

**COMMUNITY, CULTURE, NATURE:
NORTHERN BC WOMEN'S ECOPOETRY.**

by Jacqueline J. Hoekstra

B.A./M.A., University of Northern British Columbia, 2000

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in the Department of
ENGLISH

©Jacqueline J. Hoekstra 2010

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2010

All rights reserved. However, in accordance with the *Copyright Act of Canada*, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for *Fair Dealing*. Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law particularly if cited appropriately.

Approval

Name: **Jacqueline J. Hoekstra**

Degree: **Doctor of Philosophy (English)**

Title of Thesis: **Community, culture, nature:
Northern BC Women's Ecopoetry.**

Examining Committee:

Chair:

Dr. Carolyn Lesjak
Associate Professor and Graduate Chair

Dr. Sophie McCall
Senior Supervisor
Assistant Professor of English

Dr. Carole Gerson
Professor of English

Dr. Steve Collis
Associate Professor of English

Dr. Lara Campbell
Internal examiner
Assistant Professor of Women's Studies

Dr. Rob Budde
External Examiner
Professor of English UNBC

Date Defended/ Approved: April 9th, 2010



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

Declaration of Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the "Institutional Repository" link of the SFU Library website <www.lib.sfu.ca> at: <<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>>) and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Abstract

Community, culture, nature: Northern BC Women's Ecopoetry examines an approach of bioregionalist co-habitation, including sustainability as a keynote and the understanding that community includes human and non-human beings. I discuss the poetry of women nature poets based in Northern British Columbia: Donna Kane, Si Transken, Gillian Wigmore, Dani Pigeau, Heather Harris, Sheila Peters, and Joan Conway. My thesis is that bioregionalist co-habitation, as explored by these Northern British Columbian women poets, challenges embedded Judeo-Christian ideology which asserts humankind's *dominion* over the natural world, and supposes that humans are superior to and separate from flora, fauna, and landforms.

Ecocriticism has many theories and modes. One predominant mode asserts “all that is green is good” while “all culture represents decay.” This body of scholarly and creative writing produces in readers a kind of reverence but does not necessarily guarantee action. Romanticism in nature writing has not prevented ecological disasters. Thus this dissertation argues in favour of a bioregionalist approach, which guides us in devising intimate, place-based ways of living *with* the land in relation to larger global forces and innovative ways of considering the environment through literature. The pragmatic aspect of bioregionalism mitigates the tendencies in ecocriticism to romanticize nature. I analyse representative poems by these poets and show that their co-construction with nature can inform a larger audience on how to pay attention to differences in nature.

This dissertation has two aims. It shows how these poets articulate an understanding of place, flora, fauna, and landform as *here* and as *home*. The second aim is to foreground Northern BC women's poetry. While Chapter 1 of my dissertation analyses critical debates informing ecocriticism and ecofeminism, Chapter 2 maintains that these women poets produce and promote a community of flora, fauna, humans, and landforms in relation to culture. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 examine the poetry of Kane, Transken, and Wigmore respectively, and the last chapter provides readings of selected

poems by Pigeau, Harris, Peters, and Conway. The importance of this study lies in demonstrating what the local has to offer a global world that has become ecologically unbalanced.

Key Words: Bioregionalism; ecocriticism; ecofeminism; ecopoetry; nature writing

Subject Terms: Northern BC; Canadian poetry; 21st Century; Bioregionalism; Ecocriticism; Ecofeminism; Ecopoetry; Nature writing; Women's poetry

Dedication:

For my husband Boyd and his music. For the continuing support of our parents. Also for the thoughtful assistance of the poets themselves, Donna Kane, Si Transken, Gillian Wigmore, Dani Pigeau, Heather Harris, Sheila Peters, and Joan Conway whose poems, many emails, and long conversations helped me be more attentive. And perhaps most importantly for the eyes that are watching me, my children: Levi, Scout, Desirée, Pharaoh, and Cedar, and for my animal friends: Blue, Dixie, Luna-pup, Beauregard 99, Jeckle and Skeena the cats, Blackberry the pony, Black Mountain, Tink, Portia, Puspha, and Pax the donkeys, for Mario and Miley the pygmy goats, and for our yard birds: Isabella, Francesca, Lolita, Lola, Mick, Mack, Monty, Milly, Marigold, Graham, Benedict et al., for the free pigeons who come and go, and for our little farm that supports us.

Acknowledgements

My sincere appreciation for my supervisor, Dr. Sophie McCall, for her understanding and dedication to revisions, and for my committee members Dr. Carole Gerson and Dr. Steve Collis for their encouragement and insightful suggestions. Thank you, too, to Lara Campbell for your considerate questions regarding gender analysis and methodology. I would also like to thank Dr. Rob Budde (UNBC) for his thoughtful questions, fitting suggestions, and insight.

I would also like to thank the English Department and the Dean of Graduate Studies at SFU for their support in making this possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication:	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Primacy of Practice	ix
Preface	x
PART ONE: DEFINING TERMS	1
Chapter 1: “Ecofeminism, Ecocriticism, Bioregionalism and Canadian Nature Writing: A Short History including Contemporary Ecopoetry”	1
Ecocriticism.....	2
Ecofeminism	4
Three Approaches in Ecocritical Theory	8
1. a). “Culture as Decay”	8
1.b). “Constructions of Nature: Green as Icon”	11
2. Multicultural Ecocriticism and Interdisciplinary Ecocriticism	14
3. Bioregionalism and Place-based identities	17
Ecopoetry from a Bioregional Perspective.....	22
Chapter Two: Poets and Northern BC Writerly Communities	31
Writers and their Audience in Northern BC	32
Northern BC Women Writers.....	40
Regionalism and Writerly Communities	46
Dawson Creek/Rolla/ Fort St. John	48
Prince George/Vanderhoof	52
Terrace	54
Smithers.....	55
Lyric Poetry in Northern BC	57
PART TWO: THE POEMS AND THE POETS	66
Chapter 3: Donna Kane and the Liquid Resonance of Words	66
Fall	66
Morning Practice	67
Change of Season	68
On Seeing a Fox With a Dead Gopher in its Mouth	69
Introduction	70
“Fall”	77
“Morning Practice”	82
“Change of Season”	85
“On Seeing a Fox With a Dead Gopher in its Mouth”	87
Conclusion	90

Chapter 4 Si Transken: Ecofeminist Community Building and the Politics of Valuing “Otherness”	92
Generic	92
What This Lake’s Beavers Might say to an Interviewer from Outer Space	94
Damned	95
Walking through Four Early-Evenings on a Port Edwards Bush Road	96
Introduction.....	97
Transken’s Political and Poetic Engagement in Prince George Communities	101
“Generic”	108
“What This Lake’s Beavers Might Say to an Interviewer from Outer Space”	114
“Damned”	120
“Walking Through Four Early-Evenings on a Port Edwards’ Bush Road”	123
Conclusion	127
Chapter 5: Gillian Wigmore’s Place Literacy and Home-making	130
beach fire	130
stellako	131
untitled	132
Nameless	133
Introduction.....	134
“beach fire”	140
“stellako”	146
“untitled”	149
“nameless”	152
Conclusion	154
Chapter 6: Full Bodied Nature Writing: Family is Nature/Children are Small	
Animals Grazing	156
Hedge is to horse (Dani Pigeau)	156
Brother Moose (Heather Harris)	157
The silence of grazing animals (Sheila Peters)	158
Swamp Zone (Joan Conway)	159
Introduction.....	160
“Hedge is to horse”	169
“Brother Moose”	172
“The silence of grazing animals”	176
“Swamp Zone”	180
Conclusion	185
Conclusion	186
Works Cited	191

Primacy of Practice

Let's back up a little
No use putting the cart before the horse
No use sitting down and staring blankly
at swishin' tails and axles.

No use telling it at all
truth is that limb I cut off
the plum tree all blackened and scabby
used to scrape up against the shed
calling me out.

Truth is the bells are all unrung
chimes to the ground.

Truth is I don't even believe in truth
only the roosters crowing across the fence
black australorpe, white brahma, speckled wynadotte

I've gone a long distance away from where I wanted to go
haven't told you what I wanted to say
wanted there to be some sensible
farm words to tell you
about the primacy of practice.

Every morning I get up and bring water to the goats, chickens, pigeons,
hay to the horses
watch the way they
sparkle in the sun today
while yesterday is still here.

Sounds of the roosting, nesting, nickering
calling me out
keeping me here.
Abstract and concrete,
passing into what works after all.

Preface

beyond the feedlots
and the miles of busted fence
where mending rests
only in the minds
of dead settlers,
beyond the dirty stories
they tell in the bar
at the chinese place on main street,
beyond the glossy pictures
gone grey and wet in the rain,
beyond that and outside of town,
the crack in the arc if the earth,
the whole gouged-out line of it
says river river river
how rivers say it
with water.
--Gillian Wigmore, "nameless" (lines 10-25).

People sometimes ask me: "Why focus on Northern BC? Why examine this particular region?" The answer is that many years ago I attended Thomas King's writing workshop at my local college in Terrace and we talked about research projects: his advice was "if you want to know what is really going on, dig around in your own back yard."

Because I grew up on a farm in Terrace beside the Skeena River in Northern BC, Northern BC is my "back yard." I moved to the lower mainland seven years ago and I was concerned about the invisibility of a real north. For many people, Northern BC is not only the imagined barren north of hardship, isolation, and cold in movies and books; it not only is comprised of pristine wilderness; nor is it solely a masculinist resource based north. The north that I explore is one where women poets create their own stories and speak about their own communities, communities comprised of both nature and culture.

Another question that people ask me is: “Why women’s poetry?” The poetry included in this study is not only compelling but also lacking of recognition. For example, although the *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* lists the triad of well-recognized male northern poets, George Stanley, Ken Belford, and Barry McKinnon, it includes none of the poets in this project. Furthermore, Alan Twigg’s “Reckoning” conference, which I attended at SFU’s Harbour Center in 2007, considered BC publishing but did not mention any current Northern BC presses such as Creekstone or UNBC Press, nor any of the smaller private presses either. Although Caitlin Press was mentioned, it continues to focus on Interior BC writing; furthermore, it has moved to the Sunshine Coast in southern BC. This project then is my answer to the lack of “reckoning” of Northern BC women’s poetry and the lack of awareness of the vibrant community of publishing and writing that exists in Northern BC.

This dissertation has two aims. The first is to show how these poets articulate an understanding of place, flora, fauna, and landform as here and as home. The second aim is to foreground Northern BC women’s poetry. My methodology was to use a “snowball sampling” technique. Snowball sampling is a term used most often in anthropology and sociology for developing a research sample where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their friends and associates. Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball. As the sample grows, enough data is gathered to be useful for research. This sampling technique is often used in populations that are difficult for researchers to access, such as under-recognized northern BC women poets.

Given the geographic scope of Northern BC, the internet became an important tool in my research. In order to learn about poets I had not read in traditional print

sources, I began by emailing all the Northern BC women poets I knew and asked them to list the who's who of Northern BC women poets. I then asked librarians from Northern community colleges and from public libraries to inform me about local published women poets in their communities. I emailed friends I knew who had participated in Northern writing groups. I emailed the editor of *Northword*, a Northern BC publication which includes sections on culture and the arts. I also searched the websites of Caitlin Press, Creekstone Press, and *BC Bookworld*. I sent out general inquiries and then became more specific when I got a positive response. For example, I emailed Pamela Den Ouden who gave me Donna Kane's email. I e-mailed Donna Kane and she gave me Gillian Wigmore's email. I was invited, in 2008, to Donna Kane's Vancouver reading of her latest book of poetry (*Erratic*). Afterwards I met Elizabeth Bachinsky and George Sipos (both self-identified Northern BC poets) at the Sylvia Hotel. We threw names back and forth of the women poets we knew and considered Northern BC. It was after this occasion that that I decided to pick women poets who both self-identified as Northern BC and who were currently residing in Northern BC.

Why did I pick these particular poets from among the many? The main reason is that Donna Kane (b. 1959), Si Transken (b. 1960), Gillian Wigmore (b. 1976), Dani Pigeau (b. 1970), Heather Harris (b. 1953), Sheila Peters (b. 1953), and Joan Conway (b. 1959) write poetry about nature with details that defy a utilitarian or romantic attitude toward nature. They challenge their readers to define community in ways that include the nonhuman. Most potently, the poets in this study suggest that nature is in conversation with human communities and vice versa. The poets in this dissertation acknowledge nature's agency and entice readers to listen. I suggest that using the term listening

highlights the need for attentiveness. These Northern BC poets are listening and attending. Attentiveness is a process of acknowledging and recognizing the life force and agency of others. In *The Ecocriticism Reader* Manes speaks of the values of attentiveness: “Attending to ecological knowledge means metaphorically relearning ‘the language of birds’—the passions, pains, and cryptic intents of the other biological communities that surround us” (25). Scott Slovic in “Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology: The Interiority of Outdoor Experience,” in the same reader, insists that “in order to achieve heightened attentiveness to our place in the natural world—attentiveness to our very existence—we must understand something about the workings of the mind” (351). Attentiveness in and to the poets’ work in this project combines both the abstract and the concrete. Ross Leckie says that nature poetry in Canada “risks” sentiment; so too do these poems risk interpreting what they hear nature saying (“Nature Poetry in Canada Since Survival”).

This project brings together and engages with theories of ecocriticism, feminist inquiry, bioregionalism, and literary theory through close analyses of Northern B.C. women’s poetry. The first chapter’s primary aim is to examine and define ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and bioregionalism, setting the stage for my research into Northern BC textual communities. In engaging with the contemporary Northern BC tradition of nature writing my work takes place in the intersection between two prevailing notions within ecocriticism: that nature is composed of entirely positive attributes (the “all green is good” philosophy espoused by many ecocritics like Gary Snyder) and that culture is composed of negative attributes (as illustrated in John Elder’s expression “culture as decay” [227]). Many nature writers evoke the importance of paying respect, honor,

humility, and reverence to nature. I add “noticing”: that is, attending to the nuances of nature, which involves watching, observing and hearing what nature has to say.

Translating this attention into poetry is the poet’s job. Translation is never the same as the original but the impulse to somehow recreate nature, for these poets, is an act of respect.

In chapter 2, I articulate my response to the pervasive invisibility of Northern BC women’s poetry within a general reading audience, mainstream academia, and in publishing in Canada in general. I enact my promise to study and explore the local, regional, writerly and readerly communities in Northern BC. Engaging with theories of bioregionalism, such as those of Greg Garrard, I explore how these communities function, interact and support poetry, suggesting that local knowledge arises from an intimate relationship with nature. In exploring women’s writing in Northern BC, I am feminizing the North, declaring that women are making culture and paying attention to what is going on “on the ground”; these are writers who actively create writerly communities.

In Chapter 3, I provide a close analysis of four poems by poet Donna Kane: “Fall”, “Morning Practice”, “Change of Season”, and “On Seeing a fox with a Dead Gopher in his Mouth”. Kane’s poetry expresses a certain ambivalence about using nature as a symbol, which would suggest that nature is something external. Instead, she uses nature metaphors to trouble the reader’s assumed distinction between actual and symbolic nature. She keeps ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ mobile by proffering and then retracting a number of paradoxical understandings of their interrelationship. Kane’s intensely personal, lyric poetry simultaneously evokes a sense of the larger ramifications of linking the personal and the political and the connections of the local to the global for an outside

audience. Donna Kane was born, raised, and lives in the North Peace Region. She lives in Rolla, BC just outside of Dawson Creek, where she works for the Northern Lights College. She has two books of poetry (*Somewhere, a fire* and *Erratic*) and numerous publications in literary magazines. She writes lyric poetry noting the intersections of culture and nature.

Chapter 4 discusses Si Transken's ecofeminist politics and her desires for social change through an analysis of four of her poems, entitled "Generica", "What This Lake's Beavers Might Say to an Interviewer from Outer Space", "Damned", and "Walking through Four Early Evenings on a Port Edwards' Bush Road". Transken's persuasive style and her direct address to her readers work in tandem with her activist, ecofeminist politics. In a more direct way than Kane, Transken foregrounds her politics relating to gender, poverty, cultural difference, and the environment. With tongue-in-cheek jabs at mainstream society, history, and Canadian nationalism she boldly demands that readers pay attention to her views through humor that undermines potential didacticism. Si Transken is originally from Northern Ontario. Her poetry is overtly political. A professor of social work at UNBC in Prince George, she is a tireless organizer, is pro-animal (vegan), feminist, and a deep ecologist. She is also the editor and contributor to *This Ain't Your Patriarch's Poetry Book*, a series of chapbooks, and has poems in the special Northern BC edition of *The Capilano Review Literary Journal*.

Chapter 5 examines how Gillian Wigmore's pragmatic poetry makes visible the connections between human and nature. In four dense poems that relay Northern BC as home, she identifies openly with the land she has lived on: rivers, lakes, and landforms are prominently featured in her poems "beach fire", "Stellako", "untitled", and

“nameless”. I argue that Wigmore’s sparse use of adjectives allows her to present an unromantic view of nature; yet it is a nature she is intrinsically connected with.

Wigmore’s eschewing of any “Disneyfication” or, at the other end of the spectrum, use of high language provides a much-needed antidote after the commercialization of “green” writing¹ that proliferates today. Gillian Wigmore was born and raised in Vanderhoof (her father a vet and her mother a teacher). She currently lives in Prince George. She has published two books of poetry (*home when it moves you* and *soft geography*, the latter which won the 2008 Dorothy Livesay Poetry prize). She is deeply influenced by the place she grew up in, so much so that in her poetry her body and the land intermingle.

The last four poets comprise my last chapter in my dissertation, with one poem from each poet. Part of me wished I could include all the Northern BC women poets that I love but I had to draw a line somewhere. The last chapter, an analysis of poems by four Northern BC women poets—Dani Pigeau, Heather Harris, Sheila Peters, and Joan Conway—explores the interconnection of family and nature. These poems blur the often imposed lines between humans and nature as a means to include animals in the poets’ families. They suggest that not only do animals have important things to teach us but that we must listen, value, and acknowledge them. The poets broaden the standard definition of family and community to include nature. Marianne Scholtmeijer, a Northern BC ecocritic, suggests that embracing otherness, especially the otherness of animals, is a

¹ *The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology* (2002) by Theodore Roszak, *Reconnecting With Nature: Finding Wellness Through Restoring Your Bond With the Earth* (1997) by Michael J. Cohen, *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche* (2003) by Bill Plotkin, and *Green Psychology: Transforming our Relationship to the Earth* (1999) by Ralph Metzner are all texts that suggest that we might become psychologically and spiritually healthier by reconnecting with nature. My concern is that texts such as these often deify or make an icon out of nature, creating a distance which hardly creates an intimate habitation.

position of strength, and one that women writers particularly employ. Using Scholtmeijer's ideas as a springboard, I consider what these particular Northern women poets have to say about this kind of "responsibility for seeing and honoring otherness" ("The Power of Otherness" 233). I ask whether their writing blurs the hard-cast boundaries of "otherness" imposed by Western civilisation which represents nature and animals as "others".

The poets discussed in this study strongly identify with the place where they live. Rob Budde states in *Northword*: "Place-making (like map making) can occur from without or within, and the imaginative creation of a place is a crucial part of knowing who we are" ("Building" 20). He argues that:

Probably the biggest difference between the imaginative locations of up here and down there is a closeness to landscape and the natural world The closeness is more an intimacy, an entanglement, and a recognition of the ties that bind us to land and nature . . . that ability to contact the land in an intimate way is something that is not only inspiring but timely in that it is crucial for the health of the planet. (20)

This raises an important question: "Does Northern BC women's poetry raise ecocritical awareness"? Is it, in fact, as Budde suggests "crucial for the health of the planet"? Similarly, William Rueckert asks whether we can translate literature into "purgative redemptive biospheric action" ("Literature and Ecology" 121). Akin to Budde and Rueckert I believe that reading green poetry, teaching, and writing ecocritical discourse all release the energy and power stored within green poetry.

Don McKay in his famous essay “Ravens and Baler Twine” says that “it is as dangerous to act as though we were not a part of nature as it is to act as though we were not part of culture”. The poets in this dissertation openly acknowledge we are part of nature and culture. It is this tension in their poetry that is engaging. It is this push and pull of reaching towards and recognizing sameness and difference that they translate into poetry. After all is said and done, these poets are “complicit,” in the words of Donna Kane; they are “complicit” in both the “good” and the “bad” that occurs in their homes. These poems do what Kevin Van Tighem asks us all to think about: “It is time to come home. It is past time. It is time for each of us to rediscover the living landscapes . . . and recognize them as the home places that make us who we are—no less than our families, the houses in which we live” (262). These poets prove we are part of a community that includes humans, flora, and fauna. This is evidenced by their poetry insisting that a deep inhabitation of place is possible, and that being attentive to one’s surroundings and their relationship to other beings is imperative. It is time to start paying attention: the global and the local rate of environmental degradation is escalating. Attending to the nuances of nature through these particular poems is a way to engage with and critique this global discourse. The poets in my dissertation are writing within a lyric tradition (while pushing past its edges) and are invoking “I/self” to say that story and political change are connected. In a non-didactic manner, these writers encourage the reader to live by the values being explored without being directly told to do so.

PART ONE: DEFINING TERMS

Chapter 1: “Ecofeminism, Ecocriticism, Bioregionalism and Canadian Nature Writing: A Short History including Contemporary Ecopoetry”.

I have a sort of aversion to writing "about" nature... As I go about my dailinesses, I'm always noticing the weeds and the dragonflies and the trees and etc. and I know I have an almost religious feeling about them. But **so what?** Who among us with any brains or imagination doesn't? And why has it all evidently fallen on deaf ears, as far as the real world of conservation, etc. goes?

--Sharon Thesen, (interview with Nancy Holmes, emphasis added).

Nature poetry is thriving in Canada.... It is crucial to understand that nature poetry is not nostalgic in an escapist sense; it risks nostalgia because emotions such as regret may be of more poetic and political use than ironic detachment.

--Ross Leckie. *Northern Poetry Review*. October 2006.

This chapter is an introduction to ecocritical and ecofeminist literary inquiry detailing some of the differences between predominate ecocritical theories. The purpose of the chapter is to show how my bioregionalist and ecofeminist investigations differentiate from other ecocritical considerations, and to examine the role ecopoetry plays within and against these theoretical debates. While ecopoets such as Sharon Thesen (above) harbour a certain degree of distrust over ecocriticism's efficacy in making any real world changes, others, such as Don McKay and Ross Leckie, attempt to forge new relationships between nature poetry and ecocritical theories while acknowledging that “humans, are necessarily anthropocentric” (Harold Fromm, “Aesthetic Anthropocentrism” 3).

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss some of the major critical threads in ecocriticism and ecofeminism, Current multicultural and interdisciplinary ecocriticisms offer new windows from outside the mainstream, mostly white, American ecocritical theories. Finally, a bioregionalist ecocritical approach values an intimate engagement

with place that is attentive to the nuances in nature and does not see humans as separate from nature. In bioregionalist perspectives, *place* becomes an important category of identity.

Ecocriticism

*Ecocriticism*² (the umbrella field under which ecofeminism falls) is a multidisciplinary set of theories and practices whose common focus is an examination of or concern with the natural world. Central to this focus is a value system of interconnectivity and an approach that strives toward the anti-hierarchical. Barry Commoner's main precept, that "everything is connected to everything else" (*The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology* 33), is the "First Law" of ecology and is an oft-repeated definition within ecocriticism acknowledging this literary theory's roots in ecology. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the definition of ecology as "Of, relating to, or involving the interrelationships between living organisms and their environment. Later also: environmental; of or relating to the natural environment." The OED also lists the date of the first use of the word ecology as 1876.

The advent of the use of *ecocritical theory* (and language) begins in the 1960s with such texts as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which denounces capitalist ways of

² Ecocritical literary criticism is a relatively new theoretical position. It is not a term used or defined in Hawthorn's *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (1994) nor is it used or defined in the first edition of Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (1995) but in the newer revised edition (2009) of Barry's text there is an entire chapter devoted to ecocriticism and culture and nature debates. Barry's caveat is that ecocriticism "is still distinctly on the academic margins" (248). Thus it is an idea receiving a progressive amount of attention: [ecocriticism] "has become one of the more publicly visible currents in literary study today" (Rosendale, xv). The term ecocriticism first appears in 1976 in William Rueckert's "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (107).

interacting with the environment. Her groundbreaking book focused American attention on the devastating effects of chemical pesticides and herbicides. The overt linking of ecology and literature is evident in Joseph W. Meeker's 1972 book, *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*. Meeker introduces the term *literary ecology*, which he uses to describe "the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works" (qtd. in Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader* xix).

The specific word *ecocriticism* in relation to literature and literary theory traces back to William Rueckert's 1976 essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (107). In this pivotal essay Rueckert unifies what had been a division between the science of ecology and the study of literature. In seeking a new and exciting theory, Rueckert proposes applying an ecological focus to literary texts. He states: "I am going to experiment with the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis for a human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world we all live in" (107).

Cheryl Glotfelty gives us a preliminary definition of ecocriticism in her Introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*: "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (xviii). The awareness of an earth-centred approach is pivotal in my research; it contains not only an awareness of the earth as othered but also insists that the earth has something to say if

only we are listening. Through my dissertation I examine how these BC Northern women poets use language and poetry to explore the “responsibility for seeing and honoring otherness” that they enact (Scholtmeijer “The Power of Otherness” 233). It is through concentrated attempts at finding intersections of agency and places where human and nature share oppressions that we can see both the “other” and the self as connected. When Glotfelty compares ecocriticism to feminism with its gender conscious perspective and also associates ecocriticism with Marxism with its awareness of class, economics, and modes of production she is subtly connecting ecocriticism to these same values. These Marxist and feminist values are inextricable from ecofeminism, which is one of the offshoots of ecocriticism.

Ecofeminism

Ecocriticism is not listed in the OED, but the term *ecofeminism* is defined as: “A socio-political theory and movement which associates ecological (esp. environmental) concerns with feminist ones, esp. in regarding both as resulting from male dominance and exploitation” (OED). The term *ecofeminism* traces back to French writer Françoise d’Eaubonne in 1974 (*Le féminisme ou la mort*). Carolyn Merchant posits that d’Eaubonne first used the word to “represent women’s potential for bringing about an ecological revolution to ensure human survival on the planet” (“Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory” 100). Ecofeminism delves deeply into issues of feminism and casts a wide ecocritical net upon considerations of the *other*³. Tracking the roots of ecofeminism is difficult; some attribute it to the fusions of second and third wave feminism with environmentalism (see

³ The premise of ‘othering’ excludes or marginalizes another group. Declaring someone “other,” makes them dissimilar from of another, and this carries over into representations of others, especially through stereotypical images.

Merchant 1980 and Griffin 1978). For others ecofeminism comes from an awareness of animal rights—a less anthropocentric view of the world. For still others, ecofeminism enables a displacing of the self from the center, and a valorization of *otherness* (culture, race, gender, and species) (see Carol Adams’s *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 1987).

A revealing example of women’s identification with, and defense of, otherness is their historical association with animal rights movements: “The great majority of activists in the nineteenth-century antivivisection and anticruelty movements were women, as today, it is estimated, 70 to 80 percent of animal rights’ movement adherents are women” (Carol Adams, “Introduction” *Animals and Women* 5). The Western tradition has negated, subordinated and devalued what is considered or has been associated with the feminine; thus animals, nature, the body, and emotions are considered “other” and lacking in value. Conversely that which is linked with the masculine has been constructed as positive; this includes culture, science, reason and the mind. There are a multitude of historical reasons and justifications for the continued existence of these binary oppositions⁴.

⁴ Lori Gruen, in her essay “Dismantling Oppression” (1993), discusses the connections made by mainly white, middle-class male anthropologists and sociologists for linking women and nature. Several origin stories emerge to explain and justify the reasons for linking women’s and nature’s oppression: for example, the theory of Human Social evolution includes “our” (humankind’s) earliest history, as originating from a hunting and gathering society. This includes the conceptualization of men as hunters—purportedly being bigger and stronger and less restricted by the demands of gestation. Culture purportedly originated as a means of mitigating the relationship between god figures and nature. Women, on the other hand, were and are, seen as being linked to nature as life-bringing. The ability to menstruate without dying was linked to the rejuvenation of the earth in its seasonal abilities. The ability to menstruate and gestate apparently led to women’s non-hunting, non-culture-making status. Further along in humans’ social evolution was the change from nomadic hunter-gatherers to agricultural-sedentary modes of life. With the advent of agriculture came the domestication and breeding of animals;

Ecological feminism or ecofeminism is a theoretical concept that at first appears to be a united construct. In its simplest form it links the oppression of the environment with women's oppression (both by patriarchal hierarchies). Thus it is a concept of a denigrating of "power over" others that exists within the patriarchal structures of government, society, history, and religion that pervades almost every facet of Canadian day-to-day existence. Some of the difficulties in ecofeminism lie in its apparent unity of theory. In fact, ecofeminism relies upon many different and divergent theoretical premises and applications. Ecofeminism would be a more accurate term if it were pluralized as ecofeminisms. There are, after all, within ecofeminisms, as there are within feminisms, many different theoretical alliances originating from different ideologies (for example: radical ecofeminism, cultural ecofeminism, socialist ecofeminism). Cultural ecofeminists argue that women are essentially different from men, that they have particular characteristics, such as the ability to gestate, that unite women with nature. Cultural ecofeminists believe that nurturing and child raising should be valued and reevaluated in contemporary society. David Landis Barnhill argues: "Cultural feminists in particular emphasize intuition and myth, while radical feminists may be suspicious of losing the power of reason in affirming a feminist knowing" (1). Socialist ecofeminism attributes "differences" to social constructions that vary within divergent cultures and different cultural expectations. Critiques of ecofeminism include the notion that it often fails to hold womankind accountable in participating in environmental degradation and

this led to a further understanding by the "reasoning" men that reproduction could be controlled, and thus women were seen as bearers of a "work force".

risks merely turning the power over system on its head⁵. Essentialism is a danger in pro-woman ideologies. While an identification with “otherness” may create alliances, a manifestation of maternal inclinations raises questions of essentialism. However, through analyses of the strategic deployment and strategic alliances within ecofeminism necessary spaces for alliances of the particular, the provisional, and the situational can be created.

Reflecting on this critical diversity, Cheryl Glotfelty in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in literary Ecology* (1996) supplies readers with the three major developmental stages of ecocriticism and ecofeminism (using Elaine Showalter’s model of feminist criticism).

1. The representation phase: how is nature represented in literature? What stereotypes are used? (Eden, virgin land, savage wilderness) Conversely, why is nature absent?
2. The rediscovery phase: reissue and reconsider previous canonical texts. For example, reconsidering *nature writing* not just as quaint regional bird-watching essays but also for what it says about society at differing points in time.
3. The theoretical phase, where ecocritics consider "the symbolic construction of species. How has literary discourse defined the human?" (xxii-xxiv). This theoretical lens includes examining binary divisions, such as nature/culture, male/female, same/other, and body/mind dualisms.

Although ecocriticism and ecofeminism are resistant to categorization (each critic is an advocate of her or his own line of logic and considerations), I identify three of the more obvious categories (sometimes with overlap between them). The first presents human

⁵ Certainly Imelda Marcos and Margaret Thatcher were not exempt from power mongering.

culture in sharp contrast to the environment; indeed, culture is represented as a force of decay, while all that is 'green' is considered iconic. The second formulation, which, following Susie O'Brien, I describe as 'multicultural/ interdisciplinary ecocriticism,'⁶ acknowledges the connections between nature and culture. The third category that I analyze is bioregionalism. Bioregionalism most often grows out of the second category, understanding that place is as important a category of identity as gender, culture, and race.

Three Approaches in Ecocritical Theory

1. a). "Culture as Decay"

The focus of this group of nature writers, critics and poets involves a romantic longing for earlier, less-technologically advanced times. Sometimes these critics of globalist, consumerist-based societies wish to keep "small towns small" and keep humans out of nature. While not as overtly antagonistic towards all forms of technology as primitivism⁷, there are some shared tendencies. Within even a tradition as old as the pastoral⁸, nature is often a vehicle for political and social issues. As far back as first century B.C. pastoral poems by Virgil, shepherds and their pastoral way of life can be

⁶ In "Nature's Nation, National Natures? Reading Ecocriticism in a Canadian Context," O'Brien discusses her qualms about Glotfelty's visions of ecocriticism as becoming "ever more interdisciplinary, multicultural, and international" (xxv) in *The Ecocriticism Reader*. O'Brien takes to task the *Ecocriticism Reader* for espousing such multicultural and international ethics but falling short of including many multicultural or international essays in this collection.

⁷ "Primitivism is the pursuit of ways of life running counter to the development of technology, its alienating antecedents, and the ensemble of changes wrought by both" (Filiss par. 1).

⁸ While there are more traditional definitions, Lawrence Buell defines pastoral as "that [which] celebrates the ethos of nature/rurality over against the ethos of the town or city" ("Environmental" 32).

read as romantic emblems for urban disassociation. Two critics representative of this group are J Scott Bryson and Gary Snyder. Bryson, in his introduction to *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*, suggests that in order to be considered “ecopoetry”, poetry must adhere to a skeptical approach to “an overtechnologized modern world and a warning concerning the very real potential for ecological catastrophe” (6). He also argues that “the loss of relationship with the natural world is irrevocable” and that understanding the “loss and its permanence” is an ecopoet’s mandate (*The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry* 3). Scigaj defines ecopoetry “as poetry that persistently stresses human cooperation with nature conceived as a dynamic, interrelated series of cyclic feedback systems” (37). Another, slightly more nuanced perspective is that of Snyder who, in his collected essays, *The Practice of the Wild*, argues compellingly for knowledge and familiarity with place. He argues that Western humans degrade the environment because they have become displaced and unfamiliar. He states: “few today can announce themselves as someone from somewhere. Almost nobody spends a lifetime in the same valley, working alongside the people they knew as children” (27). His perspective encourages solidarity and knowledge within a biotic zone: “But if you know what is taught by plants and weather, you are in on the gossip and can truly feel more at home to know the spirit of a place is to realize that you are a part of a part and that the whole is made of parts, each of which is whole. You start with the part you are whole in” (41). Yet his argument hinges on the premise that the “occidental scientist-engineer-ruler puts the whole planet on the brink of degradation” (20). As Shaun Johnson so aptly remarks: “Snyder elevates the primitive; mythological, self-aware, and reverent, directly against the modern man; who is ignorant, selfish, and displaced” (“Place, Love, and

Time: ‘This Poem is for Deer’”). First of all, the assumption that primitive, mythological, self-aware, and reverent somehow are inextricably linked is baffling and second of all, the notion that all modern humans are ignorant, selfish, and displaced is even harder to buy. The interpretation of primitive as positive and modern as negative hardly allows for the realities of many divergent cultures today. Not everyone on this planet is displaced and some have *found* their place and made it home. The poets in this study can attest to the importance of living in place, rubbing shoulders with local flora, fauna, and landforms, and hearing what nature and the land have to say. They are, as Snyder would say: “in on the gossip”.

In contrast to Snyder, Donna Haraway asks why, if ecocritical studies are fundamentally non-hierarchical in nature, nature and culture must be seen as a dualism? She argues that, much as Edward Said maintains that the Occident is shaped by the perceived negative of the Orient, so too is the human shaped by the assumed negative of the simian (“The Dualism of Primatology”). Culture is a necessary foil for writing about nature. Do we, when we consider nature, see it only as we position ourselves around it? Haraway’s critique specifically targets the ‘culture as decay’ strain in ecocritical theory: “Nature is only the raw material of culture, appropriated, preserved, enslaved, exalted, or otherwise made flexible for disposal by culture in the logic of capitalist colonialism” (“Dualism” 147). Haraway’s perspective could almost be described as *anti*-ecocritical – but, I would argue, is usefully so, because she counteracts the tendency towards romanticization in some ecocriticism. Haraway highlights the high cost of human occupation in and on nature and draws attention to the larger power relations (colonialism, capitalism) that have deeply influenced our understanding of nature. By no

means does Haraway argue that we should separate or stay out of nature/wilderness. Her theories of co-creation and companion species indicate a very real (although not always equal) intermingling of human and animal being. Writing about nature is culture; to posit *nature* one has to be in *culture*.

1.b). “Constructions of Nature: Green as Icon”

The “Green as Icon” approach has a large following: Karen J. Warren, Starhawk, Michel Serres, and Glynnis Carr are only a few. As a subset of “Culture is Decay”, there is an emphasis on the adulation of nature. Because everything *green* tends to be popular these days, I caution against the iconification of nature. Nature as an icon means that nature exists for the edification of humanity. The pro-green mentality has filtered into academic discussions of literature and nature. For example, in his statement “Only love can save us all”, Michel Serres’s *Natural Contract* contains his plea to love one another (love humanity) and love the earth (locally and globally). Even in this pivotal and important ecological and philosophical text, there are elements of a hierarchical division between humanity and nature. According to Serres, humankind’s interactions with the environment need to be mediated by a contract much the same as Rousseau’s social contract. Humans need to be good “helmsmen”, steering and constantly making adjustments in the environment. The difficulty with this metaphor is that it implies some kind of mastery over nature. In Serres’s example, are we not reinscribing a hierarchy through ideologies of “being good stewards” to the earth? Rousseau’s contract is based on consent; but the question of whether or not the earth can or will give consent arises.

The “green as icon” approach is also fairly dominant in some expressions of cultural ecofeminism and radical feminisms which, while non-anthropocentric, value the

feminine over the masculine in terms of empathy and alliance with nature. Deep ecology also belongs to this category, and is sometimes linked to the radical feminist movement. For example, Carolyn Merchant, in *The Death of Nature*, states: “both the women’s movement and the ecology movement are sharply critical of the costs of competition, aggression, and domination arising from the market economy’s modus operandi in nature and society” (xvi).

Deep ecology is a philosophy that began in 1973 when Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess coined the phrase to oppose what he called “shallow environmentalism”. Shallow environmentalism most often consists of technological measures to improve such things as industrial waste, recycling, and making cars more fuel efficient (Alan Drengson “The Deep Ecology Movement”). Both human and non-human beings as well as nature have intrinsic value, needs, and agency within deep ecology. This value is independent of nature’s usefulness to humans. Systemic anthropocentrism is criticized. According to Michael E. Zimmerman: “Deep ecology is founded on two basic principles: one is a scientific insight into the interrelatedness of all systems of life on Earth, together with the idea that anthropocentrism - human-centeredness - is a misguided way of seeing things. . . . The second component of deep ecology is what Arnie Naess calls the need for human self-realization. Instead of identifying with our egos or our immediate families, we would learn to identify with trees and animals and plants, indeed the whole ecosphere. . . . We just wouldn't do certain things that damage the planet, just as you wouldn't cut off your own finger” (24 *In Context: A Quarterly of Humane Sustainable Culture*).

From an ecofeminist perspective, it could be argued that deep ecology ignores androcentricism as the root cause of ecological problems. Thus at times, deep ecology risks accepting, as the norm, a masculinist perspective. In contrast—though in some ways sharing the same aims as deep ecology—cultural ecofeminist theory and radical feminists are dedicated to creating and nurturing a woman-centered culture. Concerns of cooperation and pacifism are upheld as uniquely feminine traits. Power systems are considered a solely masculine domain. A *power over* system is one in which there is a distinct hierarchy with all that it entails, including subjugating those who are seen as weaker. Patriarchy denied women equal rights; traditional Christianity prevented women from being part of the power structure; colonialism subjugated all peoples that were identified as other; and general anthropocentrism denies that animals/nature have *voice*.

Within certain radical ecofeminisms, such as that of writer, critic and Wiccan Starhawk, are the notions of enlightenment, transformation, or transcendence that are sometimes attributed to spiritual or mystical belief systems. In “Power, Authority and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-based Spirituality” (1990), Starhawk states: “When we understand that the Earth itself embodies spirit and that the cosmos is alive, then we also understand that everything is interconnected. Just as in our bodies: what happens to a finger affects what happens to a toe. The brain doesn’t work without a heart” (73). Starhawk’s quote neatly avoids asking “who or what is then the head”? Is she reifying the mind/body binary? Starhawk’s quotation certainly follows the fundamental precept of ecology: “everything is connected to everything else”, but her particular emphasis is on a more caring, nurturing humanity and moreover, on a spiritual connectivity as well as a physical one. There is an implied “you cannot really care or be connected without

embracing such spirituality” that lacks pragmatics. Another, related example is the work of Carol P. Christ, a radical ecofeminist critic who romantically links the feminine with nature. She relies upon a more emotional/experiential system rather than a rational one to support her beliefs: “There are no hierarchies among beings on Earth,” she states (Christ 66). What she probably means is that she’d like this to be true. But her rationale leaves some actualities aside. When she says that only “a deeply felt connection to all beings in the web of life” can stop us from destroying the earth she does not provide a means for revealing and proving this interconnectedness (68). Radical ecofeminists such as Starhawk or Christ critique and challenge a male centered culture and argue for a female culture as distinct and as preferable. They celebrate the perceived inherent woman/nature connection. And by their overt identification with nature they hope to avoid operating in a human/nature binary. Yet this homogenous identity of womanhood often ignores the vast differences of class, ethnicity, and history. Multicultural ecocriticism helps to address these blind spots.

2. Multicultural Ecocriticism and Interdisciplinary Ecocriticism

Multicultural ecocriticism includes analyses of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and class in relation to one another, as well as in relation to place. Susie O’Brien (whose term “multicultural ecocriticism” I have borrowed), Don McKay, Ross Leckie, Neil Evernden, Marion Scholtmeijer, Rob Budde, and Jan Zwicky, are some Canadian theorists who are currently examining the possibilities of ecocriticism as a critical tool to examine the connective tissues of nature, culture, gender, place, and politics. Neil Evernden, the only Canadian writer included in the *Ecocriticism Reader*, complains of the minor role that the Arts and Humanities play in the environmental movement. His is

an interdisciplinary approach connecting science, environment, and language. He argues against the standard consumerist “What good is it?” approach concerning nature. He insists that in order to attempt any solution to environmental issues we must cast aside our western ideology of binaries. His argument is that we are not discreet entities (the environmental adage “everything is connected to everything else”) (94). Evernden asks: “Where do you draw the line between one creature and another? Where does one organism stop and another begin? Is there even a boundary between you and the non-living world, or will the atoms in this page be a part of your body tomorrow?” (95) He critiques a western aesthetics of place. Evernden goes even further in his argument, maintaining that territory is of utmost importance, calling it “*the relation of self to setting*” (99). Using terms such as “belonging” and “place” situates Evernden well within a theory of bioregionalism. Multicultural interdisciplinary environmentalism looks to science, deep ecology, and argues for a “literal interrelatedness” that once acknowledged means an unavoidable “involvement of self with place” (102-103).

Susie O’Brien suggests that some incarnations of ecocriticism fall into the trap of championing experience over theory. She argues that a multicultural ecocriticism may help fix this trend. For example, O’Brien is deeply concerned with the direction that she sees ecocriticism taking. She indicts the “sloppiness” of its rhetoric and its lack of intellectual rigor. She also points, in dismay, toward its American focus, though ironically ecocritics often champion their global and multicultural perspectives. She is also concerned with “the perils of the ecocritical mandate to get back to the physical world.” She argues that there is a cost associated with not considering how culture, politics, economics, and other social factors play out within an ecocritical outlook. In

“The Garden and the World: Jamaica Kincaid and the Cultural Borders of Ecocriticism”, she censures ecocriticism for its supposed straightforward injunctions. She notes that:

If it is to become something more than the critical equivalent of a "pleasing well-grown garden," ecocriticism needs paradoxically to move not closer to nature but back through culture in order to examine the tensions and contradictions that structure our engagements with the physical world-including (and especially) the tensions and contradictions of ecocriticism itself, . . . ecocritics might consider more seriously why ecocriticism has, as many of its practitioners acknowledge, remained mainly a white movement centred in the United States. This will entail detailed consideration of economic issues, including an acknowledgment of the (dis)connections between natural and cultural economies. In a broader sense, it means subordinating the desire to get back to the physical world to an investigation of how that world is culturally mediated. (167)

While O'Brien takes to task the first (and more prevalent type of ecocriticism): “the all green is good/all culture is decay” category and rightly so, she also censures the “multicultural interdisciplinary” category of ecocriticism. Yet, I argue that because women writers in Northern BC are often on the margins of publishing due to their lack of accessibility to larger publishing centres and because they have a unique Northerly understanding of the nature and culture connection, they are on the edge of the mainly white American ecocriticism that O'Brien justly indicts. Exploring the cultural mediation

of place/nature is as imperative as O'Brien suggests. Yet, a bioregionalist perspective, combined with multiculturalist ecocriticism, (a kind of ecoconvergence) recognizes that being in place is as important as writing about the axes of power that generate social divides based on categories such as race, ethnicity, culture, gender, etc, in relation to the cultural mediation of nature.

3. Bioregionalism and Place-based identities

Bioregionalism is a politics of inhabitation which implies that living deeply connected to place is meaningful and necessary: for example, knowing where one's water comes from and where one's waste goes is a practice of bioregionalism. The philosophy of pragmatism suggests that *what works* is a priority; in other words, practical consequences are emphasized. In analyzing the work of the poets in this dissertation from a bioregional perspective, I show that these Northern writers have no choice but to notice the differences and changes in their environment. If it is -40 degrees, a person tends to pay attention; if your backyard is a river, you learn its changing bends and contours as a city child might learn a bus route or a back alley. Necessity commands what we do. Poetry commands the articulation of that experience. This is the crux of the bioregionalist ecopoetic approach: while ethical on many levels, it hinges on a practical pragmatic understanding of place and invokes lived experience.

Bioregionalism means becoming indigenous⁹ to our place: making our homes sustainable within its climactic zone, and eating and producing local food. It means

⁹ Indigenous may be a problematic word choice: In Terry Goldie's book, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (1993), he states: "The indigene is often used to present the possibility of nature in a human form. In the same way, the indigene's closeness to nature is used to

considering the effect our actions have, both in the short and long term. While bioregionalism is undeniably a practice that emphasizes efficacy it also offers useful theoretical approaches to questions of place, nature, and the local. Thus it is a theory and a practice. Bioregionalism is gaining stature in both literary studies and in the environmental movement. Bioregionalism does not pit ‘theory’ against ‘experience’ in the way that O’Brien and others do. Bioregionalism sees the interdependence of experience and theory in the search for answers to our environmental issues.

Bioregionalism is an ethical, pragmatic, place-based theory and practice that is innately interdisciplinary. Michael Vincent McGinnis calls bioregionalism “an intellectually rich and culturally diverse way of thinking and living” (3). He also says it is “a grass-roots doctrine of social and community-based activism that has evolved wholly outside of mainstream government, industry, and academic institutions” (*Bioregionalism* 4). His belief that bioregionalism occurs in place is undeniable. It is indeed a grass-roots movement (occurring at a local level) but it is not as far outside of academia and government as McGinnis purports. The growing field of ecocriticism means that students and teachers are exposed to bioregional theory and can in turn carry it forth from the classroom. Published ecopoetry means that a reading and writing community are both theorizing and living bioregionalism, thus extending it past territorial boundaries of place.

Dan Flores, in “Place: Thinking About Bioregional History” (1999) argues that bioregionalism addresses the specificity of local history and “the particularism of

justify an emphasis on the indigene as the land. In the one, nature becomes human, in the other, human becomes nature” (20). Here he is speaking of the Indigenous peoples of Canada and New Zealand; I, on the other hand, use the word indigenous to mean local to, or originating from a specific place or bioregion. The OED defines indigenous as belonging naturally to (the soil, region, etc.), but it also emphasizes that the term is used most often to refer to aboriginal people.

distinctive places fashioned by human culture's peculiar and fascinating interpenetration with all the vagaries of topography, climate, and evolving ecology that define landscapes” (44). The poets in this dissertation are in touch with their “bioregional histories” (44) either because it is their heritage (being born to a family that has lived in place) or because they have gone looking for this history. As Rob Budde puts it: “It always takes a while to learn the poetic history of a *place* and then find *your place* in it” (“Finding”).

Globalisation is often cited as the reason behind the decreased “locality” of customs, politics, belonging, and language. Globalism *seems* to have eroded local culture and local knowledge. Yet, the assumed decline of “the local”—the amount of time and connections a person has with a specific geographic locality—is not as assured as critics of globalisation might have us believe. In Linda McDowell’s *Gender, Identity, and Place* (1999), she emphasizes that there are many places in the world that have revitalised traditions or have a deep-rooted sense of belonging. McDowell argues that place, as a term, is not fixed or bounded but instead “boundaries are both social and spatial- they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of the experience” (4).

Boundaries are both conceptual and actual; the poets in this project define themselves through their writerly communities, bioregions, territories, and geophysical place: these boundaries, though, are interpenetrable. Geographers (McDowell, Clifford, Massey) are recognizing the interrelatedness between local and global. The inference that local is fixed and that global is transitional is being deconstructed. After all, *place* affects perspectives and understandings of the natural world. According to Snyder: “We

experience slums, prairies, and wetlands all equally as “places”. Like a mirror a place can hold anything, on any scale. I want to talk about place as an experience . . . (We have the terms enculturation and acculturation, but nothing to describe the process of being placed or replaced)” (“The Place, the Region, and the Commons” 25).

Place, or where one places oneself geophysically, is still an innovative concept within ecofeminism and ecocriticism. As Cheryl Glotfelty asks: “In addition to race, class, and gender, should *place* become a new critical category?” [emphasis added] (*The Ecocriticism Reader* xix). Place is indispensable within bioregionalist perspectives and is a primary category of identity. It adds an important new category of considerations to ideas of the “connections between how one treats women, people of color, and the underclass on one hand and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment on the other” (Warren “Introduction” *Ecofeminism* xi).

Doreen Massey in *Space, Place, and Gender* considers the development of ideas about the social structure of space and place, and the relation of both to issues of gender and debates within feminism. Massey builds on an idea of spatiality as the result of economy, society, and politics. In her lecture entitled “Globalisations as Geometries of Power” Massey states: “Neither ‘local’ nor ‘global’ are politically progressive or regressive in themselves. Rather what is at issue is not whether or not we are going to have a more interconnected world, but what will be the form of that interconnectivity” (par. 1). Local knowledge that can globally benefit our planet should not be treated lightly. And yet, place should not be used as a way to exclude those who are perceived to be from *outside*. It could potentially resurrect a notion of a threatened purity. The local ought not to become a place of defensibility. What at first seems emancipatory—

acknowledging that experience of place influences understanding of the environment— becomes possibly dangerous if place is considered a closed system. And if it’s a singular locality/identity it may deny those who live in more than one place. In fact, identity and places can be plural. If place, as I contend, is another of many categories of identity then one person can belong within more than one place¹⁰.

Greg Garrard asserts that “Wilderness is . . . a recent notion. To designate a place apart from, and opposed to, human culture depends upon a set of distinctions that must be based on a mainly agricultural economy, concepts such as fields and crops, as opposed to weeds and wilderness, simply could not exist” (*Ecocriticism* 60). Although to some extent I agree with him, *North* and *Northern* complicate his categories of agricultural versus hunter-gatherer. Hunting, fishing, farming, and home gardens abound in Northern BC. Garrard’s notions of wilderness as *other* for Old World settlers becomes irrelevant in contemporary Northern BC. What Garrard calls the construction of wilderness as “signifying nature in a state uncontaminated by civilisation” does not necessarily hold true (59). The “world of culture and nature” as inseparable is true for parts of the North (*Practice of the Wild* 40). The coming together of wilderness and civilization occurs in the northern rural term *bush*, which is most often defined in Northern BC as the liminal green spaces that surround and intersect human dwellings and constructions¹¹.

¹⁰ In Haida Gwaii, during an English class (2003), a student’s response to a question about identity and place as linked, brought up the notion (upheld by the class as a whole) that one doesn’t have to be *in* that specific place to remain linked. Particularly, she spoke of her daughters away at university and how they will always (no matter where they go or where they live) be part of Haida Gwaii and how they could belong to their new place as well.

¹¹ See Pamela Banting’s comments on “bush” in chapter 3.

In choosing to examine Northern BC poetry with a bioregionalist lens, I focus on the role poetry, poets, and culture play from within a place-based perspective. Because it directly addresses location as a site of inquiry (equally important as gender or sexuality) this inquiry expands discussions of identity politics. It is just as Ross Leckie conveys in the online *Northern Poetry Review* when he avers, “Nature poetry articulates what I like to think of as lyric subjectivity, that location we occupy in space/time and the awareness of it that grants us capability, that allows us agency”. Similarly, I examine these poets and how their nature poetry “articulates their lyric subjectivity, that *location* they occupy”.

The cultural artifacts of language and writing can indeed impart a different concept of how we are connected with nature. Ecocriticism demands that we examine texts for what they say about society and how the texts depict values and ethics concerning the natural world. Eco-poetry consciously takes on issues of voice, agency, and honors otherness. I suggest that eco-poetry is poetry which “lower[s] our standard of dominating nature and raises our standard of participating in it in order to make reconciliation take place” (Francis Ponge *The Voice of Things*¹²).

Eco-poetry from a Bioregional Perspective

The work of eco-poets, especially those informed by bioregionalist theory, continuously insist that humans are part of and indivisible from the landscape. Leslie Marmon Silko, writing about integrated landscape in “Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories” (1996), writes: “the term *landscape*, as it has entered the English language is misleading. ‘A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view’ does not correctly describe the relationship between the human being and his

¹² As quoted in William Rueckert’s “Literature and Ecology” 105)

or her surroundings. This assumes the viewer is somehow *outside* or *separate from* the territory she or he surveys. Viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on” (25). We cannot extricate ourselves from nature. Moreover, as the poets discussed in this dissertation consider themselves part of their natural environment (just as Silko suggests), they have situated bioregional knowledge based on their understanding that everything is connected.

In Eurocentric Canadian ecocriticism the terminology most often used is visual. Writers such as Myrna Kostash speak of *Reading the River*, W. H. New talks about reading the lay of the land, and Pamela Banting uses the metaphor of reading “fresh tracks”¹³: these examples presuppose the reader’s job as paramount and nature as silent. Yet listening and hearing imply a dialogue that is taking place between two active interlocutors. In First Nations writing and oral narratives, often the emphasis is on *listening* to what the land/nature has to say (presupposing nature’s voice), which entails an implicit understanding of the agency of nature¹⁴. Akin to this kind of deep inhabitation with place the poets in this dissertation are listening to what nature has to say. Michele K. Johnson, a PhD student in ethnobotany at UNBC Okanagan, suggests that certain First Nations concepts may have, in fact, become part of a Northern BC lexicon which ties together holistic notions of nature wherein humans are indivisible from their place. She suggests that such terms as “bush”, “camp”, and “pack” are an English gloss of First

¹³ See Kostash, Myrna, *Reading the River: A Traveller's Companion to the North Saskatchewan River* (2005), New, W. H. *Land-Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Fiction* (1997), and Pamela Banting’s “Introduction” to *Fresh Tracks* (1998).

¹⁴ See Jeanette Armstrong’s “Landscape,” in *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing* (1998), edited by Simon Ortiz, and Leslie Marmon Silko’s “Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination” in *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996).

Nations terms that have no real translation in English. If forest is something “out there” for most European immigrants and is in fact something “right here” that First Nations traditionally spoke of then, “bush” as a term that unites these is as close as English gets (March 1st 2009 e-mail).

An ecopoet heeds and expresses the natural world in new and unusual ways so as to bring to the fore not just its importance but also a small bit of its *being* (what Don McKay calls its *duende*). There is a tension in the work of ecopoets such as McKay: even as they attempt to translate nature onto the page, nature will always remain a tangible presence that eludes representation. Ecopoets make us feel the presence of nature. The ecopoets in this study listen closely to the nuances of nature. In “Ravens and Baler Twine”, Don McKay, a key Canadian ecocritic and ecopoet, confesses the difficulty he has with using language (wrought from culture) to describe nature, but says that the struggle is a worthwhile one. His poetry does not attempt to connect universally or cross all borders but instead wrestles with, even through, language in order to celebrate and applaud the otherness of nature. He acknowledges that such writing must in some part be obtained *in situ*.

McKay advocates for speaking from place, which he eloquently explains as:

a form of knowing which . . . celebrates the wilderness of the other; it gives ontological applause. Even after linguistic composition has begun, and the air is thick with the problematics of reference, this kind of knowing remains in touch with perception. The nature poet may (should, in fact) resort to the field guide or library, but will keep coming, back, figuratively speaking, to the trail--to the grain of the

experience, the particular angle of expression in a face, and O.K., to
the raven on the baler twine.

As fresh and as original as McKay's voice is, he is drawing on a long tradition of nature poetry in Canada. A concern with the natural environment is evident in the work of many poets from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries¹⁵. If you look, they are everywhere. The difference is in tone: while older nature poetry sometimes has romantic undertones, in which nature is a device used to say something about culture only, contemporary nature poetry often underlines the urgent need to change our habitual relationship with the earth.¹⁶

Difference in tone and language aside, we owe a debt of gratitude and acknowledgement to the foremothers and forefathers of current nature writing. As an example, the work of Catharine Parr Traill (1802-1899), a writer, botanist, and ornithologist is a prototype of contemporary Canadian eco-writing. While overtly transcendent at times, Traill's work is also deeply engaged with the political issues of her time, particularly her awareness of the human impact upon the natural world. Unlike

¹⁵ For example see Charles G. D. Roberts's well-known poem, "Tantramar Revisited" (1883), the late nineteenth-century sonnets of Archibald Lampman (1925), Earle Birney's "David" (1942), Daphne Marlatt's *Steveston* (1975), Robert Kroetsch's *Completed Field Notes* (1989), Don McKay's *Night Field* (1991), and Di Brandt's *Now You Care* (2003).

¹⁶ Archibald Lampman's "Ode to the Hills" expresses a reverence for the "fierce things" suggesting they are safe and "far away" from the "ominous noises of mankind"; listing such wild animals as the eagle (line 63), the loon, the wild-cat, and the bright-eyed fox (line 64) suggesting they are safe from "The slaughterer's malice and the trader's greed" (ll 66-70). Wayne Grady rightly finds fault with Lampman's romantic visions of nature because in truth by 1899 (the publishing date of Lampman's ode) nearly all cougars had been eradicated from Eastern Ontario and enormous rivers of bison had long since been wiped off the plains (xviii). In contrast to Lampman, insisting nature is not safe McKay admits that he writes "nature poetry in a time of environmental crisis" (*Vis-à-Vis: Field Notes on Poetry & Wilderness* 9). Similarly, Brandt laments: "A species gone every three minutes./ History racing us by" (38).

other writers of her time, Traill bemoaned the loss of wilderness, noting the enormous changes taking place in the landscape about her. In *The Backwoods of Canada: Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer* (1836), for example, Traill's writing is both transcendent and attentive. Besides being a way to "refine and purify the mind", nature study was for Traill a source of spiritual sustenance, a "ladder to heaven" to the bountiful creator God (206). When she cannot discover the Canadian or "even the Indian" (120) names of the flowers and plants, Traill writes that she considers herself free to become their "floral godmother" (120) and takes the liberty of bestowing names upon them according to her "inclination or fancy" (102). In her reading of *The Backwoods of Canada*, Heather Milne writes, "Traill displays the colonizer's desire to bestow names, to measure, to know, and thus to control the landscape and people of this new land. Traill copes with alienation and exile by classifying, and gathering specimens of plants and insects in an attempt to render the landscape knowable and containable" (Milne "Place, Exile and Naming in Catherine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada*). While it is true that Traill attempts to capture and control her environment by naming it¹⁷ that is not all Traill is doing. She is also attempting to make home of what is foreign to her. By bestowing names she marks this place and literally plants herself in this new soil.

As proof of the literary heritage that Traill left in her writing, Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974) depicts Traill as a muse. Laurence's main character, Morag, has imaginary conversations with C.P. Traill. Traill tells Morag: "In case of emergency, it is folly to fold one's hand and sit down and bewail in abject terror: it is

¹⁷ Traill is a compulsive gatherer of specimens of plants, lichens and insects. She records sending squirrel skins, feathers and a redbird specimen "fit for stuffing" to her sisters in England (Traill 180).

better to be up and doing” (Laurence 431), quoting one of Traill’s more famous bits of wilderness advice concerning fires. Such pragmatism lends credence to Traill’s role as foremother to modern nature writing.

Some contemporary Canadian nature poetry (such as Don McKay’s) does in fact do just what Susie O’Brien wants: it mediates culture and nature. Granted, his poetry tends to do this rather obliquely but still comes from a place of real geophysical locality. For example, McKay’s poetry is inextricably linked with nature: his writing has detail and nuance and moreover is directly concerned with the *voice* of nature (unlike the romantics and more detailed than transcendentalists). Rhea Tregbov’s review of McKay’s poetry (as cited in Alanna F. Bondar’s essay on McKay) indicates that his “aim and method present a sympathetic challenge to us city folk who tend to be more absorbed in the social ... [and] who prefer people to cabbages” (27). Yet, Tregbov misses the social/cultural commentary that comes through and beneath McKay’s poetry. Bondar, too, writes persuasively of McKay’s particularly Canadian concerns with nature, but I do not concur with her implicit separation of humans and nature when she states that “artists bridge the human and natural worlds”, implying that humans are so separate from nature as to need a bridge. I do approve of her attention to the tradition of nature writing influencing current ecopoetry in Canada. She states that McKay’s “interest in the redeeming qualities of the natural world suggests aspirations to Romantic ideals; McKay’s work rewrites the Canadian landscape, paying particular attention to Canadian details”. Bondar goes on to quote Robert Bringhurst, who comments on McKay’s detailed vision of a *particular* nature: “Wordsworth’s vision of the natural world was full of rapture instead of detail. He said “tree” and “bird” where McKay will say white pine,

red pine, loon, or Blackburnian warbler ... [thus, his] poems have less in common with the poems of Wordsworth than with the novels of Flaubert" (28). This attention to detail is a particularly contemporary Canadian keynote in ecopoetry.

Within North America nature has been so *Disneyfied*, so made into a commodity (think t-shirt slogans and advertisements linked with the concept *green*), that an ecopoet (in Canada) runs the risk of not being taken seriously. Commodification of nature and romantic sentimentalization of nature aren't exactly the same thing, though they may have similar results of being pegged as sentimental. Ross Leckie (poet/professor) comments on the critical climate surrounding nature poetry in Canada: "It is not about the pretty; it is not about the romantic influx or inspiration or about the picture postcard" (*Northern Poetry Review*). His awareness of the reception of nature writing hinges on an understanding that while contemporary Canadian nature writing is not overtly romantic it does risk emotion, connecting human thoughts, visions, and ideologies while narrating nature. Exploring the "complexity of what it is to be human" within nature poetry is a big risk. The Canadian historic tradition of overly romantic nature poetry could easily throw off a contemporary reading public.

All the above-mentioned notions about traditional nature poetry being about romantic or transcendentalist ideals seem to have given Canadian nature writing a bad name. McKay's awareness of the Canadian hesitation over nature poetry indicates the flooding of our sensibilities through an overexposure to "nature". He articulates:

Admitting that you are a nature poet, nowadays, may make you seem something of a fool, as though you'd owned up to being a Sunday painter at, say, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. There are some valid reasons for this. By this time "nature" has been so lavishly

oversold that the word immediately invokes several kinds of vacuous piety, ranging from Rin-Tin-Tinism to knee-jerk environmental concerns. "Nature," with its secular term, "the environment," constitutes that portion of television that is not news, weather, serial drama, sports, or sitcoms, a sort of documentary melodrama which fuses spectacle with sentimentality.

In contemporary Canadian nature poetry the vapidly sentimental and overtly romantic have little or no place. Specifically, I see none in the poets in this dissertation. McKay's notion that poetic attention is akin to a translator's attention to the original is particularly appropriate to the poetry of Donna Kane, Si Transken, Gillian Wigmore, and the other poets in this dissertation. They are *paying attention* to the minute details, to the way shadows fall, to the smell of rain forest air, to the frozen in time moment when a fox crosses a field, when the berries glow, when rivers speak. They are intimately tuned into place. I turn to McKay's words often because he communicates something I find almost impossible to articulate; something that is hard to get to the essence of, something that is not a meta-narrative, not a truth but instead a formulation of a possibility. His grasp of speaking with nature, his eloquence on green being "oversold", and his notions of "translation" and the role language plays indicate that McKay neither embraces the "all green is good" category nor fits into the "all culture is bad" deep ecologist point of view. His is a less intransigent, more mediating ecocriticism that pulls its knowledge from many areas of ecocritical thought and philosophy.

Though in this chapter I have emphasized the differences between categories of ecocriticism there are overlaps in many of these areas. There are no hard and fast

divisions between the categories of ecocriticism I have discussed here. Much the same as other theories there are overlaps and liminal areas between them. An ethic of respect for nature unites them all. It is time to consciously look outside the mainstream mainly white economically advantaged theorists to include other voices. In bioregionalist theory these other voices includes nature. The ethic of attentiveness to the nuances of nature, the pragmatic stance of “does it work?”, the understanding that we can have a dialogue with nature means that we can make where we live home. That is what the poets in this dissertation do.

Having discussed the heritage and history of ecocritical theory and ecopoetry with a particular emphasis on bioregionalism, the following chapter considers the invisibility of Northern BC women writers. In an attempt to amend this invisibility, I will discuss how individual women writers, as part of larger *writerly communities*, have created and supported Northern BC writing.

Chapter Two: Poets and Northern BC Writerly Communities

Canadians have long taken the North for granted, and we've invested a large percentage of our feelings about identity and belonging in it.
--Margaret Atwood *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* 115

In Northern BC there are poets composing poems this very moment. They write independently of the commonly held belief by those outside of Northern BC who seem to think “they live there—they cannot be poets” (to paraphrase Don Precosky). They even write independently of what some Northern BC people seem to think: “this is Northern BC—there cannot be poets here.” That Northern BC poets are invisible to a larger, mainstream, more southern audience is of concern to me. The possibility that the general public within Northern BC might be unaware of their own poets is equally difficult to accept. What’s especially troubling is that when Northern BC poets *are* acknowledged, the poets are predominately male.

George Stanley, Ken Belford, and Barry McKinnon are the most often cited male Northern BC poets, appearing in anthologies and in the who’s who of poetry (see *The Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (2002)). Although the poets in this dissertation are not as well known—they ought to be. The women poets in this project are writing from within a lyric tradition but are pushing past traditional motifs. They speak of and about nature through their ecopoetry and give fresh new voice to ecological concerns and articulate their bioregionalist sensibilities through their depictions of nature as having agency and voice.

Writers and their Audience in Northern BC

Because they speak from within a bioregionalist sensibility, the poets in this dissertation understand what it means to deeply inhabit the land and to be inhabited by nature. They are as shaped by nature as they are shaping culture in the North by their poetry. Donna Kane grew up in Peace River country in Northern interior BC and lived on her family's land beside the Kiskatinaw River until recently. In my many conversations with Kane we discussed the importance of being shaped by the land. Kane spoke of the intimate familiarity with the Kiskatinaw River that shaped her childhood: "Funny how when I look at the word [Kiskatinaw], it looks very exotic and complex and, well, foreign. But throughout my life nothing could have been more familiar or common" (April 9th 2009 e-mail). Kane unequivocally believes that she is not separate from the nature surrounding her. Deeply philosophic, Kane often writes about the minutiae of nature—noticing and attending to the nuances of nature. Si Transken grew up poor in Northern Ontario and has adopted Prince George as her home. She is a tireless community organizer as well as an instructor at the University of Northern BC. Her poetry speaks of social issues, and she consistently maintains that animal rights and human rights are paramount to life in the North. Gilliam Wigmore grew up in rural Vanderhoof, her mother a teacher and her father a veterinarian. Her poems about rivers, lakes, and local communities use a compressed vernacular language that speaks of lived experience. Never hypothetical, Wigmore identifies with the land and landforms as part of her own body. The other poets in this dissertation—Heather Harris, Dani Pigeau, Sheila Peters and Joan Conway—also write about the connections between nature, self and animals and tell stories through their poetry.

These names will probably not be familiar to a general audience. They may not even be familiar to readers of Canadian poetry. To strengthen my case for the recognition of Northern writing as pertinent and provocative, I attended the “Reckoning” conference in September 2007, hoping to hear more about Northern BC publishing. Organized by Alan Twigg, editor of BC Bookworld, the “Reckoning” conference spent the morning reviewing BC literary history by concentrating on the origins of BC publishing houses; in the afternoon a variety of attendees examined Technology and the Future. As well as celebrating the career of George Woodcock Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Bill Bissett, the “Reckoning” conference generated a reference site devoted to BC Literary History and Literary Essays¹⁸. Indeed, I learned a good deal about BC publishing in general but was disturbed by the lack of attention to Northern BC publishing. Douglas Gibson, publisher for McClelland and Stewart, stated with conviction that BC writing and publishing are important and under-recognized. He phrased his response in the form of an apology at having told so many regional writers to *stay put*, to not be swayed by the bright lights of the big smoke. He apologized because he had come to realize that although good writing takes place *in situ*, publishing usually takes place elsewhere. BC is far from Toronto where most publishing houses are located, and is (in his words) “out of sight—out of mind”. He cited a colleague who allegedly commented on a BC book proposal that it was a “great idea—wrong place” (“Reckoning” conference, September 2007).

The “Reckoning” conference took place at SFU’s Harbour Centre in downtown Vancouver and was well attended by both writers and publishers. I was pleased to hear

¹⁸ This new archive will complement the free site on all BC authors at www.abcbookworld.com.

Howard White (recent recipient of the Order of Canada and editor/publisher of Harbour Press, a crucial BC press) speak of Caitlin Press (*formerly* of Prince George), the defunct Gorse Press (Barry McKinnon and College of New Caledonia [CNC] in Prince George), and the defunct Seal Cove Press (in Prince Rupert). Yet I heard no mention of the still operating Creekstone Press out of Smithers nor of any other Northern BC publishing. Creekstone publishes local writing, has been in operation since 1988, and has published ten books—about one every other year. Simon Thompson, in Terrace, bought Barry McKinnon’s old press and now publishes chapbooks under the name of Grace Press (named for his daughter). There is also a publishing group in Fort St. James: Cosmodemonic Poetics (Greg Lainsbury). UNBC Press also publishes poetry, fiction, and non-fiction.

John Pass, a BC poet and college instructor, whose book *Stumbling in the Bloom* won the 2006 Governor General Award for English poetry, made some provocative comments on regional publishing: “Publishing outside Vancouver, especially poetry, provides a greater opportunity for writers—there isn’t the expectation of sales outside of urban centers”. In accordance with Mona Fertig¹⁹, another attendee at the conference, Pass argued that regional small presses publish work because of their love “of bookmaking”. I would add that most regional publishers’ mandate is to publish good *local* writing that reinforces a sense of identity and place.

As a recent transplant to the south, it seems as if I am always staking a claim for Northern BC writing as if it truly is “out of sight—out of mind” in the lower mainland, in academia, in the general populace, and even in the milieu of publishing. In their essay on

¹⁹ Writer and publisher of (M)other Tongue Press. She is also the editor of *Rock salt; Anthology of Contemporary BC Poetry* (2008).

Northern Canadian writing, Coates and Morrison make the bold statement that “Northern scholarship... lacks the advocacy and passion that characterizes other regional scholarship in this country”. They further assert: “British Columbia has yet to be seized by regional passions” (15). I take issue with the idea of the North as lacking “advocacy and passion” and that BC, in general, has not been “seized by regional passions”. I sent a copy of my “passion” in the form of an essay about the lack of attention to Northern BC publishing to Alan Twigg, host of the “Reckoning” conference and editor of *BC Bookworld*. He replied:

Hi, Jacqueline. I don't doubt there is great passion in those who want to publish and write in northern B.C. and I welcome your reiteration of your own ongoing commitment. Literally dozens of presses were not mentioned in our necessarily superficial overview of B.C.'s literary past (September 19th 2007 e-mail).

My argument was intended to acknowledge the publishing that is *actually* occurring in Northern BC. Twigg’s comment on “those who *want* to publish” (italics added) missed my point. They do not just “want to;” *they do*. Yet, perhaps prompted by my insistence, Twigg did subsequently focus on some Northern BC writers, poets, and publishing in the very next issue of *BC Bookworld* (21.4 [2007-2008]). Entitled “Above and Beyond: Writers Who are Outside the Urban Bubble,” the issue includes an article by Donna Kane about living and writing in a rural area, an interview of Ann Walsh (Williams Lake), an article about Creekstone Press (Smithers), and a review of Sheila Peters’s new book of poetry, *the weather from the west* (2007). Twigg also included on *ABC Bookworld’s*

website an abbreviated form of my essay, “Keeping Body and Soul Together,” which discusses a few of the poets in my project.²⁰

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the writers, readers, and publishers in Northern BC who *are* very passionate about Northern BC; yet the literary communities that exist in the North are perhaps only visible to those who are oriented North or those who go looking. In Issue # 42 of *The Capilano Review*, a special edition that focuses on “Northern Poets” in BC, George Stanley (himself a Northern BC poet) puts his finger on the pulse of the Northern writing scene. He begins his introduction by considering the value of *fellowship* for Northern poets and what this community means for writers:

The poets of northern BC. . . have over the past quarter century made a community, centred on the city of Prince George—in particular, on the residence, the presence, of writers Barry McKinnon, John Harris, and others—on the support they have given to writing and local publishing, relying as well on the post-secondary institutions of that city, the College of New Caledonia, and more recently, the University of Northern British Columbia. In this community of poets there has come to be not a common poetic, but a shared premise, an indispensable responsibility for, and to, a particular type of content. (57)

Stanley’s analysis is interesting, as much for what he says, as for what he does not say. His support of the poets he mentions is pivotal within the Northern BC poetry community. Stanley’s time in Northern BC has indelibly shaped his poetry and his ties to the writing community continue. He does not, in this particular instance, mention the

²⁰ “Keeping Body and Soul Together,” (http://www.abcbookworld.com/view_essay.php?id=23).

women poets who, too, are crucial in their support of local writing and publishing²¹. Nor does he mention the small-run private publications in Prince George that foreground women's writing, such as *This Ain't Your Patriarch's Poetry Book*, published by Trans/formative Press (2003), and *Making Noise: Northern Women Caring and In/Visible Dis/Ability* (UNBC Press in Prince George, 2007).

Although lacking representation at the "Reckoning" Conference, the North does indeed speak to itself through literary conversations in print and online. Caitlin Press, which was owned and operated by two Prince Georgers and is now situated on the Sunshine Coast in Halfmoon Bay, makes its commitment to regional, Northern publishing clear on its website: "We publish writers who reflect the concerns, culture and history of that part of Canada called the 'middle north' which lies between the southern, heavily-populated areas and the far north. Our specific area of interest is the interior of British Columbia... We, as well as many authors, media, and members of the public believe that this region needs more publishing attention than southern publishers can provide." UNBC regularly publishes both summer creative writing journals and a student anthology entitled *SawDust*. It also publishes anthologies of local writers (see *The Forestry Diversification Project*²² and *Making Noise: Northern Women, Caring & In/Visible Dis/Abilities*). There are many Internet magazines focusing on creative writing and discussions on writing: for example, UNBC's *Reflections on Water*, CNC/UNBC's *It's Still Winter*, *Scroll in Space*, a division of Pressforward based out of Prince George, and Rob Budde's creative writing site, *Writing Way North*.

²¹ However, he does comment on Si Tranken's poetry, which is included in this special edition foregrounding Northern BC poetry.

²² Melissa Linteris, Gillian Wigmore, Michelle Read, Heather Glasgow, Doug Lussier, Justin Foster, Jeremy Stewart, Michael Armstrong, and nine more.

In the Fall of 2008 the Association of Book Publishers of BC listed 27 active members and 3 associate members on their website (Fall 2008). Although only one of the active members was Northern in focus (Caitlin Press) and only one of the associate members was located in Northern BC (Creekstone Press out of Smithers, which publishes Northern BC fiction, non-fiction, and poetry), there was also more publishing and writing going on behind the scenes. Much remains hidden: on the website of the BC Association of Magazine Publishers (in 2008) there was no mention of the very popular *Northword* (printed in Smithers as well). *Northword* focuses on Northern BC writing, events, photography, and what the editors like to call “Northern presence”: “*Northword Magazine* is the only independent, regional magazine in the top part of BC. We don’t take this responsibility lightly. Our goal is to connect and promote communities in BC’s northwest through printed word and image”. In the spring of 2010 *Northword* is still not on their website.

Now, as I end this research in the Spring of 2010, both Caitlin and Creekstone are listed as active members. The criterion for active membership is that the press must have at least 7 titles in print and an annual production of 2 titles and for associate membership the press must have 2 titles in print published in the previous 3 years. Thus, the Association of BC book publishers is by no means exclusionary, my object was in pointing out that these publishers were hard to find.

Promoting community through writing and reading is a particularly literary/poetic passion and one which, within the frequent isolation of the north, means a way of connecting. Heather Ramsay in her article “On the Map” states:

Writers often retreat to isolated places to spark their creativity, but what if they already live there? The literary lights of the city used to draw burgeoning small-town authors hoping to succeed in the trade. But more and more, initiatives in the hinterland are helping ensure writers, and readers, get some northern exposure at home. Prince George seems to cast the biggest beam in the literary north with numerous writers' groups, events and workshops for wordsmiths to attend. (par. 34)²³

As mentioned, Northern BC poetry is best known for its male writers. Rob Budde suggests that the history and nature of the industrial work in Prince George as well as the influence of such pivotal male poets as Barry McKinnon and Ken Belford has created this bias: "Prince George, because it's a resource-based town, does have a tendency toward a masculine outlook. The redneck image is a stereotype but it is lodged in real foundations" ("Finding Prince George")²⁴. He comments on this lack of recognition: "[T]here are talented female writers in Prince George, just not many who have achieved recognition. My 'worry' is that, yes, both the place and my writing are overly 'male' but also that the environment disadvantages newer or younger female writers" ("Finding" par. 12). In order to "achieve [the] recognition" that Budde (and many others) believe they deserve, the following research aims to *uncover* contemporary Northern BC women writers and to review the who's who of women poets and writers. It also focuses on the pivotal roles these women writers play in creating writerly communities. Their politics and poetics

²³ I am sure the other communities in this study might not entirely agree with Ramsey's statement on PG being "the biggest beam" but PG does have the University of Northern BC with Rob Budde as a tireless literary organizer, and Barry McKinnon was at the College of New Caledonia bringing writers together for many years.

²⁴ See: www.danforthreview.com/features/interviews/rob_budde.htm.

articulate their position as poets, as women, as activists, and as part of an intricate web of human and non-human communities.

Northern BC Women Writers

Contrary to popular perceptions, there are many Northern BC women poets, but the question remains: how does one decide who is a Northern BC writer? For the purposes of this dissertation, a Northern BC writer is someone who is currently living in the North²⁵ and who self-identifies as such²⁶. Many women writers who have resided in Northern BC are not discussed in detail in this dissertation. All of the poets and writers mentioned below—a list that was compiled with Donna Kane and Elizabeth Bachinsky in conversation in 2007²⁷—make up the writerly communities in and from Northern BC. The vast range of women writers proves the regional, although little known, variety. To cite a few examples, Elizabeth Bachinsky was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, in 1976 and grew up in Northern British Columbia, the Yukon, and BC's Fraser Valley. Bachinsky self-identifies as a Northern poet. Her book *Home of Sudden Service* was nominated for the 2006 Governor General's Award. Carla Funk was raised in Vanderhoof and now lives in Victoria. Her first collection of poems, *Blessing the Bones into Light*, came out with Coteau Books in 1999, and Nightwood Editions published

²⁵ At the time of writing all the poets resided in Northern BC. Heather Harris, now Pua Medieros, resides in Hawaii.

²⁶ Sharon Thesen, who worked and lived in Prince George and now lives in the Okanagan, according to Rob Budde, does not self-identify as being Northern BC. Budde states: "Sharon Thesen only spent a couple of years in Prince George. I asked her recently if she thought of herself as a "Prince George poet" or identified at all with Prince George and she said, unequivocally, no" (para. 13).

²⁷ At a poetry reading in Vancouver (2007), I had the opportunity to meet up with Donna Kane, who introduced me to Elizabeth Bachinsky. Together we debated the who's who of women poets in Northern BC.

Head Full of Sun in 2002. Her third poetry collection, *The Sewing Room*, was published in December 2006 by Turnstone Press. In June 2006, Funk was appointed Victoria's inaugural Poet Laureate. Marita Dachsel was born and raised in Williams Lake, BC, and has lived in Kamloops, Dawson City, Auckland, and Montpellier, France. Her book of poetry *All Things said and Done* was published by Caitlin Press in 2007 and was shortlisted for the ReLit Award (2008). Jacqueline Baldwin, a long-time Prince George resident, has two books of poetry: *Threadbare Like Lace* (Caitlin Press 1997) and *A Northern Woman* (Caitlin Press 2003). She has received many community service awards, and her books are in their 6th and 2nd printings, respectively. Barbara Munk, another Prince George resident, is one of four poets featured in *Four Realities: Poets of Northern BC* (Caitlin 1992). She also has one chapbook *Riverboats* and is the author of *Your Good Hat* (Caitlin 1994).

In conducting more research to include a further *reckoning* of just who else is a published Northern BC women poet, I discovered that *BC Bookworld's* online author index proved helpful as did Caitlin Press's online biographies.²⁸ Some poets are included in lesser known anthologies, such as *North Coast Collected*²⁹ (Caitlin 1994) and

²⁸ From these sources I learned of still more Northern BC women's writing, such as Judith Lapadat's book of poetry *Mixed Messages* published by Caitlin in 2002. Raised in Smithers, Lapadat taught at UNBC in Prince George; she now lives in Terrace where she teaches at the regional campus of UNBC. Doris Ray, author of *The Ghosts Behind Him* (a non-fiction novel), was the recipient of the BC 2000 Book Award and lives in Fraser Lake. She has published two chapbooks of poetry. Born in England, Margaret Thompson, author of *Hide and Seek* (date), immigrated to Canada. She lived and taught in the village of Fort St. James, BC. Her book of prose and poetry was self-published in 1992.

²⁹ Northern women poets in this anthology include N.J. Kerby, LaVerne Adams, Dina von Hahn, Lynda Orman, Joan Skogan, Joanna M. Weston, Jenny Nelson, Nancy Robertson, JoAnne Ames, and Dorothy Trail Spiller.

*Creekstones*³⁰ (Creekstone Press 2000). Other books, such as *Breathing Fire: Canada's New Poets* (Harbour 1995), include the aforementioned Carla Funk, who grew up in Vanderhoof BC. The *BC Federation of Writer's Anthology: Imagining British Columbia: Land, Memory & Place* (2003), edited by Susan Musgrave, also includes some Northern BC writers³¹. Other anthologies, such as *West by Northwest: British Columbia Short Stories* (Polestar 1998), which is devoted to short stories and not poetry, include several Northern BC women writers, such as Jean Rysstad and Eden Robinson. The latest anthology of BC poetry, *Rocksalt: An Anthology of Contemporary B.C. Poetry* (2008) includes Leanne Boschman (Prince Rupert), Sheila Peters (Smithers), Carla Funk (originally from Vanderhoof), and Donna Kane (Rolla).

In the *BC Bookworld's* article "Writers Who Are Outside the Urban Bubble"³², Donna Kane comments on the importance of the Internet in creating and maintaining Northern writing communities and how those communities of writers and artists "working in various disciplines band together" (21). There are others places as well (outside of Prince George, even though Budde refers to Prince George as "the poetry capital of Canada!" ["Finding" par .13]) in Northern BC that advocate for, publish, and pursue local writing. Numerous summer creative writing programs take place in Quesnel, Prince Rupert, Port Edward, Fort St. James, Dawson Creek, Smithers, Terrace, and various other places in Northern BC. Small anthologies often come out of these programs

³⁰ Within this Northern BC anthology are poems by Leanne Boschman-Epp, Emily Kendy, Sheila Peters, Alex Merril, Leslie Barnwell, Catharine Quanstrom, Ruth Murdoch, Judy McCloskey, Jeanie Elsner, and Taisa Jenn.

³¹ Jacqueline Baldwin and Lorne Dufour are Northern BC poets.

³² BC Bookworld's online site gives many pithy and eloquent entries on BC writers, including some Northern BC writers. Happily most of the writers in this dissertation are included, such as Donna Kane, Si Transken, Gillian Wigmore, Heather Harris, and Sheila Peters.

but mainly circulate within the regions themselves. In the Muskwa-Kechika wilderness, Donna Kane and Wayne Sawchuck organize artist-writer camps every summer, which brings together well-known BC writers with lesser-known Northern writers. They come together to write, edit and create special handmade books³³.

What this listing of local publishers, authors, poets, events, and advocates is meant to show is that Northern BC *is* publishing and *is* producing literary communities that may escape the notice of most of the rest of Canada. In the Southern imagination, the North is for the most part an ‘empty’ space upon which writers project their own fears and desires. In “Writing the North: A Survey of Contemporary Canadian Writing on Northern Regions”, Coates and Morrison point to this dilemma: “In uncovering the North as lived by northerners, rather than as dreamed by others, contemporary writers continue the old effort to understand the region's hold on the Canadian imagination” (Coates and Morrison 5). Northern regions hold the Canadian imagination—conjuring up stereotypical images of loggers and hunters, fishermen and trappers. While people, of course, do hold these jobs, that is not all that they do. There are also teachers, farmers, social workers, and yes, poets.

Significantly, Northern BC writing often seems intent on debunking myths about what Northern BC writing really is about. Si Transken addresses the notions of what is or is not Northern and what literature says about the North. In a paper delivered at the University of Northern BC's symposium on writing in the North (2005), she states:

³³ Don McKay's *Muskwa Assemblage* which Gaspereau Press published in 2008 received second prize for poetry in the Alcuin Book Design Award. McKay made his own chapbook version after he attended the MK Artist's camp. I attended the camp in the summer of 2008 (Tim Lilburn was there) and made a children's book and a chapbook of poetry: *A Way Home* from my experiences there.

“When that word ‘northern’ is used it tends to mean ‘not urban’, ‘not cosmopolitan’, ‘not somewhere else that’s important’ Here in Prince George it means ‘not Vancouver’”.

She further clarifies: “The stereotypes I’ve been exposed to suggest that northern contexts don’t produce great writers” (4). Though recognition for the talents of Northern BC writers may be slow in coming, it is important to note, as George Bowering states, that: “Most of British Columbia is not Vancouver, and nearly all of it is not the ‘Lower Mainland’. Most of it is mountains and valleys and trees . . .” (back of book in Belford’s *Ecologue*).

Don Precosky explores some common Northern stereotypes (which Transken echoed earlier), particularly that a poet is not a “real poet” if s/he lives in Northern BC.

Welcome to BC’s northern half, where everyone is a logger or a welder or a miner (or married to one). Where we live hard and die young, or work like devils, save our money, and get out. No room for introspection here. No need for poets. Cultural cliches are hard to escape. We’ve been taught them from both inside and outside our communities . . . [Yet] they are poets. They are here; they would be poets anywhere. (“Introduction” *Four realities; poets of Northern BC* xi)

Writer/artist Joan Conway also expresses a strong sense of dissatisfaction with southern perceptions of the North, suggesting an unsettling feeling of not being heard or even understood by southern publishing practices:

[W]e in the north as you know have a whole different experience than artists in larger centers that have more opportunities with a larger writing

community through various venues and publishing circles. I feel as though much validation for being a writer comes through the lens of being successful at publishing which is often so outside of our geographical/cultural experience. Already the sense of isolation is strong never mind receiving rejection letters from places that are so out of touch with our reality. (Sept 15th 2006 e-mail)

Yet contrary to this common stereotype, it is more than evident that Northern BC writers, readers, publishers, and small presses, not to mention colleges (Northwest Community College, College of New Caledonia, Northern Lights College, University of Northern BC, and Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute), support and sustain Northern BC writing. Indeed, the North seems to hold on deeply to its inhabitants: "While Canadians think of themselves as a northern people, those living in the North have a special, deeper commitment to that place" insists Robert Bone in *The Geography of the Canadian North* (3). Northern BC writers often strongly identify with the place in which they live. In the North, mobility is somewhat restricted in a number of ways: specific cultural connections to place encourage *rootedness*, movement is astronomically costly, and identity is often tied to place³⁴. I suggest that there is a strong recognition and fellowship for poets in Northern BC. It is not so much that these poets, as Precocky states, "would be poets anywhere," but that they are poets in these particular places. My interest lies in understanding how they articulate their sense of belonging to *this* particular place, in

³⁴ Eden Robinson, in her novel *Monkey Beach*, sets her story geographically by giving directions: she places herself very specifically. She goes from the broad "Find a map of British Columbia" to "Haisla territory" to her home village of Kitimaat, to "our house" (4-5). Thus, she brings the reader right into her *specific* place. Robinson's rural-local identity is explicit. She has returned to her village to write and live.

believing that their poetic practice is shaped by being *here*, rubbing shoulders with nature. They are poets because of their emic understanding of the North; these understandings are “relative” and “more like a continuum or a flow of space” (Trasken “Prince George Writing: Creating Community Differently”), but they are also place-based, formative landscapes of understanding that come from being in this place: the *here* of Northern BC.

Regionalism and Writerly Communities

It is the focused and inspired work of individual poets that pulls together a far-flung group of writers and creates a writerly community. One would be wrong in supposing that regional writing speaks only to itself or only to its geophysical area: these are voices speaking from particular places and experiences that have much to say to a larger community. Don Precosky states, in “Seven Myths about Canadian Literature”, that: “Regionalism is at the core of the Canadian identity”. He cites a variety of recognizably regional writers who are read widely in Canada (George Bowering, Alden Nowlan, Ken Norris, Raymond Souster, Rudy Wiebe, Phyllis Webb are included in his list). In a similar vein to Precosky, W.H. New, in his chapter “Landed: Literature and Region”, makes a strong case for a regional perspective in literary analysis:

[C]riticism can look too shallowly at regionalism and expect too little from it. A sensitivity to region might at one level make critics aware of place and landscape but a sensitivity to regional nuance—that is to the literary structures and metaphors of region—will make them aware of the link between language and political attitude. At its most sensitive, regional

criticism can also usefully indicate that literary texts have social value.

(New 152)

The “social value” of the poems discussed in this dissertation lies in their bioregional approach, their intimate inhabitation of the land, and in the fact that these poets are listening and are attentive to the flora, fauna, and landforms.

The writers and publishers based in Northern BC are specifically concerned with the North and with Northern audiences, redefining what it means to be Northern from a Northern perspective. While the literary production of culture and nature is not felt or heard nationally or even provincially, it is felt and heard profoundly on a local level. There is, in fact, a whole other world—a whole other literary scene—in the North based on community building projects. The history and reception of local writing in the North are regionally based. Regions in which I examine these phenomena include 1) Dawson Creek, Ft St. John, and Rolla, where Donna Kane lives and works; 2) Prince George and Vanderhoof, the localities of Si Transken, Heather Harris, and Gillian Wigmore; 3) Terrace, where Dani Pigeau and Joan Conway are based; and 4) Smithers, home for Sheila Peters.

Although there are important thematic connections between the writers in this chapter, I focus on the role that place plays in creating literary communities: local events, writing workshops, access to university or college, poetry readings, festivals, and local publishing. All of these community networks have an enormous impact on creating a local literary scene³⁵. Print culture and access to publishing play important roles in the

³⁵ Danielle Fuller, in her study of what she calls “textual communities” in Atlantic Canada states: “Textual communities offer an arena in which politics of language and power can be actively engaged and negotiated within a group” (8).

production of knowledge. Although the writings of these Northern BC poets are shared within the communities that they live in and are transmitted in the North through workshops, festivals, and poetry readings they tend to circulate primarily within Northern regions. These connected autonomous literary communities, defined loosely by their bioregional specificity, speak to one another through events, such as UNBC's symposium on Northern Writing entitled, "The Writing Way Up North: A Symposium on Northern BC Writing" (March 30, 2005) and the local annual "Take Back the Night" and "Dec 6th Vigils"³⁶. Interaction also takes place in both formal and informal writing retreats and workshops, through college and university courses, and in people's back yards, on the internet, in cabins on the lake, or at the river's side writers in Northern BC communicate their truths. In what follows I provide a sketch of the print cultures that are flourishing in each of the four regions where the poets discussed in this study live and work.

Dawson Creek/Rolla/ Fort St. John

The literary scene in Dawson Creek/Rolla/ Fort St. John is sustained by a number of institutional and individual supports. The Northern Lights College encourages much creative writing. Their first writer in residence was Jeanette Lynes³⁷ in the summer of 2008. The consultations and workshops were open to anyone interested in writing—children and adults alike—and helped to create connections between well-known and new writers. Two of the greatest proponents of the writing community in this place include Donna Kane and Greg Lainsbury. Lainsbury has promoted Northern BC writing at conferences around the world, including the University of Plymouth in England (*Poetry and Public Language: An international conference on contemporary poetry*). He

³⁶ These events, of course, take place nation-wide.

³⁷ Residing in Nova Scotia.

believes Northern BC poetry is unique: “I think it’s historical circumstances mainly, the political economy of the region. And I think it’s quite tied up with the existence of colleges in the region. They bring people up to the north, such as Barry McKinnon, who’s one of the main figures in Prince George” (NLC Press release April 2007). NLC published the anthology *Treeline* (1981), which included student and local writing, as well as poems by Al Purdy, Susan Musgrave, Sid Marty, and bill bisset (who were all NLC visiting poets). In 1983, *Treeline II: North Country Writers* contained even more student/local writers as well as bill bisset, Leona Gom, and Susan Musgrave. The most recent incarnation, edited by Lainsbury, is an online journal called *Treeline 3*. Lainsbury hosted a poetry night featuring readings by Rob Budde and Ken Belford on February 22, 2008 in Fort St. John. Lainsbury’s writing advocacy group is the Fort St. John Poetics Research Group and his small-scale publishing house is Cosmodemonic Poetics.

Donna Kane, considering the writing community in her area, spoke about the beginnings of poetry in Dawson Creek. Her research indicates that a love of poetry and the community’s support of it began as early as 1943 when Edna Jacques—Canadian poet—recited her poems in the United Church (*The History of the First United Church-Dawson Creek*). Local story has it that, unprepared for her early arrival, settlers vied for the chance to have her stay in their homes. That community of support for the arts continues today. Kane has long held “Writing on the Ridge” retreats and artists’ camps that take people outside their “normal” lives into the wilderness. She forges connections for Northern writers through these workshops.

In 1997, Kane organized her first poetry reading with Lorna Crozier. In 1999, she arranged the first Moberly Lake Poetry Retreat with Patrick Lane (then one in 2000 with

Don McKay and Jan Zwicky). From there, momentum built. She and Barry McKinnon bought a house in Tumbler Ridge in the fall of 2000, and in 2001 they established "Writing on the Ridge". The directors were Kane, McKinnon, and their spouses. Kane describes it as "a great time. Many evenings spent at the house devising our future writing retreats in Tumbler Ridge" In approximately 2003 Kane sold her half of the house to McKinnon, but she kept the writing retreat going. "Writing on the Ridge" has sponsored readings, festivals, writer-in-residence programs, and retreats (including the Muskwa-Kechika artist camps) since its inception. Kane indicates: "I know that my reading series, my visits to high schools, and the different retreats and festivals have definitely enlivened the writing culture of Dawson Creek and area. There have been high school students who have since gone on to creative writing programs as a result of visits by either myself or out of town authors who I have brought in" (July 28, 2008).

Kane is one of the more prolifically published Northern BC women poets. Her first public poetry attendance was at UNBC in 1995 when Ross Leckie (now the editor of *The Fiddlehead*) was the poetry and creative writing professor. During his tenure, UNBC hosted a reading of local poets³⁸. Like a lot of Northern published poets Kane works in education. She is an administrator at the Northern Lights College in Dawson Creek³⁹.

Kane has received recognition within certain circles. For instance, in 2000, she received

³⁸ Not only was resident Prince George poet Barry McKinnon in attendance, but so were Donna Kane, Pamela Den Ouden, and myself, among others. Established poets and aspiring poets rubbed shoulders on this occasion.

³⁹ Barry McKinnon taught at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George, Rob Budde teaches English and Creative Writing at UNBC, and of the women writers mentioned in this dissertation. Si Transken is Professor of Social Work at UNBC, Joan Conway is a support teacher in Terrace, Dani Pigeau is a school teacher in Terrace, Sheila Peterson is a college instructor for NWCC, and Heather Harris taught at UNBC in Prince George and now teaches for the University of Hawaii.

the Lina Chartrand Award for Poetry through the poetry journal *Contemporary Verse Two*. The award recognizes an emerging woman poet that has published in CV2. Through her years of organizing poetry readings and workshops, Kane has met and befriended many recognized Canadian poets. Although she has been writing and publishing for many years, her recognition by a wider Canadian audience (outside of Northern BC) has only just begun. She is not listed in W.H. New's *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (2002), although other Northern BC poets are: Ken Belford has a pithy entry and Barry McKinnon has a rather extended entry. I am forced to wonder where, in the *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, are the Northern BC women poets? Granted one cannot include every poet and every example of writing in Canada, and editors are often forced to list only the more recognized writers. Yet, this is really part of my point. Why are the Northern poets, women in particular, virtually unrecognized outside Northern BC? Even in a course on BC poetry taught at Simon Fraser University (Fall 2006), during the single class on *Northern BC* writing, Donna Kane was absent⁴⁰.

Ross Leckie, former UNBC professor, has been influential in publishing Donna Kane's work. He met her whilst teaching in the North and has offered support and encouragement and published some of her poems in *The Fiddlehead*. A pivotal question becomes, for women writing in Northern BC, "if exposure to mainstream academia is

⁴⁰ Danielle Fuller's analysis of "women's textual communities in Atlantic Canada" considers the peculiar absence of Atlantic women's writing in mainstream academia outside of their "textual communities" (1). My work addresses this same absence of Northern BC women's poetry within Canada. Fuller cites one reason for this as due to "the fact that much Atlantic writing published within the region does not circulate widely outside of it. As a result, the academics who teach and critique contemporary Atlantic Canadian work tend to live, or have lived, in the Atlantic provinces" (6). So too, the Northern BC writing published in the region does not circulate widely outside of it. And those who have a wider audience (Barry McKinnon, George Stanley, and Ken Belford, for example) have come to the North and retained their outside contacts.

limited at best, where then or how then have they published?” Kane readily acknowledges the support she has had from local writers⁴¹.

Prince George/Vanderhoof

Heather Ramsay explores the Prince George and Vanderhoof community of writers in Northern BC, pinpointing the importance of colleges and universities to writers. She writes: “Rob Budde not only teaches creative writing at the University of Northern BC and offers a survey course on northern writers, but he also organizes a reading series bringing in writers from across Canada. He likes to ensure someone local gets exposure at the same time, so when the likes of George Bowering, poet laureate of Canada, comes to town, Budde has someone from Prince Rupert, Vanderhoof, or Prince George share the stage” (Ramsay 34). This “sharing of the stage” proves Budde’s place in his Northern community. He moved to Prince George some eight years ago and is writing, teaching, reading, and raising his family there. Budde, referring to the Prince George writing community, states: “there is a strong literary subculture in the city, with writers meeting on Friday afternoons at the BX Pub or gathering for readings at Café Voltaire, Mosquito Books or Arts Space” (Ramsay). Poetry really does thrive in Prince George just as Frank Peebles asserts:

Poetry has been a strong suit of Prince George writers since the 1960s
when poet Barry McKinnon, himself a past nominee for the GG,
spearheaded the trend with fellow CNC English professor and writer

⁴¹ “And a poem in *Textual Studies in Canada*, which was a result of Greg Lainsbury (instructor at the FSJ campus of NLC/UNBC) recommending me so that did have a northern connection to it, and George Sipos, formerly of Mosquito Books in Prince George, has long been a keen editor of my work” (Jan. 2007 e-mail).

John Harris. In this year's English language poetry category, longtime writer Sharon Thesen (*The Good Bacteria*) and rookie author Elizabeth Bachinsky (*Home of Sudden Service*) were both up for the national poetry award, and both hail from this city. (Prince George Citizen, Dec 11, 2006)

The University of Northern British Columbia and the Emily Carr Institute (ECI) signed a protocol agreement in 2006 that led to the development of the first Bachelor of Fine Arts degree to be offered in northern BC and is currently being offered in the 2008-2009 school year. UNBC provides courses that reflect its strengths in creative writing, fiction, cultural studies, poetry, and drama, as well as other courses from First Nations Studies and other disciplines.

UNBC held a conference “The Writing Way Up North: A Symposium on Northern BC Writing” March 30, 2005 discussing ways of supporting and exploring Northern writing. Presenters included Si Transken, Ken Belford and Rob Budde, among others. The Poetry Train (2004-2005), Budde’s brainchild, is a partnership between VIA Rail and UNBC. It features various poets who conduct writing workshops on board and then host public readings at various stops en route. In 2004, the Poetry Train traveled from Winnipeg to Prince George and in 2005, it travelled VIA’s Skeena Route, going from Prince George to Prince Rupert and returning. Not only does Budde help coordinate readings by talented poets from elsewhere, but he is also an advocate of newer, local poets. *The Forestry Diversification Project – New Prince George Poets* is edited by Rob Budde and published by UNBC Press (2007).

Terrace

The Terrace Writing Guild helps writers become and remain connected. They meet on the last Tuesday of every month at Cafenara (a local coffee shop), and membership ranges from 5 to 16. According to Ev Bishop, the group is fairly informal, with participation from a wide range of fiction writers, poets, journalists, and even those who are not interested in being published. Bishop writes: “My writing community is almost like family—an eclectic and varied one. Some members I really connect with, and others not so much, but we make it work because, despite all our differences, we’re related. The lower cost of living here and the non-existent commuting time makes it easier for me to pursue my craft than it seems it would be elsewhere” (Bishop par. 1). The Terrace Writing Guild Fiction Contest (which began in 2007) awards monetary recompense and publishes the winning entries in *Northword*. There is also a group of senior women in Terrace who for the past fifteen years have met regularly to read and discuss poetry. As well, a group of poets (which includes Joan Conway, Harold Feddderson, Betty Geier and others), meet in Terrace and edit and provide feedback for each other’s work.

North West Community College has long published its students writings in both bound journals and online. NWCC offers online and face-to-face creative writing courses. English 209, 210, 211, 212, and 213 are all second year creative writing courses. In the 1990s Leanne Boschmann (poet and college instructor) edited a writing journal, North West Creative Collection. Simon Thompson (poet and college instructor) in the 1990s created the now defunct online creative writing journal, *Braided River*. Throughout its history the college has had both regional and national poets do readings

for the public and its students. Notables such as Ken Belford, Barry McKinnon, and George Stanley have done poetry readings at NWCC. The latest poet to come to NWCC Terrace was Leanne Boschmann (living in Prince Rupert), who recently was published in an anthology of Mennonite writers (*Half in the Sun* 2006) and is included in the latest anthology of contemporary BC writing. *Rock salt*, edited by Mona Fertig and Harold Rhenisch (published by (M)other Tongue Press 2008). She has also just launched her first full-length collection of poems: *Precipitous Signs: A Rain Journal* (2009).

The local women's shelter (formerly run by Debbie Scarborough, a poet) and the Terrace Women's Center sponsor "Take Back the Night" and "December 6th Vigils" poetry readings. Coffeehouses and community halls combine music and poetry readings throughout the year. The Terrace Public Library organizes annual summer poetry-writing workshops that enlist local writers to be mentors and teachers for teen writers. Located underneath the public library, the Terrace Art Gallery supports both the written and the visual arts. Both Leanne Boschmann and Joan Conway organize shows at the local art gallery that combine visual art with poetry.

Smithers

Sheila Peters, poet and NWCC English college instructor based in Smithers, says that while there are many ways for musicians to connect in her region, there are not as many for writers. "Writing is a solitary pastime," she admits (34). Music in the Bulkley Valley region brings together performers from diverse backgrounds, and the annual mid-summer Smithers Folk Festival, which stages both local talent and national artists, has on-stage poetry readings. The Bulkley Valley Mid-Summer Folk Festival is in its 20th year and attracts some 3,000 people annually. Nevertheless, Creekstone Press specifically

solicits Northern BC writers. They seek work by writers from Northern British Columbia or about Northern BC. Creekstone's website states: "Creekstone Press is looking for work by writers from northern British Columbia or about northern BC. Diversity of expression, accuracy, originality, craftsmanship and regional relevance govern manuscript selection". In addition *Northword*, "the only independent, regional magazine that covers northern BC from border to sea" (*Northword*), is based in Smithers. The magazine encourages solidarity and has a real feeling for Northern issues. The place-based magazine not only publishes creative writing but also includes articles on Northern BC issues, such as environment, politics, and the arts.

Within their local communities the writers participate in pivotal community building forums and thus provide fellowship. Support for one another's writing is paramount in Northern BC. For example, Clea Ainsworth, in "ARTS: keep the Poetry Machine Going" in *CONNECTIONS* (the now defunct Northern BC magazine published in Smithers) focuses on the role that certain poets play both as writers and as *builders* of a literary community that includes their environment. She states:

Poetry in the north has a unique, synaptic link to our communities and the environment that surrounds us. At its best, poetry is an electric medium.

The northwest boasts a lively and electric literary heritage, and contemporary writers and poets work to keep that heritage growing. The biggest struggle has been maintaining literary momentum and vibrancy when the population of northern communities are sparse or disinterested.

There are many writers and poets who have contributed to building poetic heritage; Donna Kane (Dawson Creek) and Barry McKinnon (Prince

George) are among them. Kane and McKinnon are poets who are relentlessly boosting the literary culture of their communities by organising readings, retreats and operating small presses. (*Connections* Summer 2002).

Recognition for Northern BC poetry is long due, and because of its invisibility to more mainstream audiences, the following section on lyric poetry addresses both the climate of writing by women in Northern BC and how these poets subvert the expectations of what it is to be a lyric poet. The regionalism and focus of the previous section focused on the particular writing communities in Northern BC, this next section focuses on the interconnectivity between regionalism, poetry, and how these poets push the boundaries of accepted theory.

Lyric Poetry in Northern BC

Lyric poetry has a long-standing tradition in Northern BC writing by women. Although all of the poets in this dissertation fall well within the lyric genre they also push past some commonly held misconceptions of what lyric poetry is. Lyric originally comes from the word lyre, indicating that it was to be sung and accompanied by music. More contemporary definitions of lyric poetry centre on the expression of a speaker's emotions, thoughts and feelings, sometimes in a direct narrative or anecdote, sometimes through metaphor. Lyric poetry may be cacophonous or melodic, humorous or sad, may relate a direct narrative or may be more philosophic in nature. There is room within lyric poetry for different manners of expression.

Eleana Kim comments on the split between language poetry and lyric poetry: "Language poetry was taken up by leftist academics as a radical alternative to the lyric

tradition” (par. 11)⁴². While lyric poetry has been around for centuries⁴³, language poetry, on the other hand, has more contemporary roots. More lyrically oriented poets often feel uneasy about the abandonment of ‘sense’ that often accompanies language poetry. Sharon Thesen expresses a certain distrust of language poetry. She says: “Now, if I could just cast off the chains of Error, I could write language poetry and avoid the whole problem of otherness and exploitation. But I can’t read that stuff with any pleasure at all. It seems to me that without the image (and how do you have images without nature) you wind up with some form of verbal calculus (despite Williams’s scorn for les Imagistes, he’d be nowhere without his twigs and puddles), not a living, breathing thing” (Interview with Nancy Holmes). In contrast, the poetry in this dissertation not only shows a concern for and about “living, breathing thing[s]” but also implicates the self, inspiring awe, respect, and reverence as well as a sense of responsibility. Although classifying poems into categories such as “nature”, “lyric”, “language”, etc is useful in some ways, I am suggesting that more urban-based nature writing and the poetics of the north should not be regarded in opposition, but rather as part of a continuum.

Ken Belford sidesteps the sharp opposition between language and lyric traditions, shifting the terms of the debate in useful ways by talking about the differences between language poetry and what he so aptly calls “lan(d)guage poetry” in Northern BC writing. His collection of nature poems, *Ecologue*, is a suspended series of the intersections between nature and culture. Belford is an important literary figure in the North both as a

⁴² “Language Poetry: Dissident Practices and the Makings of a Movement”
<http://home.jps.net/~nada/language1.htm>.

⁴³ OED lists the first recorded usage of lyric in English as 1589, but the term goes back to ancient Greece.

poet and as a man who has made a living on the land. In an interview with Barry McKinnon, Belford expresses his concerns about deifying the concept of wilderness and how his poetry partakes in a community of nature and culture:

I don't even know if I like the concept of a wilderness too much, and I think I would rather see people living and working in the landscape than just to have large zones that no one is allowed to enter and that we somehow think we should protect. I would rather see something that we can work with and live in and be involved in, and have our hands on it in one way or another. I think my poems are somehow - they're part of the old growth in a way. In my mind when I'm writing they have a sense of being kind of a component of the living breathing community.

This idea of nature and culture as a “living breathing community” is deeply embedded in Northern lan(d)guage ecopoetry.

Belford ruminates on the why and wherefore of language vs. lan(d)guage poetry: “Language writing originated in a few large cities and for a variety of reasons, never leaked past the walls at the edge of the city limits. I’m not saying we in Prince George are not linked to language writing because that would be inaccurate. But something apart from that is happening across the interior of British Columbia, something I have called “lan(d)guage writing” (“Viewed from the Mountains” 7). The neologism (lan(d)guage) comes from Belford’s essays and the title of his latest book of poems. In his essay “Viewed from the Mountains,⁴⁴” Belford further expands what lan(d)guage writing entails: “When I see the land, I see the root of land and language, but I don’t take literary

⁴⁴ www.itsstillwinter.com/Its%20Still%20Winter/contents_files/justinsinterview.pdf -

walks into it so that I can come back with a poem. It's the lyric equivalent of the colonizer going on a duck hunt" (Belford 7). Belford's lan(d)guage poetry is helpful in resisting what appears to be the lyric / language binary opposition. Yet by defining itself against what it is not (most often not "hypersensitive lyric", not "colonial", not "urban classist" etc) it sometimes remains trapped within the terms of its own reference.

While Belford sees the connections between language and lan(d)guage poetry, he simultaneously seeks to separate lan(d)guage from lyric poetry. Belford postulates that one of the problems with the conventional male lyric poem is its demand to unburden itself, to have an ending with a big "tad ah" (8). He compares what he calls the "hypersensitive lyric" to Nirvana's songs: "Its like these men are under a lot of grief and burden and sense of loss, then, at the end of the song, there's an insight. That's the old colonial man slicing his way through the bush with his machete. When and where the poem begins and how it ends is as much a problem as what goes on in-between the first utterance and the last foot. I try to stay away from that, not to write out of a colonial burden and charging forward mentality" (8). Belford uses words like "jam", "jazz", and "paint" (8) to explain his process as leaving behind the solipsistic "I" in his poetry. He is not only pushing, occasionally, into language poetry territory but intentionally steering clear of the lyric. Belford says that lan(d)guage poetry is: "quite apart from lyric sentiment having to do with rural life and the growing and consumption of animals, which is really, finally, about the fragmented female form" (7). Yet if lan(d)guage poetry is "quite apart" from rural life and the "fragmented female form"⁴⁵, then where might it leave poets like Gillian Wigmore, Donna Kane, Sheila Peters, Heather Harris, or Dani

⁴⁵ A reference to Carole J. Adam's *Sexual Politics of Meat*.

Pigeau? Wigmore states that her book of poetry is: “a kind of love-song for North-central BC” (qtd. in Strickland par. 1). She also openly acknowledges that being raised in farm and ranch country by a vet indelibly shaped her poetry. Aware of her conflicted relationship to this place, she says: “I also feel there is a shared concept of animal husbandry here that elsewhere is completely abhorrent. The only problem is that when I am here for too long, I get really itchy to get away. When I'm away, I fall in love with this place all over again” (March 12th 2008 e-mail).

Belford’s statement on rural lyric poetry suggests he finds it overtly sentimental. Most of the poets in this project are a part of a “lyric sentiment having to do with rural life and the growing and consumption of animals” that Belford sees as a negative. Yet, the deeply felt interconnection between nature and culture is for these poets what makes up their community. Having been deeply imprinted by the land they grew up on, live with, or have adopted these poets do not “charge forward” wishing only to achieve the big “tad ah”. Instead of such thrusting forward or wishing to conquer, these women poets write of the interconnections/disconnections and achieve communion not only with nature but with culture and expand it through these poems.

In order to articulate his notion of lan(d)guage poetry and his ethics of land and place, Belford attempts to distinguish what he does from what he perceives “university educated urban consumer classists” do:

One of the great divides in a lot of these conversations [about land and place] is in the question of how university educated urban consumer classists regard nature. Land has meaning to someone such as me but it may not to others. For sure some see it as a dangerous,

dark and wet region between cities. They often write poems about driving. There is some talk of place in poetics but it almost always seems the makers of the poems don't care much about where they are, because those environments are pretty much the same all over. Urban intellectuals perceive it much as I have said, but a land person would say the city dwellers are the loud, noisy and rude ones, while land is civilized. ("Viewed" 7)

But the makers of urban poems do care about where they are too. Belford's comments about urbanites and academics having no real concept of land does not necessarily hold true. For example, Meredith Quartermain, in *Vancouver Walking*, is aware of the importance of place and geography articulating her sense of place within her urban environment. In an interview by Rob McLennan, Quartermain states: "I think it was Creeley who said love, death, and place are three of the abiding themes of poetry from time immemorial. Documenting physical, cultural, poetic geography has absorbed a lot of my attention" (par. 2). This statement shows that urban poets like Quartermain also care about place and geography.

Like Quartermain, the women poets in this dissertation are part of this new tradition that articulates the paramount importance of place *and* self. There are dips and valleys, crescendos, and the occasional epiphany in their poetry but there is no big "ta dah" (Belford). Their poetry is never merely lyric. Perhaps because of their regional locations and their commitment to place they are doubly damned by Canadian publishing houses. The poets in this dissertation do care about where they are. They are not going on a colonizer's "duck hunt," intent on going on nature walks to *use* the images nor is their

gaze from a polite distance. Instead they are embroiled in the dirty work of place, often highlighting the fact that most Northern BC residents are implicated in the destruction of the wilderness in some form, by working in oil fields, logging, fishing, hunting, mining to name only a few of the most common resource extraction industries. Large-scale farming and ranching includes a rubbing of shoulders with life and death and the cycles of nature as well as the burning of fossil fuels and often the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. These poets are listening, hearing, and articulating important observations about what they have heard.

Northern BC women poets help to offset a number of persistent misconceptions about ecocriticism. For example, Adam Dickinson takes to task some of ecocriticism's pro-realist proponents (he cites Lawrence Buell as the most obvious example), insisting that metaphors (a lyric standard) are an important hinge for understanding nature because in some way, by avoiding realism, metaphors insist on foregrounding otherness. In his words: "lyric art, and specifically metaphoricity, . . . reveals itself as an articulation (that is, a breaking and a joining—a hinge) between presence and absence, or language and non-language, or logic and illogic" (par. 3)⁴⁶. Dickinson acknowledges that this space of metaphoricity is highly political and has the potential for an activism that "encourages a kind of attention that is not reducible to linguistic code or description, a form of listening, perhaps, that might serve to hear the imperative of the other, human and nonhuman" (par. 4). His choice of words "attention" and "listening" is important: listening implies a dialogue between interlocutors including non-human beings with agency. In lyric poetry

⁴⁶ Here Dickinson appears to be echoing Jan Zwicky, who in *Wisdom and Metaphor* posits that metaphorical thinking is an epistemology that is distinct from analytical cognition (56).

listening holds in mind both the intrinsic otherness of nature and the potential of community with nature.

Coming to find one's place is as important as acknowledging one's familiarity with place. Rob Budde's response as to how he connects poetic aesthetics to politics in Prince George hinges on a sense of place and moreover on a way of *finding* his place (akin to Snyder's articulation about the importance of being "placed" in *The Practice of the Wild*) and is not exclusionary (something both urbanites and more rural poets can come to adopt):

It always takes a while to learn the poetic history of a *place* and then find *your place* in it. I have spent the last few years trying to promote what's here because it is rich and relatively unheralded. By hanging out with Barry McKinnon and Ken Belford I began to soak up the place. I learned Prince George politics and history through them. . . .

Now I see a whole whack of newer poets coming up – they're going to knock the Can Lit scene on its ass. ("Finding" par. 11)

Budde's articulation of the process of becoming part of the land is critical to the aesthetics and politics of Northern poetry. His sense of poetic history is firmly grounded in a sense of place. His statement that he sees "a whole whack of newer poets coming up – [and that] they're going to knock the Can Lit scene on its ass" (par. 5) is both insouciant *and* accurate.

The poets who are "going to knock the Can Lit scene on its ass" are the poets in this dissertation. They do this with their skills as poets and with their bioregionalist

approach, with their ethical engagement with nature and culture and with their green potential.

Regardless of what more southern publishers think, poets are writing in Northern BC and women poets are gradually becoming better-known, offsetting the masculinist, resource-based image of the North. Not only are these women poets instrumental in creating writerly communities but they are also offering their ecopoetry to a larger audience. The ecopoets in this dissertation are addressing a broader reading public and uniting ideas of culture and nature. Moreover, this poetry by Northern BC women is marked by a real sense of urgency. Although Northern BC publishing, poetry, and particularly Northern women's poetry remains largely ignored by more Southerly publishers, academia, and the general reading public, I believe the vast talent of these writers and their bioregional lens can and will transform this invisibility. Contemporary Northern BC women's nature poetry is neither trite nor romantic. There is much to learn from the poets in this dissertation about nature, culture, and the mediation of both. They are "not about the pretty", the "romantic", or only the "inspiration[al]", nor about that "picture postcard" (Leckie par. 11). They *are* about the "social" (Tregebov 33); they are about "detail" instead of "rapture" (Bringhurst, "Unraping" 31); they are about the "complexity of what it is to be human" (Leckie par. 11); and they do "mediate culture" through nature (O'Brien, "Nature's Nation"). The following poetry in the next chapters continues to expand the current field of ecopoetry in Canada through its politics of bioregionalism and ecofeminism. This poetry also views nature and landforms as part of self. These poems undeniably concern themselves in articulating and translating the voices of nature that they are attentive to.

PART TWO: THE POEMS AND THE POETS

Chapter 3: Donna Kane and the Liquid Resonance of Words

Fall

What moves in the bush
moves as I do. What sounds
like an omnipresent god
could be
a bird in every tree, a bird
whose song is your mouth
humming against waxed paper
folded over a fine tooth comb.

Sometimes I see
myself in others
and don't like who I am,
as afraid of things
I can name only by the heaviness
of their step,
the number of rustled leaves
as of myself.

I keep giving myself away—
a plant you don't notice
until frost turns it scarlet
and brittle, startling a mouse
who brushes against it, hears
its body made vulnerable
by what it thought
kept it safe.

Morning Practice

Someone's in the dumpster. Every few seconds his ball cap
two-steps the rim, his hand flashes
an edge of glad-green, pooling the light
before dipping back down. Boys
with hockey gear pass by unnoticed.

A woman by a truck fishes for keys. Then.
The apocalyptic wail of a siren up-street. Everyone stops.
The man in the dumpster rising to look, the woman
faltering at her half-opened door. Boys against hockey sticks.
For a moment they are one, banded together, alpha and omega,
brothers and sisters, the galactic spin that draws them
into the hot ball centre that could change, if not the world,
at least the part that makes us lonely
until a boy hollers out, *There's a man in the dumpster!*
and the truck radio cuts loose Billy Graham mid-sentence,
his bravado bouncing off their passing deposit
on an all-for-one. The siren a nickel spinning its edge
before wobbling face down in the Coke-can swill of familiar
disorder.

Change of Season

Like tongues fallen
from the thin throats of trees,
leaves, weary of speech,
lay all they know of language
beneath the snow.
In this room our own mouths
have given in to silence,
our bodies tilted back
 away from love,
our words
reaching unknown angles;
stiff and perilous in the air
we hold to an awkward quiet
the way one leaf holds out all winter
to touch the drifted road,
drawing in the sun
like the word
we never thought of,
the one
that shifts our bodies closer,
melts a field of snow.

On Seeing a Fox With a Dead Gopher in its Mouth

How well the gopher played its part,
sagging sock, body draped, at your service, bones
small mallets sounding the scale
of ditch grass and willow. How well

it would have fallen
into the arms of John Cowan
in Grade 7 Drama.
My face to the wall.
Told to forget my muscles
on cue, to fall
with my back toward the boy who stole stickers
from the downtown Deli. Rolls of red decals
saying *boneless, reduced*. Plastered
to the breasts of pin-up girls
in other boy's lockers, and oh—
I just couldn't do it
froze before I'd begun, and yet
today, that fox, that gopher.
I felt, like the silent swath of
the fox disappearing
through ripening wheat, death's comb
part the hairs on the back of my neck, felt
with a sureness and a
calm that surprised me,
its sudden ability to carry me over,
and in mine to be carried,
so swiftly, so indifferently,
through the terrible workings
of something like that.

Chapter 3: Donna Kane and the Liquid Resonance of Words

Kane makes small details bloom large, and this makes us want to slow down and see what she sees.

-- Bronwen Welch *Times Colonist*, Victoria (January 2008)

Introduction

Akin to John Simons's purpose in *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation*, what Donna Kane "will be attempting to demonstrate is the presence of the non-human and the effect of that presence on the act of cultural reproduction" (86). Contrary to assumed descriptors of the north in Canada as acultural, barren, and isolated, Kane shows us another North, full of neighbours, small-town people, animals, the bush and how they all interact with one another create a *real* North. This is the kind of cultural reproduction Kane describes and enacts through her poetry.

Donna Kane writes nature poetry that reaches beyond constructions about nature to create an understanding of both humanity *and* nature. I do not doubt the tangible presence of her fox, her dead gopher, her moose, her fields, her ponds, her sloughs, or her frogs. In Kane's poems nature and animals are not just props in some elaborate play about humans only. Her poetry self-consciously explores how words create a textual universe while at the same time highlighting how written representations fall short of doing nature justice. Nature writing performs a translation; if it presumes more than that, it may usurp the beauty and uniqueness of nature to become a solipsistic pathetic fallacy. As much as Kane uses metaphor to convey *wildness* (echoing McKay's concept of wildness as that which eludes us but which we continually attempt to grasp) she never loses sight of the wilderness either. In other words, the imaginative space of wilderness in Kane's poetry is never idealistic; it's always highlighting material realities.

In nature poetry the use of metaphor can surprise or disrupt our apprehension of the world in such a way as to give us a glimpse of wilderness. Ross Leckie considers Jan Zwicky's *Wisdom and Metaphor* as pivotal in understanding lyric poetry. He posits that

Zwicky, in her book, examines how metaphorical thinking is an “epistemology that is distinct from analytical cognition. It is the metaphor’s ability to hold distinct entities in sameness and difference, absence and presence, which shapes the act of perception into a form of knowing” (“Nature Poetry in Canada since *Survival*”). It is the push and pull of these two ideas –where they come together in sameness and where they stand apart in their differences that help in understanding what lyric nature poetry can do.

Arguing that “[t]he existence of metaphor is dependent on the existence of a non-metaphorical way of looking at things” (14), Zwicky suggests that metaphor creates an interrelationship between imaginative and real worlds. For Zwicky, the patterns of commonalities and differences become obvious through metaphor by the layering over of two distinct ideas (24). A metaphor—in essence a comparison between two things—places the main idea over or beside another idea or object. Thus, A is B. But importantly not only are they somehow similar or alike but at the very same time by using a metaphor we are also indicating their non-sameness. That is to say, a metaphor also highlights the differences between two things. Thus, A is also different from B. This allows a metaphysical idea or philosophy to be both grounded in reality and apart from what is real *at the same time*. In Kane’s “On Seeing a Fox with a Dead Gopher in its Mouth”, the opening line: “How well the gopher played its part”, suggests that the gopher is a player in this tableau, an actor placed on this stage (the poem) but at the very same time it also gestures toward the gopher being carried across a field. These are two distinct ideas that are layered over one another: the constructed and the actual. The ever-changing relationship between the real and the imaginative provides an important tension in her poetry.

Zwicky also points out that “metaphor” derives from the Greek “to carry across” (*meta pherein* 51). It is this sense of *carrying across* that Kane plays with in her metaphors while she holds firmly to a gritty actuality of nature. Zwicky’s analogy of the layering over of ideas—a contextualized gesturing of one idea to another— describes this

carrying over but also is, as Zwicky suggests, a resonant relation creating “an awareness of this relationship [that] makes a difference to our grasp of individual concepts” (51). Kane’s fields, foxes, gophers, and small towns also exist in imagined spaces. For example in “On Seeing a Fox with a Dead Gopher in its Mouth”, she suggests that noticing the minutiae of the fox and the gopher enables her to transport/transcend the immediacy of the situation: “its sudden ability to carry me over,/ and in mine to be carried” (lines 25-26). Kane’s reference to being “carr[ied]... over” echoes Zwicky’s words on the definition of metaphor. Zwicky argues: “The implied ‘is not’ in a metaphor points to a gap in language through which we glimpse the world. That which we glimpse is what the ‘is’ in a metaphor points to” (10). Kane’s lines have this same layering over of ideas. These lines perform a hinge between nature’s agency and human agency positing a way to hold both nature in mind *and* its ability to show us a gap into something more, that is, connectivity.

As much as Kane’s work plays with the idea of witnessing nature as a form of transcendence, it also remains firmly grounded in the physical. The idea of portraying the gritty reality of nature is contentious, and some ecocritics argue that the field is overly invested in notions of ‘the real’ as distinct from the world of language and representations⁴⁷. Yet Kane does both: she writes about the world that she perceives around her, including the animals and people that are her neighbours, while at the same time she uses metaphors to reach beyond such realism. Kane’s work shows us that Dickinson’s insistence on a division between realism and metaphoricity is not necessary. What Dickinson misses in ecopoetry is the bioregionalist practicality that, too, entails a “breaking and a joining” (Dickinson 36), or a hinge for understanding. Dickinson comments: “metaphoricity . . . reveals itself as an articulation (that is, a breaking and a

⁴⁷ Susie O’Brien’s concern over “the perils of the ecocritical mandate to get back to the physical world” (“The Garden” 167) highlights the prevalence of uncritical reliance on notions of the real in some forms of ecocriticism.

joining—a hinge) between presence and absence, or language and non-language, or logic and illogic” (36). By de-emphasizing the “real world” and its applications he does not see that a pragmatic stance contains a necessary human implication within nature. Although Kane’s nature poetry consistently highlights the relationship between humankind and the natural world, she also challenges utilitarian attitudes⁴⁸ toward nature, articulating instead the unique differences that exist in nature.

In this chapter, I argue that because Kane is attentive to the land in which she has resided (Dawson Creek/ Rolla area) for much of her life, she *is* familiar with its differences and its changes. This bioregional awareness means that “differences in nature” (Plumwood 340) are attended to. Donna Kane was raised and continued to live on the same family land in the Dawson Creek area until 2006, and she now lives nearby in the community of Rolla. She has a deeply entrenched familiarity with her specific place. Gary Snyder’s notion of “being in on the gossip” (“The Place” 41) of a place, which explores the ideas of being affected by one’s environment *if* one is paying attention, applies to Kane’s poetry.

James Engelhardt’s description of ecopoetry, which suggests the interdependence of language, environment, and experience, provides a helpful starting point for understanding Kane’s work. He explains that ecopoetry is: “connection. It’s a way to engage the world by and through language. This poetry might be wary of language, but at its core believes that language is an evolved ability that comes from our bodies, that is close to the core of who we are in the world. . . . An ecopoem might play with slippages, but the play will lead to further connections” (par. 1).

⁴⁸ See ecocritic Plumwood’s statement: “Differences in nature are only attended to if they are likely to be of use or contribute in some way to human welfare” (340). Here Plumwood is discussing (and critiquing) the tendency of Western Civilization to homogenize all of nature citing Ronald Reagan’s (then governor of California) statement: “You’ve seen one redwood you’ve seen them all.”

Engelhardt's statement suggests that the manner in which an ecopoet establishes connectivity between nature and culture has important political implications. Kane's politics are concerned with how we are influenced or changed by our locale. She also questions power and status in her society. Her writing is not just of her allegiances (which makes it political in itself), but the very acts of writing and publishing are political because they become part of the public domain—carrying her opinions and allegiances to a greater audience (the authority of the mainstream) beyond her locale. As Leckie states: “Nature poetry is political in the deepest sense of the word in that it explores the epistemological groundwork for a politics that is flexible enough to encompass the complexity of what it is to be human” (*Northern Poetry Review* par. 9). Kane's is paradoxically a poetry of separation and of unification. Critical analyses of Kane's writing often remark upon her stylistics, her lyricism, and her use of metaphors; especially emphasized is her paradoxical faith/lack of faith in words.⁴⁹ It is the manner in which Kane unifies human and natural worlds yet never transcends her own humanity, her own culpability, that I argue means her poetry can be read ecocritically and ecopolitically. Maarten Asscher, in the 2002 discussion at the Goethe Institute “Can Poetry be Political?” observed that “Joseph Woods argues that all poetry is sexual, religious, political, or anything that moves people or societies, whereas K. Michel points out that poetry is always something more than any of these things, and that ‘something more’ happens to be *poetry*” (par. 1).

⁴⁹ For example, Sue Sinclair argues that there is a “withholding and giving that characterize these poems. Perhaps the letting-us-in-but-only-so-far is in the end a faithful rendition of the world” (121).

Kane's "something more" attempts the impossible; her poetry simultaneously conveys a deep abiding faith in words to translate nature for its readers and highlights the impossibility of such a translation. Her poems imply that only through metaphorical language—paradoxically dependent upon personal experience and an engagement with familiar locales—may we approach an understanding of nature. Thus language negotiates for experience, and vice versa.

In an e-mail conversation, I asked Kane several questions: "How long have you resided in the north? What is your experience as a poet and as a woman in the north? Would you consider your poetry nature poetry?" Kane provided me with this response:

I have always lived in the Dawson Creek area, I grew up on a ranch and until a year ago lived on the same land I'd grown up on. I feel very connected to place and nature in that way and have never viewed it as something I am up against, rather something I'm deeply rooted in. My book, *Somewhere, a Fire*, was used last year at the University of Calgary's ENGL 383.04 - Topic in Literature and the Environment: Contemporary Women Nature Writers, and while I had never really thought of myself as a nature writer, I have come to see I probably am one. But it wasn't a conscious decision, just a natural outcoming of where and how I lived. (January 11th 2007 e-mail)

Snyder's argument for an *awareness* of place requires serious effort to familiarize oneself to a new climate, locale, indigenous food sources, animal inhabitants, and land-forms

("Place" 40-48). A deeply imbedded sense of place as settling deep into one's marrow means indenturing⁵⁰ yourself to that place. I suggest that Donna Haraway's position that "Nature is only the raw material of culture, appropriated, preserved, enslaved, exalted, or otherwise made flexible for disposal by culture in the logic of capitalist colonialism" ("Dualism" 147) does not hold true for Kane, and I further suggest that this is because of her being in on the "gossip" of a place, as well as her place-based, bioregional approach. Kane's poetics are an avowal of the importance and recognition of finding your *place*: "Or the urge to take foreign things home, to pluck them/from their spot and put them in your hat or hang them/from your wall must be the fear/of never returning, anywhere, to find your place again" ("Place is what stands behind the door and listens" *Somewhere* 48). While the idea of 'plucking' foreign things from their spot and relocating them to your wall could be read as a fairly colonial image of appropriation, at the same time it yields to a sense of home-making. The urge to make something foreign into something that is home has both colonial and anti-colonial implications: rocks, fossils, feathers, unusual natural objects or cultural art when removed from their original context makes home of the external; essentially internalizing the objects. The urge to carry home and display natural objects starts early in life (who hasn't gone for a walk with a child and come home with a pocket full of rocks, feathers etc?). This urge to take inside the outside world creates home of the external. "We might try to sum up the paradox of home-making by saying that inner life takes place: it both claims place and acts to become a place among others. It turns wilderness into an interior and presents interiority to the

⁵⁰ I mean to use this term in the sense of apprenticing or joining oneself to something larger than oneself, in order to gain knowledge. The OED indicates that indenture is 1. "Jointing by means of notches" 2. "A deed between two or more parties with mutual covenants" and b. "A contract by which an apprentice is bound to a master."

wilderness" (McKay "Baler Twine" 22). Kane, in transforming that which is exterior into something interior, suggests that the act of home-making is part of place awareness.

Place awareness means that no matter where you are from or where you go, it behooves you to take note of your surroundings. Bioregional consideration means taking the time to learn who your neighbours are (human, flora, and fauna). On a ranch or farm one must get one's hands dirty doing the business of making a living. Crops and livestock must be watered, housed in harsh weather, and taken care of. In more urban areas people do not need to know what is going on "out there" and may spend days inside not worrying about weather or wildlife. But just because it is not immediately necessary for all of us to know these things, knowing or not knowing does make a real difference in how we treat the natural world. If we pay attention, we become aware of our culpability, we become more responsible, more connected. It is this connectivity that Kane comments on through her poetry.

"Fall"

"Fall", the first poem in this chapter, was published in *The Antigonish Review* in Autumn 2005. *The Antigonish* has a long-standing tradition of publishing lyric poetry. Kane acknowledges that she writes within a lyric genre but also suggests that the lack of acceptance of the lyric genre may very well be the reason why female poets in Northern BC are neglected. She reflects: "the male writers in the north . . . have created a poetic that is apart from the lyric poets, of which most of the women poets in the north just happen to be. So I feel it's more a 'happening' between them than anything to do with the north or even a conscious exclusion of women (though maybe a conscious dismissal of lyric poetry). And since the north is sparsely populated and if the groundswell has been

anti-lyric poetry, then it may be hard for the lyric poets to become a part of the so called ‘canon’ of the north” (January 11th 2007 e-mail). Such is the climate of publishing in Northern BC: it is difficult enough to gain critical reception and be published in more southern or eastern venues, but in addition, the best-known poets from the region are men who, as I have shown, sometimes express masculinist attitudes towards the land.

Although “Fall” is part of a lyric tradition in poetry, its evocative use of Northern BC images lend the form new credence. Kane considers what lyric means: “I think it is important for us to think about what a lyric poem is. . . . I think that what may be happening is that any technique or device that is over-used or is not effective gets labeled lyric. A kind of scapegoat term” (June 17th 2009 e-mail). This notion of lyric as a scapegoat term for maudlin or overtly sentimental poetry, carries with it the notion that lyric is old-fashioned, leaving little room for new or innovative ways of writing lyric poetry. But there is no need to assume that lyric poetry is static. As I previously argued in chapter 2, the boundaries between lyric, language, and what Belford calls “lan(d)guage” are more flexible than sometimes assumed. Kane plays with established forms of lyric poetry, all the while subtly pushing past such assumed parameters. Though Kane expresses emotion and employs brief stanzas (which are some of the criteria that the OED’s definition of lyric poetry focuses on)⁵¹, the brevity is a function that is employed to an end. The shortness of this particular poem allows a sudden emotive engagement, while never denying the “bush” and its inhabitants, it also emphasizes the constructedness of the images. Although her poetry considers loneliness, nostalgia, and love (all those lyric

⁵¹ The OED defines lyric poetry as: “poetry expressing the writer’s emotions, usually briefly and in stanzas or strophes” (OED).

standards that have us turning and returning to poetry), it does not detract from nature's actuality.

"Fall" emerges from the lyric tradition and extends it. The poem is an iteration of an "omnipresent god", that thanks to line enjambment, "could be" possible, or could even be an animist god who is "a bird in every tree": everywhere in everything: the "bird", the "bush", the "mouth humming", the voice of the writer, and by implication the reader may be infused with this omnipresent possibility (3-6). On the other hand, the bird is also the poet: both humming in the bush. There is an inherent suggestion that it is all a construction: the bird, the bush, and god. In Kane's world it is both actual and constructed. This concurrence of idealism and pragmatism is a hallmark of Kane's poetry.

Kane's evocation of natural images and her faith in the ability of words to communicate *something*, a something that is at best only hinted at, creates an unstable equilibrium. This balance may, at times, be an uneasy one. It is the uneasiness of this equilibrium, the juxtaposition of her faith in words (to attempt to translate conflicted emotions and deep philosophic inquiries) that also renders her understanding that words cannot convey the fullness of the natural world. The retinal after-images created by lines such as "what sounds/ like an omnipresent god/ could be/ a bird" (2-5) and "I can name only by the heaviness/ of their step" (13-14) indicate both a longing to transcribe the moment and an understanding that a translation is only just that: a translation.

Certain words in Kane's poetry, in this instance the word "bush", seem straightforward word choices, but on closer examination emblemize the co-habitation of humans and nature. Like Kane, Pamela Banting considers the word "bush" as uniquely

rural, indicating a natural space that humans are close to or are part of and that they (writer and nature) co-habit. Banting writes: “‘Bush’ was a term which connoted some sense of respect for the vitality and persistence of the undergrowth which was continually pressing in on our yard from all sides, trying to reclaim territory [. . .] To some extent, ‘bush’ even incorporated the animals and birds who lived there. We, however, could not have a ‘relationship’ with the bush because the bush was almost inseparable from ourselves. Place was self” (13). Bush in this sense becomes a word that must be rurally and regionally defined. This is the kind of sensitivity to regional language and nuance that New encourages in his book *Landsliding*.

I suggest that bush, in the sense that Kane is using it, means something other than the first definition given in the Oxford English Dictionary— “a shrub or clump of shrubs”. In rural terms to “go bush” is slang for to “become wild”. Kane’s bush is a space of mirrored movements that she inhabits as the speaker in the poem: “What moves in the bush/ moves as I do” (1-2). She at once celebrates wilderness and tries to make a home out of it. The speaker in “Fall” evokes the incomprehensibility of nature. She is there in *nature* and it reminds her of something else that is indescribable, something *human*, “your mouth/ humming against waxed paper/ folded over a fine-toothed comb” (6-8). When the writer admits that she is “as afraid of the things/ I can name only by the heaviness/ of their step” (12-14), she is telling us how she can only name the unnamable through metaphor and simile by telling the reader what it is most like. Similarly, W. H. New writes: “‘Commonly understood meanings’ can break down. Under these conditions, the language is at once an impediment to communication and the very means of communication, a site of paradox, a ground at once of exhaustion and creativity”

(*Landsliding* 11). Language for Kane is indeed “at once an impediment to communication and the very means of communication” (New 11). Kane uses literal language to mean exactly what it says; thus a bird, a plant, and a mouse are the physical fauna and flora of her Northern BC world. Yet her use of figurative language changes the literal connotations. Kane’s tone is understated: this is her “bird/ whose song is your mouth” (5-6) and her “number of rustled leaves/ as of myself” (15-16). There is no need for hyperbole or for pathetic fallacy; and any personification is merely implied. A few simple internal rhymes in the poem belie the complexity of its lyric quality: “be” (4), “tree” (5), and “see” (9).

This poem expresses a certain faith that words will fill in the liminal spaces between culture, human emotions and nature. This faith trusts that the picture(s) in this poem will conjure in the reader similar emotional and philosophic responses. The literal images and figurative language create an understanding of the feeling of fellowship between human and bird. This is not just a view of nature as a textualized object. Rather, Kane represents their relation in terms of co-habitation.

The metaphors and similes are unexpected: the speaker is “A plant you don’t notice/ until frost turns it scarlet” (18-19). Those sounds (that she and some other beings are making) are “like an omnipresent god” (3). Sue Sinclair comments on this unfathomable quality of her work. Sinclair notes Kane’s provocative tension in her poetry. In her review of *Somewhere A Fire* in the *Fiddlehead*, Sinclair states: “what strikes me above all is the integrity of the voice, its determined honesty. Which brings me back to my initial emphasis on the withholding and giving that characterize these poems.

Perhaps the letting-us-in-but-only-so-far is in the end a faithful rendition of the world itself” (121).

Lyric poets (in particular because they slow the moment of experience down in order to allow the reader to glimpse what that experience is like) use this system of experience to say something pertinent about who they are and what they value. Kane’s poem suggests that nature is intertwined with culture. Her ecocritical philosophy is of neither the Romantic, “all green is good” variety, nor the “all culture is decay” type; instead, her ecopoetry arises from a bioregionalist approach to a place that she is intimate with. This is poetry that not only stands within those fields, but also wallows in the rivers, wades in the ponds and listens attentively to “the gossip” (Snyder) of the place.

“Morning Practice”

“Morning Practice” is emblematic of Kane’s politics of interconnectivity and was selected for this reason. It also was selected for its inclusion of an epiphany: a sudden revelation that is another lyric standard. This epiphany produces a shift of perception within the characters in the poem, the speaker, and the readers: an insight about human experience suddenly comes into focus by the poem’s end. Robert Langbaum has called this the "epiphanic" mode and has suggested that it is a dominant convention of the modern lyric (“Epiphanic Mode in Wordsworth and Modern Literature”). Such a "revelation" often coincides with the author's implied viewpoint of things and is presented to the reader as the poem’s most important insight.

One needs a faith in words to believe in epiphanies and revelations un-ironically, yet the apparent naivety of “epiphanic moments” belies the careful crafting and composition of this poem. Only because Kane has worked the tension between literal and

figurative language, between the expected and unexpected, does she pull off this particular literary convention. Unexpectedly, Kane's "charming and menacing" (Triny Finlay 101) small town, which at first comes across as a fragmented social space, later culminates in the *possibility* of interconnectedness, of outsiders and insiders, of vagrants, and of nature. What begins in moments of separateness in the first stanza—"Someone's in the dumpster" (1), "Boys / with hockey gear pass by unnoticed" (4-5), and "A woman by a truck fishes for keys" (6)—becomes by mid-poem the epiphanic moment.

The man in the dumpster ("pooling the light/ before dipping back down") is an integral part of a larger picture: all the individual characters create a movement towards awareness and togetherness. The man, woman, and boys are "for a moment. . . one, banded together" (10). Because Kane's people know one another and stop for long enough to acknowledge that they exist *together*, they can see that: "The world is not disconnected or separate but whole. All persons are still their own entity but not separate from everything else" (Harjo 92). This portrayal of a small town indicates that they are not separate; they have not forgotten how to survive by being interdependent. However Kane does not simply dismiss the obvious social divisions that the moment captures too.

Somewhere, a Fire is a book of poems that paradoxically advocates for a politics of unification while at the same time revealing the fragments that such a constructed unity is made up of. "Morning Practice", in particular, exhibits this cohesive fragmentation. In the first stanza we are given a typical street scene, but the apparent straightforwardness of her description becomes complicated by line four. Line four forces the reader to do a back-and-forth circling in their reading. We have been told that "someone" is in the dumpster. We are then told obliquely that this someone is male: "*his*

ball cap” (1), “*his* hand” (2) leading the reader to think of a man looking for empties or food. Yet the masculine “someone” becomes more complicated because we are given the inexplicable image of this “someone” causing a “pooling [of] the light” (3). It is as if he is haloed or phosphorescent. Furthermore, the edge of “glad-green” (3) positively suspends my inquiries—what to think? Is this the “glad-green” of the ubiquitous Glad© garbage bags? Or is it the glad-green of a phosphorescent glow that the “someone” in the dumpster creates by “pooling the light”? This kind of ambiguity is indicative of Kane’s pragmatic mysticism.

The end of the sentence in line four is partially enjambed by the next word, which begins the next sentence. Because the word “Boys” (4) both starts a new sentence and lies on the same line as the last sentence of the “someone” in the dumpster, they are connected visually on the page. They are also aurally connected because the reader is forced to connect the two sentences when reading it out loud. This line break creates an enjambment, but it is an enjambment that forces the reader to read “Boys” as indelibly connected to the sentence that precedes it. We thus must think of this “someone” and the “boys” as connected—whether it is that this someone was once a boy himself or that these people, the man in the dumpster, the boys walking by, and the woman looking for her keys are all connected by their placement in Kane’s lines. There is a self-conscious creation of a textual universe in this poem. Furthermore we are made to notice what often goes “unnoticed”.

I agree with George Sipos’s comments on *Somewhere, a Fire*, where he states that what is “characteristic of much of Donna Kane’s work. . . [is] contemplation arising from the intricate implications of a specific image which makes huge intellectual and

emotional leaps but which always remains faithful to the physical reality of the experience with which it began” (par. 6). Bearing witness in her writing, Kane articulates her experience of nature and culture, making “huge intellectual and emotional leaps” but also articulating “the physical reality of the experience”. Thus Kane continuously works the tension between the literal and the abstract.

“For a moment they are one”: line 10, is an ecofeminist and ecocritical statement, in the sense that ecocriticism takes as its subject the *interconnections* between nature and culture. “As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the non-human” (Glotfelty and Fromm, Introduction xix). Although this poem explicitly deals with human interactions, it also deals with the more-than-human realm. There is an awareness that humans are not at the universe’s centre. Through Kane’s employment of literal and figurative language we are given a Coke can, bright red and white against the cold. Suddenly the epiphany and interconnectedness the poem has hinged upon falls into “familiar/ disorder” (18-19). In this poem it is enough that this unity lasts only for the moment and returns to entropy, like “a nickel spinning its edge / before wobbling face down” (17-18).

“Change of Season”

Kane’s “Change of Season,” which won the Lina Chartrand Award for poetry in 2000, ties together culture and nature indelibly. By comparing a love relationship to the inevitable seasonal changes that occur in trees, she does not *use* nature images in negative ways but instead considers how nature is capable of “drawing in the sun” (16). Such a continuance, which may seem dismaying initially, is an assurance: leaves fall, seasons follow one another, and humans fall out of and into love. There is a beautiful inevitability

in Kane's poem: a surety that whatever keeps the metaphoric and literal couple apart is transient; the willingness to *hold on* is what melts the distance and closes the gap. It is a recurring theme in Kane's work—words such as “drawing in” (in this poem) and “cinches in” (“On Waking to Snowfall”)⁵² articulate her attentiveness to the smallest habitant of nature and how this attention to detail confirms connectivity among humans and between humans and nature.

Her use of what I am calling attraction verbs, such as “drawing in” or “cinches in,” is emblematic of her work. Attraction verbs create a feeling of interconnection, one that is both present in nature and is manufactured through writing. Attraction verbs are juxtaposed with the emotional state of the speaker, by likening the autumnal trees to the state of human loneliness. In directly linking autumnal/winter trees (in their esoteric loneliness) to human loneliness, Kane evokes an emotional season of winter where all is “silence”, “tilted back away”, “stiff and perilous”, and an “awkward quiet.” Yet inevitably, like the return of spring and sun, another word “shifts our bodies closer/ melts a field of snow” (20-21). Yet it's a word the lovers cannot or do not think to say – so this reunification remains unrealized.

Such a slight poem, in its brevity, leaves a good deal of context to be supplied by the reader. It reminds us that reading is a creative process to which we bring not only our knowledge of literary conventions, but also the unique experiences that each of us, as individuals, has undergone. In this sense Kane's poem refuses the possible trap of the lyric “I” and its narrow identity politics. It almost refuses its own subjectivity. Thus Kane escapes essentialist or narrow identity issues that presume that a singular experience

⁵² “The grasshopper/ *cinches* in. In every leap/ a leap. You never see/its husked mouth open/ but you hear it singing/ in the field” (“On Waking” 36-41, emphasis added)

might speak, for example, for all women, or all northern women. Kane shows how the intimate realm of private experience is constructed and mediated through the public.

“On Seeing a Fox With a Dead Gopher in its Mouth”

“On Seeing a Fox With a Dead Gopher in its Mouth” is from her book of poetry, *Somewhere, a Fire* and, like “Morning Practice,” the poem strives to articulate a sense of unity. Yet here this unity has more disturbing implications. In this poem, Kane both affirms and attempts to sever the discursive link between women and animals. Kane addresses the disquieting commodification of women’s bodies by linking them to meat sold at the local deli of her childhood. She does not tell the reader how to feel or interpret this story. She pushes both narrative and lyric ecopoetry into philosophic mediation.

As in some of her other poems, Kane uses attraction verbs—in this case “carry me over” and “in mine to be carried”—which produce images of interconnectivity and which likewise pull the reader in. This interconnectivity is highly charged with ecocritical/ecofeminist meaning. Kane both evokes and defies the affiliation that *can* be seen in some women’s writing connecting women and animals—both commodified, both separated into constituent pieces of flesh. Joan Dunayer points out that: “Applying images of denigrated non-human species to women labels women inferior and available for abuse; attaching images of the aggrandized human species to men designates them superior and entitled to exploit. Language is a powerful agent in assigning the imagery of animal vs. human” (11). Kane’s speaker relates a school story about being asked to fall backwards into the arms of a boy. She is being asked to trust a boy who steals meat stickers from the local deli and applies them to pin-ups of girls in his locker. Although Sue Sinclair, in her review of *Somewhere, a Fire* for *The Fiddlehead* finds a certain

humour in this anecdote, I confess that I do not. Sinclair writes: “Funny story, but. . . . with an undercurrent of existential seriousness” (119). Perhaps as an indicator of reader response theory, I find nothing amusing in the boy pasting deli stickers on to the breasts and genitals of the pin-up girls in his locker, which implies that they are reduced to “meat” for his consumption.

Carol J. Adams, in her essay “Woman-Battering and Harm to Animals”, paints graphic images, discusses specific cases, and considers some statistics concerning the links between the abuse of women and of animals. However, unlike the pets who are individual targets of domestic violence in Adams’s essay, the domestic animals in Kane’s poem are generic; the labels from the deli (placed upon anonymous dead animals) create a like projection upon the poster girls in the boys’ lockers: they too are anonymous bits of flesh.

The primary image of the “dead gopher” who “played its part” (1) is linked with the twelve year old girl in “grade 7 Drama” (7)—both beings are playing their parts on this stage (the poem) and are “at your service” (2). They are, in a sense, served up for someone else’s gratification—either physically (as meat) or sexually (as meat). The young girl being told to “forget her muscles/ on cue, to fall” (9-10) combines with the stickers saying *boneless, reduced*, thus suggesting that the girl, gopher, deli meat, and the pin-up girls are all reduced, all made less than themselves.

However, the specificity of this particular fox and this particular gopher in the poem complicates the division between animals and humans, between domestic and wild animals, as well as between predators and prey. The attention the author pays to the story

of the boy and the girl does not detract from the story of the fox and the gopher. Clearly, Kane is calling into question established hierarchies of importance in this poem.

Karen Davis, in her quixotically titled essay “Thinking Like a Chicken,” argues that often in literary representations (in Western Civilization—using examples from Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* to Melville’s *Moby Dick*), the wild animal is given more merit and is spoken of in more romantic terms than the domestic animal. According to Davis, even deep ecologists reinforce animal hierarchies. Wild animals associated with masculine stereotypes, such as wolves (top of the hierarchy), are given deference over domestic animals, such as chickens (bottom of the hierarchy). “Natural, wild, and free” are idolized and “unnatural, tame, and confined” are vilified (Davis 196). Kane, though, destabilizes these hierarchies by implying that the gopher is as important as the fox, while the anonymous (domestic) deli meat is as important as the twelve-year-old girl. Kane suggests all these beings are equal. The prey’s and the predator’s perspectives are woven together throughout this poem. The girl’s view, the presence of the gopher and the fox, and the deli meat complicate the sweeping monolithic view of animals and women’s flesh as commodity.

Is it possible to speak *for* nature without unduly anthropomorphizing it? Linda Vance suggests that: “Crafting narratives that will give voice to animals and make humans care about them in appropriate ways is no easy task. We want to avoid anthropomorphizing animals even though that has proven itself an effective tactic for mobilizing public sympathy toward them” (185). What then is left? Kane’s gopher and fox remain wild animals and are not directly given voice, but they act and they cause

action to happen. The fox's disappearance through the wheat causes the narrator to not only be "carr[ied] over" (26) but to marvel at this moment and to write this poem.

Valuing the *other* in "On seeing a Fox with a Gopher in its Mouth" includes depicting animals as having impact and presence. This provides us with telling examples of "relationships and communication between us humans and other species (including questions of who speaks for nature and who listens when nature "speaks" for itself)" (Carr 18). Kane's dialogue between human and non-human characters is internal and oblique; it is merely hinted at in her line, the "ability to carry me over" (24). Voicing the animals suggests not only their presence but also their importance. Culturally determined structures such as gender binaries and speciesism have been, if not erased, at least blurred in Kane's understanding of *what nature can do*.

Conclusion

We must keep in mind that "all writers and their critics are stuck with language, and although we cast *nature* and *culture* as opposites, in fact they constantly mingle, like water and soil in a flowing stream" (Howarth "Ecocriticism in Context" 163). Kane relays this liquid resonance through her lyric poetry. Words are all we can use to communicate partial truths, and Kane is aware of these "awkward copulations of truth" ("That Said" line 14). Kane's poem "That Said" is an acknowledgement that language is an imperfect system of signs. But a clumsy tool is better than no tool at all, and Kane uses language to evoke the discursive "unsayable".

Each consonant a carrot wedged from the clay,
Its bright orange placed in our mouths.

Each vowel a star uncorking the dark, spilling
Into words, sentences, awkward copulations of truth.

Once more I've made too much of things.
In time I'll think, too little. (11-16)

Kane's lyricism, which hesitates on the brink of translating the fullness of nature, provides the reader with what McKay calls "ontological applause" for nature and for what attentiveness to nature can achieve. Sinclair's assessment of Kane's writing is that "Form and content are integral to one another, melded to become one thing. There are turns of phrase and subtle line breaks . . . But what strikes me above all is the integrity of the voice, its determined honesty . . . Perhaps the letting us-in-but-only-so-far is in the end a faithful rendition of the world itself . . . We are poised halfway in, always on the cusp of knowing. Which is exactly where Donna Kane's poems place us" (121). This positing of language as a "faithful rendering" but somehow falling just short of actuality means that Kane acknowledges that she is providing a translation of the world, not the world itself. In so doing, Kane inscribes a politics of reinhabitation—a bioregional consideration that speaks the language of this particular place. "Bush" is not just some place out *there* but it is self as well. Her politics of connectivity creates a like action in the reader: we are cinched into the poem, drawn in as it were, to this understanding of place that has formed Kane's poetics.

Chapter 4 Si Transken: Ecofeminist Community Building and the Politics of Valuing “Otherness”

Generica

from shores of British Columbia to anywhere Nova Scotia
to everywhere nowhere there's Canada's:
whiffs of American plastic,
exhaust, lilac, cut grass,
Chinese buffet lunches
& other familiars.
Tim Hortons, scabby pavement, food
that tastes vaguely like an imagined
long-ago original.
Just a Buck Stores.
a central street called:
Pine, Cedar, Birch, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Prince, Queen, King or Central
street.
strip joint, strip mall, a scar
where resources were stripped, struck down, stolen.
First Nations men wearing defeat
on palms panhandling the hungry day.
bank box machines charging
service fees equally across the nation.
Value Village/ Sally Anne/ Salvation Army.
a bookstore clinging to a corner
trying to disclose options but
selling soft porn to pay the rent.
yards, ditches & sidewalk cracks
scattered
with the robust resilient smiles
of dandelions and daisies.
a local rag almost effectively
Resisting the *Globe and Mail's* reality.
Wal-Mart.
a call centre or an annoying cry to create one.
politicians' posters fading from fences
where they were posted during
an election—promises dissolved
under miscellaneous inevitables.
A scraggly park where single moms share stories
of abuse, neglect, recipes for welfare soup.
at town's edge an SPCA where animals
await another chance or euthanasia.
a grungy railroad running through or near it all.

4 or 6 lane highway leading
to places which locals call
out, away, gone, or different somehow.
& those rudely handsome daisies
& dandelions incessantly
pressing forward
their irrepressible fluff & seeds.

What This Lake's Beavers Might say to an Interviewer from Outer Space

We do not like them. Unfurred. Noisy. No slap-it tails.
Bluishiny pissers leaving colorskim on water stinging our eyes.
Without purpose they ripple air & fluid surfaces.

On that side of our lake there's been a family of them
since thirty water rises but we've coped. The minor mercy is
their wintersleeps are long;
they're quiet from snow-thickening till bud-eating time.

Their kind are disturbing. Duplicitous.
Smiling, complimenting us
as comradely symbol of earnest employment while also
implicitly forgetting how our beings
--five million in the first two generations—
were used to construct their nations
& they continue to 'harvest' or 'cull' us....

And we've never understood why they
ridiculously call their females'
kit-making space a "beaver"
or why they construct such big shelters
to contain so little mud.

Could you please trap them, take them to your planet,
eat them, or just poison them?

Damned

the people sickened by mercury
from the flesh of fish;
the dog who bites the barking neighbour;
the woman stomped to death
by a charging bull moose;
the bear who killed the hunter;
the lion who ripped the poacher
limb from limb & then
recycled that yummy human protein;
the chickens, allegedly, causing societal flu;
the flocks of birds caught in plane engines
invoking a crash—
a Mona Lisa smile capturing my face, i applaud
miraculous tiny revenges.

today channel 9 educates us:
whooping cranes benefit from these unprecedented
global-warming-motivated hurricanes
(while audience members are switching into compassion
fatigue,
switching channels have witnessed
multiple crushes of landscape,
of urban life, of dreams lost for those arrays of running
two-legged stick figures).
whooping cranes, once almost extinct, have found
their wetlands restored.
rain & human absence is healing
their nesting grounds.

vegetarian for 20 years.
almost pristinely vegan for another 10.
never wearing fur;
refusing to own leather except in desperate
necessity
on my frail white-yellow-pale feet
in the forty below
bulked up in thick socks
& in the hug of those hurting boots
my old toes, nonetheless, twitch in shame, sulk
in remorse.

Walking through Four Early-Evenings on a Port Edwards Bush Road

(UNBC Creative Writing Retreat, Pacific Cannery July 2002).

impossible mountains going impossibly
straight up massive-greenly.
ravens complaining against cultural weight; screeching,
shaking,
self-soothing – not circus dancing.
zenny waterfalls my-shoulders-wide,
stone flows beside & not apart from each other.
stumps as large around as an indigenous family
forming a hand-to-hand circle.
moss on everything that's neglected
to move since sunrise.
cow parsnips' stems as truthful
with themselves as i am becoming.
moody logs or lochness monsters
floating in this body of dark fluid
--these raspberries are more red today or has
the way of the light shifted?

Si Transken: Ecofeminist Community Building and the Politics of Valuing “Otherness”

Ecofeminism [is an] approach to feminist social [& literary] theory that focuses not only on the oppression of women but also on its correlation with the oppression of the ecosphere and all living things, and that often includes elements of environmentalism, antimilitarism, feminist spirituality, or anti-imperialism (or all these).

--Sheila Ruth (*26 Issues in Feminism*).

I believe that, as long as man tortures and kills animals, he will torture and kill humans as well—and wars will be waged—for killing must be practiced and learned in a small scale, inwardly and outwardly. As long as animals are confined in cages, there will be prisons as well—for incarceration must be practiced and learned, in a small scale, inwardly and outwardly. As long as there are animal slaves, there will be human slaves as well—for slavery must be learned and practiced, on a small scale—inwardly and outwardly.

--Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz, author, vegan, and animal advocate who was imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp from 1940 to 1945.

Introduction

For the deep ecologist, activist/ecofeminist (which I suggest Transken is), representing animals means also defending their intrinsic interests. How such interests are understood, how such knowledge can be acquired, and how to communicate this information becomes significant. Animals and the natural world do have a material existence in their own right, irrespective of how humans view them. Part of a deep-ecologist agenda means deciding whose side you are on: nature’s or humanity’s. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition* defines deep ecology as: “A form of environmentalism that advocates radical measures to protect the natural environment regardless of their effect on the welfare of people”, which seems fairly anti-anthropocentric. However, the OED defines deep ecology as a: “philosophy and movement which regards human life as merely one of many equal components of the global ecosystem, and seeks to counter anthropocentric attitudes and policies.” The second definition lends a more egalitarian tone to deep ecology: including the interests of humans while acknowledging that “human life [is] *merely* one of many equal components” (italics added).

This is an important distinction, because my approach to ecocriticism, as well as my readings of the poems in this study, is concerned with nature in the context of human relationships. It is crucial in understanding Transken's poetry to know that Transken's position, her politics, and her poetics are anti-androcentric and anti-anthropocentric⁵³. Transken's deep ecology often situates itself within the strain of deep ecology that privileges nature's concerns over human concerns. Yet as a harbinger who warns of ecological disaster and distress, Transken expresses concern for humanity by sounding an important wake-up call for the unaware.

The mission statement of the Foundation for Deep Ecology (FDE) is "to support education and advocacy on behalf of *wild* Nature" (italics added). Their use of the word *wild* specifies that they wish to advocate only for *wild* nature thus leaving out domestic nature and establishing a hierarchy of wild/not wild. The FDE's website addresses, in particular, four reasons why wild nature is currently being degraded: 1) "the loss of traditional knowledge" and the assumption that humans are superior to nature (par. 4); 2) "the conversion of nature to commodity form" (par. 5); 3) "technology worship and an unlimited faith in the virtues of science" (par. 6); and finally, 4) overpopulation (par. 7). While I too, am troubled by the "assumption that humans are superior to nature," such a statement reifies the nature/culture binary, as if humans are separate from nature. And while I agree that "the conversion of nature to commodity form" is very disturbing, I also acknowledge that such a process is how most people in Northern BC make their living. Resource extraction prioritizes human concerns over those of nature; yet on the other

⁵³ An androcentric view is pro-masculine, male centred, and places male concerns above all others. An anthropocentric view places human concerns at the center of any nature culture debate.

hand, even people who do not directly rely upon resource extraction still benefit from these industries. If there were no logging, there would be no lumber, and sustainable practices of resource extraction are one way we might blend human concerns and the concerns of nature. Rob Heselbarth indicates: “Sustainability has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; a definition created in 1987 at the World Commission on Environment and Development, a division of the United Nations” (par. 2). He notes in this same article that the least sustainable practices take place in forests where the owner(s) use the land for a very short period of time. Their main concern is to maximize resource extraction as quickly as possible. He also points out that the most sustainable practices occur where long-term forest ownership takes place. Such divergent practices indicate that humans tend to be more attentive to long-term effects of their actions on their surroundings only when their surroundings become beneficial or *personal* to them in the long run. If someone is deeply familiar with land and has a relationship with the natural community they are perforce more attentive. My third concern with deep ecology approaches is the tendency to demonize technology. Humans may need to turn to technology at the very least to disseminate important environmental information (like the computer I used to access the very website of the Foundation for Deep Ecology, an organization that is using technology to their advantage). Finally, there are unexamined assumptions about overpopulation⁵⁴.

⁵⁴ In the article “Falling Fertility” (2009) *The Economist* states that although many point to overpopulation as the key factor in damaging the earth’s ecosystem, in fact, it is often the poorest countries that have the highest population rate and paradoxically create less waste and have a smaller ecological footprint. Importantly, it points out: “the poorest

In sum, the oppositions that the FDE establish in their list pit nature against humans. Transken's poetry, both overtly and obliquely, speaks to many of the same issues that the FDE addresses, at once challenging and confirming some of these oppositions.

Transken pulls no punches in indicting avaricious globalism, consumerism, patriarchy, and malfunctioning social systems. As a result, she comes close to reifying a prevalent opposition in ecocriticism: that nature is composed of positive attributes (the "all green is good" philosophy), and that culture is composed of negative attributes (as illustrated in John Elder's expression, "culture as decay" [227]). However, Transken also explores the liminal space that is produced in the clash between culture and nature, simultaneously berating humanity and celebrating the resistance of the oppressed. The altered value system that she relays in her poetry sometimes creates a nature/culture binary; but at the same time, by pointing out very telling examples of humanity's transgressions (both toward nature and fellow humans), she is harranging us to change, thereby expressing a commitment to amendment. While we may be discomfited at hearing about our colonial history and humanity's culpability regarding natural disasters, these are transgressions we *should* be made aware of.

Offering us a way to imagine change, Transken's ecofeminism is an expression of an altered value system. The term "altered value system" generally refers to a belief or way of life that flies in the face of the prevailing socio-political, financial, and ethical values. The current socio-political climate in Northern BC tends toward an acceptance of the necessity of resource extraction, and a belief in a naturalized hierarchy that would

Africans and Asians produce 0.1 tonnes of CO₂ each a year, compared with 20 tonnes for each American" (15).

place human concerns above animal concerns. In contrast, Transken's feminist, animal rights centred value system privileges the "other" and depicts animals as having impact, presence, and *voice*. While her poetry describes concretely the effects of poverty, abuse, depression, racism, and misogyny on disadvantaged groups, she also provides a way out of such conflicts by showing how connections can be made. Throughout her poetry she shows the possibility of achieving a balance: "whooping cranes, once almost extinct, have found/ their wetlands restored" ("Damned" 24-25). She indicates how people and nature can co-habitate, telling us that we too, can "press forward," (44) we too can be "irrepressible," (45) "resilient," (24) and we too can create community by "shar[ing] stories" ("Generic" 34). By acknowledging the cost of human actions, her attentiveness can bring about change, and through poetic fellowship we can all participate in building more sustainable communities, both literally and figuratively.

Transken's Political and Poetic Engagement in Prince George Communities

In Issue # 43 of *The Capilano Review*, a special edition that focuses on "Northern Poets" in BC, George Stanley (himself a Northern BC poet), puts his finger on the pulse of the Northern writing scene. He begins his introduction by considering the value of *fellowship* for Northern poets and what this community means for writers. Particular to his argument is the idea that the poets themselves and the institutions in Northern BC support a kind of poetic communion. Stanley speaks of the community that published writers in Northern BC create, as well as how these writers support a larger community of regional publishing. He notes that institutions such as the local colleges and the university in Prince George have helped create a Northern writing community. Importantly, he also

suggests that the cultural bioregion of the region has impacted how and what these poets write:

The place where the writers live, the natural environment and the human communities—village, town and city—particularly as they have been subjected to heedless and accelerated change by the changing priorities of economic exploitation, have been more than just a background refracted in the personal concerns of their poems; they have been the subject of the poems as lived experience. In a sense there is no background in the north.

All is figure, all is ground. (57; italics added)

“There is no background in the north” states Stanley boldly and I agree; there is no nature as mere backdrop. His notion of humanity and nature as indivisible is akin to Leslie Marmon Silko’s sense of landscapes (which I discussed previously on page 22) as viewer as inseparable from “landscape”. I believe Stanley means to say that humans and the landscape are inextricably one, are part and parcel of the big Northern BC picture.

The poets⁵⁵ of Northern BC that Stanley speaks of are indeed indivisible from their place, and are “as much part of the landscape” as the place they stand on. And place (in this instance Prince George) and its politics are what Si Transken writes about in her poems. Prince George is not only a beautiful landscape of mountains and rivers; it is equally a place of industry. Many of Prince George’s poets address this dichotomy of beauty and development in their representations of the region⁵⁶. Yet place has also created a writerly community that Transken is supported by and overtly supports.

⁵⁵ Stanley mentions Si Transken, Barry McKinnon, Ken Belford, Greg Lainsbury, and Simon Thompson.

⁵⁶ See for example Barry McKinnon’s *Pulp Log* and Rob Budde’s *Finding Ft. George*.

Transken acknowledges the uniqueness of the literary community of Prince George in her presentation at UNBC in 2006, “Prince George Writing: Creating Comfort & Community Differently.” She states: “My belief is that one of the most special and vital aspects of northern writers writing is that we are teaching and learning; listening and hearing each other into a space of community” (1). The concept of listening and hearing is a particularly important hinge for understanding community: listening acknowledges the agency of the other. That is, someone else has something worth hearing and listening to. While published authors in Northern BC have been predominantly white Anglo-Saxon males, the dialogue between existent and emergent writers is slowly becoming one of respect and inclusion. These days, the Northern BC poetic canon is beginning to address the historical muting of certain voices. Challenges from feminist, First Nations, and other minority writers have enabled the emergence of other voices outside the literary canon, even if those voices are still not at the forefront of published Northern BC writing. Contemporary writers such as Transken and Rob Budde are addressing these issues of inclusivity in both their poetry and in their critical writings.

Transken promotes the work of Prince George writers like Jacqueline Baldwin and Bridget Moran who have published locally and whose writing and readings are linked with social justice events such as December 6th ceremonies and International Women’s Day⁵⁷. She publically recognizes the community-building efforts of writers like Ken Belford who has devoted his time and his poetry to fundraising, stating: “his readings have usually brought him minimal material reward—but they contribute significantly to a sense of community being cultivated” (7). Notably, Transken also

⁵⁷ Days which are observed nation-wide.

remarks on Prince George as a “writerly terrain”—a cultural geography that is shaped by the work of writers such as Barry McKinnon and Budde. As Transken puts it: “These authors and creative activists network with each other and hundreds of others through their e-mails, websites and blogs. They nourish community” (8).

Transken herself is among the poets who “nourish community”. She speaks of poverty and pain, and of the complexity of linked oppressions, not only as a poet but also as a Professor of Social Work at UNBC. She is also a social activist who works specifically in the fields of anti-poverty, anti-racism, and feminism. As a vegan, she struggles with northern issues such as logging and hunting. In addition, she is an animal rights advocate who contributes her time and energy to fundraisers, rallies, and readings. Finally, as an editor and writer, she has been the driving force behind seven creative writing anthologies, two of which she has edited and contributed to since coming to live in Prince George: *This Ain't Your Patriarch's Poetry Book* (2003), published in Prince George by Transformative Collective Press, and *Making Noise, Northern Women* (2007), published by UNBC Press, and co-edited by Budde. She is editing a forthcoming anthology, *Un/complicated Play/ers*, published by UNBC Press, that includes the work of Belford and Budde. She has recently self-published her latest chapbook, *Don't Get Even Get Odd* (2006), and published eight poems in the special issue of *The Capilano Review* on Northern BC writing (2004).

In all of her work, Transken expresses a strong commitment to social change. Akin to the poets she recognizes in her aforementioned paper, she too, is “community oriented”, using her art “to describe a world around them [Prince George poets] in which they wish for more social justice” (Transken, “Prince George” 9). She strives to honour

her “commitment to other writers, to the next generation”, to “publish[ing] in alternate forums”, and most importantly to “align[ing herself] with vulnerable populations” (9). Transken is well known for her politics: “Her writing explores issues such as justice, activism, women’s perspectives, poverty and creative healing in northern communities” (Lamb-Yorski 5).

Her name “Si Chava Transken” is one she created for herself, rising from the dust of an impossible childhood. Transken was raised in northern Ontario and describes herself as “white bush-trash” in reclamation of the derogative (preface to *Don’t Get Even Get Odd*). As a child of a mother who was adopted, Transken highlights her mother’s lost family history, musing that she herself may not be entirely “white”: “dark-eyed. dark haired. A mystery infant / in 1940” (“Gram’s kitchen” lines 22-23). When she was growing up, no one spoke openly of her mother’s heritage. Transken affiliates herself with those who are/have been oppressed. As a survivor of poverty, abuse, and childhood incest, She self-identifies as a social justice activist and as a writer; her poetry is about her views and her experiences. Transken describes her writing as autoethnographic: she includes herself in her writing and, by revealing her stories and history, she is seeking alliances with her readers. In her essay, “Meaning Making and Methodological Explorations,” Transken discusses N.L. Holt’s definition of *autoethnography* “as a process of writing that complexly connects personal and cultural dynamics and phenomena” (4). Among other features, autoethnography uses experiential knowledge to explore wider issues, and Transken draws on her own experiences to provide a window by which she can approach a wide range of social issues.

For Transken, lyric poetry is not just personal but is political as well.

Stanley accurately assesses Transken's writing when he writes: "Si Transken initially places herself beneath "civilized" notice, repudiating all social standing ("i am a base blot; a bit of snot/ on a dignified person's sock"), and from this unassailable vantage delivers a detailed bill of particulars regarding the culture" (58). Her current social position notwithstanding, Transken has experienced a host of oppressions throughout her life and keeps these memories close. She is committed to direct action in the name of feminism, anti-violence, animal rights, and First Nations rights. In Prince George you will often find her at scholarly and writerly events, as well as at feminist, pro-animal, anti-racism demonstrations, marches, and sit-ins.

Transken's poetry reflects her political activism. For example, by playing with the rules of grammar and punctuation, in particular her use of the lower case *i*, she self-consciously positions her self as outside of the evaluative hierarchical norm of English grammar. Alison Mark and Deryn Rees-Jones, in their introduction to *Contemporary Women's Poetry: Reading/Writing/ Practice*, expound upon the difference between "I" and "i": "subtle reconfigurations of pronouns—to name an obvious strategy [that] dramatizes the process, expressing the subject as I and i, for instance—avoids essentialism and remakes these tiny particles as vehicles that can represent women as subjects" (xviii).

Though "presenting women as subjects" is part of what Transken is interested in, her poetry is not only about the self. Her work too (like Kane's) provides us with telling examples of "relationships and communication between us humans and other species (including questions of who speaks for nature and who listens when nature "speaks" for itself)" (Carr 18). In dialogue with these poems I examine how Transken presents

“relationships and communication” between women and animals, as well as between self and nature. Transken aligns herself with Morgan Gardner’s seminal work on linked activism in *Linking Activism: Ecology, Social Justice, and Education for Social Change*. Gardner states: “If one lives in a dominant culture steeped in segmentation it is challenging to live holistically. Dominant Western paradigms constantly give us messages to live in fragmented ways. Patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, anthropocentrism, and other systems of domination disconnect us from others and ourselves” (5-6).

Such “systems of domination” truly “disconnect us from others and ourselves” because in order to participate in power-over hierarchies, those in positions of power must perceive those beneath them as somehow less-than deserving. By telling ourselves that we are educationally, intellectually, physically, or morally superior to another, we distance ourselves from ourselves by maintaining a rigid hierarchy between self and other. In contrast, by articulating the intersections where we come together by choice or by similarities (acknowledging difference as a positive thing) we can break down these systems of domination. It is this kind of idealism that supports Transken’s stated desire to make a real difference. For Transken, exploring her Northern society means representing what is valued and what is *othered*: showing us the negative and the positive in her home.

“Generica”

In “Generica,” Transken moves rapidly from the general (and generic) to the particular. At times, her ambiguity and word plays become so complex that meaning itself is called into question. Transken’s impassioned engagement with both national and international issues combine with her disdain for consumerism and materialistic globalism in this poem, creating a sense of dislocation for both the speaker and the reader. “Generica” deploys a range of different theoretical frameworks that enable Transken to explore rural/urban/suburban spaces, as well as nature/human relationships within contexts of gender and place. In *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*, Glynis Carr discusses how, within ecofeminist criticism, masculine and feminine do not represent the only binary constructed by Euro-centric patriarchal society; she includes the dualisms of “colonizer/colonized, heterosexual/homosexual, adult/child, and human/animal” (17). Transken too, addresses these issues. However, Carr’s work does not ask how these issues play out in a Canadian or regional context⁵⁸. Going further than Carr, Transken considers land/animal relationships as a crucial site of inquiry, one that hinges on an understanding of regional difference. In particular, Transken investigates the Prince George writing community.

In “Generica,” Transken initially implies that the poetic scene that she evokes could be anywhere in Canada—“from shores of British Columbia to anywhere Nova Scotia” (1), implying there is little difference between here (BC), there, “anywhere” (1)

⁵⁸ Carr’s work is an example of O’Brien’s point that most ecocritical work focuses on mainstream American writing.

or “everywhere nowhere” (2). She further suggests a connection between “anywhere” in Canada to American vapid consumerism. Ultimately, however, she negates this “everywhere nowhere” framework by becoming very specific and particular: she situates herself in a “scraggly park where single moms share stories” (36). What had been general and generic—and difficult to pinpoint a critique of—has become specific to her city, Prince George. Even if these specifics are still possibly negative, they have become ultimately changeable. There is hope in the details that she offers of this particular place; women “share stories” and stray animals may be given a “second chance”. Likewise, the dandelions and daisies “press forward” and are “irrepressible”.

But Tranksen not only engages with local specificities; she also connects them to larger, macro-political problems. In the introductory lines (“Canada’s: / whiffs of American plastic”), Tranksen challenges common assumptions about Canadian-American relations, suggesting that Canada should be held responsible for environmental degradation at least as much as the United States. Tranksen frequently plays with our manner of reading by giving us a number of double meanings. In the lines “Canada’s: / whiffs of American plastic,” does she mean “plastic” articles or does she mean “plastic” as in credit cards? “Canada’s: / whiffs of American plastic” *seem* to suggest that Canadians are left with the detritus and smells of bad American environmental policy. However, I suggest Tranksen is pointing out a commonplace misconception that has no basis for fact. Canada ranks 28th out of 29 OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-

operation and Development] nations for its environmental record, which is not exactly stellar⁵⁹.

When the ambiguous “whiffs of plastic” are followed by very odorous articles, like “exhaust,” the word “exhaust” becomes difficult to read as well. Overwhelming olfactory sensations are furthered by the placement on the page next to fragrances such as “lilac” and “cut grass” and “Chinese buffet lunches”. Is she linking American/Canadian consumerism to “lilac,” “cut grass,” and “Chinese buffet lunches”? Undeniably plastic is manufactured and lilacs and cut grass (lawns) are genetically modified, but what does this have to do with Chinese buffet lunches? Is Transken implying that all culture is “bad” for making and changing nature? Is all nature only good if left alone in its pristine state? And is she suggesting, like the FDE laments over “the loss of traditional knowledge”, that only the “long-ago original” (9)—that which exists only in the imagination—has value? Finally, the “exhaust” (4) she writes about may mean that the speaker is as *exhausted* as the reader by all the uncertainty.

Ambiguity features largely in this poem, which borders on language poetry but still contains elements of lyric. The line “& other familiars” (6) is evocative but indefinite in meaning. Are the “other familiars” meant to relay a readily conjured scent (something familiar), easily retrieved from one’s olfactory memory bank, or does the *familiar* mean something else entirely? Familiar may be construed as something imminently recognizable, it may be common-place, friendly or informal, pertaining to one’s family,

⁵⁹ “Canada has one of the poorest environmental records of the industrialized countries. The primary finding is that for the twenty-five environmental indicators examined, Canada’s overall ranking among OECD nations is a dismal 28th out of 29” (“Canada Vs. the OECD” para 3).

or it may even be defined as: “Of animals: Accustomed to the company of men; domesticated, tame, on a domestic footing *with*” (OED)⁶⁰.

What is familiar in this poem becomes un-familiar through Transken’s break-neck pace of connections. On one level, this is a poem about “a conscious and continual resistance to consumerist ways of thinking” (Stanley 59). But the word choices also connote double meanings that add complications. In eluding any final authority or singular meaning, the poem de-familiarizes and calls into question everything, including alliances, and becomes exhausting.

Even the title of this poem gives it a jaunty ambiguity. “Generica”, as an adjective, (as in *generic*) can mean a couple things: 1) of or relating to a genus, 2) relating to or descriptive of an entire group or class; general, and 3) not having a trademark or brand name. Or, as a noun, it could mean the thing or article that has a non-proprietary name (such as a non-brand name generic medicine). Adding an *a* to the end of generic gives the word a feminine ending. In Spanish the word for generic is *genérico* unless the article/person/thing it refers to is female; then it becomes *genérica*. The very word *generic* becomes complicated and gendered and much more specific than anything truly generic. And “Generica” ironically sounds like a brandname itself – as if she has turned the adjective generic into a proper name, Generica.

Everything in the beginning of this poem is an implied generic. The street names Transken lists: “Pine, Cedar, Birch, 1st, 2nd, 3rd” “or Central/ street” are just as she says: they are some “central street” anywhere, in *any* town. But “Prince, Queen,/ King” street

⁶⁰ A sub-listing includes a definition of a “familiar spirit” as “A familiar spirit, a demon or evil spirit supposed to attend at a call” furthering the sense of familiar as *de-familiar*.

names are particular to our Canadian history of monarchy and is one that the United States does not particularly share. Yet there are “strip joints”, “strip malls”, and “a scar” where resources are extracted pretty much everywhere in *any* small town in North America. But in particular, in Prince George the land is: “stripped, struck down, stolen” (15). By giving voice to the specific scars of her region and testifying to the rape of the landscape, Transken is affiliating herself with an oppressed other (the land). At the same time, it remains a vague other. All of the problems that she lists—the “strip joints,” “strip mall,” the “bookstore clinging,” the “First Nations men wearing defeat,” “Wal-Mart,” and the “politicians” whose “promises [have] dissolved”—are generic or at the very least they are non-specific, leaving the reader in a state of unease.

Her description of “First Nations men wearing defeat” (16) causes the reader to balk, hesitate, and consider just what she means by this. Initially it appears that she stereotypes the First Nations men as “defeated”; but if a more careful reading is done, the First Nations men pan-handling in down-town Prince George are actually *wearing* defeat and are not in fact *defeated*. The implication is that this “wearing defeat” is a present and temporary state, not a finalized state.

By poem’s end there exists some hope, a possibility of better things. Even the relentless enumerating of issues contains some solace: the poem becomes a *specific* place where women “share stories,” suggesting that they are connecting together in a larger community, and stray animals may have “another chance.” Both the negative and the positive possibilities are explored: the women share “stories/ of abuse” *and* “recipes for welfare soup” (36-37), while the “animals/ await another chance *or* euthanasia” (38-39, emphasis added). This poem subversively connects these same animals and women to the

irrepressible daisies and dandelions that push up through “yards, ditches & sidewalk cracks/scattered” (24-25). Robust and resilient, they (the single moms, animals, and weeds) will not be held down by bad social policy. Instead, they will “press forward”:

those rudely handsome daisies
& dandelions incessantly
pressing forward
their irrepressible fluff & seeds (44-47).

This irrepressibility is the undoing of conservative social policy (forcing single mothers on social assistance to find work before their children are old enough to be in school, forcing many to find sub-standard childcare, cutting funds to women’s shelters and shelters for the homeless, reducing or eliminating effective mental health care for the impoverished, delimiting green spaces to make way for chain stores, and so much more). The oppressed claim the values of resistance and resilience in Transken’s poem. Finding valour in “pressing forward,” Transken denounces such bad social, economic, and environmental policy and celebrates the cracking of sidewalks and the growth and bloom of daisies, dandelions, animals, and single moms.

“What This Lake’s Beavers Might Say to an Interviewer from Outer Space”

In this poem Transken’s animal characters’ voices are not just implied but are written as actual utterances that articulate their discomfit and celebrate their otherness. Although tongue in cheek, the poem is what animals *might* say, given voice. Her poem is akin to the declarations by Scholtmeijer (herself a Northern BC academic and writer) who states that “women’s acknowledgement of animals provides a double source of power: recognition of the degree to which women are victimized by androcentric culture, and realization of solidarity in defiance of cultural authority” (“The Power of Otherness” 233). Scholtmeijer insists that when women writers write themselves into/as animal beings and utter their voices they are performing the “most anti-androcentric of acts”. This is an act of empowerment for both the writer and the animal.

“What This Lake’s Beavers Might Say” is an articulation of Beaver perspectives on humanity—an anti-anthropocentric inversion of humanity’s take on nature that leaves little doubt about Transken’s views on animal rights, conservation, and patriarchal language. But this poem is not just about challenging colonial and patriarchal history; rather it imagines a different way of knowing and living. Transken could care less that traditionally, “Feminine closeness to nature has hardly been a compliment” (Plant “Feminism” 19). Skirting around issues of essentialism, she both reclaims the right to ally herself with nature and problematizes the labeling of nature as inferior. She explores the use of misogynistic language, calling it “ridiculous” (16) and incomprehensible: “we’ve never understood” (15). She comments on the commodification of the beaver (think of the nickel), and the role of the beaver in the founding of Canada as a nation: “five million

in the first two generations—/were used to construct their nations” (12-13). She directly indicts the use of such anthropocentric language like using the word “beaver” to refer to human female genitalia.

In this poem, Transken denigrates “the conversion of nature to commodity form” (FDE), and holds an aversion toward “technology worship,” all of which places her predominately in the “all green is good” category of ecocriticism. In “What This Lake’s Beavers Might Say,” the disdain for the commodification of nature is obvious: “five million in the first two generations— / were used to construct their nations” (12-13). Equally apparent is her aversion to “technology” in her treatment of motorboats and jet skis: “Blueshiny pissers leaving colorskim on water stinging our eyes” (2). Still, even though we know whose side Transken is on (the beavers), and even though Transken, in speaking for beaverkind, is attempting to rectify some historical and current wrongs against them, there is a question that remains: how do non-androcentric activists/writers encourage other humans to consider the existence of other species’ rights? Sometimes the answer is to put human words into animals’ mouths. Because it is impossible, with words on a page, to create real living beings with real existences and rights, a writer must perforce use language as a tool to defend animal interests, that is, as Transken understands those interests. Judith Plant suggests that: “Today...ecology speaks for the earth, for the 'other' in human/environmental relationships, and feminism speaks for the 'other' in female/male relations. And ecofeminism, by speaking for both the original others, seeks to understand the interconnected roots of all domination, as well as ways to resist and change” (Plant, “Searching for Common Ground” 226). As a deep ecologist,

Transken is speaking for the other, in this poem by imagining what beavers might have to say about humans. She frames their words in a beavercentric point of view.

Many postcolonial writers have problematized the act of speaking for the other. Critiques include the notion that *speaking for* another does not liberate but instead homogenizes. Yet, “allowing” the beavers to speak for themselves is a virtual impossibility. If we acknowledge that there is no collective cultural identity for any being, is Transken still re-inscribing the beavers’ subordinate position in human society by speaking for them? Ultimately, it is up to the reader to decide whether Transken’s ploy works. I suggest that it is Transken’s humor that excludes an androcentric extension of Western logos--a totalizing, essentialist "mythology" of what it is like to be beaver, feel beaver, or speak beaver. Because we cannot possibly take Transken’s words at face-value, all a reader can do is acknowledge that Transken is not, in fact, actually speaking for beaver-kind. In this poem Transken speaks for the other, in a borrowed collective voice, in order to resist the dominion of humankind and in order to encourage change. The beavers’ words are pretty direct and they don’t mince words; *they* do not like *us*, we are unpleasant *others* to them:

We do not like them. Unfurred. Noisy. No slap-it tails.
Bluishiny pissers leaving colorskim on water stinging our eyes.
Without purpose they ripple air & fluid surfaces. (1-3)

Christopher Manes in his essay “Nature and Silence” states: “Nature is silent in our culture and (and in literate societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusively human prerogative” (15). Using animal voices in literature is a difficult task: is it appropriation? On the other hand, if an author does not use animals’ voices, then does she or he imply that animals do not have

something worthy to say? Linda Vance points to the dilemma of giving voice to animals while avoiding anthropomorphizing them (“Beyond Just-So Stories”). Portraying animals as speaking subjects is effective in garnering attention to their lives but in doing so writers risk inscribing what may be only human concerns. Traditionally, literary texts that use animal voices have been relegated to children’s literature⁶¹. It is as if only children are receptive to the notion of animals having “voice”. Unfortunately, in stories with talking animals, often the animals act out moral tales of instruction, indoctrinating children into an adult/cultural agenda (think *Aesop’s Fables*). So, how does a writer avoid anthropomorphizing animals for their own purposes? Perhaps, as Don McKay suggests, we might approach such writing with “ontological applause”, acknowledging the agenda, purpose, and beauty of an animal voice. Or perhaps voicing what animals have to say is ultimately “unsayable”. Ironically, co-opting beaver voices may be seen as an anthropocentric privileging of what humans might imagine what beavers would say, if they had human voices. Yet no one can truly know what beavers might say and of course, this is really the point. Transken’s use of the word “might” is very telling. She, in her title, acknowledges outright that it is all just a positing of what beavers’ *might say*, if aliens from another planet came down and could understand them. It is such a flight of fancy that I suggest Transken is very aware of logocentric assumptions. In the end, the speaker suggests that what beavers have to say is “unsayable.” In seeking to dismantle a system of anthropocentric hierarchy, Transken uses humour and exaggeration to suggest

⁶¹ Even Virginia Woolf’s biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s spaniel companion, *Flush*, which was written in 1933 is often dismissed as non-intellectual. Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts wrote books of animal stories, frequently told through the animal’s point of view; most often these tales are considered children’s literature until recent examinations through ecocriticism.

that what she's done is both impossible and necessary. After all, how would beavers know about the slang meaning of the word 'beaver'? And how could she even know that it would be offensive to them? The personification, wherein beavers feel the same way Transken does, makes a point that needs to be made and establishes "the foundations for a future of change": we humans are not the only ones who matter (Lorde 37).

Audre Lorde, in "Poetry is not a Luxury", argues that poetry is necessary because it allows one to say the unsayable: "And where that language does not yet exist, it is our poetry which helps to fashion it. Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundations for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before" (37). This attempt at "bridging" by saying the unsayable may be worth the risk of appropriating voice. Manes argues that by imposing silence on nature, Western norms and beliefs can continue unabated (15-29). In turn, by voicing the innate expressiveness of nature, Transken attempts to articulate a beaverly point of view, so that nature is not obscured by human indifference or ignorance. John Simons, in his essay "Transformation: the Human as Non-Human and Vice Versa," argues that: "It is clear that the more closely identified with the non-human the fictive world becomes, then the more its representational strategies will tend towards the blurring or challenging of the boundary between the human and the non-human. Indeed, it might be said that in texts where this boundary is allowed to become porous there is a striving towards the impossible task of actually reproducing what it is to be animal" (140). Transken's attempts to "reproduc[e] what it is to be animal" is indeed a representational strategy that she uses to invoke beaverness and to provoke an emotional response from her readers. By doing this she rouses amusement, sympathy, or ire, which

negates any attempt to remain oblivious as to the culpability of human's in ecological disasters.

In a neat inversion of colonial history, Transken's beaver-speaker turns the tables: "*We* do not like *them*," making the beaver point-of-view normative. Humans are the odd ones out here: they are "Unfurred," "Noisy," and with "No slap-it tails". They are also "Without purpose" and detrimental to the environment: they are "Bluishiny pissers leaving colorskim on water stinging our [the beavers'] eyes." The voice of the beavers is a collective family unit. Speaking as one, they verbalize their familiarity with a specific human family (one that lives across from them) as well as with humanity (especially Canadians). The language used draws a *beaverly* attention to time and place: "snow-thickening till bud-eating time" focuses on seasonal time, evoking the norm of beaver time against the strangeness of chronological (human) time.

By speaking from the beavers' point of view, Transken counters the hegemonic, anthropocentric, meta-message that colonial society most often gives concerning nature. These beavers are not defeated (even after all that trapping and iconism) but are affirmed and empowered. They are depicted not as weak, but as honored *others*, much as Scholtmeijer proposes that: "Women writers use fiction to concretize, affirm, and empower the state of being "other" (234). By "exposing" and "dismantling" the "unexamined belief structures that authorize violence against free beings," Transken has depicted beavers as heroes, which is juxtaposed with her depiction of historical and contemporary Canadian mainstream attitudes (234). In Transken's poem, we humans are

denigrated for our “duplicitous” nature, we become the *other* in contrast to the beavers’ perspective.

“Damned”

Transken’s third poem, “Damned,” also articulates her unique sense of humor but is combined with deep ecology. Transken’s deep ecology, which is comprised of an anti-establishment agenda and a valuing of the “other,” causes the reader to question not just the status quo, but also her own complicity in this poem. In Transken’s poetry, the valuing of the other takes the form of not only confronting poverty, abuse, endemic racism, and misogyny, but also depicting animals as having impact and agency. The non-hierarchical poetic voice in “Damned” causes her reader to ask: “whose side are you on?” Not only do the lines in the poem (concerning disasters) cause discomfiture, triggering the reader to question how seriously the writer wants this poem to be taken, but also, by poem’s end, the speaker suggests she herself is complicit in our global ecological disasters.

The poem lists a series of disastrous events—at least for humans—that have been caused by human intervention in nature. The “dog who bites the barking neighbour”, “the bear who killed the hunter”, and “the lion who ripped the poacher” are all examples that imply that if the humans were not overstepping their bounds, then the animals would not have taken matters into their own *paws*. Along with the animals, Transken lists the innocent villagers who are “the people sickened by mercury / from the flesh of fish” or the woman who is “stomped to death / by a charging bull moose”. Throughout the poem, both humans and animals suffer: while “the flocks of birds [are] caught in plane engines,” they also “invok[e] a crash”.

How seriously are we meant to take the lines “i applaud / miraculous tiny revenges” (13-14)? True, animal/nature’s acts of revenge are only disastrous to humans. At times, Transken’s poetry is akin to Mane’s declaration: “If fungus, one of the ‘lowliest’ of forms on a humanistic scale of values, were to go extinct tomorrow, the effect on the rest of the biosphere would be catastrophic. . . In contrast, if *Homo sapiens* disappeared, the event would go virtually unnoticed by the vast majority of Earth’s life forms” (24). While Transken does not suggest that humans ought to be wiped off the planet, she does ask us to consider how we automatically assume humans are at the top of the hierarchy. Children, in Canada, are still taught that humans are at the top of the food chain, when in reality, polar bears, tigers, and mountain lions eat humans while we do not eat them. Although on the surface one senses that Transken is at times so pro-animal that she has forgotten that humans are part of the animal kingdom too her commitment to change—engineered by human potential—is also explored in this poem.

As a vegan, Transken abstains from animal flesh, fish, and animal products, like eggs, milk, and butter, as well as animal products like fur; yet she still finds herself culpable for the leather that in the frozen North winters she wears: “refusing to own leather except in desperate / necessity” (31-32). Transken describes herself as “pristinely vegan,” setting herself apart and complicating her claims of culpability (the shame and remorse of wearing leather in lines 31-32). Transken’s animal-centred politics reminds me of J.M. Coetzee’s book *The Lives of Animals*, in which food—or rather what human cultures will or will not eat as food—is discussed. One of the characters, Norma, states: “We are the people who abstain from *a* or *b* or *c*, and by that power of abstinence mark ourselves as superior” (42). So too, Transken avows she is: “vegetarian for 20 years./

almost pristinely vegan for another 10./ never wearing fur” (28-30). Transken stands very firmly as pro-animal, implying that “the lion who ripped the poacher / limb from limb & then / recycled that yummy human protein” is a just reversal of human/animal interactions (7-9). Once again, it is evident whose side she is on.

Yet, instead of the poem focussing solely on what other people do—*those* meat eaters, fish flesh eaters, and wearers of fur—Transken also holds *herself* culpable, even as she espouses her vegan ethics. This avowal of “never wearing fur” (30) does not mitigate the wearing of leather which cause her “old toes, nonetheless, [to] twitch in shame, sulk / in remorse” (37-38) at wearing leather boots in Prince George’s cold winters. She admits to participating as a human in the oppression of animals. While Transken’s poetic voice is at times didactic, it is also humorous.

Humour plays an important role in this poem to offset its didacticism. The first stanza in this poem finds humour in human pain as if in a cosmic come-uppance. The poem articulates an almost macabre enjoyment of “natural” disasters that provide retribution and vengeance against humans. The negative effects humans have on nature and their subsequent retribution in the first stanza becomes more holistic by the second stanza. Akin to the “Gaia hypothesis,” the speaker envisages that the entire earth is a living being that has a consciousness that can heal or attempt to balance itself⁶². The second stanza of this poem moves away from provocative finger-pointing and humour to

⁶² The Gaia hypothesis states that the temperature and composition of the Earth's surface are actively controlled by life on the planet. It suggests that if changes in the gas composition, temperature or oxidation state of the Earth are caused by extraterrestrial, biological, geological, or other disturbances, life responds to these changes by modifying the abiotic environment through growth and metabolism. In simpler terms, biological responses tend to *regulate* the state of the Earth's environment in their favour. (<http://www.physicalgeography.net/fundamentals/5d.html>)

a far gentler and compassionate elucidation of restoration and balance created both by human mistakes (global warming) and by human absence: “whooping cranes, once almost extinct, have found / their wetlands restored. / rain & human absence is healing /their nesting grounds” (25-28).

It is the hierarchy of humans at the top that Transken unbalances. Transken subversively acknowledges that humans are not only superfluous to most of the natural world but often dangerous to it as well. This poem sits rather solidly within the “culture is decay” category of eco-poetics. While this type of eco-poetry often over-romanticizes “nature” and holds “culture” as a solely negative influence, at the same time it sounds an important alarm bell for the need for change, as implemented by *human* communities. Once again, Transken offers us a way out of such environmental disasters. Transken’s idealism suggests that humans ought to be toppled off our hierarchy so that we can more effectively restore balance and recognize nature as necessary and as important, in its own right.

“Walking Through Four Early-Evenings on a Port Edwards’ Bush Road”

Although Transken often plays with the rules of grammar and punctuation, “Walking Through Four Early-Evenings on a Port Edwards’ Bush Road” exemplifies her alternative use of punctuation and language. Walter Ong’s *Orality and Literacy, The Technologizing of the Word*, articulates the inseparable relationship between the spoken word and the written word, asserting that: “Written texts all have to be related somehow, directly or indirectly, to the world of sound, the natural habitat of language to yield their meanings. ‘Reading’ a text means converting it to sound, aloud or in the imagination [. . .] Writing can never dispense with orality” (8). Transken’s poetry asserts itself as being

both a written text and a spoken performance. Poetry is meant to be *spoken* aloud, is conceived in the imagination, and is written on a page. Transken evokes this debate in her poem, “Walking Through,” particularly in her use of line enjambment. Not only do the lines of the poem create enjambment, but the poem itself functions in its entirety in the same way: meaning runs over from the poem into life. Because there are no capitals (although there is some end-line punctuation throughout the poem), Transken complicates the reader’s search for meaning by rendering ambiguous the sentences’ endings and beginnings. The lines are not independent of each other, but merely separated by their space and allocation on the page. In languages that use the alphabet (like English), capitals signify the beginning of a sentence (and hence of a thought). By eliminating these markers, Transken subverts grammatical laws for her own purposes, in the tradition of language poetry, in this case allowing independent meaning and connective meaning to be generated at the same time.

Transken uses enjambment to communicate the theme of inter-connectedness. By using this poetic technique, Transken creates at once a sense of inclusion and of dislocation. The reader is forced to question where she/he “stands” within the poem’s values. The lines of this poem, the meanings it generates, and the beings that inhabit it, all exist interdependently with one another. For example, the following lines can be conjoined with their neighbouring lines and/or read as independent lines:

forming a hand-to-hand circle.
moss on everything that’s neglected
to move since sunrise. (9-11)

“[M]oss on everything that’s neglected” contains the impression that everything has been left alone for a long time (has been neglected); however, when read through to the next

line, this sense of neglect becomes complicated by the notion of “to move since sunrise”. What has been acted against (or neglected) becomes an actor in these lines (neglected to move).

Transken evokes a gentle humour in her use of enjambment. For example, “cow parsnips’ stems as truthful / with themselves as i am becoming” contains lovely lyric imagery, but becomes humorous when read as an enjambed line: “i am becoming moody logs or lochness monsters”:

cow parsnips’ stems as truthful
with themselves as i am becoming.
moody logs or lochness monsters (12-14)

Line enjambment enables Transken to play with meaning, encouraging the reader to develop a heightened awareness of the myriad possibilities of meaning both in the poem itself and through the act of reading. Transken’s pared-down language and her lack of punctuation create a poem that is open to interpretation.

In addition, verbs play an important role in this poem. Transken’s emphasis on action approaches language from pro-nature point of view. Thus we have mountains “going” (1-2) and ravens “complaining”, “screeching” “shaking”, and “self-soothing” (3-5). Nature is active. Transken relies on verbs in the beginning of this poem to create tone. And the tone of this poem attempts to relay the perspective of those beings usually assumed to have no voice: the mountain, the raven, waterfalls, stones, stumps, moss, cow parsnips, logs, and raspberries are all articulated in such a fashion that they exist, not just for the poet and her readers, but for themselves; these beings are “self-soothing—not circus dancing” (5). Animals are not “circus dancing” to provide entertainment for human amusement—this nature does what it does regardless of human observation.

“Walking Through” is a “speech act” which creates meaning and bears witness to Transken’s worldview⁶³. Her use of the lower case “i” in referencing the personal pronoun in the latter part of this poem reveals Transken’s non-hierarchical and non-anthropocentric worldview. She connects her sense of self to the natural denizens of this unique Northern BC place in lines such as: “cow parsnips’ stems as truthful / with themselves as i am becoming” (12-13). To be near to achieving such truth is something to strive for in Transken’s worldview. Although the personification in her line “cow parsnips’ stems as truthful / with themselves” attributes to flowers what most people think of as a human state, describing cow-parsnips as “truthful” is more complex than at first glance. In essence, they are just exactly what they are, regardless of what goes on around them. They are themselves regardless of what an observer might think, and it is this paradoxical “truthfulness” that Transken is evoking.

Transken’s attention to the relationships between politics, social policy, ethics, and the personal is evident in her poems such as “Generica” and “Damned” (arguing *for* connections and *against* cuts to women’s social programs, the lack of green spaces, environmental disasters). “Walking Through” is politically more subtle than “Damned” but I argue more effective because of its subtlety. Transken’s non-didactic observations speak of a dawning awareness of how her “inner thoughts and perceptions about relationships” are at once ‘other’ *and* ‘self.’ Her engagement with nature has become intensely personal and embodied: the waterfall is “my-shoulders-wide” (6). The question she poses at poem’s end: “these raspberries are more red today or has / the way of the

⁶³ Speech acts – in which language does something as well as means something – are part of praying and preaching, cursing and praising, bearing witness and giving evidence (J. Edward Chamberlin, “From Hand to Mouth” 125).

light shifted?” (16-17) leads the reader both into the writer’s perceptions and creates a dialogue to which they must respond. It is as if this place has changed the writer, rather than the human presence changing the place.

Don McKay asks in his chapbook, *The Muskwa Assemblage*: “Can a person contemplate the reverse of paternalistic and colonial nomination? Is it possible to imagine being named by a place? And—were we to contemplate such a thing—how would we come to merit that honour?” (14). My answer is that it is only possible if we can be moved by place and if we readily acknowledge that we *can* be changed. That is, if we understand how significant place is to us and how we are of so little significance to place. This necessitates a kind of humility, to use an old-fashioned word.

Conclusion

Good poetry talks, it sounds its sibilance in our inner ears, it speaks to its readers with an interior language, because a poet engages in a dialogue when she/he writes, and at the very least attempts to tell a contextualized truth. Transken’s words have the power to effect change by causing her readers to question where they themselves stand on such issues as the environment, social policies, government cutbacks, and even veganism. Her words have “residue” (Ong 11). This residue of words creates community which, in this sense, is the relationship formed between the writer, the reader, the poem, and the way the writer’s story exists in connection with the stories of others. Transken is speaking about something that is difficult to articulate: the “not-apart from each other” (7) of nature and humans. “Walking Through” intimates holistic connections between land, people, time, and place, all of which together are “forming a hand-to-hand circle” (9).

She “is speaking not only about ... [herself] but about the essential human things in all of us” (Birney xv).

When Transken posits absolutes she uses binary oppositions to further her arguments and to get her point across: everything animal and human are complex and interconnected. Ultimately, she finds human beings culpable for the state of society and for nature. Encoded in her poems are strategies that politicize animal and human interactions. Blurring the lines between animal and human is a representational strategy that challenges the “otherness” of animals. Transken employs her poetry as a device to say some serious things about linked oppressions and, as a vegan, she understands that concern for animals is linked to other concerns. By showing us how she aligns herself with an interconnected range of political concerns through her autoethnography, Transken crafts an explicitly deep ecology perspective in her poetry. She includes herself in her writing, seeking alliances with her readers, hoping to share her understanding about how intrinsically connected all life is, and although sometimes her poetry is didactic, she mitigates its effect with a wry humor.

Transken states in her essay “Meaning Making and Methodological Explorations: Bringing Knowledge From British Columbia’s First Nations Women Poets into social Work Courses”, that: “Networking is a goal that we should have as scholars so that we may assist small communities and groups to find common struggles and links for enhancing their own empowerment” (9). Her networking creates community, and her politics emphasize the importance of inclusion and collaboration: for Transken, sharing *with* is not speaking *for*. In Transken’s own words: “An ally does not speak for a vulnerable person or population; we try to speak with them” (14). Is it possible to speak

with nature? Transken would say yes. Certainly these poems come close to speaking from within nature. The fine line between the lyric “i” as an ally with nature means acknowledging that her writing process begins with self but does not end with self. Her autoethnographic poetry is playful and serious, revealing not only herself, but also *ourselves* where relationships with nature are concerned.

Chapter 5: Gillian Wigmore's Place Literacy and Home-making

beach fire

god, shorty, you got me fired up
six foot sturgeon leaping from the lake
in the night, no less
and the wind, fuck,
that wind whips up and old grandma in her aluminum putt-putt be damned

that's the life, hey shorty?
the jack pine, and those cottonwood dropping their cotton
the nights smell so sweet you're drunk on it
that smell, the pounding of the waves
i want to ride the water when it gets like that
christ. i never knew a lake like that
i never knew water that wanted to kill you so bad

i learned to read water from drunks and blind men
you know bob,
well his brother used to boat down the river at night
he knew every boulder, every rapid
there are men like that, shorty,

do you remember those nights?
remember the fish licking the surface til it roiled?
remember how we knew it would storm?
that black sky, the wind building up in portage
and blasting us back to fort
cheers to that

but the water's yellow with pollen after the weather
and it coats your legs
ah, shorty, my sister's son went out in it
i found his ball cap washed up at cottonwood beach
i don't know if fish are worth it
not even sturgeon
i'm sick of waiting for relatives to wash up
that fuckin lake
kids washing up with their bellies swollen
young kids drunk, and then dead

but when the wind gets up, shorty,
we're out there anyway,

you can't help it
you want to fuck the water
the boat slapping like a beavertail
and you have to shout to get anything heard
we're shouting anyway, shorty,
full of cotton and water and wind

stellako

swans on fraser lake beat the water til they rise
enormous and unlikely, hardly lift enough to miss the highway overpass
black beaks streaming in the rain

there are parts of my body that I haven't explored
this is one - the short river, the sweet spray off wet rocks
men cast their lines, rhythmic and patient

don't subside into marsh, don't bend the reeds
don't end, though the lake is heart-ripping emerald
reflecting hills, sky, the reason we can't quite up and leave

untitled

I go away for three years and what happens

I go away for three years and the river shifts south, leaves old channels mudbound, swilling in it, dry. I go away, the river opens rifts like lips and new sounds flow out, the river sifting, the open new way, the long tongue of it licking someone else's face. I go away for a week and what happens.

the agates rattle, the river is off, this sunset means nothing, the light is off, the agates are worthless. no kids hunt them. no current to the knees, no pink-tinted sunset or see-through rocks, no kids, no rattle no river. not without me.

a deeper hollow in the closer channel, the water faster than I remember it and warmer. on the far bank skittles of rock and dry river plaster, that's what the scum looks like. a low bank and a high bank. the bank they bulldozed to get us here, closer to the water with less effort. they razed the cutbank, though it meant everything - the run, the jump, the fling, the fear, the splat, the sturgeon, the getmeout, getmeout! a more charming river park. an embarrassed bank. a slightly grosser river.

I'm sorry.

the faster flow surprised the corner, the geese in repose, the sun through shut eyelids, rosy and hot. the faster flow, the river, the open channel, the rising gorge, oh no, the swifter current, my legs flung out before me. the swifter river, the closer channel, the geese gone but the goose shit, the slip and laughter, the getting into it, the tight chest tough breathing, the getting into it, letting go, the slipping under.

new river, open arms, honest channel, no hysterics. I go away, I come back panting, lap the river, eat the rocks. honeyed agates, blistered sunset, open water, open mouth.

Nameless

call up the walls and depth
without saying *canyon-*
in canada, naming the natural
phenomena is overdone.
down deep where light,
moon or otherwise, can't get,
the water waits on nothing.
it's nameless, once it shucks
all that colonial stuff off

beyond the feedlots
and the miles of busted fence
where mending rests
only in the minds
of dead settlers,
beyond the dirty stories
they tell in the bar
at the chinese place on main street,
beyond the glossy pictures
gone grey and wet in the rain,
beyond that and outside of town,
the crack in the arc of the earth,
the whole gouged-out line of it
says *river river river*
how rivers say it
with water.

unmarked creeks offend us less
if we never see them-
paths worn rough into cliffsides
greased with history
don't call candlefish to mind
held aloft like bright torches.
this one river
at work on the earth,
wears down the map
to blankness and pulp,
without pause,
without thought,
and nameless
without regret.

Chapter 5 Gillian Wigmore's Place literacy and Home-making

Gillian's poems are place-literate, fully flexed, often suspenseful. When she writes of the life and death of northern people and northern rivers, you love and grieve.

----- Fred Stenson, director, The Banff Wired Writing Studio.

If we make medicines and meals out of nature, of course we make poems out of it, too.

----- Sharon Thesen Interview with Nancy Holmes (August 14th, 2004).

When they ask me, as of late they frequently do, how I have for so many years continued an equal interest in medicine and the poem, I reply that they amount for me to nearly the same thing.

-----William Carlos Williams.

Introduction

Gillian Wigmore is a poet who writes of *place* in such a way that where she grew up is indivisible from who she is. She writes about nature as both meal and medicine: “lap / the river, eat the rocks” (“untitled”) *and* as “parts of my body” (“stellako”). She is unmistakably influenced by the place in which she grew up—what Don Gayton calls her “primal landscape” (75). Much like a duckling imprints upon whoever is nearest at their hatching, Wigmore is imprinted by her close proximity to Stuart Lake (the lake in the first of these four poems⁶⁴). This place she speaks of so familiarly is *here* and home for Wigmore—not some vague romantic idea of lakes and cottonwoods that exist somewhere else or only in the imagination. Akin to Sharon Butala’s observation that it is possible to be “shaped by the land” (92), and her avowal that “[c]lose proximity to a natural environment—being in Nature—alters all of us”, Wigmore is inscribed by this place. But though Butala indicates that this altering by land is “pretty much unexplored, even undescribed in our culture” (97), Wigmore’s work *explores* and *describes* how she is altered/shaped by the land, positing a theory of interaction that is deeply engaged with

⁶⁴ In an e-mail conversation, she calls Stuart Lake “my lake” (March 12th, 2008).

“home-making” (McKay). In “Ravens and Baler Twine,” Don McKay states that nature writing: “performs the translation which is at the heart of being human, the simultaneous grasp and gift of home-making” (par. 21). He argues that translating nature into language and poetry is comparable to making into “home” what is also wilderness. These dual processes of translating and home-making are never complete, since both elude our grasp, becoming the inherent tension in nature poetry. For Wigmore, home-making is both metaphorical and a physical reality. Wigmore’s homes in Vanderhoof and Prince George are city, town, *and* countryside: both wilderness and a community.

During an e-mail conversation, I asked Wigmore: “do you feel that you are as shaped by the place/land where you grew up in as that place is shaped by your habitation of it?” She responded with comments on how becoming who she is is indivisible with where she grew up:

Absolutely. I'm scarred and scared and fucked up and beautiful in large part because of where I come from. I owe it a lot. I'm really grateful for the intimate knowledge I have of these places and I fully admit I wouldn't be who I am if I'd grown up in a city with less freedom. I might even like myself less if I did. There's an intimacy up here between people that comes from a shared acknowledgement of the hardships of where we live - and those might be physical hardships like the weather or the landscape, but they are also hardships of isolation, or the lack of good shopping, or the difficulty of getting fresh produce after september. People up here look after each other often, more than we want to, sometimes, and I'm

grateful for that. I want my kids to know how to look after others, to have skills in land stewardship, to clean and eat the fish they catch.

Wigmore articulates an ethics of ‘stewardship’ but whatever words she uses, she is not hierarchical and her active engagement with the land negates any sense of superiority in her term ‘stewardship’. Although Wigmore privileges her rural background, this alone does not make her a regional poet. Rather, it is her sense of responsibility for both nature and her community, her views on land stewardship, and her privileging of the practicalities of living in a particular place that indicate her theoretical position is bioregionalist. Wigmore grew up on a farm just outside of Vanderhoof, in North-central BC, with her two brothers and one sister. Her father was the local veterinarian, and her mother taught English at the local high school. Growing up rural in Northern BC *is* a different way of life from growing up urban. To borrow the words of Briony Penn, in *A Year on the Wild Side*, “familiarity breeds community” (35). Through her poetry Wigmore invites us into her community of northern people and nature.

Gillian Wigmore is often described as an “up and coming” young poet. Not only has she published numerous poems and prose in various Canadian literary magazines⁶⁵, but she has also published two volumes of poetry⁶⁶. Her work has garnered much admiration for her “place-literate” (Stenson) ways of looking at and translating the world around her, as well as her spare, pared-down, and pragmatic use of language. Wigmore’s *soft geography* was shortlisted for the 2008 Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize and it won the national ReLit Award in 2008. In *The Prince George Citizen*, Wigmore says: “I’m so

⁶⁵ Her work has appeared in *Geist* (15.63 (2006)), *CV2* (28.3 (2006)), *filling station*, *Inner Harbour Review*, *Westwords* and *Northword* magazines.

⁶⁶ Her two collections are *soft geography* (2007) and *home when it moves you* (2005). She has a forthcoming chapbook with Wink Books (Rob Budde’s publishing company 2010).

glad that *soft geography*, which is a kind of love song for North-central BC, will reach a bigger Canadian audience than I'd ever hoped for" (Strickland par. 1). Wigmore acknowledges her love of *this* North-central place and her understanding of the importance of the award for increasing recognition of Northern BC poetry.

Caitlin Press praises her writing on their website as "Word for word, letter by letter, Gillian Wigmore's poems adeptly express the region's landscape, flora and fauna, climate and mindset. Wigmore's poems are words to believe in, and words to live by." Though one would certainly expect the press that published Wigmore's first collection to be laudatory, as a Northern interior BC press they might also know how accurate Wigmore's depictions are. Wigmore shows us what her deep and abiding connection to her roots, her family, her neighbours, her interior self, and her exterior landscape looks like. Wigmore, through her poetry, yields to the struggle of shifting boundaries, creating a complex series of interactions between "landscape, flora and fauna, climate and mindset" (Caitlin).

Wigmore's poetry is neither overtly nostalgic nor romantic but speaks from within: both from within herself and from within the place she grew up in and knows like her family. She uses a vernacular that is steeped in the everyday. She reports that the poet Derk Wynand, whom she says heavily influences her work, "told me to quit fooling around" and "taught me to pay attention to every word" (Wigmore, "Creative Writing" par. 17). Hers is the diction of ordinary people leading ordinary lives. She acknowledges that adjectives need careful consideration because to be able to say what something is, is as close as you will get to the *physicality* of nature. Her poetry is reminiscent of William Carlos Williams's famous adjuration: "No ideas but in things" (from his 1944 poem "A

Sort of Song" and *Paterson*). "There's a way of telling stories up here," says Wigmore. "I want to capture the urgency of life and death up here, to make my poetry imperative" (Wigmore, "Creative Writing" par. 16). Always wanting to express her realistic depictions of the land where she grew up, Wigmore chooses to write in her pared down language because it better reflects the landscape and people. In an e-mail, Wigmore indicates that overtly Romantic language would do both the people and the land a disservice: "If you get all mushy about the landscape (and I know I walk the line pretty closely) you change it, and it is already perfect in all its dirty, dangerous glory" (March 12, 2008).

Wigmore's exploration of nature focuses on those spaces where nature and humans come together. It is poetry of "home making", poetry of being home *and* coming home. Don McKay (in "Ravens and Baler Twine") maintains that nature poetry "performs the translation which is at the heart of being human, the simultaneous grasp and gift of home-making" (par. 21). In Wigmore work, this grasping toward "home-making" paradoxically also acknowledges the intrinsic *otherness* of nature. In an article on her writing process, Wigmore articulates the inherent tension between "the tender and the gory" within nature. She writes about her father's veterinary practice, which formed her understanding of human and non-human interaction: "there is so much magic that happens between incision and sewing up that has almost nothing to do with medicine and everything to do with a vet in love with his work. I have always been drawn to write about the juxtaposition of the tender and the gory that pervades almost every interaction a vet has with an animal" (*Northword* par. 6).

Don McKay maintains that nature poetry should not avoid anthropocentrism, but rather should engage with the human world with due care and diligence. Though nature poetry can explore some element of self, it should not *just* be about self; it should escape the narrow solipsistic “I” that confessionalist poetry can fall prey to. McKay’s ideas on nature and the inherent paradox of translating nature through a very human medium are particularly pertinent to Wigmore’s poetry:

Nature poetry's paradoxical situation is, I think, roughly analogous to home-making. Being language, it cannot avoid the primordial grasp, but this occurs simultaneously with the extended palm, the openness in knowing that I've been calling poetic attention. And that experience suggests strongly that, although it cannot be spoken, radical other-ness exists. In fact, nature poetry should not be taken to be *avoiding* anthropocentrism, but to be enacting it, thoughtfully. It performs the translation which is at the heart of being human, the simultaneous grasp and gift of home-making. (par. 21)

Wigmore uses her “poetic attention”, her attentiveness to the detail of her Northern BC community to articulate how people make home of this land. *Home when it moves you* is an exploration of her home *and* her place within North-central BC. Both Wigmore and McKay suggest that as much as their land belongs to them, they belong to the land. The paradox inherent in what McKay calls “the primordial grasp” and the “extended palm” is akin to Wigmore’s articulation of the push and pull of her love for her place. In the following poem, “beach fire” Wigmore narrates the story of two men who both love and

hate Stuart lake. This love/hate relationship echoes a very real sentiment that is a recurring motif in her poems.

“beach fire”

Cecilia Konchar Farr introduces the term "ecobiography" in her essay "American Ecobiography" to describe the place where American autobiography and nature writing co-mingle and where writers create themselves, "calling on nature as a referent for their autobiographical self-definition" (94). She maintains that though ecobiography has a long history in American writing,⁶⁷ new directions have emerged in some contemporary nature writing: "With the rise of environmental consciousness and postmodern thinking, the borders between nature and self blur; indeed, nature becomes us, and we begin to question who is constructing whom" (95). Essentially, Farr argues that "ego" and "eco" have become so entwined as to be "inseparable" (96). Though the referent "ecopoetry" often assumes an exterior—nature poetry is thought of as being about the outside world—the term "ecobiography" acknowledges that nature and the self are entwined or even inseparable for some nature writers. Farr's question—who is constructing whom?—is relevant to Wigmore's work which moves seamlessly between explorations of nature and self.

Wigmore's descriptive grittiness creates an immediacy. Her reader can almost smell the balm of those cottonwoods, feel the heat rising off the jackpine in summer, and can see the roiling/breaching of salmon and smell them in the shadows. The best of nature writing evokes this real sense of familiarity with place. It is not some place "over

⁶⁷ Canadian literature, too, has a long history of nature writing and autobiography mingling (for example, Samuel Hearne, C P Traill, Susanna Moodie, and others).

there” for Wigmore—it is here and immediate. Akin to David Boyd’s criterion for new nature writing, that contemporary nature writing should “exhibit a new land ethic based in wonder, reconciliation, reverence, respect, and responsibility” (*Northern Wild* 6), Boyd sees contemporary nature writing as a humbler version of the pastoral or picturesque. While Wigmore does exhibit respect and a responsibility to re-creating a faithful version of nature, and even approaches reverence in her poems unlike Boyd’s avowal that the writers in his collection have “either never lost their childlike awe or have somehow recaptured it” (6), Wigmore is never precious nor filled with childlike awe. She avoids the earnest reverence that marks some nature writing and that creates a further exteriorizing of nature.

“beach fire” is written as if it is a transcription of a conversation between two rural men. It is an evocation of the love/hate relationship that occurs when you live in place. Although ostensibly this poem is a retelling of another person’s narrative, make no mistake: it also says something very telling about the poet. After all, this lake (Stuart Lake) is her lake too. The lake in this poem is a place of sustenance (fishing), of recreation, of coming of age, and paradoxically of death. It is also a place of connection that is so deep that the speaker avows “you can’t help it / you want to fuck the water” (36-37 in *home when it moves you*).⁶⁸

An edited version appears in her latest book of poetry, *soft geography*, minus the all-important word “fuck”, which is replaced with the word “beat”. There is no easy replacement for the word “fuck” in this context. The avowal: “you can’t help it / you

⁶⁸ “beach fire” was initially published in *home when it moves you*, a hand produced chapbook (made and bound by Donna Kane). It was later revised and published in a slightly different form in *soft geography*.

want to fuck the water” is gritty and sexual; it is a base, emotive response to water as something that the male speaker in the poem can put himself into, be part of—it is not something so foreign and outside of self that the speaker wants to “beat” it. To use the word “beat” instead of the word “fuck” is to distance the speaker from his real physiological connection with the lake.

I asked Wigmore in an e-mail about the different versions, wondering if these were editorial decisions and how she felt about what seemed to me a very fundamental change. She answered:

You caught me. It was tough to lose “fuck”. I feel it's always been more true to the character to swear in that instance, . . .it was an edit offered to me by two different editors - it's easy to be swayed when you're so deep into editing. . . Anyway, given my way, and if I read it out loud at readings, I always say “fuck” in that line. And yes, it was always in lower case. (March 12th 2008)

Using lower case for her titles and for people’s names and the names of places is a kind of grammatical “risk-taking⁶⁹”. Wigmore doesn’t ignore grammatical conventions; she circumvents them. Although subtle, the difference between “I” uppercase and “i” lowercase decentralizes the importance of the speaker or the self in this poetry. The speaker in this “borrowed” poem is nameless but the addressee, shorty, is always in lower case, as is “christ” and “god”, evincing a non-hierarchical world-view. The original “beach fire” has no upper-case letters whatsoever. In fact, the whole chapbook is bereft of capitals except for, intriguingly, the names of rivers and lakes, which are given proper

⁶⁹ Susan Musgrave calls Wigmore’s poetry” “Gutsy, risk-taking, going-for-broke poetry” (*The Vancouver Sun* J9).

noun capitals: thus “Nechako”, “Chilako”, “Nation”, “Fraser”, and “Stuart” are elevated in their sense of import. Using capitals only for the bodies of water suggests that Wigmore furthers the significance of water – its fluidity helps show how Wigmore’s work smudges the line between nature and self. Thus bodies of water mediate her own body. For Wigmore such a deep physiological response to water disallows any overtly romantic or effusive language.

“beach fire” uses a succinct vocabulary that avoids setting up an adversarial relationship between place and space, between culture and nature. Instead it explores a co-mingling of nature/human/culture, as when the speaker in this poem avows, “that’s the life, hey shorty” (6). In this place, knowledge of water and fishing means survival, and a hard won survival at that: “i learned to read water from drunks and blind men” (13). Learning from “drunks and blind men” suggests that these men are fumbling at their task of reading the water. The ability to truly read the water is perhaps impossible: the results fall short of the intention. Similarly, the nature poet cannot translate in a complete way the fullness of nature; what she grasps toward may continue to allude. The speaker further articulates: “remember how we knew it would storm?”, and recites the signs of a storm brewing with a kind of pride. In this poem knowledge of place is power, and lack of knowledge means death: “i’m sick of waiting for relatives to wash up” (30) and “young kids drunk, and then dead” (33).

The lack of sentimentality in “beach fire” is typical of Wigmore’s writing, and in our e-mail conversation, she suggests that a bluntly direct approach to the realities of life and death may evoke a very Northern BC feeling. She is aware of the conflicted state of her relationship to this place: “The only problem is that when I am here for too long, I get really itchy to get away. When I’m away, I fall in love with this place all over again” (March 12th 2008 e-mail). In “beach fire,” the two men articulate this ambivalent relationship to place in sparse, pared down prose. They love and hate this lake. They love

it because it is part of them and it provides sustenance and pleasure. They hate it for what it can do: take lives. Yet there is also an acknowledgement that testing themselves against the lake has made them who they are. This lake has indelibly shaped the people who have lived with it.

Rob McLennan, in his review of *soft geography* asks: “What is it about the region that gives us poets working in such a vein, whether Wigmore, Rob Budde or Ken Belford?” He handily answers his own question: “Of course, the answer is unquestionably British Columbia's magnificent landscape, whether it's the pulp mills that rest in the shadows of its mountains or the severe divide between land and sea” (*Ottawa Xpress* par. 1). But McLennan misses a rather important piece of the puzzle in his answer because it is not just the “magnificent landscape”; it is the poets’ *relationships* with this landscape and how the landscape has shaped these poets. McLennan lists Wigmore as one “of the few who write in a genre that could be considered eco-poetry” (par. 1). Two years later in September 2009, McLennan conducted an interview with Wigmore. In his “12-or-20 questions”, he asks: “Do you have any theoretical concerns behind your writing? What kinds of questions are you trying to answer with your work? What do you even think the current questions are?” (question 6). Her response is direct and thoughtful: “I kind of hate to believe there is poetry out there without theoretical concerns. Maybe theory isn't the place I begin, but it's there underneath it all and it's addressed in all the editing. I'm not trying to answer questions with poetry - I haven't got the answers! Asking the questions is important. I'm thinking about place and society and marginalization and colonization and feminism and dirt and work and crises of climate and place and society... it's all in there” (6).

Wigmore’s response articulates how theory is an integral part of her poetry, but she is not positing any answers to questions about “place society and marginalization and colonization and feminism and dirt and work and crises of climate and place and

society.” At the same time, the questions are “all in there” (6). In the same vein of inquiry I asked Wigmore about the origins of “beach fire”, wondering how much is theorizing about Northern life and how much the poem borrows from real conversations. I asked, “I imagine that the dialogue comes from a “beach fire” conversation by rural men. (Not that it matters) but how much is an actual conversation overheard and how much pieced together idea”? Wigmore responded:

I worked as a provincial park operator for a few summers. sometimes I'd get invited in for a beer to someone's fire after I closed the gate for the evening. One night I heard my friend's uncle talking about stuart lake, and because that's my lake, I soaked up the feeling he had for it. that night I wrote most of beach fire, after a few beers, after a stranger's love song for the lake I love. The conversation and the characters are imagined, but that feeling is borrowed. I hope I do it justice. (March 12th 2008)

This lake has indelibly shaped the people who have lived with it. Acknowledging that the lake has made the men who they are acknowledges nature’s agency. Wigmore’s sense of family and community makes home of the places she describes.

“stellako⁷⁰”

The Stellako is a beautiful, narrow river in Wigmore’s home territory, by Fraser Lake down the highway from Vanderhoof (where she grew up). The evidence of nature’s actions is obvious and direct if you happen to be watching and are affected by it. Her understanding of the cause and effect of living off and on the land is articulated by her “home-making”: her making home of nature. As McKay states “home is also the site of our appreciation of the material world, where we lavish attention on its details, where we collaborate with it. In fact, it often seems that home, far from being just a concretization of self, is the place where it pours itself out into the world . . . It turns wilderness into an interior and presents interiority to the wilderness” (“Ravens” par. 10).

“Home-making” in “stellako” involves the combining of ordinary language with utterances of reverence for nature and humanity. The juxtaposition of a “highway overpass,” a human artifact, with the “enormous and unlikely” white swans “beat[ing] the water til they rise” provides a tension between nature and culture in the poem. This tension is echoed in the tautness between home and leaving, between her body and the body of the land, as well as between all that beauty [notice the descriptors “enormous”, “unlikely” (2), “sweet” (5), and “heart-ripping emerald”(8)] and the “reason we can’t quite up and leave” (9).

⁷⁰ The poem “stellako” was initially published in the blog *fallerbackpoems* and has three stanzas. Only the first stanza, which is almost purely descriptive, is included in her current book, *soft geography*. “stellako”, in the *soft geography* version, appears as simply the following lines (3 in all):_swans on fraser lake beat the water til they rise/
enormous and unlikely, hardly lift enough to miss the highway overpass/
black beaks streaming in the rain. The second stanza and third stanzas are missing from this version. In paring back the poem’s starkness takes hold. While the starkness is a part of the original version, it is softened *and* humanised by the second and third stanzas.

The first stanza begins with a soft assonance that gently engages the reader. The sibilant “s” and the almost entirely monosyllabic meter create an undercurrent of gentleness: “swans on fraser lake beat the water til they rise”. The language is lyric and just misses an overt romanticism. Wigmore emphasizes how important it is for her to avoid sentimentalisms: “When I started *soft geography* I was working through ideas of making a record, chronicling, articulating place and mostly-make-believe people without falling into schmaltziness (despite my dedication to here) and with integrity” (March 20th 2008 e-mail). Indeed, Wigmore walks a fine line between “schmaltziness” and “integrity”: the language she uses provides a juxtaposition of natural beauty with an unexpected directness: “enormous and unlikely, hardly lift enough to miss the highway overpass” (2). While spirant, her word choices also retain a kind of dissonance: “**black beaks streaming in the rain**” (3). The stutter of b’s at the beginning of this line trails into softer consonant choices.

The second stanza (missing from the version in *soft geography*) reveals Wigmore’s identification with this particular river:

there are parts of my body that I haven't explored
this is one - the short river, the sweet spray off wet rocks
men cast their lines, rhythmic and patient

She intertwines human *and* natural descriptors in this picturesque landscape; “short”, “sweet”, “rhythmic” and “patient” are about humans’ and the river’s physiology. The connection between her body and the body of the river is particularly evocative. This poem, combines human and natural concerns: nature becomes not as Englehardt maintains “wholly other” nor does the connection between human and what he calls

“non-human nature” “always retreat” (par. 2)⁷¹. But it is this same kind of tension that is being enacted—while Englehardt focuses on how the other of nature retreats, what Wigmore explores is how her love of this place creates a kind of pulling in of nature. By exploring this river she is discovering within herself both the familiar and the foreign. Her detailing of the river as “short,” “sweet,” and “wet” all conjure a sympathetic likening of the river to “parts of [her] body that [she] hasn’t explored”. Perhaps her relationship with her body (and with the river) is an elusive connection. The line: “this is one” becomes an important mitigator, suggesting that the connection is right there, simultaneously interior and exterior. Using the determiner “this⁷²” is much more immediate and closer than using the more distant “that”. “This is” occurs in the here and now and is up close and personal. Even the men casting their lines in a “rhythmic” and “patient” way are very sensual and erotic.

The third stanza furthers the sense of human concern, while at the same time expressing a longing for things to remain unchanged by time or human hand—a longing for a lake that is “heart-ripping emerald” to stay that way. There is a sense within this poem that even though it is the human eye and heart that sees this beauty, this place is probably better off without humans:

⁷¹ See Englehardt’s essay “The Language Habitat: an Eco-poetry Manifesto” which considers the role of poetry and non-human nature, positing how the poet recognizes the wholly “otherness” of non-human nature which in turn causes the poet to confront what it means to be human. In his essay he professes that nature is “profoundly Other and starkly confronts us with what it means to be human. As poets, we can approach and explore non-human nature, but the connection will always retreat” (par. 2). I argue against the notion on the “wholly otherness” of nature in Wigmore’s poetry because of her overt cross-identification with the land.

⁷² We say, “this here” and “that there”. “This here” is in very close proximity and “that there” is at least an arm’s length away.

don't subside into marsh, don't bend the reeds
don't end, though the lake is heart-ripping emerald
reflecting hills, sky, the reason we can't quite up and leave

Wigmore, one senses, struggles with an ambivalent relationship to this place; yet she has been formed by this tension. Her litany of “don’t”, “don’t”, “don’t”, is directed to herself, to humanity, and to nature to remain. Wigmore says: “I’m horrified by our shaping of the land - I’m so scared we’re going to wreck it. I can’t believe that we aren’t all up in arms about the proposed ‘exploration’ of the headwaters of the Nass and Skeena rivers. What’s wrong with us that we want to wreck one of the last pristine watersheds on the planet?” (March 12th 2008 e-mail). This is as close as Wigmore ever gets at being didactic—at providing those “answers” to theory (McLennan interview 6) for the questions she asks. And she is saying “don’t”. It is up to the reader to figure out what we *are* supposed to do.

“untitled”

“I go away, I come back panting, lap / the river, eat the rocks. honeyed agates, blistered sunset, open water, open mouth” (21-22).

“Untitled” continues the geophysical exploration of rivers, combined with a sensuous reflection on water. In this poem, Wigmore not only situates herself ecobiographically, but also speaks more openly than in other poems about herself, her emotions, and her body. She responds to the land she grew up in, to the land she left so she could go to school, and then returns like a child both reverent and amazed at the changes that have happened. She so strongly identifies with this specific geophysical

place—this river, these particular “honeyed agates”—that place becomes self: “open water, open mouth” (22).

The long lines flow seamlessly down the page much like the river itself. An onward motion is created by the poem’s breathless tone. By turns the lines speed up and slow down much like a river flowing over rocks, logs, and sandbanks. The opening lines “I go away for three years and what happens” (1) and “I go away for three years and the river shifts south, leaves old channels mudbound” (2) begin with a slow, melancholy tone. The tone is then slowly pulled into a more sensuous direction by all the lovely assonance of “swilling”, “opens”, “rifts”, “lips”, “sounds”, “flow”, “sift”, “open”, “long tongue”, “licking.” But the poem changes again in the second stanza. Becoming faster, almost choppy, the poem develops a rapid dissonance in “agate”, “rattle”, “kids”, “hunt”, “current”, “pink-tinted sunset”, “rocks”. The changing rhythm of the poem mimicks the flow of the river and reflects the speaker’s mercurial changes in emotions.

There is almost an unbearable solipsism (like a child’s) wherein the river becomes “old hat”. Somehow leaving and coming back for one week means that the river “is off”, the sunset is no longer “pink tinted”, the rocks (now dry) are no longer are translucent, and there are no “kids” (hinting at a barren landscape with no one to participate in it--the rocks don’t “rattle”). All fail to move the speaker emotionally because if she is not there to witness river it must either cease to exist or the beauty becomes meaningless without a viewer: “no rattle no river. not without me” (8). Yet I would suggest that Wigmore is intentionally ironic in her self-absorbed reflections: she obviously does not really mean that the river has ceased to be, but it has changed, like rivers often do with spring runoffs increasing water flow, changing the river’s course, and making new channels, or

sometimes drying up entirely by drought. Yet the longing in thinking that it would remain the same strikes the reader as deliberately self-absorbed. The implication is that not only has the river changed but the speaker has too. In a line that is made all the more significant in how it stands alone, Wigmore avers, “I’m sorry” (15). Is she directly addressing the river and telling it she is sorry for all that has been done to it by human hand—the “bulldozed” and “razed” “cutbank”? Is she sorry for progress striving for a little more beach to sit on--something more “charming”? Or is she stating a fact: “I’m sorry” because she left and now nothing is the same. Or is she apologizing to the reader? All of these readings are possibilities.

Repetition in this poem works as a kind of incantation. The continual repetition of “I go away” (repeated five times) forms a melodic refrain that is eventually coupled indelibly with “I come back”. She likens her connections to the land and her need to return to an instinctual need—like salmon or geese to return, again⁷³. It is apparent that Wigmore has been listening to the sounds her home makes and has been paying attention to the details. The push-pull of love for her home becomes obvious in her lament “I go away” when combined with the inevitable “I come back”. The old adage “you can never go home again” is replayed with a different ending—reconnection.

⁷³ The impulse to return is also expressed in her poem “Small town under a Canada Goose Flyway”:

small- town girl grow, then come home when it moves you, move
with the current and come back by the way of that feeling in your
arm when you sleep on it, follow the voices in your head, that
goodbye goose goodbye song, the pull of the river in september,
its scaly ribcage showing, breathe deep that full feeling of push
and pull the salmon feel spawning (lines 21-26)

In the last stanza, the speaker with “open arms” becomes as “honest” as the river, stopping the self-absorbed “hysterics”. She goes away and “come[s] back panting,” renewing the body’s connection to the river, lapping the “open water” with “open mouth”. This poem doubles back on itself very neatly: it is rollicking, lively and fast, as well as slow, sorry and full of body memories.

“nameless”

In “nameless” Wigmore leaves aside the confessionalist “I” voice, addressing instead the extent to which our colonial human selves are culpable of grasping too hard towards nature and disregarding nature’s agency. The poet confronts what it means to attempt to capture nature in nomenclature: a task that tells us much about ourselves as humans, as Canadians, and as settlers in a colonial country.

One of the first things that explorers to Northern BC did was to re-name and thereby claim rivers, lakes, and mountains for the ‘Commonwealth.’ All over British Columbia there are places named after English royals (Prince George, Prince Rupert, Port Edward, Victoria, and the Queen Charlotte Islands, now known as Haida Gwaii⁷⁴), explorers (Fraser River, Thompson River, and Vancouver), and forts (Ft. St. John, Ft. St. James, Ft. Nelson, and many others). When nature is so profoundly other, naming becomes a way to transform the unfamiliar into the familiar while at the same time holding it at a distance. In Western civilizations we all name our children and our pets and by doing so claim them as *ours*. Most farmers/ranchers refuse to name their livestock, and by not doing so deny their existence as individual beings. Thus naming becomes a negotiation of ‘us’ vs. ‘them.’

⁷⁴ Its original name in Haida.

In Wigmore's "nameless," our colonial history as a province is subtly explored⁷⁵. By describing landforms and water as "nameless," Wigmore attempts to strip the land of its colonial history, asserting instead that nature has its own voice, capable of uttering its own names. She writes: "the water waits on nothing. / it's nameless, once it shucks / all that colonial stuff off" (7-9). Importantly though, what Wigmore does not strip the land of is its First Nations's history. She writes of paths (invisible to most): "paths worn rough into hillsides/ greased with history/ don't call candlefish to mind/ held aloft like bright torches" (28-31). Even if we "never see them" (27) or know about the grease trails, the candlefish—eulachon that were valuable trading commodities for many First Nations—this heritage and history still exist.

Her poem is an invocation—calling up the very *being* of canyon and river, gesturing toward something that is, in essence, indescribable. The land is "beyond" its colonial baggage: "beyond the feedlots" and "miles of busted fence" (10-11), "beyond the dirty stories / they tell in the bar" (15-16), "beyond the glossy pictures" (18), and even "beyond that and outside of town" (20). "Beyond" is where the un-nameable essence of river begins, inside that nameless canyon which says "river river river /how rivers say it /with water" (23-25), using its own words.

⁷⁵ Something that (apparently) still needs to be made clear. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper addressed a press briefing at the end of the G20 Summit on Sept. 25, 2009, stating: "We also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them" (as qtd in Global News).

Conclusion

Wigmore, not unlike Donna Kane (as discussed in Chapter 3), insists that the river cannot be told, cannot be uttered in a human voice, and in doing so she suggests she can only gesture towards the river, inevitably falling short of representing it. By indicating what something *is not* is as close as she gets to saying what that something is, gesturing “beyond” what she can say with words. This is what Englehardt means when he argues that ecopoetry is a liminal space between nature and culture, forcing us to confront not only the un-nameable other but also our un-nameable human selves. Wigmore never falls into the pastoral trap of “laud[ing] nature unrealistically,” nor does she “praise the human control of nature” (Englehardt par. 2). But she does acknowledge that it is necessary to hear and see what is “beyond” our immediate selves.

Wigmore recognizes that the river has agency: it “waits on nothing” (7), perhaps also waiting *for* nothing. It “shucks / all that colonial stuff off” (8-9). Where I grew up in Northern BC there are rivers with Tsimshian and Nisga'a names. Rivers such as the Skeena, Ghitnadoix, the Khaasix, the Exchampsiiix, the Ishkinish all somehow evoke the sounds of water flowing past. As Wigmore so evocatively puts it: “the whole gouged-out line of it / says *river river river* / how rivers say it / with water” (22-25). If this is indeed a “pale translation” (Wigmore e-mail) it’s as close to the real as we can get. Wigmore writes:

I decided that I needed to write each poem with rules and those rules all had to do with content: it had to be honest, it had to be humble and it had to stand for itself. . . . I try not to be 'poetic' because sometimes

that does a disservice to the poem. The real version (of the world, the experience, nature) is already the best version - poetry is a pale translation at its best, I admit that, so I do the best I can as honestly as I can. That's not to say I don't lie or make stuff up, I just want to be direct, to believe in it so that others can, too. (March 20th 2008)

The nature poet struggles to elucidate what her connection to nature is, but at the same time she is communicating with a larger reading audience—an articulation to the outside of what is, in some sense, interior. This is partially what McKay means when he states: “The nature poet, like anyone else, is 'locked in a tower of words' as Dylan Thomas puts it; imagining otherwise is romantic mysticism” (par. 20). Wigmore, of course, is constrained by her experiences and ideologies—what McKay calls “your head [being] filled with myths and soft ecology, a whole library of assumptions about the "natural" world” (par. 20). In Wigmore’s work, the reader encounters a combination of authority (deep recognition and identification with her home) and humility (a reckoning of how difficult it is to achieve a translation of the natural world). Aware of the linguistic and cultural ramifications of being part of nature Wigmore articulates her north, her culture, which is so much a part of who she is theoretically and physiologically that it is inseparable to a wider audience.

Chapter 6: Full Bodied Nature Writing: Family is Nature/Children are Small Animals Grazing

Hedge is to horse (Dani Pigeau)

Siting at a table that is not your mother's

Day Care: "Sit up Strait.. No elbows on the table.. Say excuse me"

"What do you call a baby horse?"

"Well that's wrong"

She chose hedge

Her mother works at a carpet factory.

"This test shows her I.Q."

Her head once FULL OF BUGS, her father never FORGETTING.

Now pressed full of WORDS with meaning.

"She is some what ready, but did not know what a baby horse was called"

"She should know, she's an INDIAN right?"

"I told her it's a colt"

"It didn't seem to register"

BLANK STARE

ACCEPTANCE

SILENT STAND

"She should fit into school just fine Mrs....."

"BUT, Please explain to her what a baby horse is called."

Brother Moose (Heather Harris)

Brother Moose,
I may smile at your awkwardness.
I mean no disrespect
you are our brother.

Like a brother
you protect us
You nourish our bodies.
Give us your coat.
Insulate us from northland cold.

We honour you
using well every one of the gifts you give us.
We honour you.
By making objects of great beauty
with your sinew, hide and hair.

You give gifts to us
to sustain our body and soul.
We honour you.

The silence of grazing animals (Sheila Peters)

Two deer stand shoulder to shoulder,
one bent to nibble dandelions,
the other , head high
ears tracking.
Both silent: tails flicking flies.

In the slow pace of browsing
their noses measure the trampled grass,
assess the thread of blood,
taste coyote piss.

They swallow everything.

I remember waking
to see my two year old,
fingers tangled in twisted hair,
thumb in silent mouth,
brown eyes watching me surface.

Swamp Zone (Joan Conway)

That summer the pond was our world
my sister and I rowing close to shore
among bulrushes and pond lilies
their waxy yellow cups
a floating garden
flat disks of leaves
resting platforms for dragonflies
iridescent black veined wings
sparkling off sunlight.

That summer my Uncle
fried up frog legs
just like chicken, he declared
them sitting on a plate coated in flour
at night I dreamt of slippery speckled bodies
surrounding the cabin
throat pouch ballooning taut
vociferous croaking call missing partners.

My mother would stretch out
on the smooth curved rocks
sunning herself
rubbing lotion on creamy white thighs
wet and slippery
my uncle massaging oil onto her back
laughing down at her
and told us kids to go play.

In the swamp zone searching for frogs
how they would lie perfectly still
if you stroked their belly
legs dangling open
in some private rapture.

Where I crouched
stranded amongst the reeds
long smooth taper of leaves surrounding me
closer to shore
roots left high and dry
by the end of the summer.

Chapter 6: Full Bodied Nature Writing: family is nature/children are small animals grazing

You know they think no one listens
and you understand
the stillness it requires
and the faith
and the faith
to hear the heart beat of the land
as one solitude not two.

--Beth Cuthand "For all the Settlers who Secretly Sing": a poem written for Sharon Butala.

Introduction

As this dissertation has progressed, it has moved from the idea of including every Northern BC women poet I could think of (a kind of anthology), to focusing on three particular poets. I was going to include just one more poet in this collection but I found that I couldn't quite manage to restrain myself. This chapter, then, is my compromise: it considers one poem each from four poets—Dani Pigeau, Heather Harris (now Pua Madeiros), Sheila Peters, and Joan Conway. At the time of writing each of the above-mentioned poets worked, lived, and wrote in their own community (some rural and some more urban) but they also participated and wrote in a larger community of Northern BC writers that advocate for and support each other's work.

Possibly due to a history of non-inclusion, Métis and First Nations groups have not traditionally been part of the writing communities I have described in this study. One of the more difficult tasks that I set out to do was to include several First Nations/Métis women poets. I was absolutely sure that First Nations/Métis women were out there writing poetry in Northern BC but I had a hard time sourcing any in literary searches. Although I frequently had very fine writers who are First Nations students in my creative writing classes and who participated in smaller poetry and coffee house readings as part

of course work, writing was sometimes perceived as a hobby that took time away from their concerns as parents, workers, grandparents, children—family was the paramount concern for these students. The invisibility of First Nations women poets in the usual Northern BC writerly community events may say something about the rather unspoken exclusion or lack of receptiveness of these writing communities. It also may suggest something about the financial and familial responsibilities of First Nations peoples in Northern BC. This, in turn, says something about Northern BC economic and social policies (both current and historical) in regards to First Nations peoples.

Another factor in the invisibility of First Nations women poets in Northern BC may be systemic discrimination in the editing and publishing worlds where, as Heather Pyrcz points out, another culture's metaphors, humor, and irony are not always understood ("Native Poetry (1960-2000)."). First Nations / Métis poets may also harbour a valid distrust of dominant, 'white,' mainstream publishing. Pyrcz analyses in detail how the issue of publishing in mainstream venues continues to create problems of visibility and voice⁷⁶. She argues that more anthologies of Canadian poetry need to include First Nations and Métis voices:

⁷⁶ This may have to do with the negative history of First Nations children in the mainstream school system, residue from residential schools, and the 1970s scoop (when white social workers took many native children away from their families). It may also have to do with getting by in a system that does not usually address cultural differences. When I was teaching in Northern BC one of the main reasons for missing tests, assignments, or college classes was because of family matters which took ultimate precedence over school issues: sick children, funerals, caretaking for aging relatives, and births all are more important (and shouldn't they be?).

Although progress is being made, we delude ourselves if we think the problem of visibility has been solved. Too many Canadian poetry anthologies do not adequately represent the First Nation voices of Canada. In researching this history page, I had to rely on a few publications. It is one thing to publish anthologies of Native literature . . . but we need to increase the critical dialogue to broaden the mainstream understanding of Native poetry, its symbols, metaphor, irony and meaning.

Pyrzcz indicates that this contemporary generation of First Nations writers struggle with the mainstream "fascination with all things native." She writes: "The problem of gaining respect for differences while, at the same time, not being stereotyped is complex. How does the urban Native hold onto their cultural values?" ("Native Poetry"). Furthermore, the ease with which some deep ecologists celebrate all things First Nations is disturbing. Andy Smith, member of Women of All Red Nations, argues that the dualism of human and animal does not serve First Nations women very well. In her critique of deep ecology social movements and theoretical approaches, she notes: "saving people is as important as saving trees" (25)⁷⁷. She also gestures unhappily toward the ecocritical assumption that overpopulation (*a class and culture issue*) is the root cause of environmental problems. She argues that it is energy consumption that is the issue and it is not the poor who are over-consuming our resources. She also queries the ecocritical "celebration" of all things "Native" and spiritual, noting that "Ecofeminist thinkers often appropriate Native culture to advance their claims" and yet "do not adequately discuss the material conditions in which Indian people live" (30-31). Even with urban vs. rural differences, concerns for the

⁷⁷ This is contrary to the notion of deep ecologists who place concerns of the environment over concerns of people.

environment and nature nonetheless remain integral to much contemporary First Nations/Métis poetry. A glance through *Native Poetry in Canada* (edited by Lally Grauer and Jeanette Armstrong), more than bears this out, as do these two poems by Heather Harris and Dani Pigeau.

Change comes slowly but it is happening. Growing support of local colleges and regional campuses mean that Métis and First Nations are able to stay within their home communities and avail themselves of academic and creative writing courses. Local teachers, librarians, and professors with help from Canada Council grants bring such notable First Nations writers as Thomas King and Lee Maracle to these Northern BC communities. As well, the increasing notability and presence of local writers such as Eden Robinson means that writing is becoming a viable and visible possibility for those who may be outside of mainstream academia.

This chapter includes two First Nations/Métis Northern BC women poets: one is Heather Harris, whose book of poetry *Rainbow Dancer* was published by Caitlin in 1999. Harris is Cree-Métis and was born in British Columbia. She is also published in the on-line journal *Reflections on Water* (2000 and 2004). She has since relocated to Hawaii and changed her name to Pua Madeiros. (The poem I consider was published under the name of Heather Harris, and so I shall continue to refer to her under that name.) Dani Pigeau, who lives in Terrace, BC, is Sto'lo and Métis and she has published her work in two venues: a UNBC poetry journal, *Passage*, and the anthology, *This Ain't Your Patriarch's Poetry Book*. I think it is particularly important to include these two poems from two different Northern First Nations/Métis BC poets because it brings their poetry forward to a wider audience. Although both poets focus for the most part on issues of race and

gender, their commentary on the intersections of culture and nature offer intriguing insights for this project, particularly in the way they subvert settler expectations of what it means to be First Nations/Métis in Northern BC. The primary means by which they achieve this subversion is by engaging with the idea of living “with” the land as opposed to living “on” the land. They also link the land to the physical body and include animals as part of their communities.

To some degree all of the poets in this study share common themes, explore comparable issues, and develop similar critiques of the binaries made of nature and culture. For example, Wigmore links her body to the land, out of her deep engagement and affiliation with her home. Transken considers animal rights as important as human rights and Kane too is keenly attentive to the nuances of nature. But there are some key differences in tone and in the use of aural techniques. Both Pigeau and Harris use spare diction and repetition and write against a normative fixed language: “language sliding” as New puts it. The similarities in all these poets work lies in their interconnections with nature and the land: because they have indentured themselves to place, they see themselves as part of a larger whole system. In making these links between the land and the body, these poets write of nature as part of self: nature becomes part of family. Yet in speaking of “the body”, particularly the female body, they avoid being caught in an essentialist trap in which ‘woman’ becomes an immutable, ahistorical, physiologically determined essence. Instead, they suggest that there might be something emancipatory in *body talk*. Many First Nations women’s movements acknowledge the body’s cyclical

nature through traditional rituals⁷⁸ which make a link with nature and which explore power *with* as opposed to “over” (Paula Gunn Allen, “Grandmother” 14-18 and Kim Anderson, “Community and Nation” 213-222). The two First Nations / Métis poets in this chapter speak of their bodies not as essences, but rather on a situational, particular, and provisional basis, as if invoking what Kimberley Blaeser calls “supra-literary intentions” (65).

Blaeser's "Writing Voices Speaking: Native authors and Oral Aesthetic" discusses the ways in which "[n]ative literatures have supra-literary intentions. They want to come off the page and affect life [. . .] Native stories have goals beyond entertainment just as their predecessors in oral literature did. They work to make us into communities, form our identity, [and] ensure our survival" (65). For Pigeau and Harris, these communities include plants, trees, and animals. Harris calls the moose in her poem “*brother moose*” and Pigeau complicates her connection to horses in writing her autobiographical poem. These poets connect the past with the present, writing a kind of autoethnography⁷⁹ from an emic perspective on their lives and history. Their sometimes subtle/ sometimes obvious use of the first person “I” draws the reader into their lives. Pigeau (in conversation) acknowledges that her poem is a story from her childhood and Harris (in an email) acknowledged the connections of self and her poem.

⁷⁸ In the Northwest of BC, monthly retreats during menses afforded First Nations women (historically) some time to perform rituals, unlike early anthropologists who believed that this meant their culture thought they were “unclean”, in fact, it was an acknowledgement of women’s power and how this power was unruly during these times (Sheree Ronaasen Jan. 4th 2010 email).

⁷⁹ See my discussion and definition of autoethnography in Chapter 3: Si Transken.

Just as there is the tendency in ecofeminism to romanticize the connections women may have to nature,⁸⁰ so too is the representation of First Nations's connections to the land romanticized in the work of some ecocritics.⁸¹ There is no innate connection between all women and nature, just as there is no innate connection between Aboriginal people and the land. I concur with Marilyn Dumont who writes that while "some natives in isolated communities are still connected to the land in meaningful ways. . . , this is [only] one experience of nativeness" ("Positive Images of Nativeness" 49). There are obviously other experiences for different First Nations's peoples⁸². And there is no monolithic identification with nature for Aboriginal people or for women in general.

In spite of some of these cultural differences, perhaps where these last four poems come together (and possibly, all the poets in this collection) lies in a consideration of writing about our physical bodies and the physicality of nature. Feminist writers often consider the intersections between writing, body, and voice. Hélène Cixous's analysis of the connections between women's desire and women's language culminates in what she calls *écriture féminine*. She suggests that *écriture féminine* is a way of signifying that disrupts patriarchy ("The Laugh of the Medusa"). Although I am not suggesting that the poems in this study fall entirely within the realm of *écriture féminine* there are moments

⁸⁰ For example, see Judith Plant's essay, "Searching for Common Ground: Ecofeminism and Bioregionalism" in which she argues that ecofeminists can "develop a method of sharing with our male friends the lessons we have learned about power" (159). Here she not only sidesteps the fact that women too can be part of a system of domination but that that men can be ecofeminists too.

⁸¹ See for example Gary Snyder's essay, "The Place, the Region, & the Commons" in which he states: "Native Americans to be sure have a prior claim to the term native. But as they love this land they will welcome the conversion of the millions of immigrant psyches into fellow "Native Americans" (43).

⁸² See Tom Regan's essay: "Environmental Ethics and the Ambiguity of the Native American's Relationship with Nature".

when it rubs shoulders with it: where language becomes translucent in metaphors (Kane), where lateral leaps in intuition occur (Wigmore and Pigeau), where language mirrors the sensuous body, and where nature's body and the human body connect (Kane, Wigmore, Transken, Pigeau, Harris, and Conway). Daphne Marlatt (BC poet/ writer) and Nicole Brossard (Québécois poet) write about the body and what it means to speak or write a bodied language. Theirs is a poetics of intuition, of lateral leaps in understanding, of knowing through the body, of body memories which, they maintain, we share with all of nature: "The body is what recognizes, knows for sure when touching our real nature. Everything else can be discussed, argued about, negotiated through fantasy since in large part, the body works without respite in the luxuriance of the imaginary, the fuss we make about ideological streams and the revelations of almighty science" (Marlatt and Brossard par. 6). In this manner, writing about the body includes a negotiation of ideology and physiology. This negotiation is one place where nature writing can include humans as part of the natural world.

The poets I discuss in this chapter work in much the same fashion, disrupting hierarchical traditions of humans being held above nature. Like Kane, Transken, and Wigmore, these poets speak of self as part of nature, not apart from nature. They acknowledge the connections between nature and culture. There are no masculine constructs draped in feminine lyricism in these four poems. For these poets (Pigeau, Harris, Peters, and Conway) family is a part of nature. I am certainly not suggesting that family is only a female concern; rather, I am saying that these poets are particularly concerned with mediating nature and culture, and for them, family and the body provide the connective tissue. Cixous's analysis of *écriture féminine*, with its critique of family

and the invisibility of women's labour within the structure of the family problematizes my suggestion of the intersections in these poets' writing. I do not mean to side-step these issues but instead, wish to acknowledge that this is a place where the poets' work and Cixous's may divert. These poets' concerns of family and the idea of community including nature (ie: flora, fauna, landforms) contain an *implicit* critique of tradition Eurocentric mainstream hierarchies where animals and the land fall far below human concerns.

Animals in these poems become brothers, daughters, sons, childhood selves; in short they become family. The Oxford English Dictionary gives the Latin origin of family; "familia" meaning household. The first definition cited is: "Of people or animals". While those two entities "people" or "animals" are probably meant to be considered separately (animal families-- like a pride of lions, or a pack of wolves as opposed to human families), yet *I* cannot help but think of family as containing both people and animals. The third dictionary definition in the OED negates my optimism, stating that family is: "a group of people living as one household, including parents, children, boarders, and servants". Clearly family is defined as people and even centers around defining insiders and outsiders. What these four poets do is blur those imposed lines of human/animal by writing animals as family.

These four poets disparage easy definitions of family that may enable humans to maintain their assumptions of superiority over other beings. Each poem offers a different way of interpreting our connections to our animal *family/familiars/familia*. These poems embrace a world-view of attentiveness, making this view normative and political.

“Hedge is to horse”

Indigenous peoples speak about ancestors, about Earth, about the symbiosis that exists. It is impossible for non-Natives to feel the sorts of emotions that are called upon when between human and animal.

---Beth Brant *Writing As Witness* 33

Dani Pigeau, who was named after her relative, Chief Dan George, writes against a normative fixed English language: she subverts expected spelling, grammar, and stereotypes to make the colonizer’s language work for her. Pigeau is Métis / Stohl’o and grew up in Terrace in Northern BC. An elementary school teacher who has struggled with racism and dyslexia, Pigeau works hard to get the establishment up to speed as concerns treating cultural and learning differences with respect. She also is connected to animal rights and fosters dogs in her home.

In this autobiographical poem, Pigeau explores some of the stereotypes that damaged her child self in the normative mainstream education system. Playing with images such as the “stoic Indian,” she juxtaposes this image with the capitals she uses to suggest the aggrieved tones of a hurt child. Definitions play an important role in Pigeau’s poem. So too, do expectations and stereotypes. In *Landsliding*, W. H. New states he is not so interested in “actual landforms but with the political implications of the language choices,” and likewise, he is not invested in reifying fixed definitions but rather is tracking how language is sliding (16). Pigeau plays comparable language games in her poem. The political implications of her word choices, spelling, and grammar tell us that not only is the education system a dangerous institution but family is also a complicated institution. In the line “Her head once FULL OF BUGS” and her father “never FORGETTING” the aggravated tone of a young child comes through in the use of caps. But family is safer than *not family* as this daycare institution is part of the normative

mainstream and the child in this poem is not. Her mother is described as “work[ing] at a carpet factory” (line 6). The depreciation implied in this statement is furthered by the sense of *otherness* in the very first line of the poem, with an emphasis on how out of place the child-self feels: “Siting at a table that is not your mother’s”. The child is made to sit up and pay attention. She is told, “No elbows on the table” (2), indicating concern for manners over concern for the child. The next line “Now pressed full of WORDS with meaning” (9) shows how difficult a place such as this might be for a child who does not have a normative grasp on language.

The political implications of Pigeau’s language choices are obvious. Her alternate spelling and grammar not only mimic her child-perspective but also suggest how unnecessary standard grammatical conventions are to meaning. The opening of the poem accentuates an outsider/ insider motif by employing a distancing technique: the reader is not altogether certain whether this is an “as told to” narrative or whether the speaker is the child who is clearly out of her element. The table she must sit at belongs to someone else: “Siting at a table that is not your mother’s”. There is a deliberate withholding in the beginning of this poem, a careful structuring that makes the reader guess at what will transpire and keeps them reading.

The deliberate spelling of sitting as “siting” creates an immediate pause. This is then furthered by the spelling of straight as “Strait” in line 2. There are distinct implications about creating false boundaries and mapping in the use of the word “siting” and “strait”. Both are geographical terms that ironically evoke a nationalist Canadian agenda. Reading between the lines, the implication is that demarcations such as the

boundaries created by federal governmental systems we know as Canada/ America, BC/Alberta are arbitrary and are not part of a First Nations mapping of territory and land use⁸³. The barking out of orders in the short staccato lines that make up the directives from the authority of the “Day Care” also creates a sense of an us vs. them dichotomy. “Day Care: “Sit up Strait.. No elbows on the table.. Say excuse me” (2). So does the capitalizing of both words, Day Care, which lends a further sense of distance and authority. The child-self in this poem is under the “Care” of the faceless voice who censures and gives orders. In some sense the depersonalized Day Care stands for all educational establishments that have consistently failed First Nations students and have caused more harm than anything else to their communities. Educational institutions in Canada have long been the instruments of assimilation for First Nations and Métis peoples. Residential schools, for which there is no real reparation, outlawed First Nations languages and dismantled family structures and kinship networks. While none of this is directly spoken of in this poem, the ghosts of school experiences loom very large. Pigeau evokes the notion of school as forcing information into children: her head is “Now pressed full of WORDS with meaning” (9).

Assumptions and stereotypes are debunked: that a coastal First Nations/Métis child would know what a baby horse is called because “She should know, she’s an INDIAN right?” (10) is called into question. Furthermore the stereotype of the blank-faced, stoic Native is challenged: “It didn’t seem to register” and the “BLANK STARE/

⁸³ Traditional territories were based on land use (bioregions) and even landform, thus the Tsimshian and the Nisga’a held use rights of different parts of the Skeena River. Petroglyphs on the rock faces indicate to these peoples where their territory of use begins or ends (Ronaasen Jan. 4th 2010 email).

ACCEPTANCE/ SILENT STAND” (12-15) causes these attributions (of acceptance) to be discarded by the reader because it is obvious that this childhood experience was detrimental, hurtful, and long-lasting. In short, Pigeau asks the reader to decipher the words and meaning in this poem to allow for a deeper understanding of the effects of stereotypes and mainstream educational systems on First Nations and Métis children.

“Brother Moose”

Because you gave something a name
does not mean your name is
important.

--- Sherman Alexie “Introduction to Native American Literature”

Although “Brother Moose” is a direct address to a real or symbolic moose, it is also is a dialogue between the speaker and an external reader/audience, and as such acts as a poetic bridge between Euro-Canadian and Cree/Métis/Gitksan values. The poem outlines a concept of interconnectedness that conveys an understanding of moose / human relationships. “Brother Moose” is also a dialogue between Harris’s implied position as author and her readers. The poem’s emphasis on dialogue is indicative of more general characteristics of Native poetry. As Robin Riley Fast affirms, “Contemporary Native poetry is generically and distinctively dialogic, grounded as it is in a complex of specific historical, geographical, and cultural contexts within which its multiple voices resonate” (13).

Heather Harris, Cree-Métis, moved to and lived in Northern BC, Kispiox, and Prince George for twenty years. Her first book of poetry, *Rainbow Dancers*, comes from the name of her dance group. At the onset of my research she was a professor of First

Nations Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia⁸⁴. Her voice in this poem is clearly both reverential and pragmatic, showing respect for what “Brother Moose” offers to her people.

As a non-First Nations reader, I believe it is important to follow the cues of First Nations writers and critics in developing my interpretations of First Nations writing. In the “Introduction” to *Looking at the Words of Our People*, Jeanette Armstrong states unequivocally: “in reading First Nations Literature the questioning must first be an acknowledgement and recognition that the voices are culture-specific voices and that there are experts within those cultures who are essential to be drawn from and drawn out in order to incorporate into the reinterpretation through pedagogy, the context of English Literature coming from Native Americans” (7). I strive to forge an ecocritical reading of Harris’s poem that takes into account its cultural specificity. I attempt to *listen* to what Harris’s poetic discourse tells me. I may not be able to fully understand her poetry because I can only circumnavigate by the signs that I know. I can only, as Greg Sarris indicates, “attempt to talk across, the spaces between... [my] world and that of an American Indian text” (152). I may miss important cultural allusions and I may have limited access to Harris’s symbols and images,⁸⁵ yet nevertheless, I believe it is also important to try to forge understandings across cultural differences.

⁸⁴ She is currently working on a second book of poetry. She has since moved to Hawaii, teaches at the University of Hawaii, and has changed her name to Pua Medeiros.

⁸⁵ In her introduction to *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology*, Armstrong writes about her experience of Sarain Stump’s poetic words and says of them: “I remember reading and looking at his drawings and being stunned by the idea that he

Moose represents food for many Northern BC people, including First Nations and Euro-Canadians. Moose also represents strength and power. In calving and rutting seasons, moose are very dangerous, even aggressive animals. In contrast, Western popular cartoons often depict moose as affable, bumbling idiots (think of Bullwinkle, or Rutt and Tuke in *Brother Bear*). Acknowledging the often awkward, ungainly movement of a moose, Harris writes: “Brother Moose, /I may smile at your awkwardness. /I mean no disrespect /you are our brother” (1-4). Yet by including moose as family, calling him “brother,” Harris evokes the interdependence that some Northern people have with their environment. There is no us/them dichotomy between culture and nature.

Harris subtly explores the connections between culture/nature, written/oral, individual/communal. To have a dialogue, rather than a monologue, one must have connection. There must be some point of contact. In the introduction to *Reinventing The Enemy’s Language: Contemporary Native Women’s Writings of North America*, Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird comment on the necessity for dialogue across cultures and across individual selves to the “other”: “We learn the world and test it through interaction and dialogue with each other” (Harjo and Bird 19).

The oral/written dichotomy so prevalent in Western discourses, as Walter Ong argues in *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*, does not exist in this poem. The triad of repetitions: “We honour you” (lines 10, 12, and 17) contains oral elements that express a certain prayer-like reverence. The acknowledgement of such

was speaking a secret poetic language of symbols and images that could only be appreciated by a Native who was culturally knowledgeable. Its simplicity and depth brought us a way to speak to each other of those things spiritual without having to explain to non-Natives what they did not have access to, culturally” (xvi).

poetic attention (but not romanticism) contains reverence, wonder, respect, and responsibility. David Boyd argues that Aboriginal writing (he is specifically speaking about Beth Brant's "Prayer") "epitomizes the intimate spiritual relationship with the land that characterizes traditional aboriginal culture" (8). Although Boyd's is a rather dangerous statement, if taken to affix an essentialist notion of environmental spiritualism to all "aboriginal culture," it is also important to understand that such a profound uttering of animal as "brother" and as *family* comes from within a tradition.

Not only does Harris speak of moose as her "brother;" she also writes about his body *and* hers as related both on a familial and a physiological level. She speaks of "our bodies" being nourished, furthering the idea that individual/community is not a dichotomy in First Nations writing. Her short lines may either be a statement or a plea, or both: "Give us your coat. / Insulate us from northland cold" (8-9). She connects his coat with the warmth of her people. She states that her community uses "well every one of the gifts you give us" suggesting that there is no waste and suggests that the moose is somehow offering himself up for the sustenance of her people. In this poem, Harris is honoring "brother moose". Nature writing has been called a literature of hope (Buell, Snyder, Stegner) and there is, indeed, something very hopeful in seeing animal as self, as family, as part of oneself.

“The silence of grazing animals”

Must literature always lead us away from the physical world, never back to it?
---Lawrence Buell *The Environmental Imagination*.

We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.
--- Elie Wiesel Nobel Acceptance Speech (December 10, 1986).

This poem is Sheila Peters’s strong response to land and nature; the deer and the child in the poem are all watching “us” and what we do. In a non-didactic way Peters is requiring us to acknowledge our responsibility towards those that watch us. Her title, “The silence of grazing animals”, is intentionally perverse, suggesting that while we may perceive of them as silent, they have much to say. Sheila Peters’s sense of place, landscape, and environment is not only something she is part of, but one that she is responsive to. Peters responded to my essay on land and place, gender and language in an email conversation in 2009.

Here Peters is commenting on writing in her Bulkley Valley/Smithers community and her own writing. She indicates: “I write more about the bush because that’s where I live. I write to keep bits of it intact – in language and in reality. The two aren’t separate as far as I can tell . . . What’s wonderful in this community (Bulkley Valley), the artists (visual, musicians) don’t divide themselves by gender, really. The projects we work on together may be about gender, but the artists don’t divide themselves” (June 30th 2009 email). The artists that Peters speaks of are part of a larger community (that includes the bush) that exists “in language and reality” and, according to Peters; do not divide themselves in their art. Although Peters does not speak directly in her email about First Nations artists, Peters’s book *Canyon Creek: a script* (1998) is a mixture of archival

photos and oral histories (and is a collaborative effort with Dorothy Giesbrecht and Megan Hobson) pertaining to the eviction of the local Wet'suwet'en people from their lands in the early 1920s. Creekstone Press (on their web-site) says: "By telling one family's story, *Canyon Creek: a script* demonstrates how the early surveying and mapping of British Columbia had far-reaching consequences on both native and non-native residents. It identifies the impact of Canadian and BC land use policies on First Nations communities and puts the present status of Aboriginal land claims and self-government in an historical context". The urge to acknowledge such histories and highlight the injustices perpetrated by our governing bodies speaks strongly of Peters's politics. The Office of the Wet'suwet'en Nation endorses Peters's book. As well, the book's collaborative nature also indicates Peter's sense of community.

Her poem "The silence of grazing animals" is contained in her first full-length book of poetry and is also a collaboration (with painter Perry Rath), a kind of landscape and visual/literary performance. The *weather from the west* (2007) is a lyric re-enactment of the environment both visually and textually. Alan Twigg, editor of BC Bookworld, writes a revealing entry for, *the weather from the west*. Acknowledging the role that publishing plays in regional literature, Alan Twigg comments on the "sophisticated" choices that Creekstone Press (run by Lynn Sherville and Sheila Peters) makes yearly. His write-up admires their "modest but realistic mandate: roughly one book per year". He notes that Creekstone is the only operating Press situated in Northern BC. He calls Peters's book of poetry a "sophisticated 'synergistic' interplay between landscape, heart and mind" on the BC Bookworld website ("Sheila Peters"). He further comments on Creekstone's attempt to "do nothing less than reflect life in northwestern B.C. from

places such as the Bulkley Valley, Smithers, the Hazeltons, Vanderhoof, the Kispiox Valley, Terrace, the Skeena and Bulkley watersheds, the Spatsizi or Tatlatui Wilderness Parks, Haida Gwaii, the Nechako and Fraser watersheds, the Inside Passage and other traditional Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en territory—almost half the province”. His affirmation of the largeness of Northern BC extends to a sense, not just of actual concrete acreage/space, but also of an intangible sense of Northernness—a sense of belonging to place. Furthermore he acknowledges individual communities, landforms (such as watersheds), and traditional Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en territory; Twigg understands Peters's writing and what she attempts in her love of bush/territory/community through her poetry.

Peters's poem “The silence of grazing animals” is a thoughtful re-enactment of both animal and child presence. She subtly links the watchful eyes of nature (deer, in this instance) and the eyes of her two year old son. She describes both sets of eyes as: “silent”, “tracking”, “measur[ing]”, “swallow[ing] everything” and “watching”. These eyes ingest all that surrounds them, such as the “dandelion”, “thread of blood”, and “coyote piss”. The first two stanzas initially describe only the two deer who “stand shoulder to shoulder,” but through the hinge of the third, (single-line stanza), the deer and the child in the fourth stanza become indelibly linked. The pivotal line, “They swallow everything” (10), is directed not just to the deer or to the child whose gazes take in everything “brown eyes watching” (15) and links the deer “ears tracking” (4) but it is also an addressal to her poetic audience. She goes on to connect the “silent” deer (5) with the child “silent” (14). Such an awareness of how being watched contains an element of responsibility, both socially and ecologically. Hans Peter Duerr suggests that: “people do not exploit a nature that speaks to them” (qtd. in Manes 16). If we notice the deer listening and the child watching, we acknowledge they have something important to tell

us. They do not need to have “human voice” to be heard. Manes states: “To regard nature as alive and articulate has consequences in the realm of social practices. It conditions what passes for knowledge about nature and how institutions put that power to use” (15). Peters puts the institution of publishing to use in raising awareness of responsibility through her poetry.

Peters’s slow, measured description of deers and child indicates a kind of careful attentiveness. Her verb tense choices—“tracking”, “flicking”, “browsing”, “waking”, and “watching”—creates a sense of immediacy in the reader. The alliteration of d’s: “**d**eer **s**tand **s**hould**e**r to should**e**r”, “**d**andelions”, “**h**ead” also concretizes this poem. From an interior rhyme of “head and thread” to an approximate rhyme of “**t**hread of blood,” the repetition of the hard consonant of **d** grounds this poem. Thus Peters side-steps anything light or fluffy-sounding in a poem of pretty deers and cute children.

I invoke Peters as another Northern woman poet who evinces a kind of bioregionalist theory, whose poetry is political and speaks of the importance of paying attention, of slowing down long enough to notice that the eyes of the deer and of children are watching us. Why this matters so much to me, is that Peters’s overt (yet subtle and non-didactic) politics are about valuing of the other. This blurring of human/animal relationships suggests that we can learn from each other, a philosophy that is palpable in Peters’s writing.

“Swamp Zone”

'Nature never did betray the heart that loved her'
---William Wordsworth 1798.

Joan Conway’s poem “Swamp Zone” walks a fine erotic line. Body awareness and childhood discovery of sexuality creates strong imagery. The poem is an autobiographic exploration of her childhood one summer—when the swamp became both a place of refuge and a place of uncertainty for the child self. Conway explores a kind of erotic ecology that is both logical and quixotic: the mating rituals of frogs and humans blend together. Her descriptive poem allows for a lateral understanding of both identification and distancing through her body imagery.

Conway’s writing reflects the understandings of her affiliations with nature that combine family, history, community, and story. When Conway arrived in the North as a young woman, she commenced to live off the land in a remote community near Terrace—what was once the pioneer settlement of Doreen. Doreen is a ghost town and its only link to “civilization” is the train that trundles by once a day. There is no road access, although it can be reached by fording the Skeena River by boat. Moving back to the land, Conway gave birth to two children at her remote home.

Like so many of the poets in this dissertation, Conway is also a tireless organizer of events and a creator of opportunities for other writers and artists. She put together an art show in the summer of 2006 as a way to explore her feelings after losing one of her closest long time friends (Pat Carson) to cancer, whom she states she “went on an

amazing journey with through her dying”. After Conway created some pieces of art incorporating photography and poetry, she wanted to “celebrate the work in more of a public way and so organized an art show for women called “Mapping the Intimate”. Thirty artists came together from all over the North-west to show their work, opening up new possibilities of creative expression.

Another project Conway was involved with was the "Highway of Tears" art show (spring 2006) that Linda Stringfellow (an artist in Smithers) organized⁸⁶. Stringfellow got a grant to network and support a traveling art show to open in many of the communities in the north. Conway organized the venue in Terrace and worked with the Kitsumkalum Nation to come together with Dancers and speakers. The most important part of the show for her was working with the youth at the Terrace alternate school. They put together a piece of art for the show which included a multi-vocal poem that she helped the girls structure.

Many of Conway’s own poems work through the connections between the present and past, and mediate between the self and others. Conway’s poem “Swamp Zone” explores a number of interlocking tensions—privacy and exposure, interiority and

⁸⁶ The “Highway of Tears” is so named because of the young women who have disappeared alongside that stretch of road from Prince George to Prince Rupert. Locally in the north, the view is often expressed that the RCMP and media at the outset of these cases had been treating these missing young women as less important because of their racial/familial backgrounds. The possibility that one or more human predators are operating up and down this often isolated highway is perhaps more than people wish to accept. These disappearances have been ongoing since the 1970’s. Some 18 or so women are missing or have been found murdered alongside Northern BC highways since the 1970s. This, according to the Highway Of Tears website, is from an official RCMP list that has recently grown and now includes cases of sexual assault and battery. The newer number adds 16 sex-crime cases to the RCMP list (“New Details”). An aunt of a missing young woman believes the number is much higher (*The Province* October 21, 2009 para 7).

exteriority, belonging and not belonging—that create a sensual interplay of self and nature. At the poem’s outset, the speaker who is a child declares: “That summer the pond was our world” (line 1); but by the poem’s end the child speaker is “stranded” and “left high and dry” (32 and 36). But, make no mistake; it is not nature that has betrayed her.

Instead what Conway’s child self arrives at is an uneasy truce: an understanding of human and frog mating rituals, and also a growing knowledge of abandonment, loss, and love. In this poem the frogs’ bellies being stroked and their “private rapture” (30) are compared to the speaker’s mother’s “creamy white thighs” (21). After eating a supper made of the same frogs she plays with, the child is disturbed by the frogs’ erotic calls as they search for their lost mates (at the same time articulating a comparison of her mother seeking a mate as well): “at night I dreamt of slippery speckled bodies// surrounding the cabin// throat pouch ballooning taut// vociferous croaking call missing partners” (14-17). Titillated and discomfited by the messages she is receiving, the child speaker is troubled by the erotic subcurrents. There is a kind of vulnerability in her newfound knowledge which is echoed in her verb choices: “sparkling”, “surrounding”, “ballooning”, “sunning”, “rubbing”, “massaging”, “laughing” and “dangling open”.

New, in *Landsliding*, speaks of a metaphorical use of language that ties land, power/lessness and the female body together but his is an understanding of language which encodes “males as property owners” and “land as female”. And although he acknowledges that “body talk” contains slippages, and that: “land language [is] so unreliable” (109), he also evinces that body is physical and “sexually marked and either empowered or vulnerable” (109). But what if it is both empowered and vulnerable, what if it is not a dichotomy? What New does not add is that there are issues of power in

connecting these kinds of images and that it depends on just who the observer or teller is. The physical body (woman/child/frogs in this particular case), just like the land, can always be vulnerable or harmed but can *still* be powerful at the same time. Acknowledging that vulnerability is empowering because your strength does not come from an imagined invincibility. Scholtmeijer states: “Women writers use fiction to concretize, affirm, and empower the state of being “other,” which dominant ideology objectifies as a state of weakness . . . It is, however, only from an anthropocentric perspective that animals are defeated” (234). In much the same manner, Conway’s poem suggests that it is only from a mainstream patriarchal perspective that the frogs, the swamp zone, her mother, and her child-self are defeated. Identifying with land (the “swamp zone” as instructor/teacher) and affiliating the self with the frog creates a loss of innocence that nonetheless makes the speaker more empowered and more aware of the tensions around her.

Who dominates this sphere becomes an important question: this is not domestic space—it is the space of *other*. This swamp zone is the frog’s world *and* the child speaker’s world albeit temporarily. The adult male, Uncle as boyfriend, is an interloper in this zone. Even the definition of the title word “zone” as “area that differs in some respect, or is distinguished for some purpose, from adjoining tracts or areas, or within which certain distinctive circumstances exist or are established” (Random House) lends credence to a edenic/post edenic knowledge. This is not a swamp that represents somehow inferior space (unusable to industry unless drained). Instead this is a place where the child-self partakes in a struggle regarding sexuality, performance, boundaries

and family matters. The discovery of the mother as both a parent and as a sexual being causes the child to affiliate with the frog and swamp.

For Conway, the swamp has something important to say. How do you say that you believe that everything contains voice, everything has essence and presence, without overtly romanticizing or usurping that voice? Conway's swamp has body and voice. Manes may be missing something when he says that there is an "eerie silence that surrounds nature in our garrulous society" (16). In this poem the voices of the frogs call the child-self out into an awareness of actions and intents. She must delineate where she and her body stand. In observing her mother and her uncle she has gained an uneasy knowledge and can never go back. Heidegger is correct when he says all language both reveals and conceals (*Poetry, Language, and Thought*). Using words like "private rapture" to describe the frogs' bellies being stroked, Conway is drawing a comparison to her mother's "creamy white thighs" and her not so private displays of affection—the uncle telling the child and her sister to "go play" (25). And yet the child in this poem remains concealed, "crouched/ stranded amongst the reeds" (31-32). In this poem it is the gap between knowledge and experience that is both revealed and concealed at the same time.

Although the swamp zone in this poem is from a time past, it still exists as a specific place in the mind's eye of this poet. It contains retinal after-images of pond lilies/their waxy yellow cups . . . flat disks of leaves . . . iridescent black veined wings" (3-8). The intermixing of images that are human and animal illuminates Conway's attentiveness to detail: she is observing and listening to this "swamp zone". Conway's awareness of both the strength and the vulnerability of the frogs, her mother, and the child hints at apprehension, discovery and above all knowledge which is power too.

Conclusion

The poets in this chapter form an important addendum to the larger explorations of this project. Pigeau and Harris are voices that connect the past and the present, speaking to an audience about history and different ways of knowing and experience. Where their poetry and the last two poems in this collection come together is in their explorations of the intersections of body and family. Animals in these poems become brothers, daughters/sons, childhood selves; in short they become family. I believe these poets, like the other poets in this dissertation, have important political messages that they relay through their poetry. As Pigeau points out: the stereotypical response “She should know, she’s an INDIAN right?” is damaging, and Harris, through reverence of “Brother Moose”, suggests there are other ways of knowing that may be foreign to some ecocritical readers, the notion that one can have reverence for a being that provides sustenance and warmth. In Peters’s poem, “The silence of grazing animals”, humans are culpable: it is the responsibility of humans to pay attention. Conway explores the intersections between the fragility and strength in the female body and in nature. These are important lessons to be learned.

Conclusion

--to generate a method of reading which diminishes the gaps among people, their world, and their feelings while also emphasizing the uniqueness of all things, be they people or plants or poems, in face of the forces that would grind them down into a denatured uniformity.

---DMR Bentley *Gay]Grey Moose 274*

There are two main questions underlying this dissertation. The first is, does a bioregional approach to reading poems by Northern BC women poets create a larger understanding of the interaction of nature and culture? The second question is, can this understanding cause the reader to pay closer attention to the natural world which they are part of? I believe these questions have been answered in the affirmative. The poets discussed in this dissertation articulate a need, even an insistence that both urban and rural readers should pay close attention to their place within nature. Englehardt states: “The ecopoem is connected to the world, and this implies responsibility. Like other poetic models that assume a connection and engagement (feminism, Marxism, witness, etc.), ecopoetry is surrounded by questions of ethics” (par. 5). Englehardt suggests that ecopoetry has a responsibility to both an interior and exterior world. The poets in this study are engaged in writing about nature in just such a fashion: elucidating the connections between culture and nature, and implying a sense of ethical responsibility.

When Englehardt further asks: “Should the ecopoem do something in the world? . . . Can the ecopoem be compelling as an object and as a political call?” (par. 5) he is asking not only about ethicality but also about the effectiveness of such a practice. This line of questioning is akin to Rueckert’s beliefs that there is a stored energy in poems that can be released and re-released, never diminishing its effect but instead growing with each reading: an eternally renewable energy source that he believes may sustain the

planet (109). If we accept this theory of ecopoetry as being able to *do* something then why have we not seen more engagement with nature on an intimate level?

Whether these ecopoets' goals are to rouse sympathy or ire, whether they are seeking to honour nature or denounce those practices that risk harming nature, the *effect* of calling the reader into consciousness is similar. The poets' work has indeed been successful in heightening my attentiveness to the natural world: have given me over to philosophic musing (Kane), have reminded me where I stand in terms of human and non-human rights (Transken), brought back to me moments of intense body awareness (Wigmore), and occasioned me to use stronger language in terms of my human and animal family (Pigeau, Harris, Peters, and Conway). In writing this dissertation, my hope is that others may also experience this change. My goal is to discover whether or not this ecopoetry has any political use to others.

Acknowledging the possibility that literature potentially has real effects on readers is, perhaps, a step in the direction of change. The possibility of change is paramount: these Northern BC poets offer a way to alter perspectives, even actions, through their annunciation of the details of nature. Kane's translations of the minutiae of nature (lyrically experienced and lived in), Transken's political ecofeminist narrative poetry (pointing out a different way of being), and Wigmore's place-literate articulations (expressing a deep connection with and a love of her home) are never romantic but all show how a different, closer connection with nature contains the potential, once seen and heard, to enact change. Pigeau's, Harris's, Peters's, and Conway's nature poems that describe the interconnectivity between nature, self, and family suggest that what happens to nature, happens to self. Literature *can* have a transformative effect.

Daniel Heath Justice makes just this point in “Renewing the Fire: Notes Toward the Liberation of English Studies”. He persuasively argues that the study of literature, especially First Nations literature, needs to be holistic and that we need to acknowledge literature’s ability to effect change. He argues that the study of literature is not just an isolated event wherein the examiner is set apart from the text and analyses one thread or pattern. Rather, the reader is part of the performance of the text and must act responsibly toward it. He states: “The literature comes first, but it exists in a relationship to its influences; to separate text from context in either direction is to impoverish our understanding of both” (49). A large component of his essay argues that we need to accept that not only is literature capable of having a life-altering effect but also is capable of producing great joy. He maintains that most often academics and teachers fail to transmit this possibility of joy and transformation to their students and in their scholarship (47). He also asks us to acknowledge the revolutionary nature of literature. He makes a case for a more holistic acknowledgement of the “transformative” possibilities of literature; he argues for acknowledgment that political resistance and social activism, within literature, can bring about “profound progressive change” (53). In short, Heath Justice challenges us to accept the ability of literature to change us as readers, whether the stories are ecocritical or First Nations or both, particularly those stories that may entice us to adopt a non-hierarchical holistic worldview.

As I stated in my preface, by heightening their place within nature the poets in this dissertation actually do entice readers into a world of emancipation, of resistance to anthropocentrism, and of deep familiarity with place. They really are listening to “the language of birds, the wind, earthworms, wolves, and waterfalls—a word of autonomous

speakers whose intents . . . one ignores at one's peril" (Manes). These Northern BC poets are *listening and attending*. They are observing, participating in, and recording the sounds and voices of nature.

The ecopoetry I have discussed in this study does not erase or efface difference. It builds community within nature and culture. It is revolutionary talk in contemporary society. This ecopoetry has the potential for creating and continuing community⁸⁷. The narratives told in these lyric poems have transformative potential: finding common ground with the like-minded and creating shared stories with the uninitiated. The poets' intimacy with their place, region, and locale means they are noticing nuances and details and not just because they are "useful" to them⁸⁸. These poets do not accept that nature is only important for what it can conceptually made to mean. Unlike Robert Kern's examination in "Ecocriticism: What is it Good For?" in which he suggests that for mainstream North American society "nature (leaving aside the question of whether it can be portrayed accurately or even adequately in literary texts) *is important not for what it physically is but for what it conceptually means or can be made to mean*" (italics added 258), my examination⁸⁹ suggests the importance of nature itself, not for what it can be made to mean.

⁸⁷ Portions of this project were presented at the 8th ASLE Conference (2009). A synopsis of this project is on the *BC Bookworld* website entitled "Keeping Body and Soul Together", and the introduction to the chapter on Donna Kane is published in *Sunstream Magazine* (Nov. 2009). In this vein, I also wish to publish more of this project, inviting additional readers to consider issues of attentiveness and bioregionalism in these poems.

⁸⁸ Val Plumwood's statement: "Differences in nature are attended to only if they are likely to be of use or contribute in some other way to human welfare" (340)

⁸⁹ If I had to do this project over again, I would change very little—perhaps spend more time researching First Nations and Métis poetry on the ground (rather than in libraries and on the internet) in Northern BC. If I were to continue this project I would include

From a bioregionalist perspective, what we need is a change in our perceptions that will lead to new actions. If we begin to notice, in an immediate up-close fashion, that we too are affected by what we do to our environment, it might make some difference. If we have never heard, then we do not miss the sound of frogs calling in the spring night air—cold and close and irretrievably etched into our memories, into our bodies. This is what these poems do: they provide us a window into a world of deep co-habitation, of nature and culture intermingling. Because these poems are about living in the *here and now*—with the frogs, the foxes, the beavers, the moose, the rivers, lakes, streams, and forests—imagining up-close and personal relationships we *might* have with our environment, they encourage this same kind of attentiveness in their readers. This is why so much of ecocritical theory speaks of going to the fields and of returning to some splendour in the land. But this experience of nature needs to be found *here*—not some vacation or wilderness over there where there is no ongoing intimacy; if that is the case, we miss out on the gossip. If we cannot directly be in on the gossip (to paraphrase Snyder) ourselves, maybe we can listen to someone who is—(these particular ecopoets, for example) and the energy that is stored in these nature poems will be released.

more of the many women poets publishing and writing in Northern BC who are not featured herein.

Works Cited

- Abbott, Sally. "The Origin of God in the Blood of the Lamb." Diamond and Orenstein. 35-40. Print.
- Adams, Carol J. and Josephine Donovan, eds. *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1995. Print.
- Adams, Carol J. "Woman-battering and Harm to Animals." Adams and Donovan 55-84. Print.
- , Introduction. By Adams. *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*. New York, NY: Continuum, (1993):1-9. Print.
- Ainsworth, Clea. "ARTS: keep the Poetry Machine Going." *CONNECTIONS*, Arts, Culture, and Outdoors. Smithers, BC: Creekwood, (Summer 2002): 7. Print.
- Alexie, Sherman. "Introduction to Native American Literature." *Old Shirts and New Skins*. Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, U of California, 1993. Print.
- Allen, Paula Gunn. "The Woman I Love is a Planet; The Planet I Love is a Tree." Diamond and Orenstein 52-57. Print.
- , "Grandmother of the Sun: Ritual Gynocracy in Native America." *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. Kansas City MO, Beacon Hill: 1992. Print.
- Anderson, Kim. "Community and Nation." *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*. Toronto, Ont.: Sumach P, 2000. Print.
- Armstrong, J. "Landspeaking." *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*. Ed. Simon Ortiz. Tucson: U of Arizona P, (1998): 174-195. Print.
- , Introduction. *Looking at the Words of our people: First Nations Analysis of*

- Literature*. Ed. Armstrong. Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, (1993): 7-8. Print.
- , Introduction. *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology*. Eds. Armstrong and Lally Grauer. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview, (2001): xv-xx. Print.
- Asscher, Maarten. November 6th, 2002 Conference Goethe Institut “Can Poetry be Political?” Poetry International Web. Web. 05 Aug. 2007. <http://international.poetryinternationalweb.org/piw_cms/cms/cms_module/index.php?obj_id=359>.
- Atwood, Margaret. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Anansi, 1972. Print.
- , *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1995. Print.
- , “The Writing Life.” *Washington Post*. Sunday, February 12, (2006): BW13. Print.
- Baldwin, Jacqueline. Interview with Karen Beeler and Dee Horne. *Its Still Winter: a Web Journal of Contemporary Canadian Poetry and Poetics*. Volume 2, number 2 Spring 1999. Poets from BC. Web. 17 May, 2005. <<http://wither.unbc.ca/winter/number2.2/index.html>>.
- Banting, Pamela. Introduction. *Fresh Tracks: Writing the Western Landscape*. Ed. Banting. Polestar: Victoria, BC, (1998): 9-22. Print.
- Barnhill, David Landis. Ecofeminism. “Overview”. U of Wisconsin. Web. 10 July, 2009. <www.uwosh.edu/faculty.../Overview%20-%20ecofeminism.doc>.
- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995. Print.
- . *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Second Edition. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009. Print.

- Bartlett, Brian. Introduction: Two Pianos Together. Lilburn 5-18. Print.
- Belford, Ken. "19 Poems." Precosky 3-31. Print.
- , "crossing." *Ecologue*. Madeira Park: Harbour, 2005. Print.
- , Interview with Barry McKinnon. *Its Still Winter*. September 1993. UNBC. Web. 03 January 2007. <<http://quarles.unbc.ca/winter/number2.2/belford/interview1.html>>.
- , "Viewed from the Mountains: A Conversation with Ken Belford." Interview with Justin Foster. Web. 13 April 2008. <www.itsstillwinter.com/Its%20Still%20Winter/contents_files/justinsinterview.pdf>.
- Bentley, D.M.R. "The Mower and the Boneless Acrobat: Notes on the Stance of Baseland and Hinterland in Canadian Poetry." *The Gay]Grey Moose: essays on the Ecologies and Mythologies of Canadian Poetry 1690-1990*. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1992. Print.
- Birney, Earle. *David and Other Poems*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1942. Print.
- , *The Cow Jumped over the Moon: The Writing and Reading of Poetry*. Toronto: Holt, 1972. Print.
- Bishop, Ev. "Ample inspiration: Writing in northern BC." *Northword*. Feb 2008. Web. 28 July 2009. <http://northword.ca/february-2008/ample-inspiration.html>>.
- Blaeser, Kimberley. "Writing Voices Speaking: Native authors and Oral Aesthetic." *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*. Eds. Laura J. Murray and Kieran Rice. Toronto: U of Toronto P, (1999): 53-68. Print.
- Bone, Robert. *The Geography of the Canadian North: Issues and Challenges*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1992. Print.
- Bondar, Alanna, F. "That every feather is a pen, but living, flying' Desire: The

Metapoetics of Don McKay's *BIRDING, or desire.*" *ECW*. Vol. 19.2. 1994.

Toronto, Ont: ECW. Web. 05 Sept. 2007. <http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/SCL/bin/get.cgi?directory=vol19_2/&filename=Bondar.html>.

Studies in Canadian Literature 19.2 (1994): 14-29. Print.

Bowen, Deborah C. "Introduction: Our Home and Linguistic Land: Ecocriticism and Contemporary Canadian Poetry." U of Western Ont. May 2004 ACCUTE Conference. Winnipeg, Man. Web. 03 Dec. 2009. <<http://uwo.ca/english/canadianpoetry/cpjr/vol55/bowen.htm>>

Bowering, George. *Back of Book . Ecologue*. Belford. Madeira park, BC: Harbour, 2005. Print.

Bowling, Tim, ed. *Where the Words Come From, Canadian Poets in Conversation*. Roberts Creek: Nightwood Editions, 2002. Print.

Boyd, David, ed. *Northern Wild: Best Contemporary Canadian Nature Writing*. Toronto: Douglas, 2001. Print.

---, Introduction. Boyd 1-14. Print.

Brandt, Di. *Now You Care*. Toronto: Coach House, 2003. Print.

Brant, Beth. *Writing As Witness: Essay and Talk*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press, 1994. Print.

Brody, Hugh. As cited by Wade Davis. "Hunters of the Northern Ice." Boyd 20-41. Print.

Bringhurst, Robert. *Conversations with a Toad*. Vancouver, BC and Shawinigan, Québec: Éditions Lucie Lambert, 1987. Print.

---, "Poetry and Thinking." Lilburn 155-72. Print.

---, "Unrapping the world." Rev. of *BIRDING or desire*. *Books in Canada*. 12.8. October

(1983): 31. Print.

Bryson, J. Scott, ed. *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 2002. Print.

---, Introduction. *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Ed. Bryson. Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, (2002): 1-16. Print.

---. *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*. Iowa: U of Iowa Press, 2005. Print.

Budde, Rob. "Building Community Culture: From the Outside In." *Northword*. Aug/Sept. 2008. Issue 20. Print.

---, "Finding Prince George". Interview with Rob McLennan. *The Danforth Review*. Sept. 2007. Toronto, Ont. Web. 21 July 2008. <http://www.danforthreview.com/features/interviews/rob_budde.html>.

---, "Free Radicals." *Writing Way North*. Thursday, August 02, 2007. WWN Blog. Web. 05 May 2008. <<http://writingwaynorth.blogspot.com/2007/08/free-radicals.html>>.

---, "Poetry Stocks on the TSX." *Northword*. Dec/Jan 2008/2009. Issue 22. Print.

---, *Writing Way North. Writing, publishing, reading, and other culturally disruptive activities. The way up here*. Web. 18 May, 2008.

<<http://writingwaynorth.blogspot.com/>>.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995. Print.

---, "Representing the Environment." *Coupe* 177-181. Print.

---, "The Ecocritical Insurgency." *New Literary History*. Volume 30, Number 3. Virginia: Johns Hopkins UP, (Summer 1999): 699-712. Print.

- , *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis And Literary Imagination (Blackwell Manifestos)*. Malden MA: Blackwell P, 2005. Print.
- “Bush.” *Oxford English Dictionary*. J. Simpson and E. Weiner, eds. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.
- Butala, Sharon. “The Subtlety of the Land.” Boyd 77-97. Print.
- Caitlin Press. “Gillian Wigmore.” *soft geography*. Web. 11 July, 2008.
<http://www.caitlin-press.com/>
- “Canada Vs. the OECD: An Environmental Comparison.” Web. 14 Oct. 2009.
 < <http://www.environmentalindicators.com/htdocs/execsum.htm>>.
- Carr, Glynis. Introduction. *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*. Ed. Glynis Carr. Lewisburg, Pa: Bucknell UP, (2000): 15-34. Print.
- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. 1962. New York: Fawcett Cress, 1964. Print.
- Chamberlin, J. Edward. *Come Back to Me My Language: Poetry and the West Indies*. Toronto: McClelland, 1993. Print.
- , “From Hand to Mouth: The Postcolonial Politics of Oral and Written Traditions”.
Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision. Ed. Marie Battiste. Vancouver: UBC P, (2000): 124-141. Print.
- Chan, Greg. “Ken Belford.” *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*. Ed. W.H. New. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2002. Print.
- Christ, Carol P. “Rethinking Theology and Nature.” Diamond and Orenstein 58-66. Print.
- Cixous, Hélène. “The Laugh of the Medusa.” Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs* 1. no. 4 (1976): 875-93. Print.
- Clifford, Nicholas and Gill Valentine. *Key Methods in Geography*. Newbury Park, CA:

Sage, 2003. Print.

Coates, K.S. And W.R. Morrison. "Writing the North: A Survey of Contemporary

Canadian Writing on Northern Regions." *Essays on Canadian Writing*.

Representing North. Issue 59. Fall 1996. ECW. Web. 23 Jan. 2006

<<http://proxy.lib.sfu.ca/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/pqdweb?did=11608560&sid=2&Fmt=2&clientId=3667&RQT=309&VName=PQD>>

Cochrane, Mark. "Barry McKinnon." *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*. Ed. W.H.

New. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2002. Print.

Cocteau. Jean. "La Mort et les Statues." Paris, 1977. August 30, 2008. *Federation of BC*

Writer's. Web. 03 Nov. 2008. <<http://bcwriters.com/index.php>>.

Coetzee, J. M. *The Lives of Animals*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999. Print.

Cohen, Michael J. *Reconnecting With Nature: Finding Wellness Through Restoring Your*

Bond With the Earth. Corvallis, Oregon: Ecopress, 1997. Print.

Cokinos, Christopher. "Defining Ecocritical Theory and Practice." *ASLE Academic*

Conference 1994. Nov. 1994. ASLE. Web. 08 Sept. 2005.

<http://www.asle.umn.edu/conf/other_conf/wla/1994/cokinos.html>.

Commoner, Barry. *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology*. Manhatten, NY:

Random House: 1971. Print.

Conway, Joan. "Dissertation." Message to Jacqueline Hoekstra. Sept 15, 2006. E-mail.

---, *Northword Magazine*. "Poems". Summer 2003. Smithers, BC, Creekstone P (2003): 8

& 35. Print.

---, "Swamp Zone." *Passage: UNBC's Summer Poetry Journal*. Ed. J Hoekstra. Prince

George: UNBC P, (2001): 8-16. Print.

- “Conversation.” *Oxford English Dictionary*. J. Simpson and E. Weiner, eds. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.
- Coupe, Laurence, ed. *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Crozier, Lorna. Back of Book Affirmation. Donna Kane’s *Somewhere, a Fire*. Regina SK: Hagios P, 2004. Print.
- , “Fear of Snakes.” *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence*. Toronto: McClelland, 1988. Print.
- , “Seeing Distance: Lorna Crozier’s Art of Paradox.” Interview with Elizabeth Philips. *Bowling* 139-158. Print.
- Cuthand, Beth. “For all the Settlers who Secretly Sing.” *Armstrong and Grauer* 133-134. Print.
- Davis, Karen. “Thinking like a Chicken: Farm Animals and the Feminine Connection.” *Adams and Donovan* 192-212. Print.
- d’Eaubonne, Françoise. *Le féminisme ou la mort*. Paris, France, P. Horay: 1974. Print.
- “Deep ecology.” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000. Print.
- “Deep ecology.” *Oxford English Dictionary*. J. Simpson and E. Weiner, eds. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.
- Den Ouden, Pamela. Poems. *Reflections on Water: An online Journal of Northern BC Writers and Artists*. Vol. 2, No. 1, Dec 2000. UNBC. Web. 10 Feb. 2005. <<http://ctl.unbc.ca/row/v2n1/poetry/oudenwall.html>>.

- Derkson, Jeff. "But Could I make a Living From It?" *Transnational Muscle Cars*.
 Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2003. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. GC Spivak. Baltimore, MD: Hopkins; Corr
 edition, 1998. Print.
- Diamond, Irene and Gloria Feman Orenstein, eds. *Reweaving the World: The Emergence
 of Ecofeminism*. San Francisco: Sierra Books, 1999. Print.
- Dickinson, Adam. "Lyric Ethics: Ecocriticism, Material Metaphoricity, and the Poetics of
 Don McKay and Jan Zwicky." U of Western Ont. Web. 09 Sept. 2009.
 <<http://www.uwo.ca/english/canadianpoetry/cpjrn/vol55/dickinson.htm>>.
- Diubaldo, Richard J. "The North in Canadian History: An Outline." *Fram: The Journal of
 Polar Studies*. 1.1 (1984): 187-196. Print.
- Dickinson, Adam. "Lyric Ethics: Ecocriticism, Material Metaphoricity, and the Poetics of
 Don McKay and Jan Zwicky." *Canadian Poetry* 55 (2004): 34-52. Print.
- Drengson, Alan. *Deep Ecology Movement*. Foundation for Deep Ecology. Web. 01
 March 2009. <<http://www.deepecology.org/movement.htm>>
- Duerr, Hans Peter. *Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary between Wilderness and
 Civilisation*. Trans: Felicitas Goodman. Ed Basil Blackwell. Oxford: Oxford P,
 (1985): 90-92. Print.
- Dunayer, Joan. "Sexist Words, Speciesist Roots." Adams and Donovan 11-31. Print.
- Dumont, Marilyn. "Positive Images of Nativeness." Armstrong 46-49. Print.
- "Ecofeminism." *Oxford English Dictionary*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.
- "Ecology." *Oxford English Dictionary*. J. Simpson and E. Weiner, eds. New York, NY:
 Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

- Eisler, Riane. "The Gaia Tradition and the Partnership Future: An Ecofeminist Manifesto." Diamond and Orenstein 23-34. Print.
- Elder, John. Foreword. Bryson ix-x. Print.
- , "Culture as Decay: Arnold, Eliot, Snyder." Coupe 227-234. Print.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Emerson: Selected Essays*. Ed. Larzer Ziff. New York: Penguin Classics, 1982. Print.
- Engelhardt, James. "The Language Habitat: an Eco-poetry Manifesto." *Octopus Magazine*. Eds. Zachary Schomburg & Mathias Svalina. Issue 09. Sept. 2007. Octopus. Web. 16 Oct, 2007 < <http://www.octopusmagazine.com/issue09/engelhardt.html>>.
- Evernden, Neil. "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and the Pathetic Fallacy." Glotfelty and Fromm 92-104. Print.
- "Falling Fertility: Demography, growth, and the environment." *The Economist*. Vol. 393 no. 8655. New York, NY: Oct 31, 2009. 15.
- "Familiar." *Oxford English Dictionary*. J. Simpson and E. Weiner, eds. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.
- "Family." *Oxford English Dictionary*. J. Simpson and E. Weiner, eds. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.
- Fast, Robin Riley. *The Heart as a Drum: Continuance and Resistance in American Indian Poetry*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 1999. Print.
- Farr, Cecelia Konchar. "American Ecobiography." *Literature of Nature: An International Sourcebook*. Murphy 94-97. Print.

- Filiss, John. "What is Primitivism?" *Primitivism*. Web. 15 Set. 2009.
 <<http://www.primitivism.com/primitivism.htm>>.
- Finlay, Triny. Review of Somewhere a Fire. *Arc: The Cunning Issue*. Vol. 56. Summer 2006. Ottawa, Ont: (2006): 101-102. Print.
- Flores, Dan. "Place: Thinking About Bioregional History." *Bioregionalism*. Ed. Michael Vincent McGinnis. New York, NY: Routledge, (1999): 43-58. Print.
- Foundation for Deep Ecology (FDE). "Mission Statement." Web. 05 April 2008.
 <<http://www.deepecology.org/mission.htm>>.
- Frolick, Vernon. *Descent into Madness: The Diary of a Killer*. Surrey, BC: Hancock House, 1993. Print.
- Frye, Northrop. *Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. Toronto: Anansi, 1971. Print.
- Fuller, Danielle. *Writing the Everyday: Women's Textual Communities in Atlantic Canada*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2004. Print.
- Fuss, Diana J. "'Essentially Speaking': Luce Irigaray's Language of Essence."
Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays on Difference, Agency, and Culture. Eds. Nancy Fraser and Sandra Lee Bartky. Indiana UP, (1992): 94-112. Print.
- Gaard, Greta, ed. *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993. Print.
- , "Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature." Gaard 1-12. Print.
- , and Patrick D. Murphy. Introduction. *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Gaard and Murphy. Urbana: U of Illinois P, (1998): 1-14. Print.

- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism (New Critical Idiom)*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Gates, Barbara T. "Toward Defining an Ecology of Ecofeminism: What is an Ecofeminist Text?" *ASLE Conference Summer 1994*. ASLE. Web. 05 Aug. 2006
 <http://www.asle.umn.edu/conf/other_conf/mla/1994/gates.html>.
- Gayton, Don. *Landscapes of the Interior: Re-Explorations of Nature and the Human Spirit*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society P, 1996. Print.
- Geier, Betty. "Hunger", "A Natural list", & "Poetry is." *Passage: UNBC's Summer Poetry Journal* 2001. Ed. J Hoekstra. Prince George: (Summer 2001): 25-29. Print.
- Gibson, Douglas. *Proceedings of the Reckoning Conference*. September 14-15, 2007: Regional Publishing. Vancouver, BC: BC Bookworld, 2007. Address.
- Gilbreath, Jennifer. Wildlife Biologist and Outreach Coordinator Red Wolf Recovery. *Red Wolf News*. Volume 1 Issue 1. May 20th, 1999. US Fish and Wildlife. Web. 03 June 2008. <<http://www.timberwolfinformation.org>>.
- Glickman, Susan. *The Picturesque and the Sublime: A Poetics of the Canadian Landscape*. Quebec City: McGill UP, 2000. Print.
- Glotfelty, Cheryl, and Harold Fromm eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in literary Ecology*. Athens, Georgia: U of Georgia P, 1996. Print.
- , Introduction. Glotfelty and Fromm. xv-xxxvii. Print.
- Goldie, Terry. *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures*. McGill-Queen's UP: Montreal, 1989. Print.
- Grace, Sherrill E. *Canada and the Idea of the North*. Montreal: McGill UP, 2001. Print.
- , "North." *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*. Ed. W.H. New. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2002. Print.

- Grady, Wayne. *Bright Stars, Dark Trees, Clear Water: Nature Writings from North of the Border*. Grady. Boston: Godine P, 1995. Print.
- , Ed. *From the Country: Writings About Rural Canada*. Toronto, Ontario: Camden House Pub. 1991. Print.
- Graham, Amanda. "Reflections on Contemporary Northern Canadian History". *Essays on Canadian Writing*. Representing North. Issue 59. Fall 1996. ECW. Web. 23 Jan.2006.<<http://proxy.lib.sfu.ca/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/pqdweb?did=11608560&sid=2&Fmt=2&clientId=3667&RQT=309&VName=PQD>>.
- Griffin, Susan. *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*. New York: Harper and Row, 1978. Print.
- Gruen, Lori. "Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of the Connection Between Women and Animals." Gaard 60-90. Print.
- Hall, Stuart. "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Condition for the Representation of Identity*. Ed. Anthony D. King. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, (1997): 18-39. Print.
- Haraway, Donna. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm P, 2003. Print.
- , "The Dualism of Primatology." Coupe 144-147. Print.
- , *The Haraway Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- , "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14, No. 3: (1988): 575-599. Print.

Harjo, Joy and Gloria Bird. Introduction. *Reinventing The Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native Women's Writings of North America*. Harjo and Bird. New York: WW Norton, (1997): 19-31. Print.

Harper, Stephen. As qtd in Global News. "Every G20 nation wants to be Canada, Stephen Harper insists." David Ljunggren, Reuters: Saturday, September 26, 2009. Web. 17 Nov. 2009. <www.globaltv.com/money/EverynationwantsCanadaHarper/2037877/story.html>.

Harris, Heather. "Brother Moose." *Rainbow Dancer*. Prince George: Caitlin Press, 1999. Print.

Hawthorn, Jeremy. *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*. 2nd edition. New York, NY: St. Martin's P, 1994. Print.

Heath Justice, Daniel. "Renewing the Fire: Notes Toward the Liberation of English Studies." *English Studies in Canada*, Vol 29, No 1 (2003) 45-54. Print.

Heselbarth, Rob. "What is Certified Lumber?" *RDB Magazine*. May 2008 Issue. Web. 01 Dec. 2009. <[http://www.rdbmagazine.com/print/Residential-Design-and-Build/What-is-Certified-Lumber-/1\\$1660](http://www.rdbmagazine.com/print/Residential-Design-and-Build/What-is-Certified-Lumber-/1$1660)>

Hilles, Robert. "Creative Writing." *Northword*. Ed. Lottie Wengelin. Winter 2005/06. Web. 09 Feb. 2006. <<http://northword.ca/winter-2005-06/creative-writing>>.

Hoekstra, Jacqueline. "Donna Kane: Northern BC Eco-poet." *Sunstream Magazine*. Ed. Janet Rugenius Lacroix. Roberts Creek, BC. November 2007. Print.

---. "Keeping Body and Soul Together." Literary Criticism. *ABCBookworld*. November 2007. Web. 05 Nov. 2009.

---. "Two Northern BC Poets, Donna Kane and Gillian Wigmore." *8th Annual ASLE*

Conference. Victoria, BC. April 2009. Address.

Holt, N.H. "Representation, legitimation, and autoethnography: An autoethnographic writing story." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2. Web. 30 Aug, 2004. < www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2_1final/html/holt/html>.

Holy Bible, King James Version. Great Britain: Oxford UP, circa 1930. Print.

Howarth, William. "Ecocriticism in Context." Coupe 163-166. Print.

---, "Some Principles of Ecocriticism." Glotfelty and Fromm 69-91. Print.

Hübler, Axel. *The nonverbal shift in early modern English conversation*. Volume 154 of *Pragmatics & Beyond*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins P, 2007. Print.

Hunt, Richard. "How to Love This World: The Transpersonal Wild in Margaret Atwood's Ecological Poetry." Bryson 232-244. Print.

Hutcheon, Linda. "Eruptions of Postmodernity: The Postcolonial and the Ecological." *Essays in Canadian Writing* 51-52 (1993-1994): 146-53. Print.

"Indenture." *Oxford English Dictionary*. J. Simpson and E. Weiner, eds. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

Jacques, Edna. "Indian Summer." *All Poetry*. Web. 10 April 2008. <<http://allpoetry.com/opoem/35089-Edna-Jacques-Indian-Summer>>.

Jahner, Elaine A. "Metalanguages." *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Ed. Gerald Robert Vizenor. U of Oklahoma P, (1993): 155-186. Print.

Jensen, Vickie. "You Can Go Home Again: Eden Robinson Haisla Novelist." *BC Bookworld*. Vol. 20. No. 1. Spring, (2006): 22-23. Print.

Johnson, Michelle Kay. "Quoting you." Message to Jacqueline Hoekstra. March 2009. E-

mail.

---, PhD Thesis Abstract. *Plants Speak to the People: The Voice of Ethnobotanical Plants in Okanagan Story*. Kelowna, BC: UBC Okanagan, January 2, 2008. Print.

Johnson, Rochelle. Introduction. "Revising Culture through Women and Nature." *Women and Nature*. Johnson. Special Issue. *Women's Studies* 25.5, (1996): v-xi. Print.

Johnson, Shaun. "Place, Love, and Time: This Poem is for Deer." *Silver Sky: Poetry of the Northwest*. March 19th, 2003. Evergreen State College. Web. 05 September, 2006. <<http://academic.evergreen.edu/curricular/silversky/work/Shاون/placelovetme.html>>.

Johansen, Bruce. *Indigenous Peoples and Environmental Issues: An Encyclopedia*. University of Nebraska at Omaha: Greenwood Press, December 2003. Print.

Jones, D.G. *Butterfly on Rock: A Study of the Themes and Images in Canadian Literature*. Toronto: U of T P, 1970. Print.

Katz, Cindi. "Whose Nature, Whose Culture." Eds. Braun, Bruce and Castree. *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium*. New York: Routledge, (1998): 45-62. Print.

Kane, Donna. "Change of Season." *CV2: A Canadian Journal of Feminist Writing*. Winnipeg: Volume 23. No. 2, Fall 2000. Print.

---, "Creative Writing." *Northword*. Ed. Lottie Wengelin. Winter 2005/06. Web. 09 Feb. 2006. <<http://northword.ca/winter-2005-06/creative-writing>>.

---, *Erratic*. Regina SK: Hagios P, 2007. Print.

---, "Fall." *The Antigone Review*. Antigone NS: Issue 143, Autumn 2005. Print.

---, "Geography is not Destiny." *BC Bookworld*. Ed. Alan Twigg. Vol. 21. No. 4. (Winter

- 2007-2008): 21. Print.
- , "Morning Practice" and "On Seeing a Fox With a Dead Gopher in its Mouth."
- Somewhere, a Fire*. Regina SK: Hagios P, 2004. Print.
- , "Phd Dissertation on northern BC women poets." Message to Jacqueline Hoekstra. January 2007--Nov. 2009. E-mail.
- Kern, Robert. "Ecocriticism: What is it Good For?" *The ISLE reader: Ecocriticism, 1993-2003*. Eds. Michael P. Branch and Scott Slovic. Atlanta, GA. U of Georgia P, (2003): 258-281. Print.
- Kim, Eleana. "Language Poetry: Dissident Practices and the Makings of a Movement." Web. 08 August 2009. <<http://home.jps.net/~nada/language1.htm>.>
- King, Thomas. *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*. Toronto, Ont: House of Anansi, 2003. Print.
- King, Ynestra. "Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, and the Nature/Culture Dualism." *Diamond and Orenstein* 106-121. Print.
- Kooman, Ko. "Can Poetry Be Political?" *Poetry International Web*. November 6, 2002. PIW. Web. 30 Sept. 2007. <http://international.poetryinternationalweb.org/piw/cms/cms/cms_module/index.php?obj_id=359&x=1>.
- Kostash, Myna and Duane Burton. *Reading the River: A Traveller's Companion to the North Saskatchewan River*. Regina, Sask: Coteau, 2005. Print.
- Kroeber, Karl. As quoted in Philips, Dana. *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.
- Kroetsch, Robert. *Completed Field Notes* Toronto: Mcllelland and Stewart, 1989. Print.
- Kupfer-Koberwitz, Edgar. Epigraph. Excerpt from Kupfer-Koberwitz's *Dachau Diaries*.

Original pub date: 1956. Translated in: *Radical Vegetarianism: A Dialect of Diet and Ethic*. Mark Mathew Braunstein. Los Angeles Ca: Panjandrum Books, 1981.

Web. 03 Oct. 2008 <http://www.uksociety.org/vegetarian_ethics_home.html>.

Lainsbury, Greg. NLC News Release Oct 05, 2007. NLC. Web. 09 April, 2007.

<<http://www.nlc.bc.ca/public.news.php?NewsActiveList=newsdetails&NewsID=104>>.

---, "Some Poetics of northern BC (esp. Ken Belford)." *It's Still Winter*. Eds. Don Precosky and Barry McKinnon. Volume 7, No. 1: The Ken Belford Issue. May 29th, 2007. UNBC. Web. 24 March 2008. <<http://www.itsstillwinter.com/It%27s%20Still%20Winter/contents.html>>.

---, *Treeline 3*. 2006. Web. 22 March 2008. <<http://www.fsj.nlc.bc.ca/glainsbury/T3/Treeline3.htm>>.

Lamb-Yorski, Monica. "Poet struggles with Poverty and Pain." *The Prince Rupert Daily News*. Wednesday, July 5, (2006): 5. Print.

Lampman, Archibald. *Lyrics of the earth: songs and ballads*. Ed. Duncan Scott. Toronto: Morang, 1900. Print.

Landry, Donna and Gerald MacLean. *Materialist Feminisms*. Boston, MA: Blackwell, 1993. Print.

Langbaum, Robert. "Epiphanic Mode in Wordsworth and Modern Literature." *Moments of Moment. Aspects of the Literary Epiphany*. Ed. Wim Tigges. Atlanta, GA: Rodopi. (1999): 37-60. Print.

"Language poetry." *Oxford English Dictionary*. J. Simpson and E. Weiner, eds. New

- York, NY: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.
- Laurence, Margaret. *The Diviners*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974. Print.
- Lee, Dennis. "Body Music: Notes on Rhythm on Poetry." *Body Music: Essays*. Toronto: Anansi, 1998. Print.
- Leckie, Ross. "Nature Poetry in Canada Since *Survival*." *Northern Poetry Review*. Eds Alex Boyd and Dani Couture. March 31, 2005. NPR. Web. 30 April 2007. <http://northernpoetryreview.com/articles/ross-leckie/nature-poetry.html>.
- Lilburn, Tim, ed. *Poetry and Knowing: Poetry and the Practice of Philosophy*. Kingston, ON: Quarry P, 1994. Print.
- , Preface. *Thinking and Singing: Poetry & the Practice of Philosophy*. Ed. Tim Lilburn. Toronto: Cormorant, (2002): 1-3. Print.
- Long, Mark. "William Carlos Williams, Ecocriticism, and Contemporary American Nature Poetry." *Bryson* 58-76. Print.
- Lorde, Audre. "Poetry is not a Luxury." *Sister Outsider*. Trumansburg, New York: Crossings P, 1984. Print.
- Lousley, Cheryl. "Home on the Prairie? A Feminist and Postcolonial Reading of Sharon Butala, Di Brandt, and Joy Kogawa." *The ISLE Reader: Ecocriticism, 1993-2003*. Eds. Michael P. Branch and Scott Slovic. Athens: U of Georgia P, (2003): 318-43. Print.
- Love, Glen A. "Ecocriticism and Science: Toward Consilience?" *New Literary History*. 30 (1999): 561-76. Print.
- , *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2003. Print.

- , "Re-valuing Nature." Glotfelty and Fromm 225-240. Print.
- "Lyric poetry." *Oxford English Dictionary*. J. Simpson and E. Weiner, eds. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.
- Manes, Christopher. "Nature and Silence." Glotfelty and Fromm 15-29. Print.
- Massey, Doreen. *Space, Place and Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994. Print.
- , "Globalisations as Geometries of Power." *Signs of the Times Seminar*, 30th September 2002. Sign of the Times Collective. Web. 10 April 2006.
<www.signsofthetimes.org.uk/massey.html>.
- Mark, Alison and Deryn Rees-Jones. Introduction. *Contemporary Women's Poetry: Reading/Writing/ Practice*. London, Eng: MacMillan P, 2000. Print.
- Marlatt, Daphne and Nicole Brossard. "Only a Body to Measure Reality By: Writing the In-Between." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 31.2 (1996): 5-17. Print.
- . *Steveston*. 3rd edition. Vancouver: Ronsdale, 2001. Print.
- McDowell, Linda, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 1999. Print.
- McGinnis. Michael Vincent, ed. *Bioregionalism*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- McKay, Don. "Baler Twine". *Studies in Canadian Literature*. Volume 18.1. 1993. New Brunswick. Web. 22 Feb. 2004. <http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/SCL/bin/get.cgi?directory=vol18_1/&filename=McKay.html>.
- McKay, Don. "Baler Twine: Thoughts on Ravens, Home, and Nature Poetry." *Poetry and Knowing: Speculative Essays & Interviews*. Ed. Tim Lilburn. Kingston, Canada: Quarry P, (1995): 17-28. Print.

- , "The Appropriate Gesture, Or Regular Dumb-Ass Guy Looks at Bird." Interview with Ken Babstock. *Bowling* 44-61. Print.
- , *The Muskwa Assemblage*. Chapbook. August 2006. Print.
- , *Night Field*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991. Print.
- , "Otherwise Than Place." *The Eye in the Thicket: Essays at a Natural History*. Ed. Seán Virgo. Saskatoon: Thistledown Press, (2002): 35-50. Print.
- , *Vis-à-Vis: Field Notes on Poetry & Wilderness*. Wolfville: Gaspereau Press, 2001. Print.
- McKinnon, Barry. "Biography". *College of New Caledonia*. Dec. 31st 2005. Prince George, BC: CNC. Web. 27 Nov 2007. <<http://www.cnc.bc.ca/engldept/barry.html>>.
- , "In the Millenium: Prince George (part 1)." *The Capilano Review*. 2/43 (Winter 2004): 111-18. Print.
- , *Pulp Log*. Prince George, BC: Caitlin, 1991. Print.
- McLennan, Rob. Interview with Michael Bryson. *The Danforth Review*. 2000. TDR. Web. 21 July 2008. <http://www.danforthreview.com/features/interviews/mclennan_interview.html>.
- , Review of *The Centre, Poems 1970-2000*. *The Antigonish Review* 141, (2005):141-178. Web. 10 Nov. 2008. <<http://www.antigonishreview.com/bi-141/141-review-rob-mclennan.html>>.
- , Review of *Soft geography*. *Ottawa Xpress*. October 18th, 2007. Poetry Cabaret. Web. 05 Sept. 2008. <<http://www.ottawaxpress.ca/books/books.aspx?iIDArticle=13249>>
- , Interview with Gillian Wigmore. Sept 02,2009. Web. 19 Nov. 2009.

<<http://robmclennan.blogspot.com/2009/09/12-or-20-questions-with-gillian-wigmore.html>>

---, Interview with Meredith Quartermain. *Alterra Poetry Assemblage*. 2004. Web. 01 August 2009. <<http://ca.geocities.com/alterra@rogers.com/inter.htm>>.

Meeker, Joseph W. *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*. New York: Scribner's, 1972. Print.

---, as quoted in Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader* xix.

Merchant, Carolyn. "Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory". Diamond and Orenstein 100-105. Print.

---, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: Harper, 1990. Print.

Metzner, Ralph. *Green Psychology: Transforming our Relationship to the Earth*. Bethel, Maine: Park Street Press, 1999. Print.

Miki, Roy. "Globalization, (Canadian) Culture, and Critical Pedagogy: A Primer." *Home-Work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy, & Canadian Literature*. Ed. Cynthia Sugars. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, (2004): 95-96. Print.

Milne, Heather. "Place, Exile and Naming in Catherine Parr Trail's *The Backwoods of Canada* and Dionne Brand's "In Another Place, Not Here." Web. 27 October 2002. <<http://www.andrewlesk.com/abstracts3.htm>>.

Mowatt, Farley. *Lost in the Barrens*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993. Print.

---, *Never Cry Wolf*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963. Print.

Moya, Paula. Interview with the *Stanford Report*. June 12, 2002: *Reclaiming Identity*. Web. 05 March, 2007. <<http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2002/june12/moya->

[612.html](#)>.

Munk, Barbara. "Riverboats". Precosky 61-65. Print.

Murphy, Patrick. "Ecofeminist Dialogics". Coupe 193-197. Print.

---, Ed. *Literature of Nature: An International Sourcebook*. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998. Print.

Musgrave, Susan. *The Fed Anthology: Brand New Fiction and Poetry from the Federation of BC Writers*, Vancouver, BC: Anvil P, 2003. Print.

---, *You're In Canada Now Motherfucker*. Saskatoon: Thistledown P, 2005. Print.

---, *The Vancouver Sun*. Vancouver, BC: J9. Dec 06, 1997. Print.

Naess, Arne. "Shallow and deep ecology." *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*. Trans. David Rothenberg. New York, NY: Cambridge UP, (1993): 27-40. Print.

"New details emerge about probe of Highway of Tears murders." December 12, 2009.

Web. 12 December 26, 2009. <http://www.highwayoftears.ca/News-Oct-09-Dec-09.html#New_details_emerge_about_probe_of_Highway_of_Tears_murders>.

New, W.H., ed. *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002. Print.

---, *Landsliding: Imagining Space, Prescence and Power in Canadian Writing*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1997. Print.

North Coast Collected. Ed. Dave Speck. Prince George: Caitlin Press, 1992. Print.

North, Dick. *The Mad Trapper of Rat River*. Toronto: General Paperbacks, 1991.

North of 60. CBC. TV Com 16. Web. Oct. 2008. <<http://www.tv.com/north-of-60/show/3551/summary.html>>.

- O'Brien, Susie. "The Garden and the World: Jamaica Kincaid and the Cultural Borders of Ecocriticism." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*. June 2002, Vol. 35 Issue 2, (2002): 167-185. Print.
- , "Nature's Nation, National Nature? Reading Ecocriticism in a Canadian Context." *Canadian Poetry*. Much with Nature: Ecocritical essays on Canadian Writing. No. 42. Spring/Summer (1998): 17-41. Print.
- , "Articulating a World of Difference: Ecocriticism, Postcolonialism, and Globalization." *Canadian Literature*. 170/171 (2001): 140-58. Print.
- Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*. New York: Routledge, 1982. Print.
- Pass, John. *Proceedings of the Reckoning Conference*. September 14-15, 2007: Regional Pub. Vancouver, BC: BC Bookworld, 2007. Print.
- Peebles, Frank. Prince George Citizen, Dec 11, 2006. Print.
- Peepre-Bordessa, Mari. "Hugh MacLennan: Literary Geographer of a Nation." *A Few Acres of Snow*. Eds. Paul Simpson-Housley and Glenn Norcliffe. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992, (1992): 16-27. Print.
- Penn, Briony. *A Year on the Wild Side*. Surrey, BC: Touchwood, 1999. Print.
- Peters, Sheila. "5 poems." *Reflections on Water*. Volume 1, No. 3. June 2000. UNBC. Web. 15 July 2006. <<http://ctl.unbc.ca/row/v1n4/poetry/peters1.html>>.
- , Ed. *Creekstones: Words and Images*. Smithers, BC: Creekstone Press, 2000. Print.
- , "Gillian Wigmore and Joan Conway." Message to Jacqueline Hoekstra. November 6, 2006. E-mail.
- , "The silence of grazing animals." *The Weather from the West*. Paintings by Perry

- Rath. Smithers BC: Creekstone P, 2007. Print.
- Philips, Dana. *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America*. New York NY: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.
- Plant, Judith. "Feminism and the Mastery of Nature." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Philadelphia: New Society, (1989): 41-68. Print.
- , "Searching for Common Ground: Ecofeminism and Bioregionalism". Diamond and Orenstein 155-164. Print.
- , "Searching for Common Ground: Ecofeminism and Bioregionalism". *The New Catalyst*. Lilloet, BC. Winter (1987-1988): 226-229. Print.
- Plotkin, Bill. *Soulcraft: Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche*. New World Library, 2003. Print.
- Plumwood, Val. "Androcentricism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics". Warren 327-354. Print.
- "Pragmatism in Philosophy of Mind." *The Pragmatism Cybrary*. Web. 25 January 2010. <<http://www.pragmatism.org/>>.
- Precosky, Don. Introduction. Precosky xi-xviii. Print.
- , ed. *Four Realities: Poets of Northern BC*. Prince George, BC: Caitlin Press, 1992. Print.
- , "Seven Myths about Canadian Literature". *Studies in Canadian Literature*. Vol. 11. Number 1. 1986. SCL. Web. 24 Jan 2007. <http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/SCL/bin/get.cgi?directory=vol11_1/&filename=Precosky.ht/ml>.
- Pyrz, Heather. "Native Poetry (1960-2000)." *The League of Canadian Poets*. Web. 21 Nov. 2007. <http://www.youngpoets.ca/native_poetry_1960_2000>.

- Quartermain, Meredith. Interview by Rob McLennan. *Alterra Poetry Assemblage*. 2004. Web. 01 August 2009. <<http://ca.geocities.com/alterra@rogers.com/inter.htm>>.
- Quetchenbach, Bernard W. "Primary Concerns: the Development of Current Environmental Identity Poetry." Bryson 245-262. Print.
- Quinby, Lee. "Ecofeminism and the Politics of Resistance." Diamond and Orenstein 122-127. Print.
- Ray, Arthur. "Recent Trends in Northern Historiography." *Essays on Canadian Writing*. Representing North. Issue 59. Fall, (1996): 211-228. Print.
- Ramsay, Heather. "Books by Northern Writers make Literary Mark: On the Map." *Northword*. Smithers BC: Winter 2004/2005. Web. 10 June 2007. <<http://northword.ca/winter-2004-05/books-put-northern-writers-on-the-literary-map>>.
- Regan, Tom. "Environmental Ethics and the Ambiguity of the Native American's Relationship with Nature." *All that Dwell Therein: Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics*. Berkley: U of California P, (1982): 206-39. Print.
- Relke, Diana M. A. *Greenwor(l)Ds: Ecocritical Readings of Canadian Women's Poetry*. Calgary: U of Calgary P, 1999. Print.
- Roberts, Sir Charles G.D. "Tantramar Revisited". *Selected Poems of Sir Charles G. D. Roberts*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1936. Print.
- Robinson, Eden. *Monkey Beach*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001. Print.
- Ronaasen, Sheree. "Re: your new baby chicks." Message to Jacqueline Hoekstra. Jan. 4th 2010. E-mail.
- Rosendale, Steven. Introduction: Extending Ecocriticism. *The Greening of Literary*

- Scholarship: Literature, Theory, and the Environment*. Ed. Rosendale. Iowa City: U Iowa P, (2002): xv-xxix. Print.
- Roszak, Theodore. *The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 2002. Print.
- Roy, Arundhati and David Barsamian. *The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile: Conversations with Arundhati Roy*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004. Print.
- Rueckert, William. "Literature and Ecology." Glotfelty and Fromm 105-123. Print.
- Ruth, Sheila. *Issues in Feminism: An Introduction to Women's Studies*. 5th Edition. Mountainview, CA: Mayfield P, 2000. Print.
- Said, Edward.
- Sarris, Gregory. *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993. Print.
- Sawchuck, Wayne. Personal interview. 13 Aug. 2008.
- Scholtmeijer, Marian and Rebecca Raglon. "Canadian Environmental Writing." *Literature of Nature: an International Sourcebook*. Murphy 130-139. Print.
- . "The Listening World: First Nations Women Writers and the Environment". *This Elusive Land: Women and the Canadian Environment*. Eds. Melody Hensing, Rebecca Raglon, and Catriona Sandilands. Vancouver: UBC P, (2005): 316-334. Print.
- , "The Power of Otherness." Adams and Donovan 231-262. Print.
- Scigaj, Leonard. *Sustainable Poetry: Four Ecopoets*. Lexington KY: UP Kentucky, 1999. Print.

- Scott, Joan W. "The Evidence of Experience." *Feminist Approaches to Theory and Methodology: An Interdisciplinary Reader*. Eds. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, Gilmartin, and Lydenberg. New York: Oxford UP, (1999): 79-99. Print.
- Serres, Michel. *The Natural Contract*. Translators William Paulson and Elizabeth McArthur. Michigan: U of Michigan P, 1995. Print.
- Shiva, Vandana and Maria Mies. Introduction. *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books, (1993): 1-21. Print.
- , *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*. London: Zed Books, 1989.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories." *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*. New York: Touchstone, (1996): 25-47. Print.
- , "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination." Glotfelty and Fromm 264-275. Print.
- Simons, John. Introduction by Simons. *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation*. New York: Palgrave, (2002): 1-12. Print.
- Sinclair, Sue. "In Praise of Coldness, *Somewhere, a Fire*, Donna Kane." *The Fiddlehead*. Fredericton: U of New Brunswick. No. 222, Winter 2004. (2004): 118-120. Print.
- Sipos, George. Review of "Surrender." *Arc*. Jan. 2005. Web. 30 July 2006.
<http://www.arcpoetry.ca/howpoemswork/features/2005_01_sipos.php>.
- Slovik, Scott. "Ecocriticism: Storytelling, Values, Communication, Contact." *ASLE Academic Conference 1994*. Web. 01 Nov. 2005.
<http://www.asle.umn.edu/conf/other_conf/wla/1994/slovic.html>.
- , "Nature writing and Environmental Psychology: The Interiority of Outdoor

- Experience.” Glotfelty and Fromm 351-370. Print.
- Smith, Andy. “Ecofeminism through an Anticolonial Framework.” Warren 21-37. Print.
- Snyder, Gary. “All in the Family.” *Axe Handles: Poems*. Reprint ed. Washington: Shoemaker, 1983. Print.
- Snyder, Gary. “The Place, the Region, & the Commons.” *The Practice of the Wild: Essays*. Washington: Shoemaker, 2003. Print.
- , “Poetry and the Magic of Animals.” *Carnivore*. Seattle, WA. 8.1 (1985): 24-29. Print.
- Soper, Kate. *What Is Nature?: Culture, Politics and the Non-Human*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell P, 1995. Print.
- Spivak, GC. Trans. Preface. J. Derrida *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore, MD. Hopkins; Corr edition. (1998): ix-lxxxix. Print.
- Spretnek, Charlene. “Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering.” Diamond and Orenstein 3-14. Print.
- Stanley, George. “Northern Poets.” *The Capilano Review*. 2/43 (Winter 2004): 57-59. Print.
- , “Gentle Northern Summer.” *Gentle Northern Summer*. New Star Books, 1995. Print.
- Starhawk. “Power, Authority, and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-based Spirituality.” Diamond and Orenstein 73-86. Print.
- Stenson, Fred. “Creative Writing.” *Northword*. Ed. Lottie Wengelin. Winter 2005/06. Web. 09 Feb. 2006. <<http://northword.ca/winter-2005-06/creative-writing>>.
- Stevens, Wallace. “Anecdote of the Jar.” *Harmonium*. New York: Faber & Faber, 1920. Print.
- Strickland, Paul. “A National Award for a gifted local bard: Gillian Wigmore.” *The*

- Prince George Citizen*. Saturday, August 2nd, 2008 (2008): 4. Print.
- Tallmadge, John and Henry Harrington, eds. *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism*. Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 2000. Print.
- Thesen, Sharon. *Excerpts from a conversation between Nancy Holmes and Sharon Thesen*. Interview with Nancy Holmes. Eds. Stephen Brockwell and rob McLennan, Poetics.ca. # 5, Summer 2005. July to September, 2004. Poetics.ca. Web. 02 Nov. 2005. <www.poetics.ca/poetics05/05thesen.html>.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walking*. Kisa MT: Kessinger P, (2004): 1-48. Print.
- Trall, Catharine Parr. *The Backwoods of Canada: Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer*. 1836. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989. Print.
- Transken, Si Chava. "Dancing with diverse diversities: Creativity and rural social work professing in small/ rural communities." *Rural Social Work Journal*, vol. 9, December (2004): 118-128. Print.
- , "Damned." *Don't Get Even. Get Odd*. Prince George: Trans/formative Press, 2006. Print.
- , Personal Interview. 28 July, 2007.
- , "Northern Poets." Message to Jacqueline Hoekstra. 16 Aug. 2006. E-mail.
- , Introduction. *This Ain't Your Patriarch's Poetry Book*. Ed. Transken. Prince George, BC: Transformative Collective Press, (2003): xiii-xx. Print.
- , "Generica." *The Capilano Review Literary Journal*. Series 2, No. 43. Summer (2004): 93-94. Print.
- , "Meaning Making and Methodological Explorations: Bringing Knowledge From British Columbia's First Nations Women Poets into social Work Courses." *Cultural*

- Studies: Critical Methodologies*, Vol. 5 (1). Chicago: Sage publications, February (2005): 3-29. Print.
- , "Prince George Writing: Creating Community Differently." *The Writing Way Up North: A Symposium on Northern BC Writing*. Prince George, BC: UNBC, March 30th 2005. Address.
- , "Stupor." *Reflections On Water*. Volume 2, No. 2. March 2001. UNBC. Web. 27 Feb. 2006. <<http://row.unbc.ca/v2n2/poetry/transken5.html>>.
- , "Walking through four early-evenings" & "What this lake's beavers." Passage: *UNBC's Summer Poetry Journal* 2001. Ed. J. Hoekstra. Prince George: UNBC P, 2001. Print.
- Tregebov, Rhea. Review (as cited in Alanna Bondar). "Rev. of Night Field". *Quill & Quire* 57.4 (April 1991): 33-4.
- Twigg, Alan. "Reckoning Conference." Message to Jacqueline Hoekstra. 19 Sept. 2007. Email.
- . "Sheila Peters". *BC Bookworld*. Ed. Alan Twigg. BCBW 2007. Web. 25 March, 2008. <http://www.abcbookworld.com/?state=view_author&author_id=1831>.
- Vance, Linda. "Beyond Just –So Stories: Narrative, Animals, and Ethics." Adams and Donovan 163-191. Print.
- Van Tighem, Kevin. "Recognition." Boyd 250-262. Print.
- Waller, L. Elizabeth. "Writing the Real: Virginia Woolf and an Ecology of Language." *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*. Ed Glynis Carr. Cranbury, NJ: Associated UP, (2000): 137-157. Print.

- Warren, Karen J., ed. *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. Print.
- , Introduction. Warren xi-xvi. Print.
- , "Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective." Warren 3-20. Print.
- Weir, Lorraine. "Daphne Marlatt's 'Ecology of Language.'" *Line 13* (1989): 58-63. Print.
- Welch, Bronwen. "Monitor: Review of Donna Kane's *Somewhere, a Fire*." *Times Colonist*. D10. Sunday, January 27, 2008. Print.
- Whetter, Darryl. "Listening with Courtesy: a Conversation with Tim Lilburn." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 22.1 (1997): 135-44.
- White, Howard. *Proceedings of the Reckoning Conference*. September 14-15, 2007: Regional Publishing. Vancouver, BC: BC Bookworld, 2007. Address.
- White, Lynn Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." Glotfelty and Fromm 3-14. Print.
- Wigmore, Gillian. "beach fire." *Home when it moves you*. Creekstone P, Smithers, BC: 2005. Print.
- , "Creative Writing." *Northword*. Ed. Lottie Wengelin. Winter 2005/06. Web. 09 Feb. 2006. <<http://northword.ca/winter-2005-06/creative-writing>>.
- , "My dissertation and a few questions." Message to Jacqueline Hoekstra. March 12th - 20th 2008. E-mail.
- , Interview. "All Things said and Done." Marita Dachsel. Web. 29 Oct. 2009. <<http://maritadachsel.blogspot.com/2009/04/interview-gillian-wigmore.html>>
- , "Nameless." *Soft geography*. Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin P, 2007. Print.

---, "Winter" and "Year One." *Contemporary Verse 2: The Canadian Journal of Poetry and Critical Writing*. Ed. Clarise Foster. Vol. 28, issue no. 3. Winnipeg, Man: Winter (2006): 76. Print.

---, "untitled" and "stellako." Dec. 2006. Fallback poems. Web. 31 January 2007.

<<http://fallbackpoems.blogspot.com/>>.

William, Carlos William. "A Sort of Song." *Paterson*. New York, NY: New Direction, 1963. Print.

Yardley, M.J. "The Maple Leaf as Maple Leaf, Facing the Failure of the Search for emblems in Canadian Literature." *Studies in Canadian Literature*. 12.2 1987. SCL. Web. 12 July 2007. <http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/SCL/bin/get.cgi?directory=vol12_2/&filename=Yardley.html>.

Yee, Jessica. "Open Thread: Stephen Harper and Colonialism in Canada." Sept 28th, 2009. Web. 09 Oct. 2009. <<http://www.racialicious.com/2009/09/28/open-thread-stephen-harper-and-colonialism-in-canada/>>.

Zabinski, Catherine. "Scientific Ecology and Ecological Feminism: The Potential for Dialogue." Warren 314-324. Print.

Zimmerman, Michael. "Introduction to Deep ecology." Global Climate Change Social and Personal Responses. *In Context: A Quarterly of Humane Sustainable Culture*. Issue # 22. Summer (1989): 24. Print.

Zwicky, Jan. *Lyric Philosophy*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992. Print.

---, *Wisdom & Metaphor*. Kentville, NS: Gaspereau, 2003. Print.