I was calling  
Into badger holes, poking sticks down them  
For Irish monks.  
Pitted, pine snow was a vinegary bulge against wet rock  
At 5,000 feet, burnt trees to the top,  
Turtle Mountain, from Lost Creek Fire, sun  
A fingernail opened spot in bachelor kettle aluminum,  
And through it, the mountain's pig neck and back  
Appeared to move.  
Now rain bloom bear-sways up  
The blade of the north hump.  
Dendrites – they lived in trees, another crew



Rode bulls.

Each lit candles below the tilting night of soil.

Sheep came down from the snowline.

The mountain, half of it fell away in 1903,

Seventy killed in the valley,

The northeast face, a diamond mark sickening between its horns.

All the women stayed back

On the Pike Lake acreages, living out of converted grain bins,

Herding their common drawer of knives.

I came through here, Blackfoot country,

And took it up, the bad-angled company of dead people,

My ear slipped in and took the teat

In the bedroom of glaciers, it was looking for the Angel, the Twin.

We hooked our canoes to the highest stones.

### **Past Jordan River**

*A Traveller*

Loss Creek

Scythes its polished wheat shovel at Leech River fault

Slewing bushels of quartz-like self-substantia,

Small, cut-faced berries which it knows well,

Quickly

Under the single lane, railway

Tie bridge. In birdlessness.

Moments later a tarry flux

Handstands and cannons

Through the rub-silvered barrel of itself

Five hundred feet over Sombrio beach.

The water drops, it tears.

Alders on the bank

Like crushed asphalt.

Out of clearcut dusk, bears,

One, then another,

Take

The ridge, dipping

Down.

### **Raids, Full of Night, Practiced with its Blades**

1

*Calypso, low-voiced, calm, uncharacteristically helpful*

Go into exile up Douglas mountain, P,KOL,S, white pointed top,



Through the Indian plum forest, go at this delectating,  
Setting pieces of pre-chewed food on dead leaves  
Before each of your ten senses, your real body, its charcoal  
Circles pooled in your old body, through the Indian plum forest  
That sways its neck in a staunchion of rain,  
Just as Beowulf drove hard into the wound-pits of the lake and won.  
Give it a try.  
Give it all you've got.  
Plum flower odor descends from its rocking, royal carriages, the white earrings,  
The chandeliers it wears mink forth  
A rusted frying pan, "cat urine and watermelon rind"  
Neck boil of a smell.

\*

Prince Rupert of the Rhine  
Tolls and woozes ahead, taller than trees, onionly hipped  
Martial carwreck and jewel-shoed,  
In an elf flu delirium that humps all  
This to a single quivering,  
Lonely cavalier pressing the crumbling lamp  
Of the seventeenth century, its candlepower of moths  
To his head.

\*

But you, cher, you will see Indian plum draw into a syringe  
Of inswept breath its truth-delivered-from-the-thigh ghost  
And plinth it in its own coasting palm and you will see  
Oregon grape claw itself through a crease in rock  
Into a room in Vancouver on Homer only it can pay for,  
Bed, dresser, do not disturb, large windows overlooking  
The street, across from the Sally Ann, where its own body shows clearly, looking up  
from the cement below (it sees it)  
And the grape is individuated by this hammerstroke.

\*

Suhrawardi, clothed in sword flash,  
In speech's flying horse mane,  
Satin flower, Douglas' Blue-eyed Grass  
Could appear from the center of the plum's neglected burn stink,  
Or in Fawn Lily.  
He could rise and float from the bright hall of the Book  
And stand loose in the lily's gantry.  
  
Or he could just as easily unsilo in high pass snow, Sentinel Pass  
Much further east, 400 miles, V-ing planks

Of wind-glued snow

Up, alone, no animals and their sucking

Eyes around.

2

*The Traveller*

Rockslide cloud over the pope's nose of the Olympic Peninsula

Its whale-coloured scrawl and the Pacific, and the rain

Pinches off three hundred yards above trees.

I'd discuss a politics of ghosts

Around any fire, any time, with You, Beer Princess, Sweet

Fin flash of God, Calypso, or others.

There are two ways into Jordan River,

One, via late antiquity, snaking twist of the aorta

Of jazzed neo-Platonism

And, two, a portage, naked, next to, black bears,

One, two, ravening through salal.

Wool, rockfall of rain,

Curve of teeth.

Skin of an inner arm,

Half-fallen rain.

The skin under the eyelid of rain.  
Someone could flick in  
Just above the water from the sea,  
His booming ocularity a bee-sized black jet.  
He'd find snow souring the land,  
He'd smell grease caking from drums  
And below this something fainter  
Beneath the burned car.  
Odor of knapped tools  
Below soaked sand,  
Tools with clouds  
Of slag from palms.

3

*The Stranger, twirling a sprig of ivy between his forefinger and thumb, dreamily*

May, first quarter inch of poplar leaves  
Let out a puff of horse flank smell, and people wheel back  
Into aspens and wild rose at Half-boy's camp  
On the east gradient of the Livingstone Range  
Foreheading into the Porcupine Hills. Bees, big as bear cubs, cirque de soleiling around  
willow flowers,

Early brome flares through splintered ground.

Boy's dead since December

—slashes of movement at the gravesite, sixty people at dusk with shovels,

Wearing pieces of his clothing,

Legion tam, leather coat,

Ground too dry to freeze, filling him in.

The smell of his clothes in the northwest wind now

As the people who will fast bed in.

The wind drags snow down in skin sledges from the territories;

But first rain's grindstone, then

Buckskin, some-grass-burnt-away sky,

Then snow's herd shoulder.

Down from Single Pine, Dickie coughs around his red gut

Near the slapping blue tarp where (he says) he sleeps

And Carl hums smoke-rubbed to the face in the sternum of everyone of us.

The animals self-pry from the ground and swim closer

Their fixed masks flaked off the center of night.

**TIM LILBURN**, a Canadian poet and essayist, has published eight books of poetry: *Names of God*, *Tourist to Ecstasy*, *From the Great Above She Opened Her Ear to the Great Below*, *Moosewood Sandhills*, *To the River*, *Living in the World as if It Were Home*, *Kill-site*, *Desire Never Leaves: The Poetry of Tim Lilburn*, *Orphic Politics*, and *Going Home: Essays*. He has been nominated for the Governor General's Award in Literature in 1989, for *Tourist to Ecstasy*, and in 2003 he won the award for *Kill-site*.

Lilburn's poetics and essays are contemplative texts, explorations of home, dwelling, and being through Western Classical traditions and Christian monasticism. Attentive to ecological thinking, his works, however, continue to interrogate the tensions between the desire for the chthonic and the inheritances of colonial history and practices, and language. These issues find further exploration in two essay collections, *Poetry and Knowing* and *Thinking and Singing: Poetry and the Practice of Philosophy*, which he contributed to and edited. His work has been translated into various languages. Tim Lilburn is also the recipient of the Canadian Authors Association Award, the Saskatchewan Book of the Year Award, and the Saskatchewan Nonfiction Award.

*Assiniboia* is a work-in-progress, and we are grateful for Tim Lilburn's willingness to share a part of it with *The Goose*.



L. Szabo

# REGIONAL FEATURE

RITA WONG



Velcrow Ripper



# Watersheds

If you look at a map of Canada's watersheds, instead of ten provinces and three territories, you will see five watersheds, draining to the Pacific Ocean, the Arctic Ocean, Hudson's Bay, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>1</sup> Imagine the land as it is defined by water, not by people. What might we learn from such a thought experiment?

Let's keep in mind that you and I consist of roughly 70% water, and that we are part of the hydrological cycle, part of the watersheds on which we live, not separate from them. The water I drink in Vancouver is the accumulation of millennia of rain, pooling, gathering and swelling into lakes and reservoirs in the Capilano and Seymour watersheds. Water connects us to places, people and creatures we have not seen, life that is far away from us, and life that came long before us.



Environment Canada 2

East of the Rocky Mountains, the water flows toward the Arctic and Hudson's Bay. West of the Rockies, water flows to the Pacific. In my attempts to cultivate a better physical understanding of the Pacific Ocean watershed, this summer, I undertook a trip to learn about *sta'áw*, what the Musqueam call the Fraser River, according to Musqueam community member and language speaker Victor Guerin.

At its headwaters, *sta'áw* is translucent jade, clean and delicious looking. By the time it reaches Vancouver, silt-burdened by its 1375 kilometre trip from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean,

*staław* is a turbid current that bears the weight of pulp mills, agriculture, industry, and human settlement along its shores.

Some call the *staław* delta the graveyard of the Rocky Mountains, because the river steadily carries mountain sediment to the ocean, year after year, in its ceaseless flow for the past 12 million years.<sup>3</sup> In a sense, the river is an elder, a 12-million-year old elder who deserves our respect. It is the life path for people (such as the Musqueam who have lived there for roughly 10,000 years), salmon, bears, forests, and much more. This determined river has created the landscape on which I live, the unceded Coast Salish territories otherwise known as Metro Vancouver. As my friend Dan Fass points out, tracking the river back to its source takes us through the traditional lands of the Musqueam, Stó:lo, Nlaka'pamux, Stl'atl'imc, Secwepemc and Dakelh. *Staław* cuts a big S that drains a third of Aboriginal Columbia.



George Poitras

On that trip, I was astounded when I arrived at Fraser Crossing, not far from the headwaters of the Fraser River, and found a sign declaring the presence of a high pressure petroleum pipeline underneath the river. There in the so-called “protected wilderness” in Mount Robson Provincial Park, the 24” diameter Trans Mountain Pipeline that already exists has been joined by an additional 36” diameter pipeline alongside that runs from Hinton, AB, to Rearguard, BC,<sup>4</sup> to accelerate the extraction of oily bitumen from the tar sands in northern Alberta.

This is not the story I would like to tell about *stałəw*. I had made the pilgrimage along the Fraser quietly hoping to pay my respects to the river that gives my city life, and what the river taught me is that it is in danger from oil. While the recent attention of prominent people like Nancy Pelosi, James Cameron and James Hansen is now putting pressure on Americans to stop using dirty tar sands oil, Sinopec's (China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation) 4.65 billion dollar purchase of a 9% share of Syncrude this year<sup>5</sup> suggests that we will have to be increasingly vigilant about putting pressure on Asian capitalists to avoid the tar sands as well.

If I focus my lens on water as provider of life, energy, and wealth, I realize how urgent the efforts to stop the proposed Enbridge pipeline are. First Nations across northern BC have united in their opposition to the pipeline, and more recently, municipalities across BC have also voiced their opposition to it.

From a watershed perspective, I can see the overall effects of the Alberta tar sands more clearly, be they disfigured fish swimming along the Athabasca River in the Arctic Ocean watershed, an increase of acid rain in fragile Northern Saskatchewan, or the threat of a toxic pipeline spill through BC's forests and waters. The poison travels in all directions, if I track the water and air. What I have to do is trace the paths of the rivers, who will tell me what I need to look for in the fish, pollution levels, and drinkability (or not) of the water.



Velcrow Ripper

Having started to learn about what Indigenous leaders like George Poitras of the Mikisew Cree and Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation are doing to oppose reckless expansion of the tar sands, I now realize that their battle is my battle both because of watershed kinship as well as our interdependency in a time of global warming. In addition to being grateful to them for their efforts, I ask myself, what more can I do to support their struggle for our common survival?



One thing I did was to participate in the first Healing Walk for the Tar Sands this August, and write about it for rabble.ca. Witnessing the enormous toxic waste reservoirs (euphemistically called tailings “ponds” by industry) was horrific, but it also deepened my resolve to focus on the urgent questions posed by our watersheds. When I’ve been asked if my work on the tar sands is all negative and critical, I respond that what I want is for us to focus on the right questions. What do we want future generations to inherit?

The long history of mining in Canada and overseas teaches us that these large projects usually leave a big mess, and if it is cleaned up, it is often not by the corporations that benefited from the exploitation, but by the taxpayers and governments who are left with the bill, which is predictably bigger than budgeted. Jobs and profit are temporary, but the damage is permanent.



Velcrow Ripper

The protection of water is also the protection of ourselves in the long run. Where provinces and nation-states have become real to us because our governments have imposed their borders on the landscape, taking a watershed approach involves learning about the landscape and hydrological flows that have existed long before us, that have been changed by us, but that also continue to proceed and exceed human attempts to manipulate them.

Governments and empires come and go, but the land and water remain. If we organize our structures of feeling, our decision-making procedures, and our economic models around the long-term health and well-being of the watersheds that we rely on, what kinds of futures might we invite?

## Notes

1. Yes, we (specifically those in southern Alberta) are linked to the horrible BP spill not just by mass media, but also physically through the flow of water through the land.
2. "Discover Canada's Watersheds" is an image published by the Government of Canada at [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca), reproduced here under non-commercial reproduction allowances without affiliation with the Government of Canada. It is possible to order a free map of Canada's watersheds through [wildeducation.org](http://wildeducation.org).
3. Richard Bocking, *Mighty River: A Portrait of the Fraser*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997. 3. Print.
4. Kinder Morgan. "TMX—Anchor Loop Project: Frequently Asked Questions." *KinderMorgan.com* July 2007. Web.
5. "Sinopec Free to Buy into Syncrude." *The Globe and Mail* 25 June 2010. Web.

**Fita wong** is the author of *monkeypuzzle* (press gang 1998), *forage* (nightwood 2007), and *sybil unrest* (with Larissa Lai, Line Books 2008). An associate professor at Emily Carr University of Art and Design, she is currently researching the poetics of water. [www.downstream.ecuad.ca](http://www.downstream.ecuad.ca)

---



L. Szabo

# BOOK REVIEWS



Akshayuk Pass, Auyuittak National Park, Baffin Island

Dianne Chisholm

# BOOK REVIEW CONTENTS

- ✦ ***A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*** edited by ALAN C. BRADDOCK and CHRISTOPH IRMSCHER (KERI CRONIN)
- ✦ CAREY WOLFE's ***What is Posthumanism?*** (DAVID CECCHETTO)  
STEWART J. COHEN and MELISSA W. WADDELL's ***Climate Change in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*** (DAVID HEINIMANN)
- ✦ RAY HSU's ***Cold Sleep Permanent Afternoon*** and JAY MILLAR's ***Other Poems*** (KIT DOBSON)
- ✦ ***First Voices: An Aboriginal Women's Reader*** edited by PATRICIA MONTURE and PATRICIA D. MCGUIRE (JENNIFER ADESE)
- ✦ LORRI NEILSEN GLENN's ***Lost Gospels*** and EVE JOSEPH's ***The Secret Signature of Things*** (ALANNA F. BONDAR)
- ✦ KEN BELFORD's ***Decompositions*** and WEYMAN CHAN's ***hypoderm: notes to myself*** (MAUREEN SCOTT HARRIS)
- ✦ ***Lyric Ecology: An Appreciation of the Work of Jan Zwicky*** edited by MARK DICKINSON and CLARE GOULET (MELANIE BOYD)
- ✦ LISA MARTIN-DEMOOR's ***One Crow Sorrow*** (GINA GRANTER)
- ✦ ***Out of the Earth: Ecocritical Readings of Irish Texts*** edited by CHRISTINE CUSICK (HARRY VANDERVLIST)
- ✦ TOR FORSBERG's ***North of Iskut: Grizzlies, Bannock and Adventure*** (MICHA EDLICH)
- ✦ REINGARD M. NISCHIK's ***Engendering Genre: The Works of Margaret Atwood*** (JILL E. ANDERSON)
- ✦ JOY PARR's ***Sensing Changes: Technologies, Environments, and the Everyday, 1953-2003*** (ROSEMARY-CLAIRE COLLARD)
- ✦ TIM BOWLING's ***The Annotated Bee & Me*** (ANNE SIMPSON)
- ✦ IAN MCEWAN's ***Solar*** (AFRA KAVANAGH)
- ✦ ALISSA YORK's ***Fauna*** (JOANNA DAWSON)
- ✦ BRIAN BRETT's ***Trauma Farm: A Rebel History of Rural Life*** (LOUISE FABIANI)
- ✦ JIM DWYER's ***Where the Wild Books Are: A Field Guide to Ecofiction*** (MARIE-FRANCE BOISSONNEAULT)
- ✦ LORRI NEILSEN GLENN's ***Combustion*** (JONATHAN MEAKIN)



***A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*** edited by **ALAN C. BRADDOCK** and **CHRISTOPH IRMSCHER**  
U of Alabama P, 2009 \$60.00/\$29.95

Reviewed by **KERI CRONIN**

I have been waiting for a book like this to come out for most of my academic career. (It is not every day one gets to begin a book review with such a lofty assertion!) I recall first discovering ecocriticism when I was a graduate student at Queen's University. I remember pouring over the pages of Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader*, recognizing even in the early days of my graduate studies what a landmark text this was. While I was excited to find a theoretical framework for the academic questions I had about the relationships between cultural representations and environmental issues, I was struck by the near absence of visual material discussed in ecocritical circles. "Why doesn't someone put together a book about art and the environment?" I frequently whined to my professors and fellow students.

Just over a decade later, Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher's volume, *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, has emerged as art history's answer to *The Ecocriticism Reader*. Like Glotfelty and Fromm's volume, *A Keener Perception* is a collection of essays that focus on American cultural representation. In this book, the emphasis shifts from the written word to the visual, and essays address such topics as Buckminster Fuller's architectural designs, William Bartram's eighteenth-century botanical illustrations, Carleton Watkins's photographs of California's giant sequoia trees, and Alberta Thomas's woven rugs. The thirteen essays in this volume offer a diverse and interdisciplinary look at the ways in which landscapes, plants and

animals are imaged and imagined and how, in turn, these cultural representations are intimately linked with physical, material environmental conditions.

Braddock's contribution to the volume—a chapter entitled "Bodies of Water: Thomas Eakins, Racial Ecology, and the Limits of Civic Realism"—is an essay that will undoubtedly become a standard inclusion in bibliographies on ecocritical approaches to visual culture. Braddock offers detailed visual, contextual, and environmental analysis of such well-known Eakins paintings as *William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* (1877), *The Champion Single Sculls* (1871), and *Swimming* (1885). Eakins's focus on bodies of water—both allegorical bodies representing water as well as actual swimming holes—allows Braddock the opportunity to investigate relationships that exist between these images and issues of water pollution and water management in nineteenth-century Philadelphia. These environmental issues, as Braddock points out, in turn are inextricably linked to the racial and cultural politics of this geographical locale at this specific point in history.

In the image of William Rush carving, for example, the sculpted female figure meant to represent the Schuylkill River is shown holding a bittern on her shoulder. As Braddock points out, this bird was a once common sight along the banks of the Schuylkill but this had ceased to be the case by the time Eakins painted this image. In writing about this image Eakins referred to the bittern as part of the past, "a bird loving and much frequenting the quiet dark wooded river of those days." Development and pollution, it would seem, rendered this iconic animal near absent from this landscape.

In the late nineteenth century, much concern was raised over the safety and quality of water in and around the city of Philadelphia; the bittern was just one of many species affected. Industrial sewage and other forms of pollution

spilled in to the Schuylkill at an alarming rate and thousands of people died from waterborne diseases like typhoid, including Eakins's own sister Margaret in 1882. In short, Eakins was well aware of the environmental impact of Philadelphia's industrial development. Given that Eakins is often celebrated for his "realist" approach to art, we might expect that these environmental issues be addressed in his artwork. However, many of his best-known images of the bodies of water around Philadelphia continued to draw on an aesthetic framework that depicts these kinds of landscapes as pristine and unspoiled. For example, in *The Champion Single Sculls* Eakins paints his friend, Max Schmitt, rowing on the Schuylkill. The compositional choices that Eakins makes in this picture are those that reinforce a narrative of "natural harmony" and erase signs of industry and working-class life found along the waterways of Philadelphia; as Braddock astutely quips, "no signs of slaughterhouse offal or cesspool runoff here."

During this time other artists were visually engaging with changes in the landscape brought about by industrial development and increasing urbanization (Braddock cites paintings by James McNeill Whistler, William Wyllie, James Tissot and Thomas Anshutz here), whereas Eakins chose to paint scenes in which wealthy white Americans enjoy their leisure time in landscapes marked by environmental harmony. The absence of working-class and immigrant experiences in this landscape coupled with the omission of any overt signs of industry or pollution causes Braddock to characterize Eakins's approach as "civic realism" instead of "critical or social realism." This distinction is more than simple semantics. Rather, this shift in language reminds us that no image (including those described as "realistic-looking") can ever offer us a visual rendition of "the truth." As I tell my students each semester, "what is excluded from an image is often as important as what is included."

Jeffrey Myers's "Pastoral and Anti-Pastoral

in Aaron Douglas's *Aspects of Negro Life*" is likewise a chapter that ecocritical art historians will cite and revisit in the coming years. The analysis of this series of Harlem Renaissance paintings offered by Myers raises important questions about what gets counted as "nature." As Myers points out, this series (completed by Douglas in 1934) forcefully reminds us that nature is not limited to rural landscapes.

*Aspects of Negro Life* is comprised of four painted panels: *The Negro in an African Setting*, *An Idyll of the Deep South*, *From Slavery to Reconstruction*, and *Song of the Towers*; the various landscapes represented range from an imagined geography of Africa in a previous era to cotton plantations in the American south to the urban space of a big American city. These panels are linked together thematically as they trace the journey from slavery to emancipation. They are also joined compositionally: large circles of light and bright swaths of colour dash across the surfaces of all four paintings, a suggestion of "nature" in a most visual and visceral sense.

Myers acknowledges the argument that slave narratives often turn dominant modern understandings of the rural/urban divide inside out, that for former slaves and their descendants a rural landscape can be a reminder of forced labour whereas an urban environment is often a symbol of personal freedom. He argues, however, that this series of paintings breaks down dichotomous boundaries between urban and rural (or what he terms "pastoral" and "anti-pastoral"). In other words, the images in the *Aspects of Negro Life* series "erase...artificially constructed boundaries between the urban and the natural." According to Myers, this is most forcefully articulated in the central figures found in the first and last paintings in this series, *The Negro in an African Setting* and *Song of the Towers*. In *The Negro in an African Setting*, the body of the central figure is frozen in a frenetic dance. The surrounding compositional details suggest a jungle or, at the very least, a space that

is non-urban, non-American. In *The Song of the Towers*, a similarly silhouetted body also moves to music—in this case, the music associated with the jazz saxophone this figure holds in his hand. In this image, the figure is surrounded by skyscrapers and other symbols of the American city in the early decades of the twentieth century. These two centrally placed figures serve as bookends that frame *Aspects of Negro Life* and in so doing they stand as poignant reminders of the interconnectedness of all forms of landscapes and human experiences represented in this series. As Myers writes, “Douglas creates a kind of urban pastoral that not only idealizes the Harlem Renaissance but also critiques the mainstream environmentalist valorization of rural and wilderness spaces over urban space.”

The essays in *A Keener Perception* provide an important framework for emerging discussions around the ecocritical study of art and visual culture. If I could wish for one further addition to this rich volume, it would be the inclusion of colour plates. While I know all too well the financial and logistical impediments that historians of visual culture face when they attempt to reproduce images in their published books, I still found myself wishing for colour reproductions of the images discussed in these chapters. The authors offer such rich and detailed visual analyses, and it is a shame that the reader is prevented from grasping the full extent of these close readings due to a lack of adequate visuals.

**KERI CRONIN** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Visual Arts at Brock University. She is also a Faculty Affiliate in Brock’s Social Justice and Equity Studies Graduate Program and the editor of *The Brock Review*. She is the author of *Manufacturing National Park Nature: Photography, Ecology and the Wilderness Industry of Jasper* (UBC Press, 2010) and the co-editor of *Imagining Resistance: Visual Culture & Activism in Canada* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

## Derrida and Luhmann in a Theatre of Posthumanism

*What is Posthumanism?* by CARY WOLFE  
U of Minnesota P, 2010 24.95

Reviewed by DAVID CECCHETTO

*What is Posthumanism?* begins from the observation, via Foucault, that “humanism is its own dogma” in the sense that the term “human” always naturalizes the distinctions that constitute it. In this light, Cary Wolfe’s posthumanism intervenes both prior to and after humanism: on one hand, it is anterior in that “it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being” in biological and technical worlds; on the other hand, posthumanism also names a contemporary historical moment in which it is increasingly impossible to ignore the decentering that is worked on the human through “its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks.” In this sense, then, the endeavour that Wolfe shoulders in *WIP* is not simply to contribute to a “thematics of the decentering of the human,” but—more importantly—to explore “what thought has to become in the face of” the challenges posed by that decentering.

Wolfe undertakes this task primarily through a theoretical perspective that conjoins Derridean deconstruction with the second order systems theory of Nicholas Luhmann, a combination that positions the two theorists as departing from a similar position, but moving in different directions. In short, Wolfe argues that “while Derrida emphasizes the *final* undecidability of any signifying instance, Luhmann stresses that even so, systems *must* decide.” As a result, Wolfe follows Luhmann in viewing systems theory as the reconstruction of deconstruction.

In many ways, this responds to a

problematic raised in an earlier discussion between Wolfe, Luhmann, Hayles, Rasch, and Knodt.<sup>1</sup> In that debate, competing constructions of posthumanism variegated along the meaning/possibility of objectivity and the (human) ethical imperatives that this might entail. *WIP*, to my ears, resolves this debate in the only way possible: rather than seeking to eradicate anthropocentrism from the discourses that humanism produces, the text instead articulates the “necessity for any discourse or critical procedure to take account of the constitutive (and constitutively paradoxical) nature of its own distinctions, forms, and procedures [...] in ways that may be distinguished from the reflection and introspection associated with the critical subject of humanism.” In this, *WIP* not only answers the question of what posthumanism is—albeit with the full ambivalence that characterizes deconstruction—but also performs analyses that are fully posthumanist.

As a result, *WIP* exemplifies the “Posthumanist Posthumanism” section of a schema that Wolfe develops in order to differentiate between texts’ internal disciplinary operations and external relations. The work of Žižek, for example, demonstrates “Posthumanist Humanism” because it is internally posthumanist, but remains humanist in its “continued external insistence on the ethical and [...] ontological efficacy of the human/animal divide.” By contrast, Wolfe notes that the animal rights philosophy of Tom Regan exemplifies “Humanist Posthumanism,” in that it takes seriously the (posthumanist) compulsion to make its discipline “respond to the question of nonhuman animals foisted on it by changes in the discipline’s environment,” but its internal disciplinarity remains “humanist through and through.” (To be clear, Wolfe notes that the “desirability of a given position [in his schema] must be contextualized,” so that there is a time and place for each of the four possible designations that flow from [Post]Humanist [Post]Humanism.)

There are, I believe, two lines of criticism that this text will encounter. First, some may find it “too theoretical,” and be disappointed that it does not prescribe explicit political action. Certainly, there is some ground for this, highlighted for example by the fact that Wolfe’s cogent analysis of Koolhaas and Mau’s winning *Tree City* plan for Toronto’s Downsview Park deals materially only with the plan itself (and the debates that surrounded it). Specifically, Wolfe recommends the plan’s “reduction of ‘hard’ commitments up front” for its ability to “remain responsive over time to changing and unanticipated demands from its surrounding environment.” However, those familiar with how the project has unfolded since the plan was selected in 2000 know that its implementation has produced myriad economic, social, political, and material paroxysms that might be read as precisely the problem with this (Luhmannian) “temporalization of complexity”: if the park’s value lies in its being Canada’s first national urban park, surely this designation places a premium on whatever quality “park” is intended to convey, not least a certain notion of creating a space for “nature” in the city; otherwise, why the designation? Wolfe’s reading is sensitive to this differentiation—and, indeed, succeeds in articulating how the park is “quite literally a different entity depending on the observational schema we use” —but one can’t help but wonder what is lost in this perspective’s seeming foreclosure of advocacy for a simple park, in the most conventional sense. In response to this criticism, though, it should be noted that this is precisely the problematic that Wolfe’s posthumanism intensifies, so that this line of critique does not so much undermine *WIP* as endorse the text’s necessity.

Second, there will be those who lament that *WIP* does not present a history of posthumanism as such, in the sense that it offers neither an account of particular contemporary technologies, nor a synthesizing narrative of the

disciplines (namely, “Animal Studies” and “Science and Technology Studies”) that contextualize the position Wolfe is developing. Here again, though, this criticism misses the mark, not because it isn’t reasonable, but because it falsely constrains the terms of engagement with the text: those familiar with Wolfe’s body of work will recognize in *WIP* his attunement to contextual differentiation, an approach that precludes in advance—in practice and in theory—any neat and tidy account of posthumanism as such.

Indeed, this commitment is perhaps the feature that most recommends *WIP*, and in this light I would be remiss if I didn’t note the tremendous intellectual, scholarly, and artistic breadth that the book demonstrates at every turn. If I have focused here on the flexible construction of posthumanism that Wolfe constatively advocates, then, this is not to neglect the performative dimension of the text: in some respects, it is precisely when the text is least focused on explaining, contextualizing, and refining what posthumanism “is” that the most life is breathed into posthumanism’s materiality/semiotics (to borrow Haraway’s conflation). To this end, the second half of the book—which features a huge range of artistic analyses that include startlingly original readings of Brian Eno and David Byrne’s *My Life as a Bush of Ghosts* and Lars von Trier’s *Dancer in the Dark*—performs instances of posthumanism that are all the more lively for the fact that they do not easily collect into a clear notion of posthumanism *per se*. That is, Wolfe resists the temptation to reify his variegated, localized, and always-already paradoxical posthumanist perspective into a theory of Posthumanism (uppercase P). As a result, the text relinquishes an authority that would make it more readily digestible, but in so doing takes on a parasitic quality that might—given the right hosting conditions—allow it to move in rhythms and patterns that its hosts’ (that is, its readers’) inherited humanist presumptions

can neither anticipate nor contain.

1. Luhmann, Niklas, N. Katherine Hayles, William Rasch, Eva M. Knodt, and Cary Wolfe. 2000. “Theory of a Different Order: A Conversation with Katherine Hayles and Niklas Luhmann.” In *Observing Complexity: Systems Theory and Postmodernity*, edited by C. Wolfe and W. Rasch. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

**DAVID CECCHETTO** is Assistant Professor of New Media History and Criticism at OCAD University in Toronto, Canada. [www.davidcecchetto.net](http://www.davidcecchetto.net)



L. Szabo

---

**Climate Change in the 21st Century by  
STEWART J. COHEN with MELISSA W.  
WADDELL**

McGill-Queen’s UP, 2009 \$32.95

Reviewed by **DAVID HEINIMANN**

**R**ecently, “ecophobia” has arisen as a debilitating problematic for ecocriticism. The fear is over performative incapacity. A major aspect of that fear is the sketchy scientific understanding among some ecocritics. Stewart Cohen’s *Climate Change in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* can help remedy that.

Cohen is a professor of forestry at the University of British Columbia and, more

importantly, a senior researcher in climate change for Environment Canada, as well as a lead author of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (while Melissa Waddell is a science writer who assisted Cohen in the conversion of class lectures into the chapters of his book). The book "is meant to contribute to creating a learning community around global warming" by appealing to the "climate scientist, biologist, economist, and ethicist" to "fill an empty niche in climate change literature."

The book's twelve chapters can be considered in two parts. The first seven chapters describe the history of climate change study since 1820 and the scientific, economic, and social aspects of climate change, together with "frameworks" for impact and adaptation assessment. The second part, chapters eight to twelve, brings together the issues raised in the first part to discuss "mitigation responses," both in overview and specific to "trading and investment mechanisms" and to present an "integrated assessment" and a larger context of climate change with other global environmental problems.

The book is well laid out. The "Tables and Figures" and "Abbreviations" (both of which are many and useful) aid reference and recall, and the "Websites" reference is good for introductory exploration. The chapters are distinct in their subjects and also satisfyingly cross-referenced, with well-thought and well-titled subsections, including a helpfully directive "Introduction" and summary "Discussion" for each, and with extensive reference—a fifty-page bibliography—current to 2007 (currency is crucial to any ecological text). The index is adequate, though lacking entries for important concerns such as "GMO," "carbon tax" and "cap and trade," and "population," which Cohen does discuss (though carbon tax is under-addressed—perhaps reflecting an IPCC preference for cap and trade?).

The science is clearly presented for the targeted generalist reader, from the definition of

the carbon cycle and the effects of carbon to the development of and questions around various "models" and "scenarios" devised to work on climate change. Technical considerations such as "signal detection" and emissions trading do not overwhelm, and new and even mature ecocritics will find the basic discussion a relief and even a stimulus to deeper and broader reading. As Cohen says, "We urgently need many different indicators in order for climate change to move from a problem of natural science to one of social policy," which ecocritics can take as a sincere invitation to participation.

Cohen recognizes the need "for dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders [...] who are not professional researchers [in science]" but who "represent an important knowledge resource." He also "teaches the conflicts," presenting disputes that have arisen in questions of definition and action. Nonetheless, he favours Kyoto and presents little of the dispute around it, neglecting to mention James Hansen's rejection of it or anything at all of Hansen except a bibliographical item. The non-scientific researcher should wonder who else and what other material—for example, the rising problem around "rare earth"—has been ignored. Here ecocritics can enter to "deconstruct" the arguments of texts that potentially hide disagreement and denial by exclusion, as Timothy Morton urges.

Limitation is endemic in works like this, however. In a field afflicted with everything from self-assumed heroic contrarians (cf. Dunning-Kruger Effect) to still-evolving science, it may be enough to declare intention—Cohen's "generalist" approach—and hope for the reader's sympathy. Anyway, only the naïve would rely on a single book. Cohen's has its virtues, and ecocritics will especially appreciate his discussion of the fraught notion of sustainability that closes the book. This paragraph samples the notion and virtues, as well as shows Cohen's ultimately humanist concern:

A comparison of the climate change and

sustainable development discourses reveals some significant differences in their origins, evolution, and how they are perceived. First, the research efforts that led to their public visibility were quite different. Climate change research efforts were, and still are to some extent, dominated by natural scientists. Economics is important in research on GHG mitigation, and it could play a greater role in impacts and adaptation issues. Social science research concerning impacts and adaptation is also expanding (see chapters 4 and 7). On the other hand, the sustainable development literature is largely an effort from the social sciences, and a lot of it is not very well developed.

Ecocritics must aid that development if we are to consider ourselves worth our salt.

Should it be a truism of ecological work that ecocritics know as much about science as scientists know about ecocriticism, and vice versa? While Timothy Morton now defines (and queerly) a “Queer Ecology” (*PMLA* March 2010), such basics as the carbon cycle and population are still beyond some of us (on population, see Julia Whitty, “The Last Taboo,” *Mother Jones* [May/June 2010]). If Cohen has satisfied on the former but disappointed on the latter, it is not a great slight of an otherwise helpful explanatory work on climate change. He fits with other generalist texts, from Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* and Richard Falk’s *This Endangered Planet* to Roy Woodbridge’s *The Next World War* and James Hansen’s *Storms of My Grandchildren*. Ecocritics do well to return to such texts occasionally to recall the reason we work at all.

**DAVID HEINIMANN** teaches university-transfer literature and philosophy at Northwest Community College, Terrace, BC. He was an early member of Pollution Probe and The Green Party of Canada.

## Archives of Living

*Cold Sleep Permanent Afternoon* by RAY HSU  
Nightwood, 2010 \$17.95

*Other Poems* by JAY MILLAR  
Nightwood, 2010 \$17.95

Reviewed by KIT DOBSON

These two new books from Gibsons, British Columbia’s Nightwood Editions again show the high quality productions coming out of this small but very successful press. These different books are released through two different Nightwood’s series—Hsu’s through their Junction series, Millar’s through their blewointment series—yet nevertheless present readers with parallel takes on the world(s) that we inhabit.

Ray Hsu’s *Cold Sleep Permanent Afternoon* follows Hsu’s successful first book *Anthropy*, which won the 2005 Gerald Lampert Award. Hsu now teaches in the creative writing program at UBC and brings a complex, meditative series of voices to the poems of his second volume. The concerns of this book are social in nature, as the varied voices contribute to a stark depiction of the everyday (the book is dedicated to people whom the author cannot name: “the women and men who sewed this shirt, prepared this soup, recycled this paper, took apart my old computers, and cleaned this office”). Recurring discussions of archives, of words, of the depth and breadth of human life animate the citizens, hands, gravediggers, and others who mouth the poems on their way through the book. A poem entitled “Border” observes that people, other women, “are / our archive” and that “wherever we set foot / unfixes home, wherever we belong.”

Perhaps most impressive in Hsu’s collection is how it is held together. The book’s references are wide-ranging, including Michael Taussig, Walter Benjamin, and *The Joy of Cooking*.

While there is no dominant narrative and the speakers of the poems are not explicitly connected beyond their descriptions as Citizen, Narrator, or Chorus, what emerges is a dominant mood. It is a mood of uncertainty, of seeking:

. . . What you ask of me  
is only my story. Yes,  
I say, I want closure  
too. I want a seam  
to give me meaning. I too  
want something ferociously  
true. But somewhere I am only  
a document, an argument  
about the very experience  
that makes me so particular.

This mood is intensely meta-cognitive, aware not simply of the vast thrum of human intensity and existence, but of the book's place within it, of the fact that its words, too, are part of an archive that they join as soon as they are created. This self-awareness, though, does not negate the search: "We / are all after all looking for a protagonist, / one for whom we spare / interludes," the Chorus notes. By turns elegiac, graceful, and dramatic, Hsu's second book is a deeply intelligent and felt contribution.

Jay Millar's *Other Poems*, by contrast, cannot be so neatly summed up. Millar is a multifaceted culture worker in Toronto, the founder of the excellent BookThug publishing house and owner of Apollinaire's Bookshoppe, whose motto is that they are "selling the books no one wants to buy." There must be something wrong with me, then, since I've been browsing and shopping Millar's online storefront for some time.

*Other Poems* announces itself as a miscellany—the term on the back cover—and it more or less lives up to this billing. Millar's been a busy chap, publishing four volumes of his own work, that of others through BookThug, and selling books, and *Other Poems* is a collection of poetry written over the last decade while all of these have unfolded. The result is a perhaps

deliberately uneven volume that ranges from the traditionally lyrical to the more experimental. But it is certainly not the record of the voice of the poem "Lyric," however fanciful the image may be:

. . . Lying  
  
here on the grass  
laid out between  
the blades like  
  
clover or a weed  
I'm here to  
be lazy and  
  
quiet and so  
beautifully useless as  
long as I can.

Rather, the dominant mood that emerges is similar in some senses to Hsu's: it is at times world-weary, as in the sequence "Entropic: A Narrative," which I take to be the central portion of the book. In his or her declining and decreasing lines, a speaker remembers how "that morning we gathered near the beach to ask / How the sun could bother to raise again, the impression / So hard against those who arrived." Bleak overall.

Yet, for the collection as a whole, all is not doom and gloom: humour creeps in. In the poem "For Nodes in a Vortex," the speaker claims to be "too old and wooden / to wax philosophically for long" and proposes instead to "talk about the kids: / Sometimes they pee everywhere. / It's funny what they will and will not eat. / It's funny the things that they will say." While the list continues, becoming philosophical about the continuum that is the bizarre world humans have conjured up to inhabit, not all is ill. The need to continue and even to thrive is announced perhaps most starkly and startlingly by the speaker in the poem "North Vancouver: An Ode":  
if I really were to commit  
suicide  
I would have to begin by writing



individualized  
letters  
to everyone I know, which would take me  
the rest of  
my life, I suppose.

The everyday, in other words, is what keeps us here in Millar's *Other Poems*, and it is this everyday, the accumulation of the everyday, that makes up this volume and that gives both of these books their impetus.

**KIT DOBSON** is an Assistant Professor of Canadian Literature at Mount Royal University, Calgary. His first book, *Transnational Canadas: Anglo-Canadian Literature and Globalization*, was published by Wilfrid Laurier UP in 2009.

---

***First Voices: An Aboriginal Women's Reader*** edited by **PATRICIA MONTURE & PATRICIA D. MCGUIRE**

INANNA PUBLICATIONS, 2009 \$39.95

Reviewed by **JENNIFER ADESE**

**F***irst Voices: An Aboriginal Women's Reader* is a comprehensive collection of key women's writings by and/or about Indigenous women taken from the pages of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme (CWS/cf)*. Patricia Monture and Patricia D. McGuire bring together the voices of women across their Indigenous nations (be they Anishinaabe, Nehiyawak, Haudenosaunee, Métis, Inuit, etc.). Reprinting each piece as it was originally peer-reviewed and published in *CWS/cf*, the editors of *First Voices* offer a range of varying length essays, poems, interviews and interventions from the past thirty years that work to "restore voice" to Indigenous women: "For many of those decades since the land became known as Canada, the stories of Aboriginal women were ignored. Historians wrote about men as though women

idly waited for the men to return with the 'meat and the treaty'."

As the caretakers of this land since time immemorial, "Indigenous women understand the land that has become known as Canada in a different way from the common geographical one learned about in the public education system in this country," write Monture and McGuire. "Our stories are woven into the land and shape the way we raise our daughters." *First Voices*, in light of these words, is first and foremost a collection of stories, stories that are woven into the land and in many cases woven *by* the land, the land that through colonization has come to be called "Canada." The land, women's responsibilities to protecting the land, and the challenges Indigenous women have faced in carrying on this responsibility (in spite of the many challenges of colonization) are central to the works presented in *First Voices*. The editors write, "The land is who we are as peoples. To know who you are you must also know where you come from. This means understanding the relationship you have with the territory of your people."

*First Voices* opens with a compilation of Indigenous women's life histories, interviews and poems in a chapter titled "Profiles of Aboriginal Women." The editors placed this section following their introduction in order to reflect, at the outset, the multidimensionality of Indigenous women represented in the volume, women who "come from different nations, each of whom have their own traditions, ceremonies, laws, and languages" and who also "interact with the world in multiple ways. Some are interested in politics while others write. Some dance and paint and create." The editors draw together works which actively challenge the "shared colonial history" that "often makes us look the same when really it is the imposed colonial oppression that we have survived that is the same." In an interview with Maura Hanrahan, Welustuk Elder, Healer, and Teacher, Imelda Perley connects the unique language, Wolastoqey, to the land of her peoples,

"I tell them that our language is endangered, yes, but it is very much alive on the *ktahqomiq* (land) where we survive, it is our *npisunol* (medicine) that heals us."

The remainder of the collection is organized thematically. "Identity," "Territory," "Activism," "Confronting Colonialism," "Confronting the Canadian Legal System," and "Indigenous Knowledges" each contain a wide range of works from authors such as Kim Anderson, Agnes Grant, Winona LaDuke, Monique Mojica, Carole Leclair, Patricia A. Monture, Sharon D. McIvor, and Shirley Ida Williams-Pheasant. Within each chapter are the voices of Indigenous women whose spirits remain woven to the land and its natural inhabitants. In "Healing Is," Isabel Louise O'Kanese's poem cries "my spirit knows I return like the grass on the prairie/wild free." In the section on "Territory," Kaaren Olsen Dannenmann offers insight into her community's ways of understanding relationships to land. To the Anishnaape of Trout Lake, phrases such as "my home" or "my Trout Lake" that may operate possessively under English language sensibilities in actuality connotes holistic, broader systems of relationships: "This relationship includes those with whom we share that home—our aunts, cousins, etc., the moose, bear, gulls, ravens, mice, moles, flies, mosquitos, fish, the trees, the grass, rocks, etc."

It is in recognition of this holistic relationship to the land that a section on "Activism" becomes necessary. Appearing in the collection before "Confronting Colonialism" and "Confronting the Canadian Legal System," "Activism," as Monture and McGuire understand it, is much more holistic. Monture and McGuire write that, as women are keepers of the land (and in particular the water), "Activism" means that Indigenous women are charged with protecting lands from the disruptive elements of capitalist society, but also that this responsibility runs deeper. Indigenous women are not only activist in being reactionary to colonialism and its effects,

but are also proactive in the sense of ensuring the survival of Indigenous lands, peoples, and culture beyond colonization:

The impacts of colonialism, which often lead to the need for activism, are far too often about having both the strength and courage to resist. But resisting is not a condition of life that we are satisfied with. Simply put Aboriginal women deserve more.

The writings presented here not only mark a recounting of the many horrors facing Indigenous women since the inception of colonialism, but also represent an attempt to go beyond the simple pathologizing of Indigenous women and Indigenous "issues." *First Voices* represents some of the voices of those women who have refused to be made silent.

This is an essential work for any course or for any avid reader purporting to understand Indigenous peoples, because the voices of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women long silenced by male-dominated and/or non-Indigenous authored collections on Indigenous women are brought forth in this compilation. While the focus of the collection is not specific to one field (i.e. the environment), the breadth and range of works certainly reflect the inseparability of the land to the lifeblood of Indigenous societies. Through the voices of Indigenous women, *First Voices* also marks the central place that women hold in Indigenous societies.

The writings here, then, while they may be "stamped by the time that they were written," certainly reflect that Indigenous women have been questioning over an extended period of time the "way things are in Canada." After all, as the editors identify, "Many of the issues that we as Indigenous women have been facing remain the same since the time of first contact: sexualized violence, abuse, and marginalization." Working through *First Voices*, it becomes clear that everyone, led by the women in this volume who bridge land, spirituality, politics, and

decolonization, should take the time to come to know “whose territory we are in.”

**JENNIFER ADESE** is a descendant of the historic St. Albert Métis community and Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. She is the author of “Constructing the Aboriginal Terrorist: Depictions of Aboriginal Protestors, the Caledonia Reclamation, and Canadian Neoliberalization” in *Terror: A Critical and Interdisciplinary Approach*. Her doctoral research examines Indigenous interactions with the forces of neoliberalism and the commodification of Indigeneity.

---

***Lost Gospels* by LORRI NEILSEN GLENN**

Brick Books, 2010 \$19.00

***The Secret Signature of Things* by EVE JOSEPH**

Brick Books, 2010 \$19.00

Reviewed by **ALANNA F. BONDAR**

In Lorri Neilsen Glenn’s latest book of poetry, *Lost Gospels*, the reader is asked many questions about placement and belonging, when lilies follow and one waits, “ready as a tuned string / to witness what is ravenous, mythic.” The answers, Glenn suggests, are found within “the true earthly blessings” of *metaxu*—“the temporal seen as a bridge.” When we attend to the quiet interrogation of the living, and “when desire strums you like a fingerboard, what else can you // feel but faith, how it resonates? Listen: you are the meantime. Walk into the water, / and when the vibration summons your bones, you know you’re coming home. // Let yourself.” Within these liminal spaces of the physical and metaphoric, of the internal and external—between the self and community—silence weaves a wholeness out of language, gracefully

entangling hope and triumph with the often tenacious strands of life’s vicissitudes. Herein, as Glenn reminds us, “words are the sharpest / tools you can make. You load them / in guns, and wonder,” where, if you seek only what’s ordered and predictable, if “you avoid dark, / you miss the beauty / of chiaroscuro.”

By recognizing synchronous layers of existence (intellectual, psychological, historical, communal, emotional, etc.), Glenn creates communities and relationships ranging from intimate connections to the broader category of Canadian cultural membership. Instead of taking readers out of the poem, Glenn’s allusions to Canadian literature, publishing, art, and criticism wrap the reader in a celebration of what we suspect or think we know about being Canadian. In “Night Borders,” Glenn explains that “it’s a big country, and we are always learning to arrive or leave.” Consistent with the notion that it is frontiers and the crossing of thresholds that force us to make discoveries—multi-layered and complex—this collection speaks about embracing the wild of in-betweens, of beings and being “in the middle of nowhere.”

Throughout this book of poetry, Glenn collects—without replacing, abandoning, or shedding—possibilities for potential metamorphic borderlands: REM sleep, changelings, the reaching for things we cannot find but know are there, the dawn chorus, the back and forth along bridges, and the inside of an egg—hatched, hatching, conceived, and in flight. In essence, Glenn makes us feel—*no*, sense and know—that *being* home and *not being* home are both worth the trip, as places where we exist, seeking, “a glimpse of a hand plunging into water: something down there, / and we want it found.” Directing us into unfamiliar territory, with the confidence of a general dressed for battle or a seamstress sharpened to make or mend, Glenn convinces us “all you wanted was to become / lost” in “a place where you can wade into the birth of everything, / witchy and languorous. Released.”

Straddling these lines too, is the poetic condition (and, by extension, also the identity most appropriate for defining Canadian cultural identity) as we learn to jump into the abyss, that “grin / of a forgotten lover through a crack in the door;” “suspended, neither grounded nor in flight.” And while it is “impossible to navigate the liminal” (“You are home. Not home”) these poems create method out of the madness as they frame limitations that make poetic attendance (as a kind of knowing) possible for everyone, before they unwind the frame, and leave us once again longing for more. Read Glenn’s collection and you will be grasping for more and grabbing at the possibility of shifts in your own consciousness, made possible by reading excellent poetry.

\* \* \*

Likewise, another Brick Books 2010 release, Eve Joseph’s *The Secret Signature of Things*, engages the reader in highly crafted and pristine images that make possible intimate relationships between poet/reader and words/their power to change external and internal measures of understanding one’s self within and without biotic community. Reading through Joseph’s quiet and succinct observations remind us that we share a haunting of universal experiences that exist juxtaposed to simultaneous events, thoughts, people, and their pasts. It is as if Joseph has taken her SLR camera to the world, creating snapshots contained within the orderly, mindful, and eloquent framework of the short poetic line. By applying a polarizing filter to the language, Joseph’s poems present a kind of reflective exactness—without glare and blinding light that may dazzle and distract. In this way, the reader accesses the depths of images held beneath reflective surfaces—metaphoric and literal—of glass and water, to reach, to find, and to grasp what s/he knows exists on the other side.

Stripped of any pretence, Joseph’s

collection is thus a portrait of the real, marked by gorgeous observation and made naked through her delivery. At times, these poems offer the innocence of a child’s discovery with the sophisticated perspective of an adult who has *turned* from life’s difficulties and *returned* to the watching of clouds “all summer” in order to come of age in their “shapes shifted: swans turned into fish, / winged horses plunged through white drifts.”

Joseph inspires us to believe in the collapsing of story and knowledge when we are still like “your small face lift[ing],” taking from our elders the wisdom that we too might be “the wind that brings the sun.”

A highlight in this collection is “White Camellias,” winner of the P. K. Page Founders’ Award for Poetry (2010). This long poem in fourteen parts maps the possibility of poems not written, with some parts making the distinction between *mind* and *brain*: “these ones know the brain is only the cartographer intricately mapping what the mind explores. // As if there was ever a way to return.” And it is these poetic sections that walk carelessly (but still mindfully) in long lines across the page, in and out of the collection’s earlier poems’ propensity for order and austere images. It is as if this poem undoes the laces of the first half of the collection, letting fingers rest between words until it gives in to the wild and untamed lines of the prose poems that follow “White Camellias” to complete this collection. Stone-picked by the poet’s careful hand, this anthology slows the reader’s attention to a radiant everyday, each poem a time-nugget, each image, a rock—a sharpened crystal that pierces the soul walking barefooted, undressed, through her pages. All this, and the poems do so fearlessly, with a confidence in knowing the comfort of touching the earth.

**ALANNA F. BONDAR** is a poet and professor of English and Creative Writing at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. She received her

Ph.D. from Memorial University of Newfoundland (2004) and her MA in Creative Writing from UNB. Alanna's scholarly work has been published in Canada and USA and explores how, through the lens of ecocriticism, Canadian literature revisions our connections within biotic communities. Her poetry manuscript *there are many ways to die while travelling in Peru*, which explores links between the Andean region and the quirky *wilds* of Northern Ontario, is scheduled to be launched by Your Scrivener Press in spring 2011.

---

## CASCADES AND SHADOWS

*Decompositions* by KEN BELFORD

Talonbooks, 2010 \$16.95

*hypoderm: notes to myself* by WEYMAN CHAN

Talonbooks, 2010 \$16.95

Reviewed by MAUREEN SCOTT HARRIS

Trying to summarize *Decompositions* (Ken Belford's sixth book) or define its central position is not only contrary to what I think its intention is, but rather like dancing with a Zen koan. Consider the title with its taking apart that contains a building up (not a bad description of a process that repeats throughout the book)—*decompositions...compositions...positions...posit...* then turn it around...*posit...positions...compositions...decompositions*. Are you dizzy yet?

When I asked Belford if the book had begun as a project, he replied "I think I can say more of a yes to this than a no." I imagine he may have started with the thought: What if I wrote about my life in terms of the life of a vascular plant—or about the breakdown of community in the language of forest succession? ("I wanted to talk about the relationship / between vascular language and the succession / to woodland thinking.") Or, perhaps, how the land might, if it

could, write me?

*Decompositions* mines terminologies to exhaustion. Poem by poem, "Languages grind / against one another beneath the surface", vocabularies cascade, generating authority then confusion, while manifesting something like the shifting plenitude of the world. Decomposition is a governing process of both land and human attempts to spell it out, and we mistake ourselves thinking we can ever say the whole story. Another story is always arising.

Belford's book is exorbitant despite its adherence to largely unornamented language and an apparently simple form. With a few exceptions, each untitled poem consists of direct statements, reminiscent of the dramatic monologue. But just who is speaking and what is said is often unclear. Here's a complete, and pretty straightforward, poem:

There are mountains, hills,  
complexities and plateaus,  
but the turning point I mean  
was when I was no longer  
restricted by landforms, when  
I understood the uncertainty  
of calculations and the soil and  
water loss out on the plateau.  
In different morphopoetic regions,  
entropy can be given as follows—  
the watershed divides, determining  
borders, and I write topology indices  
of elongated lowland lines, including  
mean gullies, but I do not gather  
skeletons because the land is not empty.

Just what *is* the story here—geography or poetics? The address is to the reader, but who is this "I" (river, poet, surveyor tracing borders) and what is that turning point turning from?

How words can empty themselves and dissolve the ground we stand on is part of what I experience reading these poems. The deaths of explanation and the dream of complete knowledge are at work here. Belford mimics the ongoing processes of the biosphere, insisting we

recognize we exist *within* those processes, our identities also provisional and changing.

Yet at the same time that a kind of repeated dissolving is going on, an autobiography of sorts (and a poetics) seem to be unfolding. What a daring and necessary enterprise—to write one’s life in terms of the land and its ongoingness. Breaking down the borders between discourses and processes, we glimpse an astonishing interchangeability, the mingling and blending of a human life with the life of the land, the two going on in concert. A new story arising from the old ones.

*Decompositions* does require a large capacity for negative capability in the reader—let go of any irritated reaching after facts and understanding and relax into the movements of these poems. In his final lines, the poet instructs us, now we’ve reached the end, on how to receive them: “leave words, and / allow these poems to bend and / cause to be and come apart again.”

*hypoderm: notes to myself* is Weyman Chan’s third book. It began, he told me, with his intent “to speak from a place of equality with all things,” and from that stance what he saw was “impending destruction.” The view is bleak; despair lurks, the ache of mortality deepened by the potential death of the planet.

A science fiction-like atmosphere shadows much of *hypoderm*, dreamlike, vaguely threatening. The startling beauty and horror of a burning book in snow is emblematic: “But it, the book, was smouldering: its pages / were vortices on fire from the inside / its blue cover keeping a lid on the text / that you turn away from to be saved” (“burning”). Moments of sensory pleasure offset the heat: “So I walked, and walked along the long life river of my childhood, / the robin’s nonbeing minor strings lifted across my eye level. / Birdsong’s hand-empty, as always, falls with the dew” (“go and get milk”).

The hypoderm is the layer of skin beneath the epiderm (remember those diagrams in your

health textbook?), the site of both inoculation and infection. The word invokes “hypodermic,” a tool that punctures the skin’s surface. What gets under our skins is, idiomatically, an irritant, something that won’t be ignored. Among things that get under Chan’s skin are genocides: “Wise nations were nailed / under pox and flannel” (“my body lies over the ocean”); environmental devastation: “I’ve told you to stop douching me in motor oil and ragging out my oceans” (“earth speaks”); and human arrogance: “what monster taught Adam / to see a bird and say the word” (“san francisco blues”). If Chan’s hope in facing these evils was to inoculate himself against them, that hope is not fulfilled. Daily life and domestic relations offer the uncertain antidote, the self stitched together by memory and love: “The sliding shoulder / of my daughter at the bus stop / pieces us together. She says, / look, two people, one shadow!” (“starry morning”)

Chan’s poems vary in shape: ordinary free verse mixed with moments of rhyme, lines staggered across the page, tercets, prose poems, short lines, long lines, right-justified lines, and combinations of these practices. The “I” is sometimes there directly, at other times an impersonal presence, absorbing or observing what unfolds. At still others, the “I” tells stories and once even speaks as the Earth. The tone varies, too, from bitter irony (occasionally distancing this reader) to delight and tenderness.

*hypoderm* is thickened with two vocabularies foreign to me: popular culture references, especially to film and television, abound, and so do terms (and processes) from science. Though I can’t read these “languages” precisely, I can see they weave a backdrop of contemporary fears and longings: deadly machines, conspiracies, industrial disasters, epic battles, viruses and plagues, yearnings for salvation, dreams of home. I trust Chan’s accuracy here because of his moving meditations on his father and his daughters.

Individual poems often proceed by an

energetic piling of image on image—free association hijinks that aren't always successful. When images don't link to feeling, they clot, leaving a reader bewildered. Chan has stated (as a guest on a blog): "Every writer must come to terms with their own inner language—and it takes time to learn how to use it to best effect." Here it sometimes feels as if he hasn't completely mastered the image/feeling resonance of his inner language.

But it's exciting to read Chan as he expands his poetry's reach—not abandoning earlier themes of family and immigrant experience—with evident skill, energy, and passion.

Both *Decompositions* and *hypoderm* rise from great contemporary preoccupations: our relationship to the Earth and her other inhabitants (not excluding other people); and our responsibility for the degradation of that relationship and of the Earth. Both books practice a poetics of disorientation, entangling the readers in language and/or images that elude or dissolve meaning, discomfiting and challenging us. Both demand rereading, time, a good dictionary—and then, as Belford suggests, our letting go.

My thanks to both poets for email conversations about their work.

Poet and essayist **MAUREEN SCOTT HARRIS** was born in Prince Rupert, grew up in Winnipeg, and now lives in Toronto. Her awards include the Trillium Book Award for Poetry for *Drowning Lessons* (2005), first prize in *Prairie Fire's* creative non-fiction contest (2007), and the WildCare Tasmania Nature Writing Prize (2009).

---

## The Whole (So Far) Grasped in the Particular

*Lyric Ecology: An Appreciation of the Work of*

*Jan Zwicky* edited by **MARK DICKINSON** and **CLARE GOULET**

Cormorant, 2010 \$30.00

Reviewed by **MELANIE BOYD**

Described by its editors as "the first formal measure" of Jan Zwicky's influence, *Lyric Ecology* comprises twenty-seven pieces (by twenty-six contributors) that vary in length from one to thirty-two pages. Richly eclectic in voice, structure, approach, and content, these pieces can be read in isolation. However, to grasp fully the value and import of *Lyric Ecology*, one must read it front to back—preferably more than once. The reason is music. In her essay "Bringhurst's Presocratics," Jan Zwicky says: "Lyric resonance is a function of the attunement of various distinct components. It thus requires an open structure with distinct elements or distinct axes of experience which stand in a non-linear relation to one another." Remarkable about *Lyric Ecology* is its *own* lyric resonance, for which editors Clare Goulet and Mark Dickinson deserve high praise. In this 272-page appreciation of Zwicky's work, there is abundant evidence of the editors' commitment to embodying—in both form and content—the resonance about which Zwicky speaks and which is characteristic of her own work. But *Lyric Ecology* is not a case of imitation being flattery's highest form; the book is Zwicky-inspired, not derivative.

In a bounty of strong contributors to *Lyric Ecology*, two of the strongest riff, directly or obliquely, off Zwicky's own work. These authors are transfused by her poetry, poetics, and philosophy and—thus nourished—noodle with their own responses and ideas. One is relatively sober (Warren Heiti), one richly witty (Trevor Goward); both are awash in co-contemplation with Zwicky. The form of Heiti's "Ethics and Domesticity" is a nod to that of *Lyric Philosophy* and *Wisdom and Metaphor*. Though it does not

follow their “duon,” or facing-page structure, it is a flowing conversation between the writings of other philosophers (including Zwicky) and Heiti himself. It is a thinking-through, a working-out, a journey. It is a thoughtful examination of entry into Zwicky’s philosophy and an attempt to move that philosophy forward by engendering more questions. In “Membrane & Mosquito,” lichenologist Trevor Goward takes us on a (metaphorical) hike to the origin of metaphor. He is a scientist unafraid of saying—is in fact compelled to say—that *life is magic*, and that what we know now about it is about as much as we’ll ever know. His connection with Jan Zwicky, beyond friendship, seems to be in his sense that her philosophy and poetics express what he has tentatively concluded, as a scientist, about our existence.

Like Goward’s, other essays shed light on the use of “ecology” in the book’s title. Adam Dickinson proposes a link between the thinking of Jakob von Uexküll—a founder of modern ecology—and Zwicky’s poetry. “Surreal Ecology: Freud, Zwicky and the Lyric Unconscious” argues that in Zwicky’s effort to imagine poetically the world of the other (an apple, etc.) is the spirit of von Uexküll, who attempted “to subvert the assumed objectivity of scientific thinking by imagining how the world would look to other creatures.” In his four-page “Metaphor and Ecological Responsibility,” Darren Bifford manages to show how the work of advancing ecological responsibility is directly connected with Zwicky’s understanding of the work of metaphor, which is, in part, to link seemingly disparate things.

Not surprisingly, since Zwicky’s thinking and writing are steeped in the exploration, use, and significance of metaphor, many more *Lyric Ecology* contributors (too numerous to mention) address this aspect of her work. In their essays is a refreshing paucity (though not complete absence) of markedly interpretive literary criticism—that is, criticism with its mind made up about meaning. (In “Bees Humming in the Hand:

Zwicky’s Surprises,” Brian Bartlett takes a break from the theme, mining Zwicky’s poetry for places and ways in which its effectiveness does *not* depend on metaphor.)

Complementary essays by Dennis Lee and Clare Goulet address structure in two of Zwicky’s major works, *Lyric Philosophy* and *Wisdom and Metaphor*. In “The Music of Thinking: The Structural Logic of *Lyric Philosophy*,” Lee draws from conversations with Zwicky and from his own reading of *Lyric Philosophy* to elucidate the book’s construction and organization: their genesis, *raison d’être*, and effect. Lee shows—proves, even—that in the overarching contrapuntal/binary nature of *Lyric Philosophy* “Zwicky has devised an original medium for philosophic thinking.” Goulet’s “Reading *This*ness” takes a different tack, placing one ostensibly tiny element of both *Lyric Philosophy* and *Wisdom and Metaphor* under the microscope. In her dissection of Zwicky’s use of the dash—its many and precise variations—Goulet stumbles onto a realization: Zwicky’s choice of dashes, like a cabinetmaker’s meticulous choice of hinges, is a manifestation of attention (appropriate and necessary) to the functioning of a work. Both Lee and Goulet articulate the extent to which Zwicky is devoted to clarity—of word but also of form—in broad stroke and in detail.

Several essays in *Lyric Philosophy* serve as introductions to fields of knowledge that inform Zwicky’s work. For example, Gordon Johnson’s “Dust in Sunlight” illuminates her Beethoven poems, addressing subtleties lost on those of us not schooled in the biography and peculiarities of that composer. Carolyn Richardson’s “Talk About Talk” is partly a primer on analytic philosophy, which helps us understand her broader reflections on how and why Zwicky’s voice necessarily troubles the waters of that school.

Teachers of creative writing could benefit from reading one of *Lyric Ecology*’s best examples of “applied” Zwicky. In his essay “Why I Teach Jan



Zwicky," H. L. Hix describes a writing course that draws from Zwicky's arguments for analytic *and* lyric philosophy. He advocates sagely for both skill and oracularity in poetry writing, and for conceiving of poetry as something that goes beyond "literature."

In "The Back-Stretched Connection," coeditor Mark Dickinson notes that Zwicky keeps "the details of her personal life and the stories behind her ideas away from the public." With minimal deviation from this desire for privacy, and with sensitivity, *Lyric Ecology* still manages to bring Jan-Zwicky-the-Person to life. Two contributors (a former teacher and a former student) excel. Christopher Wiseman's "The Unforgettable Teenager" recounts Zwicky's presence in the first-ever creative writing class at the University of Calgary. Charles Barbour studied philosophy with Zwicky in her early days of teaching. In his aptly titled "Echoes of the Ardent Voice," Barbour shares the profound influence Zwicky has had on his thinking and life.

In *Lyric Ecology*, where resonance in content and structure is palpable, there are also lamentable silences. One I will simply note: except for a brief quote in the editors' preface, Don McKay does not speak. Another silence I will expand upon. In 2003, JackPine Press published a book in limited edition—*Contemplation and Resistance: A Conversation*—a correspondence-based exchange between Zwicky and Tim Lilburn. It long ago sold out. Comprising 11.5 double leaves, this short volume is a distillation of Zwicky/Lilburn thinking that is itself a coherent, resonant whole. *Lyric Ecology* includes less than half (the first) of *Contemplation and Resistance*. Whether this omission is owing to reprint rights issues or to an editorial decision is unclear. Whatever the case, it creates a rare point of dissonance in the book and prolongs limited accessibility to an important piece of Zwicky's (and Lilburn's) work.

But these misses are minor, relative to the overall success of *Lyric Ecology*. Reading it

reminded me of a colleague's comment to a university class on the fundamentals of thinking and writing about literature. Specifically about collections of poetry, Jeremy Leiper said, "Don't imagine that when you close the book, nothing's going on. Those poems continue talking with one another." Likewise, in *Lyric Ecology* there ensues a conversation between its twenty-six contributors: appreciative, yes, but also informed, inspired, stimulating, good-willed (if not always in accord), new ideas seeding and forming. And now a twenty-seventh person has joined the conversation in my personal copy of *Lyric Ecology*, which is pencilled with commentary, questions, and the graphic equivalents of furrowed brow, excitement and insight.

**MELANIE BOYD** is an academic librarian and a poet. Her home is in southwest Saskatchewan—in the spectacular valley of the Frenchman River. She also lives in Alberta, where she works at the University of Calgary. Her poems appear in Canadian literary journals.

---

### ***One Crow Sorrow* by LISA MARTIN-DEMOOR**

Brindle and Glass, 2008 \$18.95

Reviewed by **GINA GRANTER**

The children's rhyme from which Lisa Martin-DeMoor's debut full-length poetry collection takes its name illustrates the symbolic value that humans seek from the natural world. The first two lines of the counting rhyme form the epigraph of *One Crow Sorrow*: "One crow sorrow / two crows joy." In this simple children's verse, the human penchant for binaries, the swing between one entity and its opposite, is revealed. This is an appropriate opening to a work that explores the dualisms of life and death, presence and absence, love and grief, and the

tenuous divisions between them. These explorations are tied inextricably with the natural world to which humans have always turned for meaning and metaphor. While the symbolism of crows in the counting rhyme underscores the arbitrariness of humans' compulsion to see order in nature, under Martin-DeMoor's care the relationships between emotions, anatomy, animals, and landscape are intuitive, painful, and beautiful. This collection of poems is an elegant and visceral meditation on love, loss, and the simultaneous terror and beauty of mortality.

"Memory at its finest lacks corroboration," begins one of the collection's strongest poems, "Durum wheat." The negotiation between the actual event and the one seated in the memory is one with which the speaker of this poem struggles, preferring the latter for its intermingling of the human heart and imagination with the past. Recollections move from past to present tense, as in "Things to remember," in which the speaker grapples with the notion of faith. Later, in other poems, she asks, "What does it matter if I call it grief / or memory?" and calls grief her "imaginary friend," the thing which cannot be seen by others. Yet grief is so physical in these poems as well. Loss, the speaker says, "is a substance," and the heart gives material presence to mourning. In "Phase change," in which the transition of the seasons challenges the grieving speaker, the heart is "like the rain barrel / you found split open last year / when the rain inside it froze." In "Heart," it is a caged animal holding the speaker hostage, causing her "to wear a groove in the living room carpet" while staying up all night. Grooves, imprints, and scars are recurring images in these poems as well, whether they are on a landscape, on a human body, or in the memory. The Rockies are a scar on the land; the pacing of a praying father wears a spot in the floor; an airplane-shaped scar on a twin sister's chin causes the speaker in "Blood" to wonder "where these scars might take us." In Martin-DeMoor's landscapes of

grief, scars give presence to absence: the evidence of the event long past, or the loss literally marked by the movement of the mourner.

For these poems, the human body is a landscape or ecosystem, even a universe. In "Evicted," the speaker's father is turned out from his own body, destroyed from the inside by an "other will" that is stronger than his own. The sparse, one-word line "Cowbird" is a rich metaphor for the invading disease, naming the parasitic bird that lays its eggs in other birds' nests and watches its young flourish while those of the host starve. In "Pathology," the speaker's mother's disease is described as a "cosmos inside," "whole orchards" of cells growing and replicating zealously. The strangely beautiful images are disrupted by the presence of "Marines," "the neurosurgeon," and "lasers," whose presence suggest the institutional and technological means of destroying the overabundance of life threatening the life of the mother. These poems, which appear early in the collection, remind the reader that disease is a part of nature, the struggle between two entities for survival in an ecosystem. This does not mean that the speaker understands or forgives the lives that took those of her parents, or accepts her parents' deaths as simply the natural order of things, but there is a presence of wonder in her contemplation of these morbid events that reveals astounding maturity and reflection.

Readers of Martin-DeMoor's collection will not leave the final pages of this book feeling grim: there is an overwhelming emphasis on love which is, ultimately, the root of grief. Love underscores the impermanence of human life, the persistence of memory, and the fierce beauty of the ephemeral. About her mother's love, the speaker in "Summer after" says, "Her love was as fleeting as moth-wings in July, as unending / as hill-side in Ireland at dusk where I long to find / her preserved footprint, in dust. A fine, five-leafed clover." This beautiful paradox is a perfect

emblem of a poetry collection that warrants multiple readings and attention to future work by this poet.

**GINA GRANTER** is a PhD Candidate in the Department of English at Memorial University of Newfoundland and an instructor at Dawson College in Montreal.

---

***Out of the Earth: Ecocritical Readings of Irish Texts*** edited by **CHRISTINE CUSICK**  
Cork UP, 39 euros.

Reviewed by **HARRY VANDERVLIST**

Colonized, then sentimentalized and commodified perhaps as much as any place on earth can be, Ireland has of course been written, painted, and sung about in manifold ways. What the essays collected in *Out of the Earth* begin to demonstrate is just how much Irish writing of the last century or so has been “strongly oriented to nature,” as John Elder puts it in his introduction. This volume’s eleven chapters span a wide range of Irish writing: fiction from George Moore to Roddy Doyle and Edna O’Brien, poetry from Michael Longley to Paula Meehan, and drama from Synge’s *Riders to the Sea* to McDonagh’s *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. Eóin Flannery contributes a study of colonial and touristic travel posters. A concluding interview with Tim Robinson widens the volume’s scope to include this fascinating figure whose work combines cartography, local history, and prose in works such as *The Stones of Aran* and *Connemara: Listening to the Wind*. The material discussed may be Irish, but most of the contributors are American, writing mainly from colleges and state universities (does this say anything about the kinds of places where ecocritical writing has found the warmest welcome so far?)

Several of the essays connect ecocritical

with postcolonial themes in relation to the history of representations of Ireland. As John Elder describes it, such “affinities between ecocritical concerns and current approaches in postcolonial studies” suggest “a literary turning in which the appreciation of more lyrical forms of ‘nature writing’ has been balanced by an emphasis on environmental justice.” From George Moore’s “untilled fields” in the years after the famine to the more recent spectre of industrial pollution and suburban sprawl in the “Celtic Tiger” years, the land is always at stake in these discussions.

Three of the essays on more recent writing articulate a strong sense of interconnectedness, or dissolution of boundaries, between the human and the nonhuman. Donna Potts suggests that “while Michael Longley’s emphasis on interconnectedness obviously suggests an alternative to Northern Ireland’s legacy of sectarian violence, his frequent references to biological interconnectedness suggest that along with his need to traverse social, cultural and political boundaries is the need to challenge the boundaries traditionally posited between self and nature.” Karen O’Brien argues that “the representational and structural strategies in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* activate interconnectedness in a way that resonates with the promise of strengthening ecological bonds between the human and nonhuman world and of promoting an overall engagement with issues of environmental sustainability and equilibrium.” Finally, in “‘Becoming Animal’ in the novels of Edna O’Brien,” Maureen O’Connor writes that in her late novels “O’Brien not only confronts but transcends what can be a problematic ‘feminisation’ of the ‘other’ by fusing man, woman and animal in the narratives’ most affecting moments of grace, however fleeting they prove to be.”

Even though ecocriticism now has at least a thirty-year history, occasionally an essay in this collection slips back into terminologies and usages which are being redefined and analyzed

anew elsewhere in the same volume. In such cases, terms such as “natural beauty” or “traditional cultures” come trailing clouds of the very ideologies and mystifications such a collection aims to defeat. Fortunately, this happens rarely. The instance I refer to here comes at the end of an otherwise illuminating and worthwhile analysis of the child’s-eye view of disappearing open spaces in Roddy Doyle’s *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*. It is in the conclusion of this chapter that Miriam O’Kane Mara seems to revert to an uncritical use of terminology when she writes: “The wheels of progress turn quickly and problematically in Paddy Clarke’s world to erase all vestige of Ireland’s natural beauty and its traditional culture.” Is this the same “natural beauty” framed and sentimentalized by generations of colonizing landscape painters and, later, tourism promoters?

While most of the texts studied here employ recognized genres—the lyric, the drama, the novel, or the short story—Tim Robinson’s work offers an inventive blend of mapping, oral history, and literary creation which yields what the Irish poet Moya Cannon calls an “interface between language and landscape.” In the interview included here, Robinson is astute in recognizing that no matter how directly and sensuously he interacts with the Irish places, or “echospheres,” he evokes, only “prose, and prose at length, recursive and excursive” can “act out the building-up of the overarching, underpinning, encircling, realities of sky, land and sea out of uncountable glints of detail.” For Robinson, only extended prose can communicate these “places that are at once deeply humanised and richly natural.” While the essays in this collection offer several valuable looks back at the ways Irish texts have engaged with nature, in the redefined senses that ecocriticism confers that term, Robinson offers an inventive and inspiring look forward.

**HARRY VANDERVLIST** teaches at the University of

Calgary.

---

## Northern British Columbia Exposure

*North of Iskut: Grizzlies, Bannock and Adventure*

by **TOR FORSBERG**

Caitlin Press, 2010 \$24.95

Reviewed by **MICHA EDLICH**

“**S**urvival, *La Survivance*,” Margaret Atwood famously proclaimed in 1972, is the “central symbol for Canada” as well as “a multi-faceted and adaptable idea” that has been explored in a variety of genres as well as in multiple historical, ideological, and linguistic contexts. This important idea surfaces once again in the engaging memoir *North of Iskut: Grizzlies, Bannock and Adventure*, in which Tor Forsberg vividly describes a fall into an icy river with treacherous currents, close encounters with grizzly bears on three separate occasions, and several other brushes with death during a formative five-year period spent in a remote region of northern British Columbia in the 1970s. Indeed, some of the carefully crafted chapters in this life narrative are almost self-contained survival stories that highlight the seemingly myriad possibilities of, to use Atwood’s memorable phrase, “Death by Nature” for an enthusiastic wilderness novice and young visual artist such as Forsberg.

While the entertaining accounts of harrowing situations and survival in the sparsely populated Iskut area represent a considerable part of the text, the autobiographical project undertaken by Forsberg in *North of Iskut* is more nuanced and complex than the straightforward subtitle suggests, in part because she also offers her idiosyncratic spin on several other patterns that Atwood identifies in *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Forsberg, for

instance, explores her gradually evolving and often highly ambivalent attitude toward animals, thereby also charting her own personal development and spiritual growth during her time in the bush. Physically and emotionally engaging with animals—wild, domestic, or feral—as well as with closely related cultural traditions and material practices such as hunting or trapping, Forsberg not only acquires the knowledge and practical skills needed to survive in the wilderness of northern British Columbia, but is also forced to interrogate her own identity and to reassess her relationship to and ethical stance vis-à-vis animals in particular and the more-than-human world in general.

The result of this rather uneven and often adventurous process is a profound and permanent change of perspective, as a slight sense of alienation gradually gives way to an almost visceral affective connection to a unique place. This development also leads to a not truly surprising, but nonetheless highly significant insight: “we are,” as Forsberg puts it the prologue, “all interrelated.” Perhaps she comes nowhere closer to fully experiencing “interdependency” than in her own version of a vision quest, or, for that matter, in one of the many instances of survival. The land, “that wild and glorious country,” truly is a “stern teacher” that does not merely teach but forcefully demands “self-sufficiency” as well as self-reliance from a self-proclaimed “amateur” or “dilettante” like Forsberg.

These two latter designations are somewhat self-deprecating overstatements on her part, and yet they also suggest, on the one hand, Forsberg’s humorous forthrightness, a trait reflected in her brisk, unadorned prose, and, on the other, her position as an outsider. Despite her childhood in Watson Lake, Yukon, and her commitment to the mores of the small community in the Iskut area, Forsberg, an aspiring artist with voracious cosmopolitan or even countercultural interests and with a strong

predilection for solitude, remains slightly detached from her social environment. It is an aloofness, however, that is never absolute, and *North of Iskut* often also functions as a sometimes wistful and apologetic, but always heartfelt, tribute to this community and its quirky members. Reading the endearing biographical portraits of individuals such as Lynch Callison, Verna Bailey, or Lorraine “Lorri” Charette can be at least as enjoyable as following Forsberg’s account of her “spiritual overhaul” and what could perhaps be described as her autobiographical *Künstlerroman*. It is somewhat unfortunate that she repeatedly mentions her ongoing work and aspirations as an artist without ever fully elaborating on her ideas, development, and insights in these respects. Longer reflections concerning these aspects certainly would have made this memoir even more nuanced than it already is and provided yet another welcome variation on, to return to Atwood, the theme of the artist in Canadian literatures. That said, *North of Iskut* captures only a slim slice of a long and eventful life, so there is considerable hope that Forsberg will, in the near future, turn to her past again in order to write an equally inspiring sequel to her promising literary debut.

**MICHA EDLICH** is a PhD student in the American studies program at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität in Mainz, Germany.

---

***Engendering Genre: The Works of Margaret Atwood* by REINGARD M. NISCHIK**

U of Ottawa P, 2009 \$34.95

Reviewed by **JILL E. ANDERSON**

**F**rom Margaret Atwood’s beginnings as a protofeminist poet and illustrator of *Double Persephone* and *Power Politics* to her environmental concerns in 2003’s *Oryx and Crake*

and revision of classic mythology in 2005's *The Penelopiad*, Atwood has proven herself a master of various literary genres. The range and depth of Margaret Atwood's literary and artistic work deserves a thorough study such as Reingard Nischik's. Covering the thematic and generic assortment of Atwood's work, Nischik lays before readers the spread of Atwood's talent from her first poetry collection, *Double Persephone*, published in 1961, through Atwood's poetry, novels, short stories and essays, film adaptations (both aborted and produced), criticism, illustrations, and cartoons. As Nischik repeatedly reminds us in *Engendering Genre*, critics have largely ignored many of Margaret Atwood's creations, in a variety of genres and modes. Nischik's work then has two primary goals: first, to examine the concept of "engendering genre," which Nischik explains is the way genre and gender intersect, and to "simply refer to a foregrounding of gender in a specific generic format"; and second, to recover some of Atwood's overlooked work not just for the sake of future Atwood criticism at large but also for the sake of contributing to and expanding gender studies in Atwood's work. Each genre in which Atwood writes presents varying challenges to what Nischik labels her "poetic of inversion": "her technique of undermining conventional thought patterns, attitudes, values, or textual norms by turning them on their heads." That is, specific literary conventions present specific boundaries that Atwood can shatter with the help of her gender politics (and vice versa). Nischik illustrates repeatedly that Atwood's deconstruction and manipulation of gender and genre cannot be easily categorized. Some of the ways in which Atwood uses genre and gender are to "contest conventions of any kind—be they social systems of hierarchical orders or literary conventions of genre. Her subversion and transgression of generic boundaries as well as deeply ingrained gender images and prejudices, work together in a sometimes unsettling but often humorous and

always liberating manner."

Nischik's exploration of the concept of "mind style" reveals her own ability to layer on multiple levels of analysis, which she applies to her study of Atwood's novels. It is in this chapter that Nischik displays her nuanced approach to what are often Atwood's most analyzed (and sometimes overanalyzed) works. Using the scope of "nomenclatural mutations," Nischik illustrates the asymmetrical forms of address that go into the dialogue and mind style of Atwood's characters. In the case of *The Edible Woman*, Atwood's first novel, Nischik carefully and explicitly shows how characters' verbal references to each other, particularly Peter's toward Marian's, reveal the "quality and development of their relationship, their attitudes toward each other, and how they conceive of their roles in their relationship." Picking out moments in the novel in which Peter addresses Marian and vice versa, Nischik shows that the evolution of the relationship is deeply ingrained in gender politics of the 1960s. Peter's "dear"s and "darling"s, used only after the couple becomes engaged, are representative of his need to diminish Marian; when her behaviour becomes unconventional (that is, she stops acting like proper 1960s housewife material), she becomes unnamed in a way. Atwood's female characters "shrewdly observe sexist tendencies, sensibly analyze and verbalize them, and speak out against the implied negative stereotyping of women," which uncovers the gendered forms of address that seek to explicitly undo gender conventions in Atwood's novels.

Nischik is not intimidated by the hugeness and range of Atwood's oeuvre, and she shows her strength particularly in discussing the visual aspects of Atwood's work. On that note, perhaps the most effective and carefully plotted chapter is the longest one in the book, entitled "Survivalwoman, Survivalcreature, Womanwoman: Atwood as Cartoonist." Providing a short synopsis on the history of cartoons and

comics in the United States and Canada, Nischik lays the groundwork for illustrating the conventions with which Atwood is playing in her cartoons—the Americanized superhero (i.e., Superman), the behaviour and politics of the feminist movement, and the particular Canadian-ness of the cartoon’s “superhero”/victim, Survivalwoman. Atwood’s cartoons called “Survivalwoman” appeared in *Kanadian Kultchur Komix* in *This Magazine* in the 1970s. They featured a woman resembling Atwood as the “superhero” without any powers. She represented “a double powerlessness—as a Canadian and a woman.” It is also in this chapter that Nischik most thoroughly examines the angle of Canada-United States relations in Atwood’s work. Survivalwoman is an obvious parody of Superman, and, according to Nischik, she operates under tenets introduced in Atwood’s *Survival*, the 1972 study of Canadian literature. In it, Atwood argues for the different stages of victimization, Position Three being “to acknowledge the fact that you are a victim but to refuse to accept the assumption that the role is inevitable.” Survivalwoman as a character represents a critique of the Feminist Movement and Canada’s postcolonial position (Frye’s “garrison mentality”), while the cartoon itself is yet another means for Atwood to upset convention. While Nischik concedes that Atwood’s drawing might not live up to professional standards, she sees Atwood’s combination of political satire and comic conventions as her strength.

Overall, Nischik is making important and useful connections between gender and genre in Atwood’s work, laying the ground for future critics interested in these subjects. Nischik covers a lot of terrain here; each chapter could easily turn into a separate book in and of itself, with all her nuances and complexities included. And while I think she sometimes has to sacrifice *some* detail for scope of her work, Nischik’s strength is in the minutiae and in her close reading. This is what

Atwood scholarship needs now, and Nischik provides a strong framework for anyone interested in Atwood scholarship, whether one is just starting out or an experienced scholar.

**JILL E. ANDERSON** is a PhD candidate at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi.

---

## Bodies, Places, Histories

*Sensing Changes: Technologies, Environments, and the Everyday, 1953–2003* by **JOY PARR**  
UBC Press, 2010 \$32.95

Reviewed by **ROSEMARY-CLAIRE COLLARD**

**A**t the heart of Joy Parr’s *Sensing Changes*, a collection of six post-WWII case studies of Canadian landscape change, is a commitment to reinvigorating historical analysis through attention to the role of the body as an archive of experience and knowledge. These “embodied histories” towards which Parr works, building on ideas by Bourdieu and others, are histories that acknowledge the ways bodies not only are conditioned by temporal and spatial circumstance, but also act as reservoirs of past practice. By considering diverse modes of sensory awareness and how this awareness is intimately bound to place, Parr aims to reclaim forgotten embodied histories. In her book, technology, place, time, and bodies are co-constituted. Rather than being static forms or arrangements, they unfold unevenly, shaping and being shaped by each other. In each case study, Parr fleshes out how sensing bodies and changing environments are “mutually remade,” and bodies’ past configurations condition their subsequent responses. Only by observing everyday sensory exchanges between bodies and places, she says, can we tell embodied histories.

Parr’s six case studies are topically diverse



and range across Canadian provinces and the second half of the twentieth century: military base construction in New Brunswick in the 1950s; nuclear power development in Ontario in the 1960s–1990s; dredging the St. Lawrence Seaway in Ontario in the 1950s; the damming of the Columbia River in British Columbia in the 1950s and 60s; the production of “heavy water” in Ontario in the second half of the 1900s; and the *E. coli* water contamination in Waterton, Ontario, at the turn of the millennium. What unites all of the cases is a central theme of changing environments and an emphasis on how environmental change is registered on a bodily level. Parr maintains an acute consciousness throughout the book of how people’s attachment to place is expressed through and mediated by their sensory perception and physical being. Bodies, she argues, “are the instruments through which we become aware of the world..., the archives in which we store that knowledge and the laboratories in which we retool our senses to changing circumstances.” The megaprojects that Parr observes in *Sensing Changes* are experienced through the body, bodies that in turn use the senses to gather and store knowledge learned by being in new environments, and bodies whose senses reciprocally change and adapt in response to that situated knowledge.

In each case study, drawing on extensive, detailed, and rigorous archival research, Parr narrates people’s everyday relationships with their homes, communities, and environments, and then how these relationships are turned upside down as a result of large-scale environmental change. Parr carefully traces the aftermath of this upheaval, when people’s bodies gradually adapt to new technological and environmental forms. The adaptation process is not smooth, however, and Parr consistently demonstrates the irreversibility of the changes she documents. Many individuals featured in her embodied histories experience a change in livelihood, and even a change in their relationship

with their communities, friends, and families, due to their displacement. These displacements engender physiological and psychological stress, and profoundly reconfigure people’s embodied interactions with their environments.

The embodied histories related in *Sensing Changes* all revolve, then, around people who experience “transformations in their bodily archives of knowledge.” These transformations occur through the senses, “conduits through which knowledge of technology and the environment flow.” The senses play a significant role in Parr’s historical analysis, and she is unfailingly alert to more than just the visual. Other senses, such as sound, and particularly smell, are recurring themes in the book. Chapter six, which documents the installation and maintenance of a heavy water production facility on Lake Huron, discusses smell’s “starring role” in an environment where danger or safety are indicated odourously. The “industrial smellscape”—primarily hydrogen sulphide gas, which smells like rotten eggs—that accompanied the heavy water plant came to be how the community was deemed safe (or not) and how local knowledge of a modern technology was made. These olfactory knowledges lead Parr to conclude that “there is more than meets the eye in environmental histories and histories and technology.” Historians should therefore not only engage with the senses as bodily archives, but also broaden the spectrum of senses beyond sight, to account for non-visual knowledges.

The book’s strength and greatest contribution lie in its meticulous attention to embodied habitation, to the inseparable psychological and corporeal relationships people have with the environment in which they live. These multi-sensory relationships are demonstrated in the extensive collection of quotes amassed by Parr. In addition, the book is accompanied by an online series of new media projects by Parr and her collaborator, Jon van der Veer. The Megaprojects New Media series aims

to provide a “more coherent, sensuous, and memorable reclamation of experience than is possible through textual representation” of the stories and events retold by Parr in *Sensing Changes*. Each case study has a corresponding new media project, complete with photos and audio and video recordings. The new media work ensures that Parr’s book will be a valuable teaching tool and resource for researchers in the humanities and social sciences alike, particularly those with a geographical or historical interest in the embodied links between place and sense of self.

**ROSEMARY-CLAIRE COLLARD** is a PhD student in geography at the University of British Columbia, where she studies the economics, politics, and ethics of humans’ relationships with other animals.

---

### ***The Annotated Bee & Me* by TIM BOWLING**

Gaspereau, 2010 \$18.95

Reviewed by **ANNE SIMPSON**

This spring, after I returned to Nova Scotia after being away for nine months, I couldn’t see any activity around the beehive on a ridge above our garden. I walked up past the bayberry bushes and reluctantly took the cover off the hive. The frames were empty, except for a scattering of ants. A subtle fragrance—from the crusted beeswax and remnants of honey—wafted up from the hive: disheartened, I stood with the cover in my hands, gazing down the slope to our house and the estuary beyond.

A few weeks later, a small packet arrived in the mail, as if to assuage my sense of loss: Tim Bowling’s beautifully designed *The Annotated Bee & Me*. When I asked to review it, I didn’t

realize that it would be a collection of poems that incorporated fragments from a sixties-era chapbook, “The Bee and Me,” written for family by Bowling’s Great Aunt Gladys Muttart. Her story of beekeeping in Edmonton in the first quarter of the twentieth century forms the heart of a book in which family history is enlarged upon by Bowling’s poetry. He makes a complex hive, not a family tree, out of the original story. And his poems situate us in the present while giving us a narrative tether to the time and place of the Muttarts; we have a sense of something growing, one honeycomb upon another, through the accretion of poems.

A prologue, “Propolis,” could be read as a poem as Bowling relates how he found the chapbook on an “oyster-coloured day not so many years ago.” So begins the once-upon-a-time of *The Annotated Bee & Me*, which has the effect of appearing to be a conversation between two members of the same family. Now and then Muttart’s bits of prose, with their animated chattiness, have a poetic touch: “Mother had managed to get a swarm of bees into a hive and Grandfather, a cabinetmaker by trade, built a case for them which looked just like a suitcase.” Off they go by train from Ontario to Alberta, terrifying the porter with their luggage.

In the first section of the book, Bowling’s poems arise naturally out of Muttart’s narrative; this strategy has more in common with counterpoint than annotation. It sustains the dynamic between the prose of Gladys Muttart, the dead matriarch, and the poetry of Tim Bowling, her descendant, himself a parent. As if superimposing a transparency of the future over the picture of the past, Bowling’s poems are never merely nostalgic. In “Frank, Father, Jack, Mother, and Will, Stratford Ontario,” the white hive boxes are also tombs, “for Will must fall / in the trenches, and Susannah / who almost died from being stung / from head to toe, must put on / a necklace of dead bees.” Occasionally, the tension of the poetry slackens, as when the

details of family lore give way to contemporary complaint: “global warming, rent-collecting, West Nile Virus, / East Yangtze Bacteria, condo-developing, schoolyard / bullying, carpal tunnel syndrome, terrorist attacking.” Yet in “Wintering,” the world is transformed into the thickened, sticky stuff of nightmare: “you die in the sweet walls / of the grave no one has dug.”

The best poems in this collection balance narrative and lyric with ease. “Reading, Equinox” explores a large field—what the past can reveal to the present, and how it calls it to account—but it does so without forfeiting sensuous details: “I lower my head to the pages, breathe in / the smell of rainy sidewalk, dew on grass / rotting pear, a line-dried pillowcase.” Not only do images glisten in these poems, voices with familiar inflections come to us as if from the next room. They could be neighbours or relatives: we overhear their conversations. That’s the point—Bowling brings us into the hive of his making and allows us to listen. We’re compelled to measure what’s been gained and what’s been lost. Like him, we find ourselves standing under a full moon in the back yard, “plunged in the dark / of the earth like a shovel.”

**ANNE SIMPSON**’s most recent book is *The Marram Grass: Poetry and Otherness*.

---

### “The fault is but in ourselves”

**Solar** by **IAN McEWAN**  
Knopf, 2010 \$32.00

Reviewed by **AFRA KAVANAGH**

Ian McEwan is an observer of the contemporary scene writing about the inner and the outer lives of his characters. In *Solar*, he uses Michael Beard, Nobel laureate, to draw a picture of the modern hollow man and illustrate the

social and physical problems we face today. Beard and the government officials, scientists, and businessmen he deals with all reveal this hollowness in their actions and inaction. Beard is embarking on an enterprise in climate control, but this is a man who is not smart enough to keep his penis tucked into his snow suit! He manages to freeze it when he tries to relieve himself in the sub-freezing Arctic outdoors. In *Solar*, with characters like Beard, McEwan delivers a more misanthropic, a more acerbic novel than usual. He constructs, with a sensuous satiric bite, a comic plot that revolves around human fallibility and its tragic consequences.

In past novels, McEwan poses antagonists against his basically good and thoughtful protagonists; for example, in both *Enduring Love* and *Saturday*, the secondary character, an obsessive or a criminal, invades the home or life of the main character bringing along an ugly reality. *Solar*, which reads like the rest of McEwan’s works—well-developed, engaging, and with off-kilter characters—is different from them; it has no sympathetic or heroic characters with whom we can identify. Instead, we feel superior to his characters. McEwan uses such characters and elicits these reader attitudes to deliver a satirical novel in which no one escapes the dunce cap!

McEwan satirizes human frailty in *Solar*. He shows people who don’t seem to know any better, and don’t have the strength to withstand temptation, but are not malignant or intentionally cruel. However, in the face of the threat to the world’s equilibrium, its very existence even, they do nothing. They stand by, preoccupied with their own selfish needs. Readers of this wonderfully humorous narrative are given something to laugh about, that, ironically, is the very thing we should grieve over: the possibility that science, government, and business are conspiring to hoodwink taxpayers, while also doing nothing. They spend millions to solicit responses—not solutions—from the most unlikely sources, to the

dramatic changes in weather caused by accelerating industrialization, population growth, and over-consumption of natural resources.

Beard is guilty of gluttony, sloth, adultery, and selfishness, and a few more of the old-fashioned sins identified in the Ten Commandments. His best work behind him, Beard has not bothered to become familiar with new scientific theory. His lifestyle requires a greater income than what his teaching job and several other sources supply him with, and he is now “always on the lookout for an official role with a stipend attached.” Fortunately for him, “the Blair government wished to be, or appear to be...engaged with climate change and announced a number of initiatives.” He is invited by the government to oversee a new centre for renewable energy that is controlled by the cabinet minister’s man, and staffed by several brilliant and “pony-tailed” theoretical physicists who have no experience in industry or business. Beard and this band of frauds are the people who will select proposals for new and sustainable ways to heat and light England.

Beard himself gets hold (fraudulently, we might note) of what appears to be a very good set of calculations for an alternative source of energy. He acquires a business partner who sells the idea to investors in America, and work on it begins. Beard travels back and forth between America and England and has a romance on either side of the ocean. The inadequacy of the love and life habits of this modern man, his shallowness, deceit, and self-indulgence, erode all of his relationships, while his greed and dishonesty destroy his credibility in the world of work.

As the novel builds towards a climax, Beard, unthinkingly, like many others (like us, the novel whispers), stumbles forward through the first decade of the twenty-first century. As can be expected, his several worlds collide, resulting in a shattering of his plans and relationships. On the final page of the novel, he watches his world crumble as if from another plane(t), incapable of

interpreting what is in front of his eyes.

McEwan, we are told, revised the novel he was already working on when he learned about the inability of the governments of the industrialized West to agree to any positive actions to slow down global warming, and as a result, begins *Solar* with the following quote from Updike’s *Rabbit is Rich*: “It gives him pleasure, makes Rabbit feel rich, to contemplate the world’s wasting, to know the earth is mortal too.” Readers cannot help but ask themselves about the kind of fool Rabbit is, Beard is. This novel shows us, sometimes with bemusement and other times with horror, the bleakness of a future controlled by fools—fools with superior intellectual ability or enormous political power. McEwan writes about human weaknesses and their tragic consequences, and at the centre of this particular “tragedy” he places a buffoon. By addressing the biggest crisis of our time and our failure to deal with it as a “comedy,” he invites us to contemplate the terrifying truth that we don’t need villains; we “mortal fools” are quite capable of destroying the environment ourselves by simple inaction. McEwan also invites us to consider that, defying Eliot’s prophecy, our world will end, both with a bang—the failure of government and big business to save the world from global warming—and then with a whimper, as Beard’s private and public worlds collapse in an ending reminiscent in its irony of the last scene in Kubrick’s film with the telling title, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*.

**AFRA KAVANAGH** is a professor in English at Cape Breton University.

---

## **Alissa York’s Urban Wilderness**

***Fauna* by ALISSA YORK**

Harper Collins, 2010 \$29.95

Readers familiar with Alissa York's first two novels, *Mercy* (2003) and the Giller Prize-nominated *Effigy* (2007), will likely be unsurprised that the title of her first novel set in an urban space is *Fauna* (2010). Whether York is describing the small-town life of a family of butchers or a polygamist Mormon household of an avid hunter, animals are always at the centre of her novels. *Fauna* is the story of various strays and predators, human and nonhuman, whose lives intertwine at a junkyard near the Don Valley in Toronto. Juxtaposing social wreckage with the accumulation of consumer waste, *Fauna* brings together the stories of a motley crew of solitary wanderers, many of whom are emotionally, economically, or ecologically vulnerable.

The novel opens with the description of Canadian Wildlife Officer Edal's recent breakdown, brought about by a troubling event at Pearson International Airport where she was called to respond to an incident of animal trafficking in which an elderly woman was caught transporting four hundred juvenile Indian star tortoises concealed in egg cartons in her luggage. Eventually Edal follows a young girl in the Don Valley to an urban junkyard-cum-sanctuary for orphaned creatures, human and nonhuman, Howell's Auto Wreckers, where a rich array of characters meet in order to sort out the wreckage of their lives.

*Fauna* is a novel about collisions, social, technological, and ecological. York's choice of Toronto's Don Valley as the location for much of the action in the novel allows her to adopt the wide-ranging points of view of the human and nonhuman animals who inhabit it. Writing about the borderlands between wild and urban areas is a rich literary strategy, as the places where two different habitats meet are often rich in biodiversity. This is not to say that these juxtapositions are idyllic.

One of the literal collisions in the novel takes place between birds navigating the night skies and downtown Toronto's luminous skyscrapers: the lights draw migrating birds, who then frequently die from flying into the buildings. The dead birds are gathered by the aptly named "Lily" of the Don Valley, a homeless youth who attempts to rehabilitate those that survive at Howell's Auto Wreckers.

Lily also collects the bodies of the birds that do not survive the collisions, and York's novel addresses the memorializing of deceased animals, a theme explored in her previous novel, *Effigy*, which described the reanimation of hunted animals through taxidermy. The birds in *Fauna*, however, are given a burial in the garden at Howell's, and each grave is marked with a salvaged hubcap from the wreckage housed at the junkyard.

Other human and nonhuman animals spend time recovering at Howell's, including Stephen, a returned soldier from Afghanistan. After witnessing the death of an adult female raccoon who is hit by a minivan, Stephen finds her orphaned young and takes them home with the intention of eventually setting them free. Likewise, Guy, the owner of Howell's and incidentally another orphaned figure in the novel, attempts to nurse a convalescing young hawk back to health.

The orphan motif is a common strategy for generating affect in films about animals (Walt Disney adopted this profitable strategy frequently in his films such as *Bambi* [1942] and *Dumbo* [1941]), adapted from realistic wild animal stories written in the early twentieth century. According to wildlife film critic Derek Bousé, such motifs mobilize affect in order to make normative claims about human (nuclear) family values. Furthermore, he argues, such motifs frame an individual animal's survival in terms of the "fitness" of the animal's parents instead of focusing on predation or other natural processes. York's novel revives some of these narrative

strategies but to a different end. The novel is teeming with images of negligent human parents who are unable to care for their children. Edal's mother develops a hoarding problem that results in an unsafe home environment that resonates with the novel's emphasis on consumption and waste. The mother of the novel's antagonist, Darius, is likewise unfit to care for her son and he is sent to live with his grandparents after her untimely death. The resounding failure of human families in the novel reframes the portrayal of animal orphans and advocates an interspecies ethic of care between human and nonhuman animals.

The juxtaposition of Guy and Darius as orphans in the novel sets up an intriguing contrast between them. Whereas Guy is reared by supportive relatives, Darius is brought up by his grandmother and grandfather, the latter a spineless human predator (who literally has to tie himself to a board in order to stay upright) who terrorizes his wife and grandson. Darius enters the novel as a vigilante mounting an online effort to kill the coyotes living in the Don Valley at "coyotecop.blogmonster.com." He gruesomely kills a number of them, later posting pictures he's taken of the killings on his blog.

I am generally unconvinced by the inclusion of letters or journal entries in novels, as their status as fictional "real" documents tends to spoil the suspension of disbelief for me, but York is unusually talented at using them effectively. I was somewhat cynical about the inclusion of the blog entries at first, but they allow York to portray a socially isolated figure's troubling views about wildlife. Darius's violent extermination campaign is portrayed as a result of self-hatred of the highest order that connects with his personal history of feeling preyed upon by the adult humans in his life.

York's novel will be relevant to those with an interest in animal stories, as her characters frequently read texts like *Watership Down* (1972), *The Jungle Book* (1894), and Ernest Thompson

Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898). Readers familiar with Seton's fanciful stories about animals will likely be amused by Lily's choice words about Seton's oeuvre, which also sheds light on the historical resonance of York's novel. Many of Seton's stories in *Wild Animals I Have Known* were set in the Don Valley at the turn of the century. Even during Seton's own lifetime, however, this area succumbed to rapid urbanization. In returning to this part of the country, York documents the shift in representations of wildlife in the area and positions Toronto as a place that can be simultaneously registered as a wild space and as an urban space with a corresponding historical genealogy.

I remain convinced after having read *Fauna* that Alissa York is writing some of the best fiction about animals in Canada. Like the coyotes she describes in the novel, she is a kind of literary generalist, equally at home writing from the point of view of a hungry raccoon or an ambivalent Canadian Wildlife Services officer. Adeptly written to include urban and non-urban spaces and both the present and distant past, York's novel shows that the range of her talents is wide and capable of supporting her aesthetic commitments to representing nonhuman life.

**JOANNA DAWSON** is currently doing her graduate work at the University of Victoria.

---

### **Trauma Farm: A Rebel History of Rural Life** by **BRIAN BRETT**

Greystone, 2009 \$35.00

Reviewed by **LOUISE FABIANI**

**A** good garden is a farm in miniature. As a naturalist and environmentalist with a community garden plot on the island of Montreal, I feel this almost every time I visit our little patch of urban

green. I gauge the passing of the seasons. I've learned that the garden's microclimates depend on tree cover, the presence of low-lying plants, and soil type. I note how both diseases and pests (small and large) are horrifying one year, non-existent in others. The ecological balance, which consists of millions of vital factors, is constantly being recalibrated with each weather event, interference by humans or other animals, and the shift in the Earth's orientation towards the sun.

If we gardeners, like most gardeners everywhere, must acquire both conscious and subconscious awareness of the multiple variables that comprise a productive plot, consider the inside of a *farmer's* head. (And I am speaking of a real farmer, not a person who oversees a factory complex that happens to crank out what passes for human-grade foodstuffs these days.) He or she must set about learning many important things about equipment, weather, soil, animals and plants (domesticated and wild), and, of course, other people—because it is impossible to farm alone. After a decidedly deliberate education, the real knowledge starts pouring in, the material that kind of soaks in through the cells and deposits itself under the skin, where it lies for use later that afternoon or ten years down the line. That connection to the real world, where the only constant is change, may be the last link the modern citizen has to ancestral humans, who were deeply embedded in their environment in every sense.

Poet-farmer Brian Brett's latest book, *Trauma Farm*, is a testament to this disappearing way of life and way of *being*. Taking the form of an "eighteen-year day," he leads the reader through the nitty-gritty of his routine (roughly sketched, of course, since all those variables do not a strict routine make), births and deaths, the ups and downs of life on Salt Spring Island, and of course the many amazing creatures he has encountered in the quest to create food. Individual chapters pivot on subjects like seeds, bees, dogs, apples, livestock, and the value of

watching and paying attention. But along with each topic at hand, he packs in everything under the sun.

Salt Spring Island lies within the Gulf Islands, off the coast of British Columbia. Brett's farm has to deal with cloud-forest conditions, where "you'd swear the rain erupts from the ground." The mild temperatures allow him to farm almost all year—planting hardier crops during the winter, of course. As a mixed, organic farm, those crops must live in close quarters with livestock: sheep, pigs, horses, and chickens, not to mention peafowl, dogs, cats, and a host of wild animals from the surrounding woods.

As a small-scale enterprise, with deep affection for the animals he raises to kill for meat, Brett has plenty negative to say about factory-farming operations. These objections, made on the bases of ecological, social, and animal-welfare issues, are becoming more frequently voiced in the media. But it is important to hear the rationale (and emotional outrage) from someone on the frontlines, and not just a journalist with a fondness for locally grown beefsteak tomatoes.

Surprisingly, at least to this reader, Brett also disdains food "fetishes." He lumps vegetarianism in with an obsession with local food (mindless of the energy used in greenhouses, for example), or fad diets. It is not uncommon for country folk to associate a city person's "fussy" ethical and/or healthy eating practices with a reluctance to eat "naturally"—naturally being the way the farmer eats, of course. This boldfaces a major area of mutual misunderstanding, sad to say. His dismissal solves nothing.

Brett leavens his heavier opinions with a great deal of humour and rapturous prose. (He even adds a few of his quite lovely poems to the mix; no surprise he is a published poet, with island friends like Lorna Crozier and Patrick Lane.) Like many memoirs, in particular ones featuring the natural world, *lyrical* sums up the writing in *Trauma Farm* best of all.



Here he is on physical work as a form of prayer:

Cutting firewood, moving fluidly yet living inside the cave of the body, is a kinesthetic meditation. Every log holds the possibility of enlightenment—the moment the blade drives through, following the grain, splitting its linear universe. It's the poetry of the everyday, the kind those monks preach; the ability to find the extraordinary in ordinary life—like the wolf on the hunt, at perfect attention to the world.

However, there is little rhapsodic in the hard reality of farm life: most years, Brett and his wife barely scrape by (hence the farm's nickname). Although rich in food and experiences, they are cash-strapped, old-school back-to-the-landers in a world that relies on monster pig-farms and 1000-acre GMO corn plantations to feed a rapidly expanding world population.

The Slow Food movement and the trend towards more regional eating—that is, the mostly urban-centered backlash to all this globalization and mechanization—seems to be spreading. But it has more chance if the present stamp of elitism goes, and the gospel of real food gains more rural advocates.

*Trauma Farm* joins the struggle to regain a more Earth-centered eating philosophy.

**LOUISE FABIANI**, a Montreal science writer, naturalist, poet (*The Green Alembic*, Signal Editions) and critic, has a Master's in Environmental Studies from York University. (She studied with John A. Livingston, who died on Salt Spring Island in 2006.) One of her ongoing projects centres on the ecology of the human diet. <http://poetryandecology.blogspot.com/>

## ***Where the Wild Books Are: A Field Guide to Ecofiction* by JIM DWYER**

U of Nevada P, 2010 \$29.95

Reviewed by **MARIE-FRANCE BOISSONNEAULT**

Dwyer's *Where the Wild Books Are: A Field Guide to Ecofiction* is not a book that one would most likely read like a traditional work of fiction. But, like a good story, Dwyer keeps the reader captivated in learning about the vast array of available works of fiction that encompass ecological values. From Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis and Other Stories* (1915) to Carl Hiaasen's *Scat* (2009), Dwyer compiles an exceptional overview of close to 2000 nature-related literary titles that spans both time and space.

Dwyer reveals his criteria for inclusion as analogous to Lawrence Buell's definition of ecofiction: "1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history. 2. The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest. 3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation. 4. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text." This comprehensive definition of ecofiction allows Dwyer to delve into a vast array of thematic topics from the Native American works of Blackfoot James Welch (*Winter in The Blood*, 1974; *The Heartsong of the Charging Elk*, 2000), the general speculative fiction of Douglas Adams (*Hitchhiker's Quartet*, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1985) and Piers Anthony's omnivore series (*Omnivore*, 1968; *Orn*, 1971; *Ox*, 1976) to Connie May Fowler's ecoromance *Remembering Blue* (2000) or the mysteries of Sarah Andrews (*Mother Nature*, 1997; *Bone Hunter*, 1999, *Fault Line*, 2002).

*Where the Wild Books Are* provides an

excellent resource for both the environmentally savvy connoisseur and those new to the area of ecofiction. The book is accessible to a wide audience and Dwyer suggests his own interpretation of how to best use the book, and guides readers on the most effective way to find their own niche within its rich thematic foliage. The book is incredibly multifaceted: whether you are interested in a particular author, genre, or perhaps a specific country's contribution to the branch of literature known as ecofiction, Dwyer's *Where the Wild Books Are* is sure to guide you on a fruitful literary journey.

The first few chapters are a good starting point for readers that are new to the field. The rich yet concise description of the early roots of the genre of ecofiction provides the reader with the background of the literary history of the genre from the 1800s onward. Dwyer also imparts the readers with an explanation of what they can expect from each chapter. The style in which this book is written invites the reader to chart his or her own course. Dwyer does not constrain his audience to following the traditional route of starting at the first chapter and following through to the end, but rather entices the reader into jumping ahead and revisiting previous sections. The way in which Dwyer invites the reader to gain a new perspective of titles that they may have previously read and his analytical viewpoint and commentary equally encourage the reader to explore *Where the Wild Books Are* from multiple dimensions.

*Where the Wild Books Are* surveys fictional works that focus on philosophical and spiritual issues from Lauren Belfer's *City of Lights* (1999), to Edward Abbey's eco-defence novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975) and ecotopias as explored in the works of Ursula Le Guin, Ian Watson, Guy Dauncey, and Nance Van Winckel. When climbing through the many branches that Dwyer considers in ecofiction, there is no leaf left unturned, as each title discussed in the chapters is joined with a brief helpful summary that gives a

supportive impression of the fictional work.

Dwyer also gives the reader the opportunity to explore another side of authors which the reader may not have been aware of by including some lesser-known works by specific legendary authors. Many readers would most likely be familiar with the widely recognized works of Jack London such as *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906), but may not have knowledge of London's futuristic cautionary tale *The Scarlet Plague* (1915), which recounts the end of civilization. Not unlike London in this regard, Arthur Conan Doyle was best known for his Sherlock Holmes character, yet the author also created Professor Challenger from *The Lost World* (1911) and *The Poison Belt* (1912). A number of readers may also be familiar with Steinbeck's *The Pearl* (1947) from their high school English class. Still, Steinbeck's earlier work *The Red Pony* (1937) carries with it an equally important message about the value of respecting all living beings.

If you are unsure of where to feed your appetite for works of ecofiction, then this is definitely the book that will fulfil that hunger. *Where the Wild Books Are* is not only for those new to the field, but is equally a great resource for those wishing to develop course curricula or looking to expand their own knowledge of the genre. The analytic commentary on the popular works that Dwyer includes also encourages the reader to revisit some of these classical novels from a new critical outlook. Dwyer's *Where the Wild Books Are* offers a veritable cornucopia of literary fruit to satisfy any reader's narrative palate.

#### **MARIE-FRANCE BOISSONNEAULT**

([mfboiss@uoguelph.ca](mailto:mfboiss@uoguelph.ca)) is an Adjunct Professor at the Ontario Veterinary College in the University of Guelph and a freelance researcher. Her research activities are directly related to the relationships between human and nonhuman animals, conservation, and the influence of popular media in shaping societal beliefs and values. She is

particularly interested in the ways in which media, literature, and popular culture impact societal beliefs, values, and actions towards positive changes related to human and nonhuman animal interactions. Some of her publications include *Every Living Being: Representations of Nonhuman Animals in the Exploration of Human Well-Being*, Inkwater Press, 2010 and *Nurse or Nemesis? Public Perceptions of the Australian Grey Nurse Shark*, Equilibrium Books, 2009.

---

## STRANGE FAMILIAR

*Combustion* by **LORRI NEILSEN GLENN**  
Brick Books, 2007 \$18.00

Reviewed by **JONATHAN MEAKIN**

In her book, *Combustion*, Lorri Nielsen Glenn evokes the complexity and struggle of human perception to make sense of—to record, reflect on, engage—individual agency in changing physical, social, and emotional landscapes. In many respects, “Smooth Rock from Lawrencetown Beach”, the second poem in Nielsen Glenn’s *Combustion*, summarizes the constructive tensions among form, language and meaning-making that pervade the collection. Here’s the poem in full:

Round and purple as a plum, accidental  
kindness tossed from the rough

grip of the Atlantic. Teach me  
concentration. Where darkness goes. How

time laughs. That memory,  
like you, is shucked from mystery, rests

snug in my hand. The wind breathes  
frost: listen! Blood,

singing.

A remarkable strength of this poem is the scope of vision conveyed through a scant nine lines. Taut, open-ended line breaks that jut over gulfs of white space; an intuitive rhythm shaped by a shifting syntax; punctuation as incisive as musical notes in their measures of pauses—all compel a sharp focus. “Teach me // concentration,” for example, is not only a direct appeal to the poem’s subject and the poem as object, but the line break also underscores the speaker’s openness to new learning and experiences. The speaker’s conflation of personal memory with the rock’s geology “shucked from mystery” through the connection of touch, of a hand as the tool of individual agency, forges a link between the natural world, particularly its physicality and temporality, and the ephemera of a human life. Yet rather than imposing willed definitions on the poem’s subject and object, and instead of falling silent in the face of a daunting geological timescale, the speaker invites meaning-making through the celebration of ephemera, of the intimacy of a human being, of “Blood, // singing.”

Nielsen Glenn is attuned to moments when the intimacy of human experience bumps up against the indifference of the natural world. “Signal Hill, NL,” for example, situates a personal memory in conjunction with Marconi’s radio telegraph experiments at the turn of the nineteenth century. At first, the figure in the poem is at a vantage point “where the wind’s good arm can pitch you over the edge // with ease, alms for the Atlantic”—lines that are at once a representation of natural indifference expressed through a homely personification and, perhaps, a recognition of the loss of lives in the Atlantic due to impersonal political and technological change. The figure then “lean[s], an arc against the cold / wall of wind where Marconi drew / a line of sound, meridian of the human voice // across the air and over the water.” It is the simultaneous resolve and frailty of human communication, of the will to connect, touch, and

make-meaning (to “pick... up scattered tales”) in the face of indomitable and inhospitable space and time that lingers here.

Neilsen Glenn is also aware of the limitations, if not the dangers, of semiotics in creating environmental consciousness. When Wordsworth tested his assertion of a “deeply interfused” connection with the environment —“of all the mighty world / Of eye and ear, both what they half-create, / And what perceive”—he does so through the process of making the strange familiar through recourse to a shared experience with his sister, Dorothy. Neilsen Glenn undergoes a similar, although more thorough, self-assessment process as a poet and ethnographer through the touchstone of Margaret Mead in “Strange Familiar,” which begins: “To make the strange familiar. To take your notebook and recorder to fields / unknown to you, be participant observer, just as Margaret was.” There is a caution here not just for ethnographers, but also for writers who assume privilege over their subject matter that “when you gaze[...] / upon informants gazing back at you, another text ...[is] ... being written”:

Where was  
the ethnographer  
recording you, documenting your wanton  
appetite for whatever’s  
in your path, because all the world is your  
dominion, because  
all of it is food?

These reservations about the poet/ethnographer as semiotician inform Neilsen Glenn’s awareness of both the precision and subjectivity of the tools at her disposal—including consciousness of the uneasy and perhaps false distinction between personal, social and environmental discourses that inform experience. In “Combustion,” the title poem, the matter-of-fact statement opening —“And so the nuns put my little brother Jack into the furnace and that was that”—is an internalized social discourse that belies a woman’s grief

repressed by the social mechanisms of “*The holy Trinity. Doctor, nun, husband.*” Again, Neilsen Glenn collapses distinctions between human and non-human worlds; in this instance, the conflation of the stillborn child’s cremation and the mother’s cigarette smoke insist on personal experience as something simultaneously communal: “Out of the chimney into the air, the whole town breathing him. Her smoke drifts of the deck, toward the trees, white mark in the air.”

*Combustion* is an impressive book that demonstrates the versatile and compelling work of a poet exploring experiences, voices, and forms through a unifying vision. Neilsen Glenn embraces meaning-making and individual agency through the strengths and failings, the complexity and simplicity of individuals situated in community and a natural world. Fittingly, the book closes with “Hold,” a summary of that individual/communal dynamic: “You see / them spinning in the light: love, // loss, love, loss, love, / loss. Turn. At the door: / seasons // reach for your hands: hold.” At one level, essentially, perception here is reductive in its vision of “loss” or “love,” a binary reinforced by the poem’s faltering syntax. And yet what matters, and what the poems in this book return to again and again, is how the individual makes sense of the world through perception and connection, by what consciousness and touch—the tools of agency and responsibility—can “hold.”

**JONATHAN MEAKIN** has published poetry and reviews in England and Canada. He is also a dabbler in small press publishing, having co-founded The Olive Reading and Chapbook Series, and more recently, the fledgling venture stately/Plump Publishing. He has worked as a communications specialist, university instructor, and arts administrator, and he is currently the literary and media arts development consultant for the Government of Alberta while attempting to complete a PhD in Canadian Literature at the University of Alberta.

A poem by TV MASON



*Corvus*

(linoleum cut) L. Szabo

## NW Crow

A crow crouches as we pass,  
looks at our walking,  
    concurs to fly  
    should we cross too close—

a line exists we cannot see, a measure  
we cannot take:  
    Time before we domesticated,  
    shaped, acquiesced to it—

A northwestern crow crunches dry leaves  
on a low stone wall overlooking English Bay

    (whose tidal sways  
urge susurrating sands to deliquescent edge)

crouching, bouncing, Steve  
Nash pump-faking,  
    and again,  
looking for an open lane  
    an open man

    before time runs out  
and the shot clock expires—

**Tv MASON** is a Killam Postdoctoral fellow at Dalhousie University, Co-Editor of fish magic press, ALECC Member-at-Large, and much more.

3 poems by BASMA KAVANAGH



Glace Bay

(Acrylic) Basma Kavanagh



## Gift

Steelhead

*Oncorhynchus mykiss*

One— no, two  
dark bodies.  
A glimpse  
unfolds  
a cool  
pair  
from  
shadows.  
We squint,  
sift your forms  
from twigs and  
stones, the glint  
of surface glare.  
You work your  
salmonid gift—  
smooth tail-flick,  
strum that holds  
you both in place  
— sheltered, shaded—  
by a sunken log  
you hover, still,  
in this song, two  
long gray notes  
held, tuned  
to the open-  
ing moment,  
moving  
water.

Here  
to breed, or feed,  
*to dream* within  
these fluid,  
familiar  
folds;  
*the way*  
*it holds*  
*you*, flows  
in steelhead  
shapes, formed  
to fit only you.  
Waterborne gifts;  
*float, list, glean*  
bliss of its sweet  
touch on glinting  
mica skins, hiss  
of its flow over  
stones. *O. mykiss*,  
muscled travellers  
—alumni of oceans—  
here to swim,  
to be seen; we  
glimpse the  
myth in the  
moment.

## Bog myrtle

*Myrica gale*

Sweet gale, cousin  
of wild bay, basking  
lakeside, streamside;  
*dreaming in daylight.*

Resinous nutlets cluster  
at branch tips, yield  
to a desire for picking;  
aromatic oils cling  
to fingers.

Bluegreen *lance-shaped,*  
*alternate* leaves dusted  
with wax and yeasts, transform  
the narrow beach with fragrance,  
their lucid presence.

## Bigleaf Maple

*Acer macrophyllum*

Antler of the forest  
crook your ear: your listing,  
listening length, fern antennae  
tucked trembling into your velvet.  
Releasing breath: *moisture, information—*  
through strands of stomata; *yours,*  
*theirs,* the difference indistinct  
in the nap of this vascularized  
surface.

Sway out from the slope,  
swathed in abundant chartreuse  
clusters: bombs, *bustles*  
in fashion for several  
minutes of spring, zing  
with the yellow of skunk cabbage  
*those neon swamp candles*  
buzzing in the ditches.

It's hard to be hardwood—  
the work of making shade  
a heartbreak among needles;  
but vanilla leaf needs you,  
and the western thorn,  
*Petastites, Corvus, Cervus*;  
anchor their mesh  
of rooting and cawing.  
A swaddling of mosses

softens the scrutiny  
and scratch of *Ursus*, her tendency  
to gouge your soft crust;  
sinking into the living, springy  
crumb. Her rough touch  
ignites this ligneous  
truss: you, holding them,  
*holding you*  
up.

**BASMA KAVANAGH** is a Nova Scotia artist, poet, bookmaker, and much more: “My evolving interaction with my surroundings leads to work that explores resonance in natural forms: the echoes and overlaps between terrestrial and marine, vertebrate and invertebrate, plant and animal, human and non-human. Ultimately, an exploration of these forms is an exploration of the intimate connection between living things, and of the empathy we possess for life, both familiar and unfamiliar. In my practice, I become acquainted with various organisms, cultivating relationships. The acquaintance is developed outdoors – in the woods, on the beach – but the work is completed in my studio. The artworks that result from this process – whether sewn, bound, painted, written or planted – are essentially portraits, hopefully conveying something of each non-human persona I encounter, emphasizing the selves that help us, as Barry Lopez said, “in the quest to understand landscape not only as something that is living, but something that includes us and upon which we are subtly dependent”. That is, an animate ‘landscape’ that consists of persons who require our care and respect for their survival and our own.” See Basma's website: [www.basmakavanagh.blogspot.com](http://www.basmakavanagh.blogspot.com)

An essay by DAVID HEINIMANN



L. Szabo

## Ecological Martial Law

In current discussion of environmentalism, anxiety over our condition has led to the term “ecophobia.” This debilitating concept must be answered with the legal and moral idea of “duty of care.” Only with the provisioning that follows from that duty can we avoid an ecological martial law.

**1. Ecophobia.** Fear of the environment debilitates. Whether fear of nature itself, contempt of nature, or incapacity to respond to eco-crisis (Estok, Sobel), definition declines further into a politicized hatred of one’s own home (Belien). If, as Tony Judt says, we have entered “the age of insecurity,” fear as both symptom and consequence is “corrupting the trust and interdependence on which civil societies rest.” Even Judith Shklar’s ironically protective “liberalism of fear [...] radically consequentialist in its concentration on the avoidance of foreseeable evils” (31), can’t assuage the anxiety around this spiral of dread—Shklar’s liberalism foresees threats to freedom, but ecophobia results from the threat of freedom in “business as usual.” Ambivalence and ambiguity paralyze ecocriticism and make Simon Estok and Bill McKibben demand a new vocabulary (4; McKibben *Current*). Whether that means only augmented terminology like James Hansen’s “global warming” and William Rees’ “ecological footprint” or means also a meta-discourse above ordinary language, something like Julia Corbett’s *Communicating Nature*, for McKibben that vocabulary must also ask “the question for our time: how to keep control” (McKibben *Bioneers*).

Ecophobia debilitates the necessary activism. In the nineties, Timothy Luke regretted the “unusual fetishization of wilderness” that joined “a crippling set of counterproductive [...] actions and [...] values.” Of that feeble state, Timothy Morton asserts that ecocriticism is suffering a “crisis of reason” (27) and needs

deconstruction (6), which Kevin Hutchings applies to ecology’s etymology in defining an anti-nature logo-centrism. But whether pro- or anti-nature, the fetish too often conflicts with our other *oikos*, the economy. This unproductive binary of ecology vs. economy must become dialectical; otherwise, environmentalism risks becoming what John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, in their trenchant Marxist analysis, call “trickle-down ecology” (14).

The binary reflects an optimist-pessimist divide symptomatically played out recently between the leading American climate bloggers Ted Nordhaus and Joe Romm. Their historicizing makes them inevitable antagonists. While Nordhaus embraces a prospering modernity to avoid “green bubbles” – the hope and hype of panaceas – (18), Romm’s cynical *Hell and High Water* makes the last “green bubble” our dying breath. Both of them would find conciliatory a session with Carol Saunders’ “Conservation Psychology” to mutually assist “the attempt to understand self-in-relation to nature in order to develop a more powerful vocabulary for influencing the public discourse and producing enduring behavior change” (138).

If ecophobia ends in self-defeat, what does that look like? In classical culture, we look for satire, parody, and travesty – anything ironic – to overtake heroic drama. Christian Bök’s “xenotext” and “crystallography” projects, self-admittedly parodic as they evolve from Alfred Jarry’s absurdist “pataphysics” and lack any stated ecological interests, have somehow still become subjects of a Congress 2010 panel on ecocriticism (Dickinson, Laurico). Similarly, poet Jonathan Keats’ “latest thought experiment: television for plants” (Gopnik) sensitizes ambiguously and allows climate deniers and skeptics to now mock vegans, too: if “meat is murder,” then “salad is slaughter.” Unstable as a signifier, then, ecology naturally inspires fear.

What ecocritics really need to fear – and out-manuever – are the deniers. Fox News seems intent on leading them, with Canada’s *National*

Post yapping along. Their mendacity is matched only by the outrageous “greenwash” of “climate fakers,” and altogether their stupidity updates the “ecological fallacy” that William Robinson defined in 1950: the stereotyping from group, or “ecological,” data. Their reckless fraud laughs at what William Rees calls “the most difficult challenge for policy”—that is, how to change behavior “to achieve sustainability,” which echoes McKibbens’ concern over control.

From Nicholas Stern to James Hansen, the need for change has been and continues to be aggressively stated. If economy is an ecophobia, Stern is Timothy Morton’s eco-Derrida—and the *nomos*, the law, is the issue (note McKibben’s *Deep Economy* [2007], the play on the cliché). Riffing on legalism, Hansen likens our ecocrisis to Nazism to assert that “the time for compromises and appeasement is over” (211). Together with taxing carbon (221), he finds “merit” in civil disobedience (242). When economist Jeffery Rubin equates peak oil with peak food (225), we know that law will have to change. If not, demographer Vaclav Smil cautions, “saltation,” or sudden evolutionary change, will climax our repeatedly passed tipping points.

If ecophobia represents the crisis in ecocriticism, it is an anxiety of incapacity. Still, though Fox scoffs at the science, Canadian climatologist Andrew Weaver has sued the *Post* for libel after denialist articles allegedly defamed him (“UVic’s”). To this toxic environment, security and legal theorist Barry Kellman adds “bioviolence...the most likely deliberate threat to humanity’s survival and progress” (xv). His thesis to transform international law (245) asserts a “Law for Humanity” premised on asking “what institutions and rules our grandchildren will want us to have created” (5; cf. Hansen). Tangentially, the new JOE (Joint Operating Environment) report of the US military already works on the “Shadow Globalization” of the “Bazaars of Violence” (JOE), so “forcings” of a preventative kind—from preventing ecoterrorism to protecting resources,

the prelude to an ecological martial law – promise at least reduced incapacity, if not increased capacity.

**2. Duty of Care.** The most promising attack on climate inaction is based on the concept of “duty of care.” Long recognized in medicine and insurance, environmental lawyers are using test-case judgments to build theory. Three related aspects appear central: negligence, foreseeability, and the “reasonable man.” A tort must prove that damage resulted when the reasonable person neglected what was foreseeable. Difficulty exists in making all three apply sufficiently, but the prospect already has potential defendants declaring adherence to climate action: oil giant BP now brands itself as not just British Petroleum but “Beyond Petroleum” (with the Gulf disaster, consider “Bad Player,” “Bitter Pill,” or “Bullshit Petrocracy”), and the recent Chair of HSBC, John Bond, lauded his bank’s achievement of carbon neutrality and asserted that “we owe a duty of care to future generations” (Wah 12). If Bond can stand for the “reasonable man,” then it is a nice commentary on the corporate world that, in a “Fox-y” sort of move, the British “campaigning company” Audacity—lobbyists—in a post titled “Beware of extending the duty of care”, “advocates developing the man-made environment, free from the burden of ‘sustainababble’ and ‘communitwaddle’.” Audacity’s post responds to the Royal Institute of British Architects’ promotion of environmental duty of care. With an august professional body backing the duty, deniers may now themselves be phobic.

The theory for a “duty of care” for ecocriticism and eco-law can begin with John Rawls’s landmark *Theory of Justice*. In the chapter “Justice Between Generations”, Rawls argues for “a just saving principle” that “applies to what a society is to save as a matter of justice” (255); the saving is of “real capital” for “the good of all subsequent generations,” with the telling parenthesis that “(It should be kept in mind here

that capital is not only factories and machines, and so on, but also the knowledge and culture, as well as the techniques and skills, that make possible just institutions and the fair value of liberty.)” (256). And though for Rawls “The just savings principle can be regarded as an understanding between generations to carry their fair share of the burden of realizing and preserving a just society” (257), that justice did not extend “real capital” to “natural capital”—the economy-ecology binary still. Some have attempted to remedy that (Thero), addressing the “ethical problem” that Rawls identified: “agreeing on a path over time which treats all generations justly” (257). Rawls himself apparently saw his lacuna, and in his later *Political Liberalism* added reference to “natural resources” (273). Still, foundational though Rawls is, his ecological duty remains the under-theorized binary, not much beyond David Hume’s Hobbesian caution over the consequences of using up nature’s “unlimited abundance” (260).

Driving theory to law is civil disobedience. Rawls places it between test cases and conscientious resistance, “at the boundary of fidelity to law,” though a “duty of civility” keeps it “distinct from militant action and obstruction” (*Theory* 321-2). But Rawls was working before the recent ecological imperative; James Hansen, again, finds merit in civil disobedience and has even defended obstruction, at the Kingsnorth trial in Britain, where Greenpeace activists were cleared with the ruling that damage that prevents greater damage is permissible (cf. Criminal Damage Act, 1971). Greenpeace, best-known for its militancy, is also pushing eco-theory, as with its various charges of crimes against the planet, but the charges don’t and won’t stick without the refinement of the negligence argument. How to refine could be sought in the Syncrude-duck case: the Crown Prosecutor cited a “duty to protect” (McRory) to achieve conviction.

The best attempt at refinement may be legal scholars David Hunter and J. Salzman’s

extensive article “Negligence in the Air: The Duty of Care in Climate Change Litigation” (2007). They first identify the primary difficulty, that “Climate change is essentially a global environmental tort” in which—unfortunately but not without prohibitive merit—exists “a relationship between the defendants and virtually everyone else in the world” (108). Though they recognize the “daunting problem of scale,” they also ask rhetorically, to answer that misfortune, whether “tort law should treat a duty to everyone as a duty to no one” (141). Reasonableness and foreseeability are central, and with the expanding science and the already alert insurance industry (136), successful prosecution on duty of care appears likely given two prospects: first, because of technological advance, “the cost of addressing climate change is declining,” suggesting that soon “the burden of avoiding harm will be lower than today, making the imposition of liability more likely” (128); and second, the shift in the “risk-utility balance of climate-changing activities” means that “a defendant’s activities or products will be found to present an unreasonable risk of foreseeable injury” (154)—Shklar’s consequentialist “liberalism of fear” informs here. Both prospects are leading to climate-conscious policy and practice in business and industry, thereby allowing prosecution to shift focus from untriable economic sectors like oil and automobiles to the laggards within those sectors (154).

The question remains, though: will pursuit of laggards suffice, and will business and industry – and consumers – do what’s needed? If, as Judith Shklar says, we have to ask “the likeliest victims, the least powerful persons” to determine what “cruelties” create our fears (35), how many victims will it take to make the laggards listen? Is there a critical mass of test cases? They are building: the residents of Kivalina, Alaska, are appealing the dismissal of their suit against dozens of industrial defendants over global warming’s affect on their village; southeast Asian

states that depend on the Mekong River are contesting China's dam construction, and China has much to fear from its own notorious "cancer villages"; and though eccentric, activist Danny Bloom's intention to take world leaders to the ICC for "intent to commit manslaughter against future generations" ("Sue") shows the prescience of Michel Foucault's "biopolitics," that is, the "object of governing as 'addressed to a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass'" (Kellman 247 n.3). Environmental statecraft, as Scott Barrett shows, addresses Foucault's mass, but the question remains: will it be enough, and soon enough?

**3. Martial Law.** Our ecological crisis requires more than dialectical tinkering with theory and law. From James Lovelock to Amartya Sen, our negligent present has been clearly analyzed, and the analysis develops the new vocabulary that Estok and McKibben require. Ecocritics are creating the "specific semiotics" that, as Umberto Eco says, address "epistemological problems" (5; ontological, teleological, and ethical could be added) and rely on "social engineering" (6) born, as Vico also said, from environment (107-8). To engineer our semiotics and epistemology, Eric Hobsbawm reminds us that we legitimate and cement group cohesion by inventing tradition (12). If invention is ecocriticism's present main tactic, Hobsbawm commands attention: "The crucial element seems [to be] the invention of emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership rather than the statutes and objects of the club" (11). Where would Greenpeace be without a name and signifying practices that "manufacture consent" (Chomsky) in the ecocritical community?

The inventions of a community in crisis--our ecological, our semiotic--are especially charged. Military allusion and analogy increasingly inform environmental writing,

making a highly charged sign, even a problematic, to recall Hobsbawm, of our growing realization that our ecocrisis may need the military's ruthless efficiency. Here I turn partisan for Roy Woodbridge's 2004 book *The Next World War: Tribes, Cities, Nations, and Ecological Decline*. A retired Canadian foreign aid diplomat and now environmental consultant, Woodbridge argues that our future is one of "provisioning" (xii). His military allusion is intentional, and it appeals to ecocriticism's troubled vocabulary. Woodbridge is duty of care as applied science. His central term, provisioning, "refer[s] to the processes through which human societies organize access to natural capital" to "wage war against global ecological decline" (xii-xiii). Admitting that it's "not a great metaphor" (xiii), he asserts that "nature [does] draw lines in the sand" (xiv) and that we now have to mobilize "as if for war" (xv). Moreover, the current mantra of salvation is delusional: "provisioning differs from the pursuit of *sustainable development*"—peace depends not on the triple-bottom-line environmental, economic, and social concerns of sustainable development but on the increasingly contentious access to ecological goods and services (xv; note that Rees, who has argued for sustainability, endorses Woodbridge [back cover]). Though they overlap, sustainability fears and avoids what Woodbridge anticipates and what civil law would be powerless against: provisioning is Malthus realized—the crisis in the world grain reserve, the collapse of fisheries, and wars over water actually claiming victims, and many of them. The sad irony of Woodbridge is how well his soteriology for negligence will have prepared us for what we never wanted but made inevitable for ourselves.

Woodbridge's argument apparently frightened publishers – another ecophobia. Near despair, he met by chance a University of Toronto Press editor, who brought it out, and it has been reprinted. What is there to fear in such an argument? In an irony similar to Woodbridge's and that recalls the Kingsnorth decision—and



even valorizes a certain ecophobia—Judith Shklar identifies that fear when she assesses our political tradition: “What liberalism requires is the possibility of making the evil of cruelty and fear the basic norm of its political practices and prescriptions. The only exception to the rule of avoidance is the prevention of greater cruelties” (30). Not only have most people not yet understood the urgent need to prevent the greater cruelties of our ecological crisis, they still resist accepting the very evil of it (note that the recently aired television series “Aftermath” addresses martial law).

What will it take to convince the negligent that continuing indifference and resistance will require the imposition of an ecological martial law to keep the control that McKibben fears the loss of? Negligence has two prospects: militarized culture, from rationing to resource extraction; or, by analogy with natural law, the ecosphere itself, in saltation, will impose its own ruthless efficiency. To prevent either to the extent possible, Woodbridge would redefine the World Summit *on Sustainable Development* and the Framework Convention *on Climate Change*; he calls for a “Framework Convention *on Provisioning*” and a “World Summit *on Global Provisioning*” (251ff., 268ff.; my emphases), both to follow specific criteria to radically redesign policy around natural capital and the environment.<sup>1</sup> The vocabulary of Hobsbawm’s emotional signs may already be inventing a radical tradition: the “100-Mile Diet”; the “Urban Farming” movement (begun, ironically, in Motor City–Detroit); Tom Lynch’s dry-land eco-scaping, “Xerophilia”; the “Transition Town” eco-urban and eco-village phenomena. If they represent the “eco-civility” that Benet Davetian proposes to “[transcend] our generational quirks” (527; cf. 8), and if they help achieve Laurie Adkin’s “ecological democracy” (xii), they are also, especially given the latest UN report on biodiversity (*Global*), the unavoidable beginnings of provisioning.

Whatever we invent, the duty to care will

inform the emotional content that will, if necessary, impose martial law. If reliance on voluntary engagement in this real mother of all battles—against negligence, against ecological decline—increasingly becomes Hansen’s appeasement, then the mother of invention, necessity, will demand militancy. If Mother Earth is green, so is a soldier’s uniform.

## Notes

1. Woodbridge proposes these ten “actions” to lay the groundwork of the Summit: 1) Document the scale of provisioning requirements by 2025 [or twenty-year period]; 2) Accelerate investment in innovation for ecological sustainability; 3) Assess the effects of innovation for ecological sustainability on employment, wealth creation, and the reduction of poverty; 4) Clearly define rural and urban roles in regard to provisioning and wealth and job creation; 5) Build the case for bio-region management; 6) Build the case for eco-urban management; 7) Place social issues in the context of provisioning; 8) Address the need to control population growth; 9) Accelerate efforts to document global pollution levels; 10) Begin rationalizing international institutional structures. All areas require ecocritical framework language, some of which exists, much more of which needs creation. Both creative and critical expression would aid. Ecocriticism could assist and innovate especially well in 1), 3), 4), 7), and 10), as well as in the Framework Convention on Provisioning.

**DAVID HEINIMANN** (PhD, UMTI) teaches literature and philosophy at Northwest College, Terrace, BC. Writing primarily on ethics and fiction, he is two books into a four-part series of eco-political novels. He was an early member of Pollution Probe and The Green Party of Canada. “Ecological Martial Law” emerges from a presentation given as part of the Ecocriticism II Panel at ACCUTE (Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English), Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences Congress 2010, Montreal, Quebec, 28 May 2010 co-organized by Paul Huebener and Lisa Szabo.

## Works Cited

Adkin, Laurie E., ed. *Environmental Conflict and Democracy in Canada*. Vancouver: UBCP, 2009. Print.

- Audacity. "Beware of Extending the Duty of Care." Audacity.org. 28 July 2010. Web.
- Barrett, Scott. *Environment and Statecraft: The Strategy of Environmental Treaty-Making*. Oxford: OUP, 2003. Print.
- Belien, Paul. "Roger Scruton on Immigration, Multiculturalism, and the Need to Defend the Nation State." *The Brussels Journal* (24 June 2006). Web.
- Bök, Christian. "The Xenotext Experiment." *SCRIPTed* 5.2 (2008): 227. Web.
- . *Crystallography*. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1994/2003. Print.
- Chomsky, Noam and Edward S. Herman. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon, 1988. Print.
- Corbett, Julia. *Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages*. Washington: Island Press, 2006. Print.
- Davetian, Benet. *Civility: A Cultural History*. Toronto: UTP, 2009. Print.
- Dickinson, Adam. "Postmodern Ecopoetics: Christian Bök's Crystallography." Ecocriticism II, Panel at ACCUTE (Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English), Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences Congress 2010, Montreal, Quebec. 28 May 2010. Conference paper.
- Eco, Umberto. *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984. Print.
- Estok, Simon C. "Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and Ecophobia." *Simonestok.com*. Web. [*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 16.2 (2009): 203-25. Print.]
- Foster, John Bellamy, and Brett Clark. "The Paradox of Wealth: Capitalism and Ecological Destruction." *Monthly Review*. 61.6 (November 2009): 1-18. *Global Biodiversity Outlook* 3. United Nations. 10 May 2010. Web.
- Gopnik, Adam. "Plant TV." *The New Yorker* (15 March 2010). Web.
- Hansen, James. *Storms of My Grandchildren*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2009. Print.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: CUP, 1983. 1-14. Print.
- Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. 1751. In Steven M. Cahn and Peter Markie, eds. *Ethics*. Oxford: OUP, 2009. 255-79. Print.
- Hunter, David and J. Salzman. "Negligence in the Air: The Duty of Care in Climate Change Litigation." *U of Pennsylvania Law Review* 1741 (2007): 101-54. Print.
- Hutchings, Kevin. "Ecocriticism in British Romantic Studies." *Literature Compass* 4.1 (2007): 172-202. Web.
- "JOE, The" (Joint Operating Environment). United States Joint Forces Command. 18 February 2010. Quoted from Moisis Naim. *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers, and Copycats are Hijacking the Global Economy*. New York: Doubleday, 2005. Web.
- Judt, Tony. "Ill Fares the Land." *New York Review of Books* (29 April 2010). Web.
- Kellman, Barry. *Bioviolence: Preventing Biological Terror and Crime*. Cambridge: CUP, 2007. Print.
- Laurico, Mary Anne. "Genetically Modified Poetry: poetic DNA, Risk, and Christian Bök's 'The Xenotext Experiment'." Ecocriticism II, Panel at ACCUTE (Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English), Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences Congress 2010, Montreal, Quebec. 28 May 2010. Conference paper.
- Luke, Timothy. *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy, and Culture*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.

- Print.
- Lynch, Tom. *Xerophilia: Ecocritical Explorations of Southwest Literature*. Lubbock: Texas Tech UP, 2008. Print.
- McKibben, Bill. Interview. *The Current*. CBC. 15 April 2010. Radio.
- . Interview. *Bioneers*. Kootenay Cooperative Radio. 29 April 2010. Radio.
- McRory, Susan. Cited in “Syn crude in Court to Face Charges Over Duck Deaths.” CTV News. 1 March 2010. Web.
- Morton, Timothy. *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2007. Print.
- Nordhaus, Ted and Michael Shellenberger. The Breakthrough Institute. Blog.
- . “The Green Bubble: Why Environmentalism Keeps Imploding.” *The New Republic* (20 May 2009): 16-18. Print.
- Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. 1971. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1999. Print.
- . *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1993. Print.
- Rees, William. From “BA in Sustainability and Policy Analysis, Kwantlen U. Program Concept: Sustainability and Policy Analysis.” New program proposal. January 2009. Email from Heather Harrison, Kwantlen U, 13 April 2010.
- Romm, Joe. Climate Progress. Blog.
- . *Hell and High Water*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006. Print.
- Rubin, Jeffery. *Why Your World is About to Get a Whole Lot Smaller*. New York: Random House, 2009. Print.
- Saunders, Carol D. “The Emerging Field of Conservation Psychology.” *Human Ecology Review* 10.2 (2003): 137-49.
- Shklar, Judith N. “The Liberalism of Fear.” In Nancy L. Rosenblum, ed. *Liberalism and the Moral Life*. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1989. 21-38. Print.
- Smil, Vaclav. *Global Catastrophes and Trends: The Next 50 Years*. Cambridge MA: MITP, 2008. Print.
- Sobel, David. “Beyond Ecophobia.” *Orion* (Autumn 1995). Web.
- “Sue World Leaders for \$1 Billion for Global Warming?” *Reuters* (28 November 2008). Web.
- Thero, Daniel P. “Rawls and Environmental Ethics: A Critical Examination of the Literature.” *Environmental Ethics* 17.1 (September 1995): 93-106. Print.
- “UVic’s Andrew Weaver sues National Post.” *West Coast Environmental Law*. 22 April 2010. Web.
- Wah, Jennifer. “A Worldly and Local Banker: Q&A with HSBC’s Sir John Bond.” *Viewpoints* (Journal of Sauder School of Business, UBC) 25.2 (Spring 2006): 10-14. Web.
- Woodbridge, Roy. *The Next World War: Tribes, Cities, Nations, and Ecological Decline*. Toronto: UTP, 2004. Print.

# NEW PUBLICATIONS



Auyuittak National Park (Dianne Chisholm)

## ANANSI

*Player One: What is to Become of Us: A Novel in Five Hours* by Douglas Coupland

Genre: Fiction  
ISBN: 978-0-88784-972-5  
\$19.95  
Available now

“In the tradition of Kurt Vonnegut and J. G. Ballard, Coupland explores the modern crises of time, human identity, society, religion, and the afterlife. The book asks as many questions as it answers, and readers will leave the story with no doubt that we are in a new phase of existence as a species—and that there is no turning back.” [More...](#)

*The Wrecking Light* by Robin Robertson

Genre: Poetry  
ISBN: 978-0-88784-258-0  
\$22.95  
Available now

“Alongside fine translations from Pablo Neruda and Eugenio Montale and dynamic (and at times horrific) retellings of stories from Ovid, these poems pitch the power and wonder of nature against the frailty and failure of the human.” [More...](#)

*Bloom* by Michael Lista

Genre: Poetry  
ISBN: 978-0-88784-951-0  
\$22.95  
Available now

“On May 21, 1946, the day of a lunar eclipse, a Canadian physicist named Louis Slotin was training his replacement on the Manhattan Project, which prepared the bombs that had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But Slotin decided to forego the standard safety procedures, and there was an accident: the plutonium went critical, a phenomenon scientists call a ‘bloom.’ Nine days later Slotin died. Michael Lista, a thrilling and wildly engaging new voice in poetry, reimagines this fateful day in a long poem that draws upon the still-mysterious events of May 21, 1946.” [More...](#)

*Cold Earth* by Sarah Moss

Genre: Fiction  
ISBN: 978-1-84708-138-4  
\$16.95

Available now

“Six young people meet on an archaeological dig in a remote corner of Greenland. Excavating the unsettling remains of a Norse society under attack, they also come to uncover their own demons, as it becomes apparent that a plague pandemic is sweeping across the planet and communication with the outside world is breaking down.” [More...](#)

*February* by Lisa Moore

Genre: Fiction  
ISBN: 978-0-88784-202-3  
\$29.95  
Available now

“In 1982, the oil rig *Ocean Ranger* sank off the coast of Newfoundland during a Valentine’s Day storm. All eighty-four men aboard died. *February* is the story of Helen O’Mara, one of those left behind when her husband, Cal, drowns.” [More...](#)

## **BETWEEN THE LINES**

*The No-Nonsense Guide to Green Politics* by Derek Wall

Genre: Nonfiction; environmentalism and politics  
ISBN: ISBN 9781897071687  
\$16.00  
Available now

“The *No-Nonsense Guide to Green Politics* measures the rising tide of eco-activism and awareness and explains why this event heralds a new political era worldwide: in the near future there will be no other politics but green politics.” [More...](#)

## **CAITLIN PRESS**

*Whitewater Devils* by Jack Boudreau

Genre: Adventure; local interest  
ISBN: 978-1-894759-46-5  
\$22.95  
Available now

“In *Whitewater Devils*, Boudreau includes an unbelievable collection of adventures that take place on, in and below the raging rivers and mighty lakes of BC.” [More...](#)

*Edge of the Sound* by Jo Hammond

Genre: Memoir; local interest  
ISBN: 978-1-894759-49-6  
\$24.95  
Available now

*“Edge of the Sound* is both a love story and a tale of adventure between a man with an uncommonly high IQ who found his niche behind the wheel of a salvaging boat and a young woman searching for her own place in the world. Their bond was the risk of the wild and unpredictable sea...” [More...](#)

*Unfurled* edited by Debbie Keahey

Genre: Poetry  
ISBN: 978-1-894759-52-6  
\$22.95  
Available now

“In this anthology of new writing, women poets from Northern BC share their refreshing, intriguing, mystical and sometimes mythical insights into rural and urban life.” [More...](#)

## COACH HOUSE BOOKS

*The Inquisition Yours* by Jen Currin

Genre: Poetry  
ISBN: 9781552452301  
\$16.95  
Available now

*“The Inquisition Yours* speaks to the atrocities of our time – war, environmental destruction, terrorism, cancer, and the erosion of personal rights – fashioning a tenuous bridge between the political and the personal.” [More...](#)

## CORMORANT BOOKS

*New Under the Sun* by Kevin Major

Genre: Fiction  
ISBN: 978-1-897151-85-3  
\$32  
Available now

“Needing a change, Shannon Carew takes a job in the National Parks system in Newfoundland and Labrador. The journey brings her life full circle, returning her to the birthplace she abandoned years

before. As she makes new connections, and unearths old ones, Shannon learns the land holds many memories." [More...](#)

*A Blue Spruce Christmas* by Brian Fawcett

Genre: Memoir  
ISBN: 978-1-897151-94-5  
\$24  
Available now

"In this memoir, young Brian Fawcett sets off with his best friend to find the biggest and most beautiful Christmas tree possible for his school: a majestic blue spruce, hidden away in a park in their hometown of Prince George, British Columbia. After chopping their prize down though, the boys learn that the tree is one of a group of trees given to the city by the State of California." [More...](#)

## **DOUGLAS & MCINTYRE**

*Arctic Eden* by Jerry Kobalenko

Genre: Travel; photography  
ISBN: 978-1-55365-442-1  
\$45  
Available now

"In this intimate portrait, Jerry Kobalenko describes a series of journeys he has taken over the past twenty years around the Canadian High Arctic by foot, skis, kayak, and ship that provides a multifaceted view of this most beautiful and most vulnerable part of the Arctic." [More...](#)

*The Legacy: An Elder's Vision for our Sustainable Future* by David Suzuki

Genre: Environment; science  
ISBN: 978-1-55365-570-1  
\$25  
Available now

"If he had to sum up all that he has learned in one last lecture, what would David Suzuki say? In this expanded version of the lecture that he delivered in December 2009 and that will be released as a film in 2010, Suzuki, one of the planet's preeminent elders, explains how we got where we are today and presents his vision for a better future." [More...](#)

*Bateman: New Works* by Robert Bateman

Genre: Art  
ISBN: 978-1-55365-579-4



\$55

Available now

“The long-awaited collection of new works by the world’s most beloved wildlife painter and conservationist.” [More...](#)

*Tom Thomson* edited by Dennis Reid

Genre: Art; biography; history

ISBN: 978-1-55365-493-3

\$50

Available now

“In this lavishly illustrated, ‘comprehensive and compelling account of Tom Thomson’s life and times’ (*Toronto Sun*), six expertly written essays reveal the iconic Canadian artist and colleague of the Group of Seven from many different perspectives from his biography and work to the context of the period in which he lived.” [More...](#)

*City Farmer* by Lorraine Johnson

Genre: Environment; gardening

ISBN: 978-1-55365-519-0

\$19.95

Available now

“*City Farmer* celebrates the new ways that urban dwellers are getting closer to their food. Not only are backyard vegetable plots popping up in places long reserved for lawns, but some renegades are even planting their front yards with food. [...] Still others are colonizing public spaces, staking out territory in parks for community gardens and orchards, or convincing school boards to turn asphalt school grounds into ‘growing’ grounds.” [More...](#)

*Chasing Clayoquot* by David Pitt-Brooke

Genre: Environment; nature

ISBN: 978-1-55365-523-7

\$19.95

Available now

“First published in 2004, and now with a new preface by the author, this book of natural history, environmentalism, and politics explores one of the earth’s last primeval places: Clayoquot Sound.” [More...](#)

*Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* by Shelagh D. Grant

Genre: Politics; current affairs  
ISBN: 978-1-55365-418-6  
\$39.95  
Available now

“Based on Shelagh Grant’s groundbreaking archival research and drawing on her reputation as a leading historian in the field, *Polar Imperative* is a compelling overview of the historical claims of sovereignty over this continent’s polar regions.” [More...](#)

## **FITZHENRY & WHITESIDE**

*On Parade: The Hidden World of Animals in Entertainment* by Rob Laidlaw

Genre: Juvenile nonfiction; animal welfare  
ISBN: 978-1-55455-143-9  
\$19.95  
Available now

“In this follow-up to his highly acclaimed book, *Wild Animals in Captivity*, biologist and activist Rob Laidlaw focuses our attention on the living conditions and treatment of animals that are captured, bred, trained, and kept for the purposes of human entertainment.” [More...](#)

## **GREENBOATHOUSE PRESS**

*Light & Char* by Jake Kennedy

Genre: Poetry  
\$100  
Now available

“*Light & Char* is a series of 15 prose poems, each playing within and without the confines of binaristic thinking to explore the productivities stored in the nexuses of, say, yes-no worldviews, right-wrong logics, abstract-concrete divisions, happy-sad categorizations, life-death paradigms.” [More...](#)

## **GUERNICA PRESS**

*Fosfeni* by Andrea Zanzotto, translated by Pasquale Verdicchio

Genre: Poetry  
ISBN: 9781550713299  
\$15  
Available now

“The poet’s intimate relationship with the landscape makes it easy to envision him as a sort of linguistic mountain-goat daring the perilous edges of language as an expression of survival.” [More...](#)

*Light and Time* by Michael Mirolla

Genre: Poetry  
ISBN: 9781550713282  
\$20  
Available now

“Michael Mirolla looks into his art as into a language prism: light glances off many sides of the 'object' at once, and time, particularly time, is what attempts to hold it still.” [More...](#)

*Time Slip* by John Oughton

Genre: Poetry  
ISBN: 9781550713022  
\$20  
Available now

“Drawn from the author's 60-year journey through the Middle East, Japan, and North America, this collection of poems offers a variety of engaging styles, ranging from sonnets to haiku to free-form experimentation, while considering the implications of technology, science, and nature in the context of the 21st century.” [More...](#)

*Anne Hébert: Essays on Her Works* edited by Lee Skallerup

Genre: Literary criticism  
ISBN: 9781550712780  
\$20  
Available now

“Anne Hébert made Quebec literature internationally known. Her poems, stories and novels brought the passion and mysteries of rural Quebec to wider audiences and forced English Canada to translate the French literature of North America.” [More...](#)

## **HARBOUR PUBLISHING**

*Campbell River* by Ian Douglas, photos by Boomer Jerritt

Genre: Local interest  
ISBN: 978-1-55017-501-1  
\$34.95  
Available now

“Quadra Island resident and author Ian Douglas interviewed dozens of locals to bring to life the community of Campbell River and the surrounding islands, and award-winning photographer Boomer Jerritt skilfully illustrates the story with breathtaking photographs of the people, places and wildlife that make this part of Vancouver Island unique.” [More...](#)

*Adventures in Solitude* by Grant Lawrence

Genre: Memoir  
ISBN: 978-1-55017-514-1  
\$26.95  
Available now

“With plenty of laugh-out-loud humour and inspired reverence, *Adventures in Solitude* delights us with the unique history of a place and the growth of a young man amidst the magic of Desolation Sound.” [More...](#)

*A Walk with the Rainy Sisters: In Praise of British Columbia’s Places* by Stephen Hume

Genre: Local interest  
ISBN: 978-1-55017-505-9  
\$32.95  
Available now

“In *A Walk with the Rainy Sisters*, one of British Columbia’s favourite authors writes with passion about his favourite topic—the geography of British Columbia. Stephen Hume guides readers through the natural world, moving from the thin, cold air of British Columbia’s high country to the fecundity and silence of the deep rainforest.” [More...](#)

*Witness: Selected Poems 1962-2010* by Patrick Lane

Genre: Poetry  
ISBN: 978-1-55017-508-0  
\$16.95  
Available now

“*Witness* is the only volume to cover the breadth of Lane’s career and gather up the finest of his work—from early poems penned during his literary beginnings to new poems written at the height of his career.” [More...](#)

*Glaciers, Bears and Totems: Sailing in Search of the Real Southeast Alaska* by Elsie Hulsizer

Genre: Travel memoir  
ISBN: 978-1-55017-516-5  
\$44.95

Available now

“Marine writer Elsie Hulsizer, whose *Voyages to Windward* unlocked the mysteries of cruising Vancouver Island’s west coast, now does the same for that other great unknown of West Coast cruising, Southeastern Alaska.” [More...](#)

*A Wilderness Dweller’s Cookbook* by Chris Czajkowski

Genre: Cookbook  
ISBN: 978-1-55017-518-9  
\$14.95  
Available now

“*A Wilderness Dweller’s Cookbook* is not just a collection of recipes; it’s also a fascinating account of how a wilderness dweller—in a non-growing climate 20 km from a road, 60 km from a store, and 250 km from a town large enough to have a supermarket—feeds herself and her guests.” [More...](#)

*Cold Land, Warm Hearts: More Memories of an Arctic Medical Outpost* by Keith Billington

Genre: Memoir  
ISBN: 978-1-55017-534-9  
\$29.95  
Available now

“In 2008 Keith Billington’s surprise bestseller, *House Calls by Dogsled: Six Years in an Arctic Medical Outpost*, vividly described Billington and his wife Muriel’s experiences providing medical care to a string of isolated First Nations settlements in the Northwest Territories during the 1960s. In *Cold Land, Warm Hearts: More Memories of an Arctic Medical Outpost*, Billington dishes up more of the hair-raising and heartwarming stories about medical emergencies and Native traditions that made his first book such a hit.” [More...](#)

*Dreamspeaker Cruising Guide Series: The Gulf Islands & Vancouver Island*, New, Revised Third Edition by Anne Yeadon-Jones and Laurence Yeadon-Jones

Genre: Maritime guide  
ISBN: 978-1-55017-522-6  
\$49.95  
Available now

“Intended to complement official hydrographic charts, the *Dreamspeaker Cruising Guides* accurately pinpoint both popular and little-known highlights in BC and Pacific Northwest coastal waters that every sailor, power-boater or kayaker should know.” [More...](#)

## MCCLELLAND & STEWART

*Away* by Jane Urquhart

Genre: Fiction

ISBN:978-1-55199-423-9

\$21

Available now

“A stunning, evocative novel set in Ireland and Canada, *Away* traces a family’s complex and layered past. The narrative unfolds with shimmering clarity, and takes us from the harsh northern Irish coast in the 1840s to the quarantine stations at Grosse Isle and the barely hospitable land of the Canadian Shield...” [More...](#)

*A Map of Glass* by Jane Urquhart

Genre: Fiction

ISBN: 978-1-55199-425-3

\$21

Available now

“A novel about loss and the transitory nature of place, *A Map of Glass* is vivid with evocative prose and haunting imagery — a lake of light on a wooden table; a hotel gradually buried by sand; a fully clothed man frozen in an iceberg; a blind woman tracing her fingers over a tactile map.” [More...](#)

*The Quarry* by Damon Galgut

Genre: Fiction

ISBN: 978-1-55199-451-2

\$11

Available now

“*The Quarry* written ten years ago but never before published outside South Africa, is a stark, intense, and crystalline novel in which human nature is set against the desolate backdrop of rural South Africa.” [More...](#)

*The Price of a Bargain: The Quest for Cheap and the Death of Globalization* by Gordon Laird

Genre: Economics; popular culture

ISBN: 978-0-7710-4607-0

\$21

Available now

“With an eye for documentary storytelling and investigative detail, Gordon Laird traces the bargain

from its humble dollar-store origins to its place as global juggernaut. From Alberta's tar sands to China's factories, from Las Vegas to the Arctic Circle, a single question emerges: how will we survive the bargain?" [More...](#)

*Eastern Passage* by Farley Mowat

Genre: Autobiography  
ISBN: 978-0-7710-6491-3  
\$32.99  
Available now

"*Eastern Passage* is a new and captivating piece of the puzzle of Farley Mowat's life: the years from his return from the north in the late 1940s to his discovery of Newfoundland and his love affair with the sea in the 1950s." [More...](#)

*Future Babble: Why Expert Predictions Fail – and Why We Believe Them Anyway* by Dan Gardner

Genre: Popular culture; history  
ISBN: 978-0-7710-3519-7  
\$32.99  
Available now

"In this fast-paced, example-packed, sometimes darkly hilarious book, journalist Dan Gardner shows how seminal research by UC Berkeley professor Philip Tetlock proved that pundits who are more famous are less accurate — and the average expert is no more accurate than a flipped coin." [More...](#)

## **MCGILL-QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY PRESS**

*Earth into Property: Colonization, Decolonization, and Capitalism* by Anthony J. Hall

Genre: History; sociology  
ISBN: 9780773531222  
\$34.95  
Available now

"A broad exploration of the colonial roots of global capitalism and the worldwide quest of Indigenous people for liberation through decolonization." [More...](#)

## **NEW SOCIETY PUBLISHERS**

*Choosing a Sustainable Future: Ideas and Inspiration from Ithaca, NY* by Liz Walker

Genre: Social science; sociology  
ISBN: 9780865716759

\$19.95

Available now

“We all want a sustainable future, but what does it look like, and how do we get there? In Ithaca, NY a new culture is blossoming - one that values cooperation, local production, environmental stewardship, social justice and creativity. Ithaca is showing the way to meet the challenges of the day with a wide variety of practical, real-world solutions.” [More...](#)

*Winter Harvest Cookbook: How to Select and Prepare Fresh Seasonal Produce All Winter Long* by Lane Morgan

Genre: Cooking

ISBN: 9780865716797

\$24.95

Available now

“Anyone can include more local food in their diet at the peak of summer, but what do you do when the tomatoes are done and the first greens of spring are months away? The *Winter Harvest Cookbook* takes a seasonal approach to eating, even during the coldest months of the year.” [More...](#)

*Humanizing the Economy: Co-operatives in the Age of Capital* by John Restakis

Genre: Economics; environment

ISBN: 9780865716513

\$19.95

Available now

“*Humanizing the Economy* shows how co-operative models for economic and social development can create a more equitable, just, and humane future.” [More...](#)

*Bioshelter Market Garden: A Permaculture Farm* by Darrell Frey

Genre: Gardening

ISBN: 9780865716780

\$34.95

Available: October 2010

“The *Bioshelter Market Garden: A Permaculture Farm* describes the creation of a sustainable food system through a detailed case study of the successful year-round organic market garden and permaculture design at Pennsylvania’s Three Sisters Farm.” [More...](#)

*The Biochar Solution: Carbon Farming and Climate Change* by Albert K. Bates

Genre: Technology; agriculture



ISBN: 9780865716773  
\$17.95  
Available: October 2010

*"The Biochar Solution* explores the dual function of biochar as a carbon-negative energy source and a potent soil-builder. Created by burning biomass in the absence of oxygen, this material has the unique ability to hold carbon back from the atmosphere while simultaneously enhancing soil fertility." [More...](#)

*Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing* (Third Edition)  
by Doug McKenzie-Mohr

Genre: Business; economics  
ISBN: 9780865716421  
\$24.95  
Available: February 2011

"How then do we go about transforming people's good intentions into action? *Fostering Sustainable Behavior* explains how the field of community-based social marketing has emerged as an effective tool for encouraging positive social change." [More...](#)

*Whitewash: The Disturbing Truth About Cow's Milk and Your Health* by Joseph Keon

Genre: Health; nutrition  
ISBN: 9780865716766  
\$19.95  
Available: November 2010

"In *Whitewash*, nutritionist Dr. Joseph Keon unveils how North Americans unwittingly sabotage their health every day by drinking milk, and shows that our obsession with calcium is unwarranted." [More...](#)

*Eco-Yards: Simple Steps to Earth-Friendly Landscapes* by Laureen Rama

Genre: Gardening; landscape  
ISBN: 9780865716827  
\$19.95  
Available: February 2011

"Many urban yards are essentially unproductive patches of grass, requiring constant attention for no return. Through sustainable, organic landscaping, these small or large plots of land can become part of the solution to today's environmental challenges." [More...](#)

*Creating Cohousing: Building Sustainable Communities* by Charles Durrett and Kathryn McCamant

Genre: Architecture; sustainability

ISBN: 9780865716728

\$32.95

Available: February 2011

“How can we regain the elements of the traditional village – family, cooperation, community and a sense of belonging – within the context of 21st century life? *Creating Cohousing: Building Sustainable Communities* is an in-depth exploration of a uniquely rewarding type of housing which is perfect for anyone who values their independence but longs for more connection with those around them.”

[More...](#)

## NEW STAR BOOKS

*Off the Highway: Growing Up in North Delta* by Mette Bach

Genre: Memoir; environment

ISBN: 9781554200498

\$19

Available now

“Part social commentary, part personal memoir, and part history, *Off the Highway* is Mette Bach's thoughtful examination of growing up in North Delta. We learn about the valiant efforts of the Burns Bog Conservation Society volunteers who work tirelessly to preserve the Bog, North America's largest raised peat bog and one of Canada's natural wonders.” [More...](#)

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN BOOKS

*The Will of the Land* by Peter Dettling

Genre: Photography

ISBN: 9781926855004

\$39.95

Available now

“Through Dettling’s stunning photography and passionate narrative, *The Will of the Land* serves as an incredible artistic testament to the beauty of the natural world and the sometimes painful truth of hyperdevelopment in majestic landscapes, offering the reader a dynamic and broad vision of what national parks should stand for in our ever-changing world.” [More...](#)

*Northern British Columbia Canoe Trips Volume Two* by Laurel Archer

Genre: Travel guide

ISBN: 9781926855042

\$29.95

Available now

“This second volume of the guidebook series *Northern British Columbia Canoe Trips* describes in detail 7 spectacular northern BC paddling routes over 11 phenomenal rivers, and is designed to provide canoeists with all the information they require to plan a river trip appropriate to their skill level and special interests.” [More...](#)

*Bow Lake: Wellspring of Art* by Jane Lytton Gooch

Genre: Art; biography  
ISBN: 9781926855059  
\$24.95  
Forthcoming

“Bow Lake in the Canadian Rockies has inspired artists for almost a century. An early explorer who recognized the beauty of this alpine landscape was Jimmy Simpson, a legendary guide and outfitter who also collected art and painted in watercolours. [...] This volume includes an introduction describing the history of exploration and the early artistic activity generated by Jimmy Simpson, followed by brief biographies of 18 contemporary artists whose works are also included in the 47 colour plates, all documented and described, of which only 6 have ever been published before.”

[More...](#)

## **RONSDALE PRESS**

*Evolution: The View from the Cottage* by Jean-Pierre Rogel, translated by Nigel Spencer

Genre: Natural history  
ISBN: 978-1-55380-104-7  
\$21.95  
Available: October 2010

“With all the attention to ‘creationism’ in the news these days, Jean-Pierre Rogel decided it was time to show how Darwin’s concept of natural selection can be seen in everyday situations — from a summer cottage near a lake — with examples taken from familiar species such as loons, salmon and bears.” [More...](#)

## **TURNSTONE PRESS**

*Gimp Crow* by Ken Kowal

Genre: Poetry  
ISBN: 9780888013750  
\$17  
Available now

“A quirky little set of rhymes about a crow with a bad leg blossoms into a free-flying grace of words as

the clumsy bird tears free from his boring life in the prairies and his nagging 'ol lady' in search of a bigger destiny. Along the way, Gimp Crow collects a magpie from Alberta and a raven from the West Coast, and learns about love and loss." [More...](#)

*Walking to Mojácar* by Di Brandt

Genre: Poetry

ISBN: 9780888013705

\$17

Available now

"Di Brandt has surpassed herself in this extraordinary book, which hurls itself upon our desperate environmental, emotional, spiritual condition with fury and eloquence and headlong grace." [More...](#)

## UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA PRESS

*Rudy Wiebe: Collected Stories, 1955-2010* by Rudy Wiebe

Genre: Fiction anthology

ISBN: 978-0-88864-540-1

\$39.95

Available now

"The University of Alberta Press is proud to publish the fifty short stories that Wiebe completed between 1955 and 2010, including four previously unpublished stories. This is a must-have book for aficionados of great world literature, fans of prairie fiction, and Wiebe's faithful readers." [More...](#)

## UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA PRESS

*Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada* by James Opp and John C. Walsh

Genre: Essays; memory

ISBN: 9780774818407

\$85

Available November 2010

"*Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada* maps a fascinating terrain in memory studies by shifting the focus to local places that sit at the intersection of memory making and identity formation — the main street, the city square, the village museum, internment camps, industrial wastelands, and the rural landscape." [More...](#)

*Managed Annihilation: An Unnatural History of the Newfoundland Cod Collapse* by Dean Bavington

Genre: Environment; sociology

ISBN: 9780774817479

\$85

Available now

“Examining the history of commercial cod fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador from the mid-nineteenth century to the aftermath of the cod moratorium, *Managed Annihilation* makes the case that the idea of natural resource management was itself the problem.” [More...](#)

*Transnational Yearnings: Tourism, Migration, and the Diasporic City* by Jenny Burman

Genre: Sociology; geography

ISBN: 9780774817356

\$85

Available now

“*Transnational Yearnings* maps a new way to look at contemporary contact zones and global interconnections as it traces circuits of migration and leisure travel between the Caribbean and Toronto, a city that has become for Jamaican Canadians both a place of promise and cultural vitality and a site of criminalization and exclusion through deportation.” [More...](#)

*The Aquaculture Controversy in Canada: Activism, Policy, and Contested Science* by Nathan Young and Ralph Matthews

Genre: Environment; sociology

ISBN: 9780774818100

\$85

Available now

“Comprehensive and balanced, this book explores the issues at the heart of the aquaculture controversy—the relationship between humanity and the environment, notions of rights and justice, and the rise of intense local-global interactions and conflicts.” [More...](#)

*What is Water? The History of a Modern Abstraction* by Jamie Linton

Genre: Environment; history

ISBN: 978-0-7748-1701-1

\$34.95

Available now

“In this wide-ranging study, Linton shows how scientific practice, the modern state, technology, and politics produced an idea of water that helped permit its manipulation and control on a vast scale, with corresponding effects on human society.” [More...](#)

## UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY PRESS

*Looking Back: Canadian Women's Prairie Memoirs and Intersections of Culture, History, and Identity* by S. Leigh Matthews

Genre: Historiography; literary analysis

ISBN: 978-1-55238-096-3

\$39.95

Available now

"In this ground-breaking new study, Leigh Matthews shows how a critical approach to the life-writing of individual prairie women can broaden and deepen our understanding of the settlement era."

[More...](#)

*The World of Wolves: New Perspectives on Ecology, Behaviour, and Management* edited by Marco Musiani, Luigi Boitani, and Paul Paquet

Genre: Ecology; environment

ISBN: 978-1-55238-269-1

\$34.95

Available now

"*The World of Wolves* offers a fresh and provocative look at current trends in wolf and wildlife management. Representative case studies, from geographically and culturally diverse areas of the world, highlight the existing interconnections between wolves, their prey, their habitat, their ecosystems and people, and the role of science in policy formation and wolf management." [More...](#)

*A Century of Parks Canada, 1911-2011* edited by Claire Campbell

Genre: Environment; history

ISBN: 978-1-55238-526-5

\$34.95

Available now

"Today, Parks Canada manages over forty parks and reserves totalling over 200,000 square kilometres and featuring a dazzling variety of landscapes, and is recognized as a global leader in the environmental challenges of protected places. Its history is a rich repository of experience, of lessons learned—critical for making informed decisions about how to sustain the environmental and social health of our national parks." [More...](#)

---



L. Szabo



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



L. Szabo

**T**he Editors of *The Goose* would like to send out special thanks to all of our contributors. Thank you Tim and Rita for your generosity in sharing your work. Our appreciation goes to Travis, Basma, and David for helping us expand our Scatterings section to include more creative and critical works, and giving us the opportunity to share your talent with readers. Thank you, also, Lex for allowing us to introduce your painting—*Estuary III* is a parting glance worth lingering over. Thanks Dianne for continuing to share photos from your explorations of Canada—they continue to remind us of the beauty of this country. Thanks to ALECC's President, Richard, for providing us with a recap of a resoundingly successful inaugural conference in Cape Breton.

A BIG THANKS to Naomi for your copy-editing skills—a life-saver. Finally, thank you Paul for providing feedback, co-editing, and for your patience and generosity with my ever-changing formats of *The Goose*.

If you are interested in submitting writing or visual art to or doing a review for *The Goose*, please go to [www.alecc.ca](http://www.alecc.ca) for more details. We are always looking for contributions. Contact the Editors with any questions about *The Goose*:

Lisa Szabo [lsszabo\[at\]alecc.ca](mailto:lsszabo[at]alecc.ca)

Paul Huebener [huebenph\[at\]mcmaster.ca](mailto:huebenph[at]mcmaster.ca)

© All copyrights belong to the contributors, and permission to reproduce any of the works posted in this issue must come from the contributors. Email the Editors for contact information. Layout and design by Lisa Szabo and Paul Huebener.



# PARTING GLANCE

A painting by LEX HEDLEY



## Estuary III

**“A**cross the estuary, the wind has eased and the tide is at rest. In such a tranquil, almost timeless setting, sitting, watching in silence, one can devote the eye and mind to looking and seeing. An entire day can pass, seemingly almost before it begins.

Such stillness, seemingly absolute in this vast connection of sea and sky, invites reflection. Senses sharpen, thoughts stray. I think of other, wider symmetries in nature; the ebb and flow of the tides, the arrival and departure of migrating birds, the all too swift passage of the seasons.

As the afternoon advances, such scraps of thought coalesce until, in that last, luminous, exquisitely beautiful hour before sunset, I begin to understand why experiences like these, so supremely evocative, so energize and renew the human spirit.”

Born in the far north of New Zealand, Lex misspent his youth out on his bike in the countryside looking for birds and their nests. He now spends his days on field work in the Pacific Northwest, working on a manuscript for his first book.