Lyric Geography: Geopoetics, Practice and Place

by

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BFA, University of Victoria, 1998

MFA, University of Victoria, 2005

MA, University of Victoria, 2013

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Geography

We acknowledge and respect the lək^{w}əŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

Recent work in the geohumanities has renewed a call for the inclusion of creative work within the discipline of geography. This dissertation works both creatively and critically to answer that call, and to contribute to the geohumanities generally and the subfield of geopoetics particularly. In the theoretical portion of this work, I draw from and dialogue with creative geographies, emotional geographies, nonrepresentational theory, and post-human geographies, arguing that geopoetics is both theory and practice-based and focuses on how to apprehend the world, how to acknowledge and practice the act of perceiving, and the relationship that grows through the act of perceiving and being perceived. This attendance is an ethical act; it helps to enrich understandings of place and of human relationships to the world. I use this understanding of geopoetics to rethink relationships to place through the embrace of poetic technique, an ethics of care, and an acceptance of situated, autobiographical emotion in practice. I use the work of three philosopher-poets (McKay, Zwicky, Lilburn) to argue that geopoetics is a relational ontology that helps contribute culturally to embodied understandings of ethics, landscape, and environment through its practice of attendance and perception. Separately, all three writers contribute variously to conceptualizations of wilderness, home and place; together, I propose that their work serves to further define geopoetics through the manner by which one attends to the world. I also specifically use Zwicky's work on lyric to intervene in non-representational theory, clarifying ideas on a body-in-the-world. Attendance, for me, involves emotional, sensory, and philosophical engagement but is focused on the world, not on the perceiver. The creative portion of this dissertation puts the theoretical work into practice, adding to understandings of what geopoetics might do. This creative work is an act of attendance, which has as its root a geography of love and an emphasis on *how* to perceive. Its inclusion further validates creative practice and the inclusion of creative professionals within the discipline of geography.

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Epigraphs

"Practicing geopoetics is neither window dressing nor apolitical." (Magrane 2017, 19)

"To love a geopoetic proposal is to embrace the idea that every poem, written or read, is an opportunity to reorder or refresh the world. This is a radical proposition, an ethical one." (De Leeuw & Magrane, 2019, 146)

"I am not interested in making poetry useful, of course, because part of poetry's energy comes from imagining itself to be useless." (Lilburn 2017, 107)

"Attentiveness is the natural prayer of the soul." (Malebranche in Felstiner 2001, 164)

Acknowledgements

I am indebted and grateful to so many people who helped this project along. To my early supervisor, Simon Springer, for introducing me to human geography before I crossed from the humanities to the social sciences, and for then encouraging me, with enthusiasm and kindness, through early thoughts and attempts. To my later supervisor (after Simon moved continents), Reuben Rose-Redwood; I am grateful for his optimistic and stalwart support. I am grateful to my committee members, Sarah de Leeuw and Cameron Owens, as well as to my external examiner, Jeanette Lynes, for their work and support. Thanks to Teresa Dawson for lay of the land conversations, to Kinga Menu for her love.

This work could not have been completed without financial assistance from the Department of Geography, the University of Victoria, UVic's REACH Awards, the Access Copyright Foundation, the McLoughlin House, and the Canada Council for the Arts. I am grateful to my students, who make this journey infinitely more interesting and hopeful. Thanks also to the publishers and editors of much of the work in this project: *Canadian Literature*, the Comox Valley Art Gallery, *Dialogues in Human Geography*, *Focus Magazine, GeoHumanities*, Leaf Press, Nightwood Editions, *El Ojo del Lago*, and Routledge.

I started looking to the work of Don McKay, Tim Lilburn, and Jan Zwicky many years ago at St. Peter's College in Muenster, Saskatchewan. I am indebted to them for conversations, questions, and continued friendship. As well, gratitude to the monks at St. Pete's and their enormous potato cellars.

I am full of gratitude for my family, especially my father, Dr. Loren Acker, for goading me onward, to Sandra Acker and Margaret Acker for their love and support, and to my sisters, nieces and nephews. Thanks to Wyatt Rhys Maddox for joining me.

More gratitude to Lacey Decker Hawthorne, Keagan Hawthorne, Erica Gies, Peter Fairley, Renee Poisson, Lisa Jean Helps, Maximino Chavarria Mendoza, Jean Campos, Shelley Leedahl, Manuel Campirano, Emrys Miller, Sheila Taylor, Adam Hill, Corey Levine, Mike Bond, Emily Nilsen, Mike Large, Maral Sotoudehnia, Jeff Weightman, Ken Josephson, Cam Owens, Tom Benjamin, and Lindsay Chase for conversations, encouragement, walks, canoe paddles, art, work sessions, check-ins, and perfectly-timed parachutings-in of love. I send gratitude to others for their part in this journey: Drew Mildon, Jase Rollins, and Kris Elder.

For the miracle of their hearts and minds, I am so grateful to Bren Simmers and Sophie Wood, and to Christian Fink-Jensen, Sam Fink-Jensen and Kieran Fink-Jensen, cobbled family, for their patience and love.

I live and work as an uninvited guest on W̲SÁNEĆ and Songhees Territories, and for that privilege, in such a truly extraordinary part of the world, I am so grateful. I also lived and worked on lands in Jalisco, Mexico; to those I love who live there, my gratitude for providing sustenance of every kind.

Preface

This work is a contribution to the geohumanities generally and the subfield of geopoetics in particular. It draws from and attempts to dialogue with creative geographies, emotional geographies, nonrepresentational theory, and post-human geographies.

My background as a professional artist profoundly informs this dissertation's scope and direction. As a West Coast writer, I have focused for the last twenty years on attending to the landscapes around me; it is a preoccupation largely due to my history. I became a writer far from Canada's supposed cultural centre of Toronto. I was raised on a sailboat, with extensive encounters with the natural world and a longstanding need to understand the beings around me. I was taught how to row before how to ride a bike; silence was the most important part of each stroke, and with silence came the ability to approach without disturbing an animal, to watch the world, to apprehend more.

In my career as a writer, honing my ability to perceive and apprehend the world became central in my work. Perceiving and apprehending are major themes in my first two books of poetry. Though I began by learning about the world through work in wilderness locations, this preoccupation with attendance and perception has carried over to more recent work in developed landscapes, cities, and with human stories as well as other species' stories. As a writer, I occupy an in-between place. I am a settler, a diaspora Jew; I have lived in Saanich (W̱SÁNEĆ), British Columbia my whole life. I am not Indigenous to this place, but I have a profound attachment to it. My practice of geopoetics (in my creative work) is two-fold. One trajectory tracks my attention to material place. The work in this dissertation ranges in its locations, from Eastern Europe, where my ancestors are from, to California, where they arrived, to Vancouver Island, where they settled, to Mexico, where I write. But the underlying bedrock of slow, perceptual attendance was learned on the West Coast of Canada. This access to wild landscapes has cultivated a dedication to environmental and social issues, including ecosystem restoration, First Nations traditional landscapes, botany, environmental studies, and the ways in which humans participate in the species-rich world around them.

My professional history as a writer stands in contrast to dominant literary trends in Canada, where a distinct trend toward urban themes, masculine (anti)musicality, experimental

forms and techniques, and an Anglo-Saxon diction is used as a stand against the earlier understanding of Canadian literature as a voice in an endless wilderness, itself a masculinist construct of man against nature (see Atwood 2004; Frye 1995) and urban against nature poetry (see Solway 2003; Wells 2004). Contemporary critics such as Starnino, Lista, Wells and Bōk have faulted nature poets for following a well-worn path of overused tropes centring around prairie fields and pine-strewn cliffs. A centrist tendency in Canadian Literature leaves many western writers (such as Tim Bowling, Fred Wah, Al Rempel) out in the cold, so to speak, and many find their voices marginalized or ignored. Thus I see a geopoetics situated in the work of West Coast writers as a political act, which serves to re-legitimize the philosophy and arguments behind eco-poetry and poetics in this country. This dissertation thus thinks and attends globally, but argues locally. In doing so, I have chosen to look to writers who share my ecological concerns and whose work focuses on landscapes I also hold dear. They are, or have been, locally engaged in many of the same ecosystems as have I on BC's southwest coast (Zwicky on Quadra Island; Lilburn in Saanich; McKay for a significant period in Juan de Fuca). In the same way, I appreciate scholars such as Weber (2013) for citing primarily European writers when he himself is based in Europe, so I appreciate Bachelard (1969) for bringing Baudelaire, and Simpson (2014) for bringing Anishinaabe understandings. A writer is necessarily situated. It is the situatedness of each that makes, collectively, for a diversity of voices.

The second trajectory for my work has been a focus on affect and emotion, specifically through attempts to explore hard feelings—anxiety, fear, shame, anger, depression—and their manifestation through experiences of material place. Specifically, I focus on hard feelings as they relate to humans' tenuous but stubborn attachment to the world. As a poet, my work begins with a recognition of coming close to the edge of something. Usually this something is a feeling, an idea or a person. A poem, for me, is the recording of the frustration and joy that come from approaching that edge. Specifically, I look at hard feelings through my own experiences, and I examine both the real and imagined conversations my poems have with myself, as well as with the human and more-than-human world.

Creative geographies, and particularly geopoetics, provides a disciplinary location in which I can use creative practice to engage with issues of place and place-making, with perceptions and conceptualizations of landscape and with affect and emotion. This work also has the potential to provide interesting and timely interventions and dialogues with current work in non-representational theory (NRT).

In situating this work, it will also help to highlight a trouble with positionality which I continue to mull over, and about which I have not, despite this dissertation, come to any solid conclusions. I have great difficulties—having come to academia in the 1990s during the height of the misappropriation anxiety that marked much of the social sciences and humanities—justifying my entry into a different culture in order to study an aspect of that culture and report back. A key question that has consistently dogged my research is voiced well by Stuart Aitken (2010, 3): "Through a variety of qualitative methods, is it sufficient to simply rework other people's experiences through my experiences and my writing? In this, all I offer is my perspective on being in their worlds. What violence do I permeate with this perspective?" This, the crisis of representation, and the damage that representation can do, has long been a subject of inquiry (see Clifford & Marcus 1986; Livingstone 1998; Rose 1993; Nash 1996). The possibility of violence against another group, culture or being – a white woman researching from within another culture's landscape—has prevented my pairing my love of travel with my love of scholarship. It has made me feel squeamish and uncomfortable at the idea of reporting back from the Global South, even if that work is being used for good. The possibility of misappropriation has always seemed too high. As a writer, the Creative Writing MFA dictum "write what you know" has been drilled deep into me. But I also concur with many writers who believe writing is an act of the imagination, a creativity that eschews boundaries (Kunzru et al. 2016). Well known scandals in the Canadian literary community (such as Joseph Boyden's uncertain lineage as a First Nations writer, or Robert Bringhurst's unauthorized retelling of Haida Myths found on wax cylinders in archives of the Smithsonian) have kept sharp my sense that one must proceed with humility. But "to suggest that a writer cannot depict characters [or lives] unlike themselves is patently absurd" (Forna in Kunzru et al. 2016).

Geopoetics offers a way to mitigate this discomfort but I acknowledge my task as a writer in a few ways. Firstly, I centre this dissertation in part on the regional knowledge I have obtained within particular landscapes; I stay within the stories of place with which I am familiar, that are my home. Secondly, by using the work of writers that address landscapes particular to them but which chime with my particular understanding of wilderness poetics, I can do geographical work that reflects on individual understandings of place, bringing to Geography key voices outside of the discipline who have also written about conceptions of place, ideas of home, and understandings of the colonial landscape. Their poetic and philosophical work is in *their* words; representation, in this case, offers an opening for authentic accounting. Rebecca Belmore asserts,

"I am the artist amongst my people. Every society has its artists, and we have the responsibility to speak about how we are collectively in this moment in time" (in Simpson 2018, np). Lilburn's understandings of his settler position in Saskatchewan, or Zwicky's farming background in Alberta, follow a similar trajectory of exploring their particular place. Every poet has their own project, which they work through using their writings, and which is informed by their history, the teachings they learned, and their own positionality. Using the work of artists in a culture allows primacy of a culture's own language, its own way of choosing what to say and how to say it. In Belmore's case, this includes a "refusal to centre whiteness in her own work," a refusal to apologize or compromise her voice, and a retort to the belief that "as an Indigenous woman, people don't think I know what I'm doing" (in Simpson 2018, np). In McKay's (2004) work, this involves a refusal to name without acknowledgement of flat ontology: his varied thrush is instead Varied Thrush.

Nonetheless, the question of representation remains pertinent when using language, especially because the fourth chapter in this dissertation, a series of poems, in part recounts my experience, both emotional and place-based, in a culture not my own (Mexico). I acknowledge my positionality there is as a white female foreigner, with considerable privilege compared to the local population. Questions surface about the role that creative work plays when done in a subaltern culture. How does emotion contribute to understanding? Can creative work provide an alternative to the well-discussed connection between geography and colonialism that perpetuates narratives of domination and exploitation (see Aitken 2010; Cope 2010; Haraway 1988; Hunt 2014; Myers 2010; Said 1978)? What does it mean when a creative work uses personal experiences with others as its subject? If I include details from people's lives—their hardships, their family relationships, their hopes and emotions—but they appear in poems in a mixed-up, unplanned, aesthetically motivated manner, am I perpetuating the spike-suit metaphor of the academic that Aitken (2010) uses in identifying his positionality as a researcher? There are no easy answers to these questions. Acknowledging the pitfalls that arise with the politics of difference, Aitken argues that "out of connectedness arises…a cultural distinctiveness…that is simply not reducible to a politics of representation because it is also about the emotions that encounters with difference and diversity entail" (Aitken 2010, 3). That is, qualitative work that is situated in affect and emotion, and even autobiographical in method, has the potential to do political work through its attention not to the fixing, domesticating, spatial aspects of representation, but to the "emotive form of responsibility and care" that Aitken (2010, 22) sees in

qualitative research and that I see in creative process. Thus, my Mexico-based creative works take from Aitken's understanding that "methods that break my heart provide an appropriate way of knowing" (22), cultivating a space of aperture and freedom, through "the possibility of surprise and dislocation" that creates openings for the political (24). I view my position as both autobiographical/auto-ethnographical, but also paradoxically as an attendance, focused on the world, not the perceiver. My creative work uses my own affects and emotions as entry point to thinking about and engaging with the world. The auto-ethnography/autobiography is an examination, a mapping of my interior "I" rather than "the perpetuation of the falsely constructed omniscient 'eye'" (Moss 2001, 9); the attendance, triggered by that mapping, allows the "I" to retreat, bringing the world into focus. Finally, I situate myself as a Canadian who must leave in order to survive. I go to Mexico in part because renting my home out is the only way of paying my expenses as a student; I am low income and cannot afford to live on Vancouver Island year-round. Summer rent supplements my income. The tiers of privilege also exist in developed countries.

My poetry, in this dissertation, is not included as a way of "exploring 'knowing', 'representing', and 'intervening' in place" (Hawkins 2015, 3). It is research based in doing as much as in producing. In my work as a poet, I would deem 'research' as reading, walking, thinking, waiting, experiencing, even "lollygagging" (McKay 2001). Rigour, in this case, also stems from professional standing as a published writer, skills and techniques attained through study of poetry and poetics, and participation in Canadian letters (all of which I have). The poems are the product of creative process (and thus imaginative) and practice, a personal and emotional journey. In this, my creative work serves as prime example of the generative relationship that art has with geohumanities; the creative pieces do work, they are a coming to know, they are a form of *doing* geo-graphy.

Introduction

A lyric moment in place

I suspect the lyric moment that ultimately triggered this dissertation took place over 30 years ago, in the cockpit of a 27-foot sailboat, the *Starbright,* under the shadow of Mount Tzouhalem, in the Cowichan Valley, on Vancouver Island. It is a moment that has surfaced in my own poems and prose, and which I have told at dinner parties as a story, and which strikes me even now as the quiet but firm beginnings of my life as a writer for whom attention and perception is a primary form of epistemology.

My father and I spent a great deal of time under a blue tarp that we arced over the boom to encase the cockpit of *Starbright* in shade, and then double shade after the sun fell behind Tzouhalem in the afternoon. This was in Genoa Bay, a protected harbour used as a marina for summer sailors, generations of live-aboard boaters, and as a holding spot for log booms back in the days of giant trees and powerful tugboats that pulled the booms up and down the coast of Vancouver Island.

We played music there, he on harmonica and I on Casio keyboard. We ate countless boxes of Sun Maid raisins, vacuum-packed Salisbury steaks, Frosted Flakes and chocolate milk. We read charts and tied things up or off or down, and sealed lines by burning and melting the bitter end into a round black dome. We watched herons and kingfishers and eagles and other raptors in the green shadows that the mountain made on the sea below it. A mountain of fir, cedar, big leaf maple and arbutus. The branch of a tree wavering as a bird alighted and then left. The deep green depths of the water below glinting silver when a bullhead or perch or rockfish or eel briefly surfaced. We were sailors, and much of what I learned about the natural world as a child came from time at Genoa and other bays.

This moment sticks in my mind like something outside time. Or as when time, enhanced by lyric's intensity, slows to reveal the fleeting ephemerality inherent in each day. Storms are infrequent on the south coast of Vancouver Island in summer. The days are dry and long and the grasses at the water's edge go golden by June. A rainstorm is a rare event. This one was rarer still, as it was like watching one's future approach from afar. The bay's head bends northwest, the direction from which rain approaches. And so, far before it hit us, we could see the storm, then

hear it, before we felt drops on the tarp and dodger hoods close over our heads. In the perhaps half an hour it took for the storm to move from inlet head to the dock where we were moored, I have a series of jumbled memories, mostly perceptual and sensual.

My father's foot scribing the air, moving it unconsciously in the pattern of a square. The feel of a raisin in my mouth, my tongue dissecting the skin and crystals of sugar, the pulp. The deepening colours of the forest, as the far reaches of the inlet turned from green to dark blue, the Payne's grey of the cloud bringing to stark relief the leaves of arbutus on shore near us, then the watery grey as the bay's head was eclipsed by cloud. The cooling air and occasional puff of wind that lifted the tarp and dropped it with a slap against the boom. The squeak of fender, slip and skitter as a fish surfaced and dove. The quieting birds on shore. The green depths of water smooth in calm air, ruffled and diamonding in puffs of wind. Fir trees up on the ridge bending before we could hear the wind in their branches. A slow line of disturbed water, gone from jade to pewter with reflected clouds, moving towards us. Smell of moisture, damp, ozone, petrichor. A drop in temperature. The hiss, from far away as though a kind of tinnitus, the line of rain behind the line of wind. The first drops, and steam rising from the docks and the log booms. The sink into the silence that a rain can bring. Rain an unsilent nothing that swept away self and memory and poured itself over us like a choir. I write this as though there were a linear progression from fair to storm, and in actual history, there was. But the experience in memory is more pointillist, as if unordered, polyphonic. My attention switches from one part of the experience to another. The resonance of all parts of the experience sing together, forming my understanding of the event.

In Zwicky's (2003, 2011) understanding of a resonant moment like this, where many things are combining simultaneously to form a cohesive understanding, the structure that primarily anchors this experience is not linear time, but space. Lyric understanding—that resonant, polyphonic experience—is understanding briefly set free from time's gravity, it is spatial in orientation, in that it clusters, sings all at once or cannot be ordered sequentially as a story or an argument; but it also moves beyond spatiality in that it works within Massey's (2005) understanding of space as throwntogetherness, made of movement, surprise and freedom.

It is this moment of clustering, of being set temporarily free from time, of being both anchored by spatial understandings and released by the surprising connections that come from affect and playfulness, that has informed my life as a poet, and that is now propelling my work as a geographer, especially in light of today's looming environmental disasters and in light of our

absolute need to decolonize our thinking—two subjects which demand emotional response and thinking-through. For many poets writing today, as environmental and social problems become more and more pronounced, the emotions connected to these subjects are not easy—they include sadness, anxiety, fear, anger, despair (see Aitken 2010 or Kearns and Collins 2012 for work on emotions; Tschakert et al. 2017 for feelings of loss and Cunsolo and Ellis 2018 for grief in the face of climate change). This dissertation brings these difficult emotions into geography to urge that this particular work become a key part of the geohumanities and specifically geopoetics. For to feel these negative emotions is to refuse to "fail doubly, to fail again in the midst of the failure" (Sinclair 2017, para. 19) that is environmental disaster on a scale we have never seen, caused by climate change, which is in itself related, though not reducible to, colonialism and our dissociated relationship with the land. To fail doubly would be to turn away from these feelings, to dissociate, to refuse to participate in an attempt to decolonize one's own self through self-examination of one's position as a settler in North America, one's personal responsibility, and the sifting through of the difficult process of finding oneself not autochthonous.

This dissertation advocates for a geopoetics of open attendance to the world that, for me, allows moments like those I experienced so long ago in Genoa Bay to congregate, to be examined, while also acknowledging the unprecedented position we find ourselves in on earth. Attendance and contemplative perception, and the actions that specifically surround their practice within poetry (which I will elaborate on using both critical and creative methods), can contribute to larger themes in geography – with how to live in the world. This work serves to open a wider 'space' for geohumanities encounters with all manner of poets, poems, poetry and poetics (both for the conceptual insights and for the depth of felt 'worlding' that they may afford). This work also acknowledges, as Lilburn writes (2016, 10), that "the epistemology implicit in the lyric poem…will help build an inner stance, a dispositional architecture, which may give us a better chance of holding truthfully and justly the weight of the new ontological and political sadness stealing upon us." This stance is a political stance; for geopoetics to contribute fully to geography, its politics must recognize not just individualized bodies, but the urgent call faced by all of humanity in the face of environmental catastrophe the likes of which our species has never before experienced.

Geopoetics as attendance

I argue that the practice of geopoetics centres around an act of attendance. It is primarily a practice-based intervention in geography that focuses on how to apprehend the world through

the senses, and how to acknowledge and practice the act of perceiving, and the relationship that grows through the act of perceiving and being perceived. This act of attendance involves emotional, sensory, and philosophical engagement. It is a creative act that seeks to ethically and courteously engage with the world, and it is what I strive for in my creative practice.

I draw on the prose works of contemporary eco-poets who have also completed works of poetics (the philosophy and/or writing on the creation of poetry), focusing on the work of three key Canadian philosopher-poets (Don McKay, Jan Zwicky and Tim Lilburn) currently working at the intersection of eco-poetry, philosophy and (perhaps unknowingly) geography. I argue that geopoetics as a form of attendance is an epistemology that helps contribute culturally to "embodied and relational ethics of landscape and environment" (Hawkins 2011, 67) through the manner and philosophy of its practice. Geopoetics as a form of attendance can help enrich understandings of place, wilderness, lyric, and home in geography. It can also contribute to emotional geographies, non-representational geographies and post-humanist geographies. Through further defining geopoetics as the manner in which one performs or practices it, as well as the philosophies one explores from within it, I argue that geographers are better equipped to face coming environmental challenges, and the inevitable sorrows and anxieties they will bring.

This dissertation thus answers a call by geographers for a different kind of geography (Crang, 2010; Meinig, 1983; Orley, 2009). The call is for the inclusion of creative geography and specifically geopoetics in the discipline of geography – it is a call that takes into account voices from the creative arts, and one that recognizes subjective, qualitative understandings of the world (de Leeuw, 2003; 2019; Dear, 2015; Hawkins, 2011; Lorimer, 2008b; Magrane, 2015; Meinig, 1983). I will provide one way of answering that call through the first (that I know of) full manuscript of poetry included as part of a geography doctoral dissertation (see Boyd 2017 for a smaller selection of poems included as part of her critical dissertation on poetry as research method). Through inclusion of this creative work, I answer the request from geographers for substantive intervention from artists who have a vested interest in geographical thought by demonstrating what might be offered by the creative humanities that could enrich the discipline of geography.

Finally, I will show how geopoetics can contribute to and further knowledge primarily in nonrepresentational theory, as well as emotional and post-human geographies, and how these in turn can provide new knowledge for geopoetics. Emotional geographies have shown the benefits of exploring states of feeling and qualitative knowledge (see the work of Anderson & Smith

2001; Bondi 2005; Haraway 1988; Lawson 2009; Rose 2004; Sedgwick 2002) as well as the value of the personal, the autobiographical, and the situated in the engagements of a body with the world (Dyck 2005; Garrett & Hawkins 2013; Grosz, 2005; Haraway 1988; Lawson 2009; Plumwood 2002; Rose, 1997). Nonrepresentational theory (NRT) urges practitioners of traditional scholarship to "imbue" their methods with creativity, to place more emphasis on partial knowledges, the unsaid, the sensuous, the affective (Boyd 2017; Latham 2003; Thrift & Dewsbury 2000; Vannini n.d.). Posthuman geographers pay close attention to the vibrancy of our encounters with non-human actors in the world (Bennett 2010; Davies & Dwyer 2007; Gergan 2015; Kitson & McHugh 2014; Whatmore 2006; Wright et al. 2012), In this, the requests of NRT and post-human scholars and practitioners are not so different. But, more importantly, many value that which creative writers are *already achieving* in their own work. That is, an art form that uses situated knowledge, bases itself in the particular, the experiential, the material and the place-connected. Creative practice and products can serve as a point of articulation for those who view nonrepresentational geography as an inadequate depiction of a realm beyond politics (Cresswell 2014). Some have argued that poetic writing both recognizes and subverts language's inadequacy (Springer 2017; Simic 1990; Zwicky 2011a). Its use of metaphor is a mode of representation which reaches past representation itself (Bushell, 1996; McKay, 2001; Zwicky, 2003). Poetic writing turns away from pure scientific methodology, producing (not just translating) knowledge (Ruefle, 2012).

Geopoetics provides a vital contribution to geography and wider ecological scholarship. Our world is in peril. Increasing human populations, environmental destruction, neoliberal policies and the advent of the Anthropocene and climate change have curtailed or severed many humans' relationship with the natural world. Many in the Global North are losing their ability to experience and engage with other species (Baldwin 2018; Louv, n.d.). There is a need to remember how to attend to things at the pace at which they unfold themselves. A proposal of geopoetics as an act of slow attendance argues for this ethical and political engagement with the world, before or to forstall its disappearance in a haze of resource use and profit.

Geopoetics is thus not just a creative field within geography, allowing geographers to practice creative methods, or allowing geographers to study creative works as interventions in geography. Geopoetics offers a different way of perceiving and attending to the world, as well as a way of world-making. It is a way of moving through space and place, and recording that moving, which takes seriously the emotional, uncertain, unrushable attempts to connect and to

translate experience. It is an act of attendance that acknowledges its own failure. Language is the primary tool of communication for an analytic or creative writer, yet this imperfect tool cannot fully depict experience, even as it 'worlds'; often it can only gesture, point toward understanding. Understanding the act of attendance as a way of practicing geopoetics – a geopoetics of encounter and creative and emotional response – has the possibility to revolutionize geography, even amidst this failure. The geopoetics I identify as attendance is a perception that takes as its goal the focusing on, waiting with, and responding emotionally to its subject, rather than categorizing, counting, comparing or measuring. But more than that, geopoetics as attendance places focus on the act of attendance and the manner in which it occurs as much as the outcome (the creative work). Moving beyond geographical arguments over representation and the more-than-representational places greater emphasis on the ethics of our encounter with an 'other'; *how* we come to the use of language (or the failure of it) is as important as whether we use it. This dissertation thus adds to Magrane's (2019) ideas of what geopoetics might do – geopoetics as creative geography, as literary geographies, or as geophilosophy. Of the three, my work functions primarily as creative geography and by practicing geophilosophy, attempting to posit not just what geopoetics might do (using poetry as geographic practice) but also how the process of the doing of geopoetics is key to its work within geography.

Geopoetics also presents important theoretical possibilities, which can be further explored when placed alongside other cognate literatures: nonrepresentational theory and more-than-human geographies. This dissertation identifies key theoretical areas that contribute to and enhance the idea of geopoetics as a form of attendance and how this understanding of geopoetics might in turn produce new understandings of existing geographical theory, including emotional geographies, self-reflexivity and autobiography (see Bondi 2009); nonrepresentational theory (notions of presence/absence, immanence, ineffability and affect); and more-than-human geographies (specifically as they explore connections to other species or landscapes). I argue that this work also has ethical and ontological implications which can help address tensions between critical and creative geographies. Attendance to a being or a place is an ethical and thus a political act. In this, it has ties to critical geography's engagement with issues of power and politics. This dissertation posits a geopoetics that moves beyond humanist perspectives, which tend to valorize humans and their power over other species and our relationship with them. It will instead use geography's political engagement to think through possibilities for interspecies

relations, using attendance.

Positionality

My positionality is as a white, female, professional writer who creates and studies place-based creative work. As a North American woman with significant post-secondary education, I also acknowledge that my position is very privileged in comparison to much of the Global South, and in comparison to those of less privileged economic, social and cultural backgrounds. I acknowledge that my good fortune in turn has likely affected my scholarship and writing on art, theory and environmental thought. It has predisposed me toward scholarship that investigates what I argue to be valuable – ideas around wilderness, nature, landscape, and place, which tend toward the wild, and not the urban. If we cannot improve our relationship with the earth and transform our cities as sites of consumption, we will have no habitable place on which to treat one another equitably. I recognize that my exposure to the natural world is also an aspect of my privilege. I have lived my life in close proximity to unspoiled natural areas; I am not a resident of a landscape that has suffered large-scale toxic environmental pollution; I have had significant exposure to science-based observation of the natural world; I also acknowledge that I have had much greater mobility, opportunity and freedom than many women; I am childless, I am not financially responsible for my elders, and I have been able to travel beyond my country's borders with relative ease. This has undoubtably affected my ability to feel at home in foreign landscapes.

Additionally, I am fortunate to be in a position where I have the freedom to consider the role of art, and to practice that art in the world. I am concerned that a poet's understanding of poetics be given its due as geopoetics develops and matures in geography. Politics has a different (though not lesser) ability in creative writing than in geography. As a poet concerned with anthropogenic changes on the earth, and the precariousness of our lives as climate change progresses, I am privileged to be able to focus particularly on what nature poets and eco-poets might have to contribute to geopoetics. This dissertation strives, through its necessarily partial view, to open up a wider space for geographers' encounters with all manner of poets, poems, poetry and poetics. I thus see my positionality as a way of continuing a conversation, rather than portraying a singular view.

Defining the territory

What is attendance?

The Oxford English Dictionary traces *attend* to the Old French and Latin, "to stretch to (still in Old French); *hence*, to direct the mind or observant faculties, to listen, apply oneself; to watch over, minister to, wait upon, follow, frequent; to wait for, await, expect." Originally used transitively and intransitively, it now often functions in the intransitive passive, to *attend to.* It involves directing the ears, mind, energies to anything; to turn one's ears to, listen to. Immediately, we see that attendance involves more than visual perception. It is a bodily act and an affective state, in which the emotions become engaged in what we attend to. The waiting aspect of attendance implies a slowness, an attention to detail. It also implies an ethical relationship, as one is waiting for a thing to unfold *itself* in front of the attendee; the waiting indicates courtesy, the gift of time and space.

If geography asks 'What happens where?' as one of its primary questions, the prelude to that question is not just the ability to perceive but the manner in which one perceives. To attend is to open one's being to the thing being attended. It is a directing of the mind and body toward ways of attending to the world that are usually lost in childhood. Alexandra Horowitz, in *On Looking* (2013), calls attention itself a kind of synaptic activity, where we learn over time what to pay attention to and what to ignore. This learning shapes not just how we experience the world but what we are able to apprehend as adults (unless instructed by an eager child) as our brain shapes to filter out unnecessary information. She notes that for babies and toddlers, synesthesia, animism and astonishment of every thing is a natural occurrence. Neurons that form synesthetic connections between shapes and taste, sound and colour have not yet been snipped; as we grow and stop paying attention to these connections, they disappear. Animism, a way of understanding unknown objects, of drawing analogies and a form of sensitivity helps form a moral compass of empathy and understanding between self and world and belies "appropriate" word use for richer language: "compassion emerges from imagining the world alive" (Horowitz 2013, 39).

For the young child, nothing is unworthy of notice. Tranströmer, in his poem "Vermeer," writes:

> And the wall is part of yourself—
> we know or we don't know but it's true for us all,
> except for small children. No walls for them. (1997, 190)

This manner of perceiving is one geopoetics can also employ in its contribution to geography. As Picasso stated that he spent his entire career learning to see again like a child, so poets also cultivate this beginner's mind—an ability to perceive and attend to details adults have been

trained to ignore, and to draw together, as with metaphor, seemingly unlike things. This attendance to the world is a kind of "listening with the ear of the heart," according to St. Benedict, an openness that forestalls the need for hard conclusions, to categorize or even to define the thing being attended.

For me, my history of attendance to the natural world as a poet has always been two-fold. One aspect is the act of perceiving, itself. The act of perception, of attending to a thing, for me, is an attempt at connection and courtesy that has been my chosen and honed response to the myriad species and landscapes around me from which I have variously felt a separation from, and a kinship with. Working as a Fire Lookout in remote locations in Northern Alberta for five summers, with helicopter access only, I stumbled into an end game with wilderness, thinking it did not want me, and trying to perceive, or attend, with as little disruption to what was around me as possible. That work turned into my first and second books of poetry. But searching for a viable environmental politics, I slowly realized that, as Ingold (2011) advises, we are but one species in the larger world; we are not separate from it. The act of perception and attendance, in my work as a creative writer, became a seeing-with rather than a seeing from beyond a threshold.

The second part of attendance, which I have striven not just to cultivate but to detail and chart, is the emotional response inherent in the act of attending. As a writer, this is not just an emotional geography, nor simply a byproduct of "listening with the ear of the heart," though it is also these; it is an essential currency of my work as a writer, and is what enables, in part, the poem to have power.[1] For me, the dominant emotion in my work is anxiety, as it is in my life. And so after getting myself out of the way for two books, in this third manuscript of poetry, Chapter 4 of this dissertation, I am taking heed of the work of de Leeuw (2012), Belcourt (2017) and Moss (2001 & 2017), amongst others, to try for a messier, more autobiographical, more emotionally present geography of my self within my work about the world.

Examining these two parts of attendance as inextricable from one another—the act of perceiving and the emotional response—it becomes obvious that there is no geopoetics without corresponding emotional geographies. Thus, I argue that to admit the work of creative practitioners into geography is to solidify geography's work as inherently concerned with

[1] This statement needs qualifying, as any poet can tell you. The emotion contained within a work simultaneously empties out and enlarges the writer during the writing process, until the writer sits as though at the centre of a hurricane, all calm and deliberative moves within, all chaos without. Or, to use another metaphor, she is raised (or dropped) on waves of emotion until she (somehow) reaches a balancing point or equilibrium, which allows her a temporary stillness, from where she can perceive and make the poem.

qualitative knowledge, including experiences of emotion such as anxiety, fear, and sorrow, especially where our connections to the world are concerned, but also joy, care, and connection. It is therefore not enough to argue that human geography is as much a humanity as a social science; we must fully embrace creative geographies in practice not just as the art of mapping, field-journaling or artistically portraying landscapes, but as an emotion-filled art, a fine art with all of the techniques and strange thought patterns and methods of composition these entail.

Creative geographies

Despite the recent emergence of the field of creative geographies, the practice of art within geography has been a centuries-long occurrence (Hawkins, 2013), suggesting a long intermingling of critical and creative practice. Creative practices and products in the arts have been called by various names throughout history. Within geography, they have, until recent decades, tended to fall into the category of visual depictions of landscape or place: map-making and landscape-painting or, in the case of literature, geographical writing that itself had a literary quality (Ley & Samuels, 2014) or literary work that focused on geographical locations and features. Until the end of the 20th century, and particularly before the last decade, "the creative" in geography was seen as a helping mechanism, one that assisted geographical work or provided opportunity for greater empirical knowledge. Recently, Marston and de Leeuw (2013) have identified three periods of "artistic and geographical flowering [that] represent a fertile moment in knowledge production and creativity unconstrained by disciplinary boundaries" (Marston & de Leeuw, 2013, viii), the first two of which set the stage for the third – the current period, where art has come to be seen not just as a helping mechanism or a creative product that could offer a critical role in understanding landscape studies or studies of place and space (as with interpretations of visual art) (Hawkins 2014, 5). In this third period, creative practice as well as product now represents "a mode of disciplinary knowledge-making, collaborating with artists and [geographers] venturing into the practice of politically explicit creative works" (Marston & de Leeuw 2013, xi). "Creative" now stands for practice itself as much as the product of an artist (or geographer, for that matter). The critical skills of geographers *and* artists are necessary to bring to the table when creating and critiquing these practices and their works (Acker, 2015, 2017; Bauch, 2015; de Leeuw, 2003; Dunlop, 2002; Magrane, n.d.; Lorimer, 2008b; Magrane & Johnson, 2016; Orley, 2009; Robinson, 1986; Ward, 2014).

Geography needs these interventions of creative practices and products, as has been steadily asserted by geographers since Kropotkin (1885). In recent decades, this assertion has

formalized into the area of the geohumanities, with geopoetics being one of its main sub-disciplines. Meinig's (1983) call – that geography "will deserve to be called an art only when a substantial number of geographers become artists" – has been echoed by a substantial number of geographers (see Cosgrove 1978; Cresswell et al 2015; Dear 2015; Hawkins 2013; Watson 1983). Since the creative re-turn, geographers have also turned to the production of poetry (see Cresswell 2013, 2015; de Leeuw 2012, 2015; Magrane 2017) as a way of echoing Watson's words: "the poet gets to the *real* issues, because [s]he is *of* them. [S]he is the gut-knowledge that guides the geographer in measuring on the ground the pattern of the mind" (1983, 392). I concur with geohumanities scholars that intervention by the arts and practicing artists enriches and enlivens geography's conceptions of place and provides a valid and much-needed tool for softening of disciplinary boundaries between the arts and sciences (or between positivist and more interpretive methods, if one is arguing that geography is a humanities discipline) (Bolland, 2015; Dekel, 2008; DeLyser & Hawkins, 2014; Hawkins, 2014, 2015; Hayes et al 2015; MacKenzie, 2008; Madge, 2014; Magrane, 2017; Orley, 2009). This softening of boundaries has practical benefits, as pointed out in recent field-based geopoetics work by Eric Magrane (2017), as he cultivates in others an increased understanding of the impacts of the Anthropocene and increased ability for personal responsibility and interspecies connection. Geography also needs to acknowledge the importance of emotional connections to the world using creative methods. Doing so helps locate and ground geographers' passion for space and place-based inquiries, as I have seen in practice when teaching geohumanities. Students who participate in practice-based exercises in the geohumanities (such as drawing, writing in a lyrical style, or performing the act of slow perception) have expressed how much these exercises have clarified their own relationship with the world and brought their personal understanding of geography to the fore. The creative aspect of these exercises and the attention each pays to the world through sensual apprehension grounds their learning in place and embodied experience. Geopoetics can accomplish this same connection.

Poetry & geopoetics

As a way of beginning a conversation, one might ask: Are poems good for anything? Do they create meaning or is language "the only thing of value a poem can offer" (Lista 2012)? And at the root of poetics, do we find a silence or the creation of a world?

These are questions that have long dogged poets and poetry critics. "Poetry is a sickness" writes Ed Bok Lee (ND, para.1); W.C. Williams called them little machines (1969, 256). For

Dickinson, to write a poem is to feel a funeral in the brain (1960, 128). "The hut of poetry," Dan Beachy-Quick writes, "has no floor" (2012, 13). In his reading of Dickinson, Beachy-Quick argues that the floor we fall through when reading a poem is the plummet through reason that occurs when we come to know something through poetry. In Dickinson's own words:

> And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
> And I dropped down, and down—
> And hit a World, at every plunge,
> And Finished knowing—then— (1960, 129)

Meachy-Quick observes that "[k]nowledge isn't reason, but the plank that, in reason, breaks…To 'finish knowing' is to break through the floor reason has built" (2012, 13). Thus, if they create meaning, poems also give us an experience of death – the failure of language to enact the world which it names: itself a kind of silence. I will say more on this in Chapter 3.

Within Canadian letters, these questions have recently generated division and helped to widen the gap between so-called urban and nature poets. Michael Lista, throughout the 2010s, wrote a series of poetry columns for the *National Post*, in which he disparaged poetry written by many recognized Canadian poets. In particular, he denigrated those who sought what he called "a conspicuous environmentalism that masked a deep-seated misanthropy; a vain self-regard for its own social consciousness; diction and cadences that were more noisy than musical" (Lista 2016, np). The argument spun out into social media circles and onto the Canadian Women In Literary Arts (CWILA) website, where poets expounded the pros and cons of the negative review, and of poetry's tendency, particularly in Canada in this generation, to divide itself along nature/urban lines. Other manifestations of these created dualisms could include poetry as meaning-filled/poetry with no pretension of utility; poetry makes nothing happen/poetry can serve to redress injustice; lyric poets/language poets; or even Latinate language/Anglo Saxon vocabulary in the English language. The divisions are not arbitrary, but they serve to divide a nation that doesn't think very much about poetry as it is, and so make an already rarified group even more fragmented. The continuing arguments are colloquially referred to as the "dumpster fire" that is Canadian literature; Lista's comments eventually cost him his job with the *National Post*. The fire has continued to see divisions amongst Canadian poets on issues of politics (see UBC Accountable nd; CWILA nd).

When bringing poetry into geography, under the umbrella of geopoetics, the questions become even more complicated: geopoetics rubs shoulders with NRT, a poetic-like form of geographical theory that does not work to create meaning but rather to understand the world as

affect and embodiment without clearly delineated implications. Is geopoetics' intent to create meaning, in contrast to NRT? Does it posit a clarified vision of the world, with deeper emotional cohesiveness? Is it simply a series of words strung together and working toward an affectual state, a clamouring or whispering of emotions that float on the ether, admitting to no conclusion?

I bring forward these questions as a way of testing the place of creative methods in geography. But I think they may be false starts, the wrong questions to be asking. Keats, as Lista points out, "bemoaned the faintest whiff of utility in a poem, writing that 'we hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us'" (Lista 2016, np). As Lilburn also points out, poetry suffocates when it is lashed to an overt message; poems that begin with utility and a design for subject and meaning fail when they put these goals first, but that does not mean that the poem itself ends up meaningless, or enclosing an essential silence as its core.

A better conception would be a poem as a form of resonance (itself more of an enactment than a depiction or representation), and resonance being a key praxis that geopoetics can contribute to geography, and a key reason why I choose geopoetics as a discipline in which to craft argument. Resonance assumes the search for connection. It does not necessarily point to universal meaning, or even to meaning as universally possible, but it allows an embodied, emotional connection with the world, whether that emotion includes absence (of empirical knowledge) or presence (of indefinable knowledge) or both. Geopoetics, in essence, is a way of letting go of that particular social science approach, which asks "What is your question?" so that a myriad of thoughts, possibilities, hunches, emotions, ways of being, and states of knowledge can instead be raised, and allowed to rest there on the page or in the air or projected onto a screen or a desert wall (Magrane 2017) in hopes that the one contemplating the words might receive something of value. Sometimes, this *something* might be life itself: "a poem initiates us into death so as to awaken us into life, into this world that requires new eyes to see…Life, world: we die into it. Words kill us. We lose the tops of our heads. Then we open our eyes. Then we walk out of the poem into the world" (Beachy-Quick 2012, 16 & 18).

The Thinking and Singing Poets

During a two year non-degree low-residency seminar program in 2004-5 (entitled: *In the Field: A Low Residency Program in Contemplative Philosophy, Environmental Thought, and Writing*), I worked with a group of nature poets – Don McKay, Tim Lilburn and Jan Zwicky – whose philosophies and poetics raised key issues pertaining to how we perceive the world around us, and how we might live in it as if it were a home, rather than as a site to be plundered,

a wilderness set to thwart us, or a landscape to be tamed and reigned over (Zwicky 1998; 2003; 2001; 2011a; 2012; 2014; 2015; 2016; McKay 2000; 2001; 2004; 2011; Lilburn 1994; 1999; 2002; 2016; 2018). Though long a source of inspiration to me, these writers are mostly unknown in geographical circles.

In this dissertation, I seek to bring these three philosopher-poets into dialogue with geography: All three have been labeled in Canadian literature as eco or nature writers. I will also reference others that share their interests, including Jordan Abel, Inger Christensen, Billy-Ray Belcourt, Robert Hass, Sarah de Leeuw, Charles Simic, Bren Simmers, and Tomas Tranströmer. Some poets have written extensively in poetics (philosophy or prose writing on poetry), and these I will draw on more heavily. But Zwicky, McKay and Lilburn have been critically recognized as the "Thinking and Singing Poets" along with Robert Bringhurst and Dennis Lee (Dickinson 2004; Northrup 2013).[2] This collective is recognized internationally for the interconnectedness of their writing lives, their reach back to phenomenology, continental philosophy and the pre-Socratic philosophers, their preoccupation with the relationships that humans sustain with the world, and how poetry (including language itself as well as metaphor in particular) both fails and succeeds in translating experience into language. Their prose work, with its tendency toward polyphony (Abeysekera 2011) and its examination of emotion, metaphor and lyric, speaks to geography's interest in multiple, embodied knowledges (Whatmore 1999) and to geopoetics' interest in how creative work can contribute to geographical knowledge.

The "Thinking and Singing" writers are also unique in that all three have chosen to dedicate part of their vocation to composing a philosophical poetics, on which this dissertation focuses. The non-fiction interlude, in itself, is not unusual; other poets have seen fit to pronounce on the best way to write poetry (Oliver 1994; Rilke 1989; Zapruder 2017) or to provide "how-to" prose on poetry, writing elegantly of poetry's forms and techniques (Dobyns 2016; Hugo 1992), its spiritual dimension (Hirshfield 1998) or as a field guide to poetry's themes (Felstiner 2001). Zwicky, McKay and Lilburn, however, claim poetry's techniques themselves as integral to

[2] Two other writers exist in the "Thinking and Singing" group: Robert Bringhurst and Dennis Lee. Their work, through seminal essays such as Lee's *Cadence, Country, Silence*, provides important contributions to Canada's colonial narrative and Bringhurst's work also adds to conceptions of the natural world and made important, though controversial, contributions to First Nations literature through his translation of Haida myths. Their contributions, however, are less relevant to Geography and Geopoetics. It is the work of McKay, Zwicky and Lilburn, instead, that I argue can be seen as a cohesive and comprehensive philosophy for enacting geopoetics as attendance. Together, these philosopher-poets question and trouble colonialism's history as a dominating, extractive, use-based approach to the world, exposing the ways in which settler North American culture has ethically and ontologically failed. Most importantly for geopoetics, perhaps, these writers put forward a lyric alternative to analytic argument.

understanding the world, to living mindfully in place. Finally, and oddly, it seems to me, these three Canadian writers represent an example of what Lilburn calls a "quirk" in the world of poetry: they are poets who perform deep readings of philosophy in order to inform their poetics and their poetry (2017, 161). It is a quirk that Lilburn believes is particular to few poets (the list of which would also include Anne Carson, Sue Sinclair and Warren Heiti, in Canada). And it is also this quirk that I believe makes these three writers an apt choice for a primary intervention into geopoetics. Their deep reading (of Levinas, Wittgenstein, the pre-Socratics, Plato) lends them a scholarly rigor, which is perhaps more common in nature poets or eco-poets because of its philosophical underpinnings of conservation and ethics. And their scholarship "rides as ballast in their work… [which] has the exploratory reach of a certain sort of philosophical inquiry" (Lilburn 2017, 161-2).

Zwicky has made important philosophical contributions to thinking about lyric and domestic experience, as they relate to space and time. Her scholarly work extends beyond poetics, and is applicable to geography's preoccupations with representation, space, time and scale. She makes contributions to understandings of time, through her distinction between lyric and domestic time, which provide important contributions to nonrepresentational theory's exploration of the possibilities of the "*and*…" (for examples, see work focused on the ideas of enchantment, vitalism and connectedness, including Bennett 2010; Dewsbury 2003; Barad 2007; Ergin 2017).

Concurrently, Zwicky's philosophy of lyric writing identifies a spatial difference between analytic, systematic thinking (found in much academic writing) and that of lyric thought. Zwicky's work has received criticism for its understanding and application of Newtonian time (Angel 1993); her interpretation of Ricouer when examining the subject of metaphor (Curry 2010) and; her position on negative reviewing (Lista 2012). But I was unable to find a negative critique of her lyric philosophy. "Think of [her work] as a bell," advises Peter Sanger, "if you strike that bell at any point on its striking circumference, the tone rings with a consistent clarity" (Sanger 2004).

McKay's contributions to the Thinking and Singing poets' work is primarily through his novel understandings of metaphor and wilderness, the first of which is pertinent to geopoetics and to geography as earth writing (Springer 2017), the second which can add to geographical thinking through the term and its problematic uses and definitions. McKay's work investigates the wilderness *within* the other, including within language itself, charting a way forward for

geographical place-making in a colonial landscape. I argue for new ways of thinking through the conundrum of representation in geography through the use of McKay's work. McKay has been praised as a feminist poet who eschews Canadian colonial trappings and thus "side-step[s] manifestations of patriarchal guilt and inadequacy," and avoids the Romantic trap of a separation of humanity from nature and the pastoral feminizing of nature (Bondar 2004). Critiques of his poems focus on his literariness, in which one contemplates "his mind as he considers the natural order" rather than the world itself (Szumigalski in Wells 2006, NP). Wells (2006) also focuses on his tendency to anthropomorphise, his tendency to obscure egoism behind self-effacement, and "sublimating his faults as a poet and thinker into virtues" (Wells 2006 NP). David Solway puts it more succinctly, arguing that his poetic style is "slightness wedded to garrulity" (in Sutherland 2004. NP). The latter two are also infamous for their querulous attacks on Canadian poets of all stripes.

Lilburn's contributions focus less on language's metaphorical qualities and more on the way in which humans approach the world. His work posits how to live in North America in the wake of colonial settlement, drawing from the Pre-Socratics' understandings of "eros" and *hacaeitas* to posit an ethical and philosophically integrative (neither materialist nor idealist) relationship with the world. His work has solidified as a significant addition to the decolonial project, in its painstaking attention to European settler history's entanglement with nostalgia, colonial blindness to the world they arrived to, and, the possible routes out of the colonial imagination. Lilburn's early work focuses on courtesy and the ethical gaze as primary to forging a new relationship with the land. His most recent work brings to a culmination his trilogy of prose works, which focus on the question of how to be in the world as if it were home, drawing on the pre-Socratics and other mystical traditions to retrieve a contemplative tradition that can begin to set the ground for conversation with Indigenous peoples in light of Canada's 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Report. Though not overtly political, Lilburn "hears things that can gradually effect political change through personal transformation" (Maillet 2005, 244). Lilburn's work has also not escaped criticism; Lista calls *Assiniboia* a work that "veers occasionally into an ugly kind of animist misanthropy," and Lilburn a poet who prescribes "as the balm for our colonial wound a kind of nebulous Catholic mysticism…gussied up as a masque" (Lista 2012). Dopp's review of *Thinking and Singing*, Lilburn's book of edited essays, notes that the collection's essays "were better at making a case for the use of poetical thinking in philosophy than the other way around" (Dopp 2004). Starnino asserts that beginning in the mid-1990s, "Lilburn's voice

forfeits its imprudence and sass and instead embraces a form of gnomic theologizing, still deeply sensual in its sense-making but synthetic." Lilburn portrays himself as "both enraptured by and utterly alienated from nature," which leads him to an untenable position, where his "descriptive powers are currently trapped in the paradox of wanting to name the world in its particulars while simultaneously regarding the desire to render things precisely an untenable form of hubris" (Starnino 2004, 150-152).

Research scope

My interest in land stewardship has also influenced the selection of poet/philosophers for this dissertation, and led me to poets (Lilburn, McKay and Zwicky) who have an international reputation as a school that cultivates sound, respectful relations with land. This dissertation seeks to bring their work in particular into the sphere of geography for the first time. I prioritize this school of Canadian wilderness poetics as a way of adding to the conversation currently developing in geopoetics, and as an addition to research on poetry's potential contributions to geography. There are many other authors this dissertation could have chosen; for an exploration of some of these directions, please see this dissertation's Conclusion. For an explanation of why I focus on Zwicky, Lilburn and McKay, please read on.

In geopoetics, as in other spheres of geography, an integral part of studying diversity (alongside explorations of trans, queer, urban, spoken word, or language poets) is ecological care and interspecies diversity – valuing land and other species as much as valuing diversity of human perspectives. This is not a deliberate omission of cultural diversity but a choice based on my personal history as a writer with a long interest in land, in wilderness poetics as defined by McKay, as well as a desire, since my early days as a geographer, to bring their voices into the discipline. This is not to say, however, that the work I am doing is either incompatible with critical geographies, or apolitical. Ecological writers are political, but their sphere of care primarily focuses not just on humans but also on other species. As Ecuador recognizes rights of the environment, so do these poets choose environmental concerns as a political stance. To me, this is no less valid a position than to focus on human rights. I seek to re-legitimize work on the natural world as an addition to the social politics of critical geographies (alongside the work of political ecology), rather than seeing this as an error of omission. As a West Coast poet whose work focuses in large part on the natural world and my relation to it, these poets are particularly important to bring in to the sphere of geography; omitting them while writing about landscape and wilderness in poetry would be akin to writing a dissertation on Romanticism without

mentioning Wordsworth.

Scholarly contributions

Attendance as "force"

Colls (2012) made a first foray into addressing the undifferentiated body subject of NRT theory with a proposal for a feminist "nomadic consciousness" as well as through her presentation of Grosz's (2005) idea of sexual difference as "force." Rather than dismissing non-representational geographies for what they do or do not 'contain', she argues that it might be more useful to reflect on the liberation of 'contained' subjects by questioning and rethinking the terms through which we call for an attention to difference (Colls 2012, 441).

Colls' work heralds a direction in which this line of thought could continue, which has also been taken up recently by scholars both in and outside of geography, who examine feminist new materialisms (Alaimo & Hekman, 2007; Braidotti, 2002; Glass & Rose-Redwood, 2014; Huib Ernste, n.d.). Attendance can be a "force" to a "positive ontology" (Moss and Al-Hindi in Colls 2005, 442), illuminating the constructive energies that the arts can provide within geography. Thus, the potential for contributions from geopoetics is high – NRT's focus on affect (which can be understood as a force) points to an embodied, relational connection to place and landscape. I argue that Zwicky's work on lyric resituates NRT's work as pointing toward lyric experience and coherence. Lyric acknowledges a state that is both brimming with individualities and part of a coherent gestalt, a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. By mapping Zwicky's work onto NRT, I reinterpret NRT's controversial pre-political stance, and instead frame it as a reaching toward lyric coherence, itself a more ethical, comprehensive engagement with the world.

Creative practice

In this dissertation, I produce creative work to solidify and advance the relatively nascent stage of development that creative geographies and geopoetics currently occupy. Discourse on the role of geographers who produce poetry and those who simply study it is under development; trajectories have not solidified. But missing from these conversations are more voices that speak from a predominantly creative background – creative professionals who have studied with dedication the tools of their art, with recent work in geopoetics being the obvious exception (see

de Leeuw 2017; de Leeuw and Magrane 2019; Leeuw and Hawkins 2017; Magrane 2015; Magrane et al. 2019).

I focus on two concerns. Firstly, I do not yet see true respect for creative practitioners' methods and knowledge base. Tim Cresswell's (2014) confession that to be a writer of poetry or a creative practitioner who is also an academic geographer is "embarrassing" or a mutually incompatible venture hints that cross-disciplinary work is still not widely accepted. These geographers might take a trip across campus to the multitude of North American Creative Writing departments to see how the academic and the creative worlds can combine. Secondly, I do not see full understanding of the forms, techniques and devices that creative practitioners have at their disposal, and how these are being employed by artists to speak about place, place-making and other geographical topics. For instance, use of "metaphor" has been lauded recently (Springer, 2017) as an ideal tool for breaking down geography's reductionist tendencies and encouraging a more creative style of research and inquiry. Springer sees metaphor as a form of lyric writing – writing which features an attention to emotion and first-person experience, use of rhetorical devices and resonant language. But the nuances of the abilities and limitations of metaphor within lyric (as the authors chosen for examination in this dissertation will show) have yet to be explored by geographers and related back to geography. Similarly, the geography community, despite its professed interest in interdisciplinary work, has strangely ignored the work of poets focused specifically on place, wilderness and landscape. There is a need for greater understanding by the geographic community not only of the existence of these scholars and writers, but of their theories, their contributions to geographical knowledge and their ideas on human-environment relations.

Geopoetics scholars must examine literature that has been written already by creative practitioners (see Barnes & Duncan 2013; Bushell 1996; Cohen 1978; Magrane 2017; Goulet 2009; Porteous 1986), rather than trying to establish a free-standing understanding without consultation of the metaphor-creators (creative writers) themselves. I encourage geographers interested in working within creative geographies to turn first to artists within creative fields and practitioners who have contributed to thinking on form, technique, process and philosophy. Otherwise, scholars in this area risk a marginalization of voices and co-opting of terms, which is neither politically appropriate nor acknowledging of expertise and multiplicity of experience.

Representation & performance

This dissertation also engages with the complex question of representation within

geography (see Strohmayer & Hannah 1992). Language is both a performance (a speech act) and a representation (Searle & Searle 1969). This dissertation notes affinities between and adds to understandings of both geopoetics and nonrepresentational theory. Questions thus surface about the role of language and poetry within creative geographies and geopoetics, and how geopoetics can add to a theory that claims to work in realms beyond the representable. Can geopoetics move beyond representation? And if so, how?

In this dissertation, I understand geopoetics to be a performance (speech act), a representation, and an affect, a force which is "a push in the world" (Thrift 2004, 64), and which has the ability to do caring, political work through connecting "with our need to communicate and identify…with our need to care" (Aitken 2010, 24). This opens possibilities for geopoetics to be understood in wider terms than simply as another form that language takes.

Zwicky argues that "good writing, of any sort, is never more than a finger pointing at the moon, an attempt to move beyond the page, and words, into experience" (in Zwicky & Cran 2001, ii), which firmly situates poetry as, on one hand, a representation. In fact, it is widely argued by writers who use language artistically, and particularly for writing poetry, that language represents, but incompletely. Consider, an example; Wislawa Zsymborska's poem "Utopia," an uninhabited island where "the faint footprints scattered on its beaches/turn without exception to the sea" (1995, 128); the act of attempting to hold something on the page – to freeze it – also involves losing something of its life. Similarly, Denise Levertov's "Illustrious Ancestors," illustrates both her yearning to and her recognition of the inability to make poems:

> direct as what the birds said,
> hard as a floor, sound as a bench,
> mysterious as the silence when the tailor
> would pause with his needle in the air. (1961, 87)

Simic, in conversation with Charles Wright, argues poetry proclaims there's something *more* real than ideas, something that remains, as it were, always stubbornly unformulated, but which we as readers of poetry have no trouble experiencing and savouring in poems we love (in Wright 1995, 72-73). Thus, when poets talk of language's failure, they are speaking of the "clumsy tool" (McKay 2001) that we employ to lift into ourselves to brief communion with the world, to find "ways through language to point to what cannot be put into words" (Simic 1990, 64). Poetic language is, then, a representation, but it also points beyond itself in ways that go beyond the representational.

Language's performative aspects (as demonstrated by Magrane 2017) bring poems into the wider environment, casting them onto the material world and allowing them to be spoken, performed and enacted by geographers and by audiences. Geopoetics can also illuminate the performative aspects of speaking poetry aloud and the gestural power of words. At a reading to launch the 2018 JackPine Press chapbooks, authors Bren Simmers and Garth Martens used their bodies to enhance the meaning of a poem, employing theatrical gestures and dance-like techniques to paint a visual picture to accompany their words (Simmers & Martens 2018). Gesture can also form a part of the creation process itself. Writers describe becoming out of breath while composing, of using body movement to find the next word of the line.

I also take my understanding of poetry's role as an art form that can reach past representation from Boyd's lucid parsing of what poetry does when placed in the social sciences as a research tool. In Boyd, DeLyser (2010) argues that writing does not simply re-present but also creates geographical experiences. Boyd argues that poetic inquiry differs from other forms of writing and coming to know in that it is involved, subjective, participatory, and occurs in relation to others (2017, 211). When we participate in involved knowing, and re-present it in poetry, it is to "give it affective charge" (211). In reference to poetry that serves a dual function of art and research method, Boyd argues that "in poetic inquiry, the researcher is engaged in a critical act of resistance to dominant forms of academic discourse whilst still working in effective, interdisciplinary ways" (2017, 211).If poetry resists traditional academic discourse, it also seems to resist common understandings of language as *only* representation. Using Heidegger's (1971) notion of poetry as the house of being and Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) understanding of poetry as sensation, Boyd concurs that the best poetry should use vigour more than rigour, it should allow a reader to *feel with* a poem rather than simply read it, it should surprise and cultivate a sense of discovery in a reader, it should present one truth (of many) and finally, it should provoke, through newness.

All of these techniques help create work that goes beyond representation, to understanding a poem as a material thing in the world, but also a performance that is a becoming, "an unfolding movement of a block of sensations in conjunction with a reader who is also, for the time of the performance, the actualization of the poem" (Clay in Boyd 2017, 213). As well as asking what a poem means, then, we should ask what it does: "How does a poem function in connection with other things, what intensities does it transmit, what multiplicities or 'lines of flight' does it generate?" (Boyd 2017, 214). Reading a poem as an act of becoming reconfigures

it as a kind of praxis. The performance of reading and listening intertwine; "the reader 'passes through' the landscape of the poem…The emphasis is on *encounter*, not recognition" (Boyd 2017, 213-214 emphasis in original).

More-than-representational geographies

Through Boyd's work, possibilities open for geopoetics' contributions to NRT. Cresswell (2012) has asked how NRT itself can justify using such text-heavy theory in order to explore affects and emotions that go beyond the representable. In its defense, Lorimer (2005) has argued that NRT is perhaps a misnamed theory, as the 'non' raises the question of how a theory so fixated on moving beyond representation, toward explorations of affect and embodiment, can be so "texty" (Cresswell 2012), so thick with theory and words and (often) situated at a distance from the tangible world. For discourse (text) is itself an embodied practice, a thinking that otherwise reinforces the mind/body Cartesian dualism. When we instead understand NRT as more-than-representational, a space is created for the exploration of what language can gesture toward (however imperfectly) *and* what it cannot speak of. Geopoetics provides this possibility of recentring NRT as more-than-representational through its reach past representation: the performance of speech acts; actual performance when a poem is read; and through the ways in which poetry can contribute to a clarification of the world, even as it fails. The 'more' of more-than-representational, in poetry, is the resonance created by a poem as a whole. It is the lyric understanding that a poem moves toward (Zwicky 2011). It is the is/is-not backstretch created by the two terms in metaphor. But "more" seems also to refer to something more-than-definable. Perhaps this is one reason why NRT is criticized for its liberal use of words; when we try to describe a feeling or encounter which we cannot quite grasp, one tendency is to fall to silence, another is to keep talking and gesturing, circling around the unnameable emotion, affect or sensation that we experience.

Affect & emotion

My understanding of geopoetics also opens space for consideration of affect and emotion in geography, as differentiated by Anderson and Smith (2001). For many poets, the practice of creating a poem involves the experience of emotion and attempts to chart various affects. While NRT focuses on affect, feminist theory tends to focus on emotional geographies (see Bondi 2005; Pile 2009; Thien 2005) as ways of studying and writing about how it is "to both know, and intervene in, the world" (Anderson & Smith 2001, 7). Pile is critical of the metaphors (of

circulation, transmission and contagion) (2009, 16) that NRT scholars such as Thrift (2008, 235-43) have created in order to describe such in-between spaces, calling them "a chain gang of metaphors (or resources, or assumptions)" that rests solidly in representational practice and in language (Thrift 2009, 17). Pile cautions against emotional geography tying itself to "an increasingly cognition-centred, humanistic and romantic view of expressed emotions, where accounts that display ever-greater poignancy and intimacy become the stock-in-trade of the caring researcher" (2009, 17). I argue geopoetics has the potential to intervene and contribute to both affect and emotion studies, through its attention to both interior emotion and exterior forces or affects.

Definitions & Cautions

The challenges of etymology

The complexities of representation lead to similar challenges with the words we use to describe things. Along with many geographers, I have problems with many of the words used to describe and categorize the material world. The phrase *natural world* creates an unnecessary nature/culture dichotomy and brands the urban as either inferior and sullied or superior and advanced (Cronon 1996). What is the unnatural world? Is there one? Are the tar sands in Northern Alberta an unnatural world? Or precious metal mines in Guatemala? Or have we simply arranged the materials and substances of the natural world in a manner that is not pleasing, aesthetically, environmentally, or ethically?

Equally problematic are the words *wild* and *wilderness*. They presuppose wilderness as a place untouched by humans. They harken back to romanticism's obsession with a sublime landscape, meant to awe, frighten and inspire in equal measure. Wilderness as a landscape that serves a purpose for a viewer, a space from which one is separate, but from which one might take solace and face one's desire for connection that can never be satisfied because of the immense gap that separated human from the "slovenly wilderness" (Stevens 1990) that surrounded all culture.

William Cronon addresses this separation and categorization of wilderness as other, arguing for a new integration and interaction with the natural world, claiming that wilderness itself is a term that facilitates "the false hope of an escape from responsibility" (1996, 80), as well as an inaccurate description of North America's supposedly mythic frontier (76), which had been managed and cultivated by First Nations for millennia before Europeans' arrival (Acker

2012).

Is there a way to resuscitate the word *wilderness* by removing it from these historical associations? Words can be resignified with different meanings, but it is challenging to completely remove them from past associations/connotations. Humans would do better to move beyond the dualisms of nature/culture, natural/unnatural, wilderness/settlement and concentrate instead on the possibilities of how humans, as one species among many, choose to interact with the world. Choosing to expand the term rather than discard it, Don McKay's *Vis à Vis* and *The Shell of the Tortoise* argue there is an element of wilderness not just in streams and mountains but in fridges, power saws and forks; we ourselves also contain a wilderness.

By "wilderness" I want to mean not just a set of endangered spaces, but the capacity of all things to elude the mind's appropriations. That tools retain a vestige of wilderness is especially evident when we think of their existence in time and eventual graduation from utility: breakdown. "To what *degree* do we own our houses, hammers, dogs? Beyond that line lies wilderness… [T]here is also the sudden angle of perception, the phenomenal surprise which constitutes the sharpened moments of *haiku* and imagism. The coat hanger asks a question; the armchair is suddenly crouched: in such defamiliarizations, often arranged by art, we encounter the momentary circumvention of the mind's categories to glimpse some thing's autonomy – its rawness, its *duende,* its alien being" (McKay 2001, 21)

McKay thus urges an ethical, contemplative response to all the things and entities of the world, an understanding that is borne out by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous contemporary BC writers. An ethical response to difference, reminiscent of Levinas' idea of ethics as first philosophy, McKay's interpretation of wilderness is to foreground both the unknowability of things (everything escapes its ability to be fully described) and also how the particularity and "duende" of a thing can simultaneously pull us into a new way of attending, a recognition of strangeness and connection, all at once. It is a stance similar to how McKay (2001) describes poetic attention as:

> a sort of readiness, a species of longing which is without the desire to possess, and it does not really wish to be talked about. To me, this is a form of knowing which counters the "primordial grasp" in homemaking, and celebrates the wilderness of the other; it gives ontological applause. (26)

Still, the use of these terms is hard to separate from their histories. I struggle to find a word that will not create dichotomy, presuppose a separation of human and nature or reinforce the various romantic, colonial or otherwise outdated understandings of the territory that

surrounds us. What might a poet's answer to this word be? Wilderhome? *Holgar*? Bachelardia? When at the Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts in August 2018, I attended a talk with Indigenous writers Philip Kevin Paul and Carleigh Baker, who were there to honour Indigenous fiction writer Richard Wagamese. They shared this struggle, and the word they settled on as a noun that could encompass places both outside of and within cities was the word "land." One has a relationship with the land, whether in the cross-hatched grid of Toronto, the wild of the Northern Boreal forest or the organically curved bays around Smugglers Cove Marine Park. For Paul, land is both where he lives and what he is part of. For Baker, who was raised "outside community," land draws her in both city and country; she sees no difference between the two, as the colonial project is but an overlay on the still-existing land underneath (Paul & Baker 2018). To use the word land is also to include oneself in the world. Lawyer Drew Mildon shared a story of a meeting he had with a Dene elder during the first tar sands legal challenges his firm was helping to fight in the 2000s. "I am the land," the Elder told him, "the land is me" (Mildon 2011). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson says the same (Simpson in McLeod 2014, 108). The term 'land' ducks out from under the long and disputed history of terms such as landscape and wilderness, and brings thinking back to original understandings of this continent, much the way removing colonial, invasive species such as English Ivy or Scotch broom, or removing colonial names from land forms is also a way of decolonizing. In this dissertation, then, I endeavour to use the word 'land' as much as possible, instead of wilderness or even natural world, in order to bring thinking back to what geopoetics can actually do for a place – make a new conception of the earth, bring about new understandings of the places in which we live. One practical benefit of geopoetics, then, is to provide a new, less dichotomous language.

Lyric

Lyric geography is the title of this dissertation. What, then, does lyric mean? How is it being used in this work? Helen Vendler calls the lyric form a poem of "psychological wisdom," an "algebraic equation" which asks the reader to be its co-creator and to "think concretely as it speaks abstractly" (Vendler 1996, 151). Elizabeth Bishop called a lyric poem a map rather than a photograph (in Vendler 1996, 151). Its seeming impreciseness is due to its concentration on specific moments, rather than on comprehensive depiction. Lyric poems contrast with narrative poems (though there is also lyric narrative) in that they focus on drawing out specific, resonant, often epiphanic moments that can serve to represent a larger emotional landscape. This dissertation will explore the concept of lyric, including critical investigations of the form itself,

in Chapter 1 and use of lyric form in Chapter 4: the poems are emotional, personal; they are concentrated mostly on epiphanic or arresting moments rather than on cohesive narrative (with a few exceptions); they gesture toward abstractions through use of the particular. All of these aspects work toward a poetry that most clearly, for me, elucidates relationship with place and emotion, and has a wide enough scope to incorporate philosophical argument as well as story.

Along with an understanding of lyric as a form of poetry, I also understand the term lyric through Jan Zwicky's work in *Lyric Philosophy* and *Wisdom and Metaphor*: lyric as a form of experience, understanding, thinking and expression, as a philosophy, as a geography of love. Lyric thinking – that practiced within a poem, among other practices – is resonant thinking. It centres on attunement – the relationships between particulars in a poem that, though ordered, produce a poly-dimensional coherence. Sinclair (2015) writes that lyric thought is more spatial than it is temporal in nature, as it relies on this clustered resonance of particulars in order to transmit meaning more than it relies on an ordered, time-dependent system of argument. Systematic thought is linear; its logic is based in progression. It says: a, then b, then c. Lyric thought is spatially organized; the timelessness of a lyric piece of music or lyric thought is that of a clustering, a simultaneous happening, a network. Thus, lyric thought gestures beyond the pure representation of *this* equals *this*, and instead says "this and this and this." Lyric is thus additive; though it is also bounded by time, in that its existence in time is what makes it losable, its brief exit from time into a moment of timelessness is paradoxically proof of its existance within time, though not of time (Zwicky 2011).

This dissertation works primarily from Sinclair and Zwicky's conceptions of lyric, in that I proceed with an understanding of lyric as a form of resonant, gestural, ineffable understanding. I argue that lyric is thus the manifestation of that state of perception and attendance in geopoetics. Lyric thought has, in Zwicky's words, polydimensionality, integrity, and resonance (Heiti 2015, 195). If philosophy is thinking in love with clarity, as Zwicky (2003) argues, lyric thought "might be roughly understood as such thinking in which clarity assumes the form of resonance" (Heiti 2015, 188). I consider this understanding of lyric to be essential to my contribution to geopoetics as a form of attendance. For it is this slow, meditative, attuned attention to the world that most often produces the work of lyric, in which it is important to understand how lyric "turn[s] to that toward which the work is gesturing" rather than fixating on the work itself (Heiti 2015, 190). In this, lyric is a stance toward the world; it is an open-hearted courtesy, an ethical gaze, an unparaphrasable encounter, "a little stream/braiding itself over a lip

of rock" (Zwicky 1998, 67).

Landscape & place

Landscape and place are key terms with which I engage, through bringing to bear work in geopoetics with work in nonrepresentational geography and through engagement with place and place-making within geopoetics and creative geographies. A brief outline of the terms will help to situate the challenges geographers have in clarifying their meanings and imports.

Landscape and place remain key disputed concepts in the wake of geography's qualitative revolution. As Cosgrove (1985) points out and Hawkins reiterates, landscape "has a foundational role in art-geography relations" (Hawkins 2011, 465), but it is not a term that is free from power, politics or vision. It has also seen a significant transformation in the understanding of what the concept means. After the term was banished from geographical scholarship in the middle of the last century, it enjoyed a resurgence, beginning in the 1980s, as an experiential, sensible, authored space. It came to be viewed by American scholars as a holistic space, and by British geographers as an artistic or literary response to the visible scene (Cosgrove 1985). With landscape understood as a way of seeing and thus involving a practical appropriation of space, the term became entwined with notions not just of perspective and geometry, but also as demoting visual space to a "dependent, appropriated subject" that gave dominance to visual ideologies in geographical understandings of landscape (Cosgrove 1985, 49). The relational ontology of NRT has recently provided geography with the opportunity to reassess the term landscape, "building an ethics…a mutual enfolding of self and world that inevitably moves us beyond the singular personal experience" (Hawkins 2011, 467). Similarly, geographers have also questioned the "white, bourgeois, heterosexual" masculine perspective through which landscape has been understood (Rose 1993, 87). Landscapes are predominantly still seen, argues Rose, in terms of the feminine body, and pleasure in landscape itself is not innocent but rather a manifestation of the masculinist "spectator" gaze of a feminized "body" that contains all of the familiar tropes of power, subjugation, distance and desire (Rose 1993, 87). In attempting to disrupt this history, Rose points to work on the unconscious and on disruption of the gaze (Mulvey 1989), arguing that "the unconscious could be seen as a site of resistance against masculine and feminine identities" (Rose 1993, 110). She also posits that women see landscape differently and have often placed themselves within landscape rather than seeing it from a distanced, objective viewpoint (112). This, she offers, does not provide a hegemonic alternative so much as an opening for further discussion on geographers' relationships to the world.

Place is also a disputed concept (Cresswell 2009). Heidegger's "dwelling" reawakened a secular understanding of place (Casey 2013). Kant used the human body to come to terms with external perception; place became where the instrument of the body understands the world, where it meets in place. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological work examined the body's physical position and its ability to perceive the world as both embodied subject and intricately linked to place through perception. NRT has drawn extensively from phenomenology, with its focus on embodied happenings and the process of perception in the conception of place rather than on Descartes' separated dualism of body and world. In recent decades, place has been theorized more through process or mobility rather than through the humanistic notion of place as a fixed, bounded, rooted concept, "the locus of exclusionary practices" (Cresswell 2009, 176). Massey (2005) argues for place as actively constituted, produced through the connections people have with the world and their physical identities, calling these connections "routes," which demonstrate an "extrovert" or "progressive" sense of place (Cresswell 2009, 176) and showing how "place [might] incorporate diversity, the integration of differences, and constructive relationships with other places" (Seamon in Aitken and Valentine 2014, 44).

For critical geographers, including feminist geographers, however, "the mapping of particular meanings, practices and identities on to place…leads to the construction of normative places where it is possible to be either 'in place' or 'out of place'" (Cresswell 2009, 173). Feminist critiques of humanistic geography began, in the 1980s, "to develop a critical approach to place which sought to rectify" the problem of power relations, negative associations and a 'universalist' subject, as well as Heidegger's 'being in the world' and being in a home place as an idealized location (Cresswell 2009). The opposing notions of place/home in humanistic and feminist geographies are perhaps best illustrated by humanism's understanding of a safe place; "home-place [as] a centre of meaning and field of care" (2009, 173), versus critical human geographical examinations of home as a site of power (and its inverse, powerlessness), where violence, subjugation and boredom instead can become the norm. Place, in this understanding, ceased to be a welcoming location created by all, and became instead a site for powerlessness and placelessness, though potentially also a site for imagining new ways of using place through transformation and transgression of norms.

Nature writing & the environmental movement

To focus a study on perceptions of the world—which is based on an environmentalist perspective of ecosystem and species protection, and attachment to and respect for the creatures

that surround us—one must also acknowledge the damage this perspective has wrought when considering critical understandings of gender, race and class. The history of the modern environmental movement in North America has been routinely exclusionary and restricted to white, male, middle class (or higher) adventurers and professionals (see Jamie 2008; Sturgeon 2009; Taylor 1997; Belkhir & Adeola 1997; Varman & Costa 2013; Yamamoto et al., 2001). Recreational ecotourism, which promotes a connection with nature but which has a narrative arc of entry, adversity and triumph in a wilderness setting, is all too reminiscent of colonial and conquest narratives (see Erickson 2011; Fletcher 2014; Starkey & Date 2005). The bucolic, restful vision of the rural as a space of retreat and peace is fraught with race and class issues (see ' 2007; Panelli et al. 2009; Piper & Szabo-Jones 2015).

A major critique of the environmental movement has also been its pervasive whiteness (Bunce 1994; Hollaway 2007; Panelli et al. 2009). The environmental movement has long been criticized for marginalizing and excluding non-white rural residents, fighting environmentally harmfully projects only to have them relocated in poorer and/or racially non-white communities without the machine of environmental activism to protect their interests (see Bunce 1994; Cutter 1995; Heiman 1996; Holloway 2007; Panelli et al. 2009; Yamamoto & Lyman 2001). Thus, the history of going into, connecting with and attempting to save natural spaces and places is fraught with competing desires and complicated and dynamic relationships and political issues of unequal representation, inequalities and contested access.

Colonial trends also exist in literature; nature writing and nature poetry have not been immune to domination by white men, despite more recent attempts to use a more inclusive gaze toward the wider world (in McKay, Zwicky and Lilburn's work). The 19th century Romantic movement in poetry fashioned nature and the natural world as a sublime source of inspiration and solitude, where the poet could escape and face his need for transcendental experience, be inspired and moved by nature, and return to civilization to record works as "emotion recollected in tranquility." Keats' and Wordsworth's Romanticism laid the seeds for Thoreau's dreams of "wildness" and Emerson's Romantic view that the natural world existed "to reveal universal meaning to the individual soul via one's subjective experiences" (Poetry Foundation). The Modernist movement in poetry subsequently rebelled against Romanticism in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, but did not become more inclusive. Imagism sought direct treatment of its subject, using sparce language, and a reliance musical (not metronymic) rhythm and on things in the world rather than abstractions to communicate meaning. Modernism's reliance on personal

imagination, fragmentation and its skepticism of coherence echoed the increasing disillusionment with a fractured and damaged post-war world. Modernism continued to be predominatly white and male, with few notable women (Stein, Moore, Lowell, H.D., Loy being the notable exceptions).

The 20th century postmodern era ushered in a generation of Beat Generation poets, including Gary Snyder, Kenneth Rexroth, Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan and Robin Blaser. Nature poetry and ecopoetry featured work that strove to be environmental (focused on nature) and environmentalist (in favour of that nature). Shoptaw calls ecopoetry "nature poetry that has designs on us" through its politics and its need not just to represent the natural world but to convince us, overtly, of its value (Shoptaw 2016, np). However, nature and ecopoetry was (and is) a world still largely dominated by white, cis-gender males, many of whom entertained poetry readers, as Snyder did, while a wife cooked for guests and cared for the children in the background (Goodyear 2008). For examples of male nature writers, one can look to Gary Snyder and Robert Hass in the US, Don McKay and John Pass in Canada, and Seamus Heaney and the surge of recent UK poetry (see Michael Symmons Roberts 1993; John Glenday 2009) and prose nature writers (see MacFarlane 2008; Deakin 2009; Mabey 2007). Today, female eco-poets such as Kathleen Jamie are still creating work "between the laundry and fetching the kids from school" (Jamie 2007, np), in contrast to her British nature-writing counterparts, who have been criticized for their new romanticism and tin ear for issues of gender, class and ethnicity (Jamie 2008):

> What's that coming over the hill? A white, middle-class Englishman! A Lone Enraptured Male! From Cambridge! Here to boldly go, 'discovering', then quelling our harsh and lovely and sometimes difficult land with his civilized lyrical words. (Jaimie 2008, np)

I acknowledge these critical considerations and the limitations of the literary environmental movement. In response, I strive to engage with scholars who are working to overcome these limited perspectives, and who decline participation in the power relationships that influence who benefits and who participates in environmental conversations. But I also recognize that, however imperfect, the solution is not to stop this work. As scientists announce 2030 as the date at which an irreversible climate change tipping point will occur (Watts 2018), we must search for ways to engage more fully, with more comprehensive collaboration between all genders, races and classes, including taking into consideration the wealth of knowledge that Indigenous peoples can offer in their particular understanding of place and landscape. But though the aim must be to move forward in ways that seek to decolonize ecopoetics and other

geographical work, problematizing and rectifying our approach to the world and to current environmental challenges *as a species* should take precedence (notwithstanding the chasm of difference that exists between those that profit from environmental destruction and those who are exploited and/or oppressed by it). If it does not, there will be no world (as we know it, or as we can inhabit it) in which to continue these conversations.

Methods & methodology

Geopoetics and geohumanities necessarily involve practice and process (Hawkins 2011). My methods involve autobiographical experiential explorations of place and place-making, using embodied, situated practices, even when investigating nonrepresentational theory. In my own apprehensions of place and place-making, as well as my investigations of poetics that contribute to understandings of NRT, I employ what Eric Magrane (2017) has referred to as "poetic field research" methods, and hermeneutic analysis of the selected writers' texts. Magrane's methods are a tongue in cheek response to his experience of constantly being asked to qualify and explain poetic process to social scientists, and to put his work into the box of acceptable social science methods, when poetic practice so completely resists this sort of planning. Some of his instructions for poetic field research include advising the researcher to "List everything that is alive around you. List everything that is not alive around you. Stand up and put your arms out. The length of your arms is the circle of the poem" (Eric Magrane, n.d.). Though light-hearted, the instructions make a key argument toward widening the strictures of social science methods, in the instructions' openness to messy, intuitive, playful, open-ended, spontaneous and risky work. Poetic work is anti-methodological, in that its goal is to not know where it is going, or how it might get there, or what tools it might use along the way. I understand, however, the need to detail more traditional methods for the purpose of this dissertation; they are included below.

Discourse & documentary analysis

I am not a proponent of the New Criticism School when examining works of literature, which advises a separation of text from author and relies primarily on close reading to understand a text as a self-contained aesthetic object. I do agree that close reading has an integral part to play in the examination of poetry within geopoetics. However, so does the background and intention of the author. Discourse analysis will involve reading and parsing the creative and critical texts listed throughout this dissertation in order to further arguments on place, landscape and representation, to clarify the work of NRT, and to use these texts as signposts for and

justifications of my own creative work. The research I am undertaking in the field of geography involves theorists who, even when investigating direct experiential contact with the world, are doing so using text. Textual analysis in this dissertation will serve as background, as grounding for advancements in theory, as connecting force between disciplines (when bringing creative texts into the discipline of geography) and as inspiration (when reading and using creative texts as jumping off point for my own creative work).

Autobiography

Using autobiography will allow me to reproduce some of the methods used by scholars (Wylie's walking; Lilburn's sitting with the land; Robinson's material and philosophical explorations of place) while allowing me the scope to invite my own personal experiences and observations into the dissertation (Lilburn, 1999; Robinson, 1986; Wylie, 2005). I also hope to add to the conversation spurred by new work on intimate writing in geography (Moss & Donovan, 2017).

Autobiography has a long (though often unheralded) history in human geography, as detailed by Moss (2001). And yet, many geographers are working to make autobiography a valid geographical method (R. A. Kearns, 1997; R. Kearns & Collins, 2012, 2012; Longhurst, 2000; Purcell, 2007). I am interested in documenting my own situated knowledge as a poet and woman traveler. Earth-writing, for me, is a practice in which my own voice can add to the multiplicity of conversations on place and place-making (Springer 2017). By intertwining geopoetics with autobiography, I seek to affirm and legitimize both of these oft-marginalized methods, and to challenge positivist views that to engage as such is merely navel-gazing.

Creative practice

There is a growing history of scholarship by those who are examining creative practice and product and its relevance and usefulness to geographical thinking, as well as using it in their own practice (Cresswell, 2014; de Leeuw, 2003 & 2017; Hawkins, 2011; Hawkins et al., 2015; Magrane, 2015). In order to know how the geopoetics and creative texts aforementioned might further contribute to geography, my methods will continue to de-stigmatize the inclusion of creative research and practice in the field of geography through the inclusion of my own and other writers' poetic and philosophical work. A key method in my research will involve use and study of creative practice, which will provide geography with the opportunity to move beyond ocularcentric and solely materialist approaches, into research that puts into practice many of the

requests for creative voice, made recently (and not so recently) by both geographers and artists (Hawkins, 2015; Magrane, 2015, 2017; Meinig, 1983; Whatmore, 2006).

I also wish to draw from the efforts of Nordstrom's exploration of anti-methodology, which takes into account the messy, momentarily-contained anarchism of research that considers the "nonliving…equally important in knowledge production" as human subjects (Nordstrom, 2017, 216; also, see Springer, 2016). For Nordstrom, research is a constant surprise that follows no set path, includes no standardized research questions and takes into account Deleuze's focus on doing, feeling, experiencing, it "happened, happens and continues to happen…[it] creates and cultivates rather than reproduces…[it] is a creative contagion" (Deleuze 1995, 19 in Nordstrom 2018, 224; see also Feyerabend 1993). In particular, I am interested in Nordstrom's coining of the object-interview, a space in which "humans, nonhumans, living, and nonliving are entangled together to produce knowledge" (Nordstrom 2018, 217). I explore these issues in Chapter 4 through my use of creative writing to posit voices of the various actors in Tod Inlet and their possible contributions to the past and present day history of the bay. As Magrane writes, "as the social sciences increasingly consider the role of affect and emotion in shaping and re-shaping relationships in the world – and as important levers of social reproduction – the orientations and tools of poetry offer opportunities for (re)presenting affective and emotional juxtapositions" (2017, 16).

The intent of poetry and use of lyrical methods such as creative autobiography are different than that of social science research in that they do not seek to analyze and explain carefully gathered data. Nor does lyrical poetry serve to provide precise conclusions. Rather, the aim of poetry is to open the doors to a variety of interpretations, to part the threshold (momentarily) between ourselves and the world, and to encourage creative thought and creative response – neither of which can be quantified, tabulated or reduced to a single method that yields a single answer. This tension—between poetry as an inconclusive opening and social science doctoral work as requiring defined methods—could be a point of frustration. Instead, I choose to view it as a locus of possibilities. Creative methodologies, when used within a social science setting, can work to create conversation between traditions, to encourage associative and imaginative thinking, and to create the setting for multiple interpretations and a widening of possibility, rather than a precise conclusion. Poetry as a methodology forces a reader to slow down and consider a more associative, metaphorical approach to thinking. Indeed, metaphor and association are the key to how my methodology is staged.

Along with poetry, however, there are philosophical frameworks that will serve to anchor this work in particular methodologies, however open its conclusions might be. I will use a philosophical underpinning that draws from critical and NRT work (see Anderson & Harrison 2010; Bowlby & Tivers 2009; Boyd 2017; Carey et al. 2016; Colls 2012; de Leeuw 2017; de Leeuw et al. 2017; Dyck 2005; Haraway 1988; Latham 2003; Latham & McCormack 2009; Lorimer 2008a; McDowell 1992a; Moss 2002; Moss & Donovan 2017; Nagar 2013; Thrift 2008; Tucker & Rose-Redwood 2015; Valentine 2007; Vannini n.d.). Through research of a range of voices from the creative arts, this research will widen the scope of voices working to encourage polyphony and multiplicity in academic work. It will work to loosen disciplinary boundaries and to demonstrate how one might live in the world more sensibly and empathetically – as if it truly were a home. My approach also takes a cue from the recent turn toward the plurality of voices and actors expressed by the rematerialist turn in geography (Bennett 2010; Robbins & Marks 2010; Whatmore 2006). My own poetic work assumes actors from the human and non-human world have potential to speak and ability to do so. Part of poetry's beguilingness is its ability to use language to draw connections between animate and inanimate objects, and to recognize the life force present in all things.

As emotional and nonrepresentational theories expand, they are clarifying new understandings of bodies in the world and of the politicized body. Creative geographies are poised to enter this conversation because they provide new ways of thinking about how a body operates in place and landscape and in the space of artistic creation itself. Geopoetics can elicit emotional response in a reader/viewer, helping to strengthen qualitative work in geography and to validate resonant, emotional, untranslatable experiences in place. Creative geographies encourage a rethinking of art's contributions to geography using sited works, bodies in the world and through the practices and products of art itself (Hawkins 2015). In this way, the creative practice work in this dissertation is emotional in that it posits autobiography as a valid geographical method, and unties autobiography from its reputation as merely (and nothing more than) "Confession. Self-absorption. Anecdote. Navel-gazing" (Moss 2001, 10). Creative, autobiographical work is geographical work. By tying together emotion with landscape and place, I also draw on a long history of feminist thought in geography – thought that seeks to give validity to personal experience in place, that situates affect and emotion as valid, legitimate subjects to explore. Feminist geography, however, is not the primary focus of this dissertation; in this study, my interest lies in the connections between NRT and geopoetics, and the capacity and

promise of geopoetics as a tool for greater understanding of humans' emotional connections to the world. Future work in geopoetics, which I expand on in the conclusion of this dissertation, could address the connections between feminist geography and geopoetics.

I recognize that representation, through use of written texts, can be a problematic concept for some critical geographers, as a text often ultimately presents an image or idea from a certain perspective, creating a subject/object split and coming to constitute that for which it purportedly stands (Disch 2016). I argue that works of poetry (and creative non-fiction, which uses many of poetry's techniques) can supersede these concerns, firstly through a rethinking of what a work of art actually *does*, and secondly, through its use of metaphor and metaphoric techniques. A written work of poetry can function not only as a representation of embodied experience but also gesture *beyond* representation, becoming an object of encounter rather than an object of representation, providing an opening to a new world and a new way of thinking. As O'Sullivan argues, "Art…is the name of the object of an encounter, but also the name of the encounter itself, and indeed of that which is produced by the encounter. Art is this complex event that brings about the possibility of something new" (2006, 2). My work will draw from O'Sullivan, and his use of Deleuze and Guattari's understandings of art, to offer an example of thinking in art that moves *beyond* representation, a kind of rupturing into a new world.

The charting of emotions experienced in landscape or place in creative geographical work acknowledges the work geographers have done to validate and legitimize emotion and affect as subjects of study (Bondi 2005; Lawson 2009; Morrison et al 2013b; Muhanna 2016; Thien 2005). My creative work also functions with the understanding of the nebulous, resonant, and partial knowledges of non-representational theory (Anderson, 2013; R. Kearns & Collins 2012; Muhanna 2016; Schurr 2014; Wylie 2009, 2012). Creative work which combines emotional experience in landscape can serve as a legitimizing force for creative geographies, allowing for exploration of emotion and emotional states as they relate to place and landscape, and for grounding and points of connection between non-representational theory and creative geographies.

Dissertation structure

This dissertation is comprised of five articles as well as an introduction and conclusion. The recent flourishing of the geohumanities, and the creation of *GeoHumanities*, a journal named in its honour, has set a place for the geohumanities as a vital part of the discipline of geography – one that recognizes that artistic process and practice can contribute to critical, political, and

theoretical discussions about place, space, landscape, affect and emotion in their own right.[3] The focus for this dissertation is on contemporary work in geopoetics, rather than providing a historical study.

Chapter 1

This dissertation looks critically at poetry as a technique of coming to know the world, as a geographical practice and as a creative product, acknowledging both poetry's positive and negative potential. Poetry can heal, inspire, teach; it has also been used as a radical space of exclusion (de Leeuw 2017). In Chapter 1, I critically draw attention to the ways in which poetry's adherence to European standards of success – its use of metaphor, its conception of lyric, its location on the white page (rather than in *voz alta*), and its standards of beauty – have sometimes meant that creative works which practice beyond these boundaries (such as spoken word, slam, oral or sung poetry) are less valued. These canonized techniques themselves can thus inflict damage if not practiced with awareness of their power to exclude, or used without care and love. Chapter 1 also critically investigates what poetry does and does not have the power to do, looking at the potential for damage and exclusion through form and technique of poetic language, and, ultimately, the possibilities for poetry and poetics as a positive force within geography.

Chapters 2 & 3

The writers examined in detail in Chapters 2 and 3 (primarily but not exclusively Zwicky, McKay and Lilburn) have focused their work on the threshold that language creates between humans and the rest of the world's species. They focus on perception, place and place-making, as they relate to the wild around them. They are environmentalists concerned with the impact we are having on the earth. They are preoccupied with how to attend to, and how to live in, the world respectfully. In this, they offer a vital opportunity for geohumanities scholars

Chapter 2 provides a primer and an overview of the recent blossoming of creative geographies, geohumanities and geopoetics, and an examination of corresponding theories that resonate with and further geohumanities' aims. Since attendance to the world, to me, indicates a kind of homing, a feeling at home, this chapter takes its question from Lilburn (1999): How do

[3] Though *GeoHumanities* is developing a strong reputation, much in Geography leads me to think that creative work still sits uneasily within this discipline (McLean & de Leeuw 2020), and often proceeds with the danger of being misunderstood or undervalued for its rigour, even while it is lauded for its vigour. Thus, my position is that this dissertation does work in solidifying creative, poetic work within the social sciences and outlining creative work's possibilities.

we live in the world as if it were home? This chapter examines seemingly disparate threads of thought from the arts (poetics) and the social sciences (critical geographies, including emotional and nonrepresentational geographies) in order to uncover and advance rhizomatic and bodily understandings that link nonrepresentational geography, emotional theory, and the emerging field of geopoetics, in the geohumanities, arguing that creative poetic/artistic practice has capacities and capabilities to extend our repertoire of understanding 'how to live in the world'.

A review of emotional geographies first clarifies and provides background on what "the creative" means in relation to geography and how this work might clarify understandings of NRT. Secondly, this focuses on the emergence of creative geographies and the opening to creative methods created by recent practitioners of creative geographies and geopoetics, identifying the periods of creative expression located within geography and the possibilities of what is called geohumanities' "third period" of creative interpretation and practice (Marston & de Leeuw 2013). In particular, I am interested in the scholarship on art as more than a hermeneutic tool, but as an object of encounter (Hawkins 2014), which can act as a cut or a crack in our habitual subjectivities (O'Sullivan 2006).

Looking next to NRT, I examine collaborative, relational and social thinking that makes up much of NRT's body of work, including its understandings of the body in the world as it moves through life "*before* and *alongside* the formation of subjectivity*, across* human and non-human materialities and *in-between* distinctions between body and soul, materiality and incorporeality" (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, 13, italics in original). Of interest in this work in particular is Seigworth's (2000) discussion of banality, which he associates with everydayness, allowing "for a plurality of spaces to inhabit any single space" (234). Since NRT's beginnings, this notion of everydayness has opened the door: to work on presence and absence as an emotional encounter one experiences in a place or a landscape; to work on metaphor (Bogost, 2012); to Wylie, Robinson and Rose's work on walking through landscape; as well as dwelling and displacement in landscape and the geographies of love (Robinson, 1986; M. Rose, 2002; Wylie, 2005, 2012). This exposition of NRT also includes a summary of criticisms raised against it, including its "textiness," its lack of connection to empirical study, the politically uncertain status of the subject, and its insistence on a world without differentiations beyond 'life' and 'the subject' (Cresswell, 2012). Other critiques have also focused on NRT's masculine tradition of solitary engagement with landscape and its rejection of representation while using (at length) language as a representational tool (Bondi, 2005; Cresswell, 2012; Cresswell et al., 2015; Thien,

2005; Tolia-Kelly, 2006).

The rationale for exploration of these concepts and theories is to set the stage for a deep investigation of the possibilities inherent in geopoetics as a contributory and connective "force" (Colls, 2012) in geography. NRT shares several preoccupations with the creative artists I have selected for examination in this dissertation. Crossover occurs in their investigations of the concepts of home, landscape, place and representation. They also share an interest in investigating the boundaries and limits of embodied subjectivities and in how bodies feel in the world – their emotions, affects and corporality. Here, I continue work begun by creative writers who have preoccupations that intersect with geographical work on place and landscape, and have added to knowledge both inside and outside of geopoetics (Abeysekera, 2011; Bartlett, 1995; Bushell, 1996; Christensen, 2012; De Leeuw, 2004, 2015; Hensby, 2012; Lilburn, 1999, 2002, 2008; McCaslin, 2011; McKay, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2011; McLeod, 2014; Northrup, 2013; Paul, 2003, 2008; Simpson, 2014; Whetter, 1997; Zwicky, 1998, 2003, 2011a, 2012). I conclude this chapter with two thoughts. Firstly, I argue that Zwicky's description and understanding of lyric versus domestic experience can be mapped onto NRT's scholarship on absence/presence to illuminate both. I then propose a rethinking of NRT's much criticized pre-political state, using Zwicky's understanding of lyric experience in order to show that coherence with the world can both preserve the specificity of a person, but also acknowledge the experience of "a wholeness that is not merely additive" (Zwicky 2011, L66). Is this a universalizing experience? I think it is rather a "unity that is dependent on multiplicity for its meaning" (Zwicky 2011, L67). Zwicky continues that "lyric thought springs from love, love that attends to the most minute details of difference; and in this attention experiences connection rather than isolation" (L69); it seems to me that this is both particularity and universality at once. This argument, for me, is an urgent ethical and environmental one as well as a theoretical one. I propose that NRT's attention to practice and affect is, essentially, an incomplete description of lyric understanding or lyric coherence. This lyric coherence is what desperately needs to be acknowledged, sought out, and cultivated in order to change the trajectory of human relationships with land and the planet.

Secondly, I turn to metaphor. Key to altering human relationships with the world is a new understanding of metaphor within geography. I argue that McKay's understanding of the term "wilderness" as a metaphor for all things in the world that "elude the mind's appropriations" (McKay 2001, 21) can help geographers come to better relation with the world. Additionally, I argue that Zwicky and McKay's conceptions of metaphor as identifying a 'third

space' contains elements of the embodied practice of emotional and creative geographies, and the discourse of more-than-representational theory. The not-one-not-two relationship of metaphor highlights both the particularity of a thing and its unification with another, offering clarifications for NRT and future directions for creative geographies. In addressing these scholars' investigations, I am not simply addressing perceived tensions between these geographies but also thinking about what creative geographies and geopoetics in particular might offer each, and how geopoetics might generate new knowledge through its particular approach to the practice of geography.

Chapter 3 serves as a bridge between the more traditionally academic work of the first two chapters and the creative work of the final two. It is a formally experimental piece which is an engagement with poets who contribute to my understanding of geopoetics. An abridged version of this chapter appears in the edited book, *Geopoetics in Practice* (Magrane et al. 2019). My questions for this chapter are: What are the geopoetic possibilities for unfolding place? How might creative process and product (specifically poetry and poetics) contribute to geographical thought? How can I find a way to talk about poems and place within the social sciences, using my training as an artist? A geopoetics in practice, this piece is a response to a call issued by geographers for a more situated, creative, entangled way of writing about the world. I ask what creative geographies have accomplished in recent decades, and I look at the theoretical underpinnings that have driven this turn to the creative and what topics within the discipline of geography lend themselves to creative exploration. I then turn to a possible form for geopoetics concerned with place and landscape, positing what facets and what thinkers in contemporary poetics and poetry might be relevant and useful for geographers. In particular, I look at both geographic and poetic theories of place and landscape that can better inform the interpretation and critique of contemporary geopoetics.

The form of this chapter is necessarily a reflection of its content. It uses dialogue as a method – that essential interaction between self and other, between disciplines, within and outside the academy – that is our best chance at ethically approaching the world, as Rose-Redwood et al. (2018) argue. Some of the chapter occurs in short prose vignettes; some takes place in more aphoristic prose; and some is poetry itself, the record of an encounter with that place called poetry. I wish to undertake a geographer's practice, but to write about place with an artist's eye. The vignettes of daily life (in Ajijíc, Mexico) that conclude this piece support the poems that were produced in place and illustrate the concepts raised in the earlier prose. The

prose work sets the stage; the vignettes are my observations; the poems are the creative culmination of the study.

Chapters 4 & 5

In Chapters 4 and 5, I turn to the practice of creative geographies. Chapters 4 is a manuscript of poetry (accepted for publication in 2022 with Nightwood Editions); Chapter 5 is a short creative non-fiction article (published in *GeoHumanities* in 2017). The former is preceded by a preamble that grounds this creative work. These chapters show how creative work can act as a form and a method to help unsettle understandings of representation; contribute to scholarship (using creative methods) on place and landscape as well as affect and the experience of emotion in place; explore the potential for lyric thought and the applications of the poetic concepts of metaphor and failure in practice within geography; and, to add to geopoetics' creative vocabulary through using creative work on and in place as a method of legitimizing creative practitioners within the discipline of geography.

The positioning of these final two chapters differs considerably from what comes before. Having taken the time to attend to critiques of lyric poetry and its choices (use of metaphor, embracing of beauty), and to posit what geopoetics as an act of attendance might add to geography and specific geographical fields, these chapters put into practice what has been explored. They embrace their individual forms (dialoguing prose and poetry), and the texts that inform and inspire them. There are many ways of making poetry, and of writing creatively. Poetry needs a variety of voices to begin to undo colonialism, to give space for historically silenced groups to speak (including the voices of other species), and to endure the loss and sadness that will accompany climate change. My background as an environmental writer, and my history as someone with inextricable ties to south coast island (Salish Sea) ecosystems, dictate that these chapters take inspiration from writers who best address my chronic panic in the face of the changes I have seen in my home. To write of both places of importance and emotions that dog me is to write of the insideness and outsideness of place (Relph in Seamon & Sowers 2008). The writers cited in Chapter 3 help me navigate these two aspects of place, while inspiring me to respond in kind, helping me to recognize the shape of my own politics, which fixates on giving voice, on pursuing justice, on care, courtesy and love, but from my own rooted perspective, even when situated, as many of the poems in Chapter 4 are, in a culture not my own.[4]

[4] An aside about my creative practice Mexico: I became fluent in Spanish in my 20s, when I spent a semester abroad in the central highlands city of Morelia. Since then I have lived, cumulatively, in the country for close to three years.

Chapter 5 functions as a storytelling piece about the land (and water) in and on which I learned how to attend to the world. Storytelling in geography is a way of dislodging the focus on "reductive forms of testing" (Last 2012, 706) present in much social science scholarship, and focuses on emotional experience and understandings of relationships (de Leeuw 2017). But as Cameron (2012) deftly summarizes, storytelling in the last three decades has expanded since the cultural turn's use of story as a way of "thinking through the workings of power, knowledge, and geographical formations at the most intimate scales" (Cameron 2012, 574). Since then, storytelling has been taken up in a range of recent work which views story as "an object of knowledge…a form of practice…and…a mode of academic expression" (575), an approach that loosens geographers' grip on the need to tie story to "notions of ideology, epistemology, representation, power, and knowledge" (575). Instead, storytelling has recently been used as a way to tell small, mundane stories, which express experience as a "situated practice of transformative change" (575) and a political tool; and finally, storytelling functions as an "expressive method and an affective tool" (575) that challenges understandings of story as solely representational. Chapter 5 contains elements of all three of these understandings of story in geography. The piece tells small stories of those who live on and in the water; it gives voice to an increasingly marginalized group (liveaboards)[5] in an attempt to express the situated political relationships of those on the sea and around it; and it works within an experiential and affective form, seeking to express the personal through lyric language and addressing of emotion that goes beyond the representable. It should be noted, however, that all chapters in this dissertation contain elements of storytelling, often as an entry into each chapter's preoccupation, and as a way of drawing a reader into the work.

Finally, this dissertation concludes by considering the possibilities for future research and work in the geohumanities. One specific question which this work provides an opening for is the

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I live there not as a social scientist but as an artist. It has been a respite place for me, where I have developed life-long friendships and where I have long gone to regain my practice of my art and my sense of emotional equilibrium. Barbara Kingsolver (2009) writes that America of the 1930s had a great deal of hope and not much art, where Mexico had a great of art and not much hope, a description that has stayed with me for its strange, continuing accuracy. Thus, those characters who appear in the poems of Chapter 4 are a kind of family to me, though names and details have been changed for anonymity. Their appearance is not meant as an ethnography but a manifestation of care in place, an emotional attendance.

[5] Liveaboards are predominantly marginalized peoples, often due to their poverty, but also by their choice to live outside the dominant (white) framework of land-dwelling, property-tax paying residents of a coastal area. For this, they are ostracized by shore-dwelling land owners, chased from safe harbours using increasingly common License of Occupation bylaws drafted by local municipalities, or in other ways legislated out of their right to occupy federal waters. In the choice to occupy an alterative existence, they also represent an interesting political commentary on property-oriented capitalism, on the land-dweller's participation in the economy of things, and present a counter to the narrative that poverty precludes attachment to and connection with the natural world.

possibility of taking very seriously the claim that metaphor matters. What might that mean? Metaphor, and its use in poetic language within this dissertation, provides a potential connective, between the social sciences and the humanities, and as a method of carrying forward work on how to live as a body in the world as if it were home (Lilburn, 1999, 2008) while considering a more care-full and imaginative way of doing so.

In summary, this research program defines geopoetics as a form of attendance, relates this understanding to my own practice as an eco-poet and addresses the question of what poetry might add (and what it cannot) to creative geographies. It then turns to geopoetics and what my understanding of geopoetics might contribute to related geographical fields. Next, it clarifies theory through a mapping of lyric experience onto the pre-political assertions of NRT. Finally, I answer the call that geographers have made to include creative work and specifically geopoetics in the discipline of geography – one that takes into account voices from the creative arts, and one that recognizes subjective, qualitative understandings of the world. In the conclusion, I indicate future directions for geopoetics, including a closer study of metaphor as a trope and as a research tool.

Ethics

Ethics regulations are clear at the University of Victoria. Research using human subjects must receive ethics approvals. Text-based research is exempt from ethics approvals. The first three chapters of my disseratation draw from textual research. Creative works are also exempt from ethics regulations. Chapters 4 and 5 of this work are not qualitative studies but part of my artistic practice. They were written without a research question, and without a known or hypothesized outcome. My artistic practice work, as confirmed by the University of Victoria, is exempt from examination under social science standards of ethics. This work operates instead as two completed works of art: a book of poems (Chapter 4) and a creative non-fiction piece (Chapter 5); I have applied for and received official exemption from the university from needing ethics approvals for this entire dissertation.

Conclusion

Readers will notice that a change in tone marks the critical chapters from the creative work in this study. Though I seek to integrate my own work as a poet, there is also a need for critical grounding that can set the stage and contextualize my own poetic direction. Thus, readers

will find the critical chapters engage with poetry, geopoetics and geographical theories, aiming for scholarly coherence and rigour, rather than primarily poetic tone, though some flourishes are still present. This is not accidental. The list is long of poets who have also completed critical work on not just poetry but philosophy, geography, and environmental studies (Warren Heiti, (2015) Sue Sinclair (2015), and Adam Dickinson (2004) come to mind as contemporaries). A change of tone in this dissertation does not, in this case, mark a change of intent or topic.

Chapters 4 and 5 are also examples of how one might *do* situated, emotional work in a geohumanities context, and the problems geographers face in engaging creative and humanities-focused work, methods and methodologies. In particular, and to bring this project into the realm of my own experience as a poet and geographer, I will identify how to bring emotional geographical practices into my own textual, creative work, particularly through the use of situated knowledges, autobiography and my own work as a poet. Geopoetics, like metaphor, goes beyond simple representation, employing a form that can gesture beyond language. It can also fail, or fall short. Creative geographies, in both their successes and failures, have a great deal to offer to geography; this section of the dissertation will answer the call for increased participation by artists in geography's canon.

Why choose the mixed methods of scholarly and creative writing as opposed to simply traditional geographical scholarship or a fully creative dissertation? As Magrane (2017, 12) writes, "the geohumanities open up space for outputs that blend theory and praxis, going into the world as much in a catalytic, expressive…mode as in an analytic mode. In doing so, they radically add to the forms that geographic work takes in the world." New forms encourage new readings, new understandings of what it is to be in place and how that place affects a person. Creative geographical explorations of place add to the voices who have experienced these places; in choosing a creative form, I seek a wider acceptance, within geography, for geopoetics as radical but justifiable form, providing a way to further the scholarship of geohumanities, while also contributing to its practice through extended creative work. In the end, this dissertation works to mix these voices so that they might be considered as contributing both equally and as necessarily intertwined. For if "geopoetics…[is] a practice of re-making, re-enchanting, and re-imagining our relationship with each other" (Magrane 2017, 24), it is also a practice of reimagining the relationships and boundaries between critical and creative work, allowing for greater polyphony and attention to the nuances of the world.

Chapter 1: Situating Poetry within Geopoetics

Introduction

During a ten-day period I spent in Muenster, Saskatchewan, attending *In the Field* at St. Peter's College in 2004, the attendees, instructors and I took several field trips.[1] During the field trip I remember best, we travelled out to some short-grass prairie remnants that lay an hour's drive from the abbey, guided by Trevor Herriot (author of *Grass, Sky, Song*) and Tim Lilburn, who had both been living in the area for years. With the introduction of intensive settler agriculture, native short grass prairie has been destroyed. Only small patches remain, untouched because they are too wet and unploughable, too inaccessible, or just forgotten, before they were turned, in tiny pieces, into parkland. Short grass prairie is one of the richest ecosystems on the prairies; the roots of grassland forbs and flowers go down feet. The prairie supports an enormous array of bird, insect and mammal species, and is critically endangered.

We walked from the cars, our pant legs tucked into our boots to protect against ticks, past aspen groves and caragana and rose brush into the hummocked openness that was hundreds of species of grasses, flowers, mosses, dragonflies and birds. It was early afternoon in mid-June, and the heat crept out of the earth around us. The blue sky arched overhead, unmarred by a cloud. We were six participants, three instructors and naturalist Trevor Herriot. Alternately listening, then joking and talking, Trevor was telling the story of how local residents had managed to protect the parcel. We were listening for the call of a Sprag's pippet, or a burrowing owl. Then they were in the air above us, without our knowing they were coming. We stood under a wave of Monarch butterflies, as they migrated north from Mexico. A swath of the sky turned from blue to bright orange. It was a wave so long we couldn't see its end. Some forgotten fragment of conversation lingered in the air as we all craned skyward, apprehending this ribbon of solid sunlight that just happened to pass directly over us, in the middle of remnant patchwork grasslands of Saskatchewan. I remember a feeling of simultaneously craning into and out of myself, as if seeing them through a pinhole camera and also from within their midst. I remember

[1] *In the Field* was a low residency MFA equivalent program that was offered through St. Peter's College, in Muenster, Saskatchewan. The subtitle of the program was "Contemplative Philosophy, Environmental Thought, and Writing." Tim Lilburn, Don McKay and Jan Zwicky offered the program for three years from 2004-2007. Ten days of summer residency (in which a day of conversation alternated with a day of silence) were followed by six months of letter writing between myself and an allotted faculty member, exploring a decided-on set of readings. The following spring, participants gathered again at St. Peter's to discuss their findings.

wondering who of us would write this down (a poem about the experience is included in my second book of poetry). I remember feeling completely inadequate to the task of translating their passing. I remember wanting to rise up into their midst, and simultaneously wanting to pull them down.

The ribbon had an end. It faltered, then stragglers appeared, then it was over. I think all our mouths were open. The sounds of the songbirds and rain-slap of aspen leaves suddenly seemed overpowering, after the feather rush of their wings. I fell fully back into my body, though a piece of me floated above for the next few hours, even as we counted the ticks on our clothing upon returning to the cars, throwing them out the windows as we drove. Even as we showered the last ones off, at the Abbey. Even as we joined the monks for supper, our last talk before the upcoming day of silence. Something in me is still attending to those bodies, their dusted wings propelling them over a continent, the blue/orange contrast blowing open my heart.

This, to me, is attendance to the world. I am aware of wanting something; and of being in awe, which is without want. The fulcrum of my attention rests both in the limitedness of myself as a human, and completely with the thing that I apprehend and cannot ever fully understand. The search for a description of the experience can only be satisfied through metaphor (a wave, a ribbon, how viewing them was as if through a camera's viewfinder, so concentrated was our gaze). Even when conveying this in prose (as opposed to the poem I published), I turn to language that can more directly appeal to the sense of strangeness and simultaneous sense of connection – lyric language, imagistic, emotional, acknowledging of the wilderness in every creature in the world. It is these abilities and this perspective that I believe geopoetics has to offer geography. This is the attempt at "the good step" as elucidated by Tim Robinson (1986) – to try (and ultimately to fail) to match the deftness of the world as it arcs through its life.

This chapter explores this good step, in that it is possible to enact one, and what geopoetics, as a subfield of geography, might be capable of, as well as what pitfalls might await it along the way. My intent is to engage with thinking within creative geographies and geopoetics in the last decade, and as a poet (someone who thinks and writes about poetry) and geographer (someone who thinks and writes about place, landscape, and the earth), try to clarify what poetry can (and can't) do for geography. There are matters of means, intent, and aesthetics that reside within the art of poetry which must not be lost as it is brought across disciplinary thresholds. My positionality is as a professional writer who has been creating and studying place-based creative work for over two decades; I am concerned that a poet's understanding of poetics be given its

due as geopoetics develops and matures within geography. In particular, politics has a different (though not lesser) role in creative writing than in geography. As a poet concerned with anthropogenic changes on the earth, and the precariousness of our lives as climate change progresses, I am particularly focused on what nature poets and eco-poets might have to contribute to geopoetics. This chapter strives, through its necessarily partial view, to open up a wider space for geographers' encounters with all manner of poets, poems, poetry and poetics.

Why poetry?

Why are some geographers turning to the creative arts, and specifically to poetry when the world's ecosystems are crumbling around us? Why not study glacier movement or work to save the myriad species in the Amazon rainforests? Why particularly turn to poetry? What is it that scholars such as Kropotkin (1885) and Meinig (1983) are really asking for when inviting creative work into geography? The call for creative intervention by geographers can seem facile, when so little is known by geographers of the way poems work, and how they succeed or fail.

Concurrently, what does a written art have to offer groups – queer, racialized, maginalized peoples – for whom daily existence would seem to demand relief through more overt political means – policy changes, enactment of the Truth and Reconciliation Recommendations, or return of stolen land, for example – not just figurative language about birds and trees and feelings. As a painful example, the first language of the Saanich Peninsula on Vancouver Island, SENĆOŦEN, is now spoken by less than 25 people, with only four living Elders speaking it as a first language; SENĆOŦEN will go extinct in the coming decades, if language revitalization programs currently being developed are not successful. What can poetry do to nurture what Lilburn has called this "chthonic tongue… in possession of unusual powers" (Lilburn 2016, 1)?

The answers to these questions are complex, and involve admitting what poetry cannot do as much as pointing to what it can, while simultaneously admitting to Lilburn's suspicion that poetry is useless, and that its energy comes exactly from that uselessness. Answering these questions may also involve taking a step back from the work done thus far in geopoetics to get a more comprehensive lay of the land. With the publication of Magrane's (2015) article "Situating Geopoetics" in *GeoHumanities*, practitioners and scholars of this creative/critical discipline within geography finally have a foundational text within the discipline of geography that can serve as an outline of approaches to geopoetics. Magrane's (2017) article is now one of the most cited and read in the journal, which goes to show its need. Magrane identifies the work of

geopoetics as occurring in three modes: as creative geography, as literary geography, and as geophilosophy. His work has helped to solidify the discipline of geopoetics, but when I read his and other works which seek to integrate creative with scholarly work, I suspect more needs to be done to develop the first and third of his modes. Namely in the first: how does poetry function? What does it do? Which poets and poems should be cited? How does it both fail and succeed in adding to the world as an art (and as a geography)? If we do not understand the concept of how a poem works and what it can and cannot do, we cannot responsibly employ it or its methodologies in geography. And in the third: what might poetics have to contribute to adjacent theories in geography? What does geopoetics as a process (as opposed to product or outcome) look like?

I attended a seminar of artists and scientists in April 2017. Founded and run by naturalist Trevor Goward, Edgewood is a centre for conversation, seminars and field study in Clearwater, BC. Called "Enlichenment, Enlivenment and the Poetics of Place," the seminar brought together ecologists, visual artists, writers and other scientists, to attend half day workshops by poet Don McKay, landscape artist Marlene Creates and Trevor himself and tromp around the area with knowledgable guides. The Clearwater Valley is the territory of the Shuswap Ns'mpxemux (people of the North Thompson River); Wells Grey Provincial Park surrounds the Edgewood property, which is mostly comprised of lodge pole pine and spruce, mossy uplands, marshes with warblers, and the Clearwater River itself, hundreds of feet below the stretch of the valley, in a volcanic rock laden gorge.

What was telling about the seminar was the way in which poets' voices were welcomed to the conversation; it was an example of an undercurrent movement that is gathering momentum as environmental health becomes a more pressing concern. More and more, practitioners of the arts and sciences are gathering together at conferences to face together the challenges of the Anthropocene and climate change, through the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE), the Association for Literature, Environment and Culture (ALECC), conferences such as "Speak to the Wild" (2013) and Trinity Western's "Art + Science" (2015). I see the advent of geopoetics, within the established field of the geohumanities, as part of this movement.

These moments of exchange, however, are both inspiring and troubling. It is galvanizing to see art and art practices invited into conversation with scientists and social scientists. Poetry is being valued for what it can contribute, and it is being put forward as a political tool (see de

Leeuw 2004, 2013, 2017; Magrane 2017; Madge 2014; Cresswell 2014). And yet, as has recently been argued (see Marston & de Leeuw 2013; Hawkins 2015; Lilburn 2016; Madge 2014), we must proceed with caution, ensuring that we are not taking a highly developed discipline in the arts and applying it as a heal-all, or practicing it without knowledge of the extensive practice and cultivation of skill involved in creating a successful poem.

Lilburn, at the 2015 Art + Science conference at Simon Fraser University, remarked that scientists seemed to be searching for "something sharper," with which they could persuade the public of the seriousness of climate change statistics. That something sharper, however, would be "diminished or imperilled if too heavy a charge of will-directed shaping entered the discipline" (Lilburn 2016, 4). In this, Lilburn refers to the ability of poetry to be political as opposed to its ability to achieve overt political aims, which I argue are two different needs, and which I will explore in this chapter's second section. Geopoetics should thus proceed with caution, with an understanding that scientists (and social scientists) may be asking for something that poetry cannot give.

In this chapter, I concentrate my arguments on what poetry can add to geography and specifically geopoetics by referencing the lyric poem, arguably the most widespread form of poetry being written today. There are countless other forms of poetry – from performance poetry to experimental, concrete, conceptual or sound poetry – but much of what creative geographers have looked to for intervention into geography has been lyric in form (see Eshun & Madge 2012; Madge 2014; Magrane 2017; Dekel 2008; Tuan 2004; Butz et al. 2011; Dunlop 2002). My own professional training as a poet has also been as a lyric writer, and thus this genre of poetry is where this chapter focuses.

A lyric poem is generally written from the point of view of one speaker; it explores a state of mind or emotion; it uses techniques such as metaphor, imagery, and musical elements such as rhythm and rhyme (though it is generally no longer end-rhymed); it is momentary and timeless at once; it is known for its precision, its emotional depth, its voice and its combination of the mortal with the timeless, the historical with the momentary. A lyric can also be a song; lyric poetry is musical, it finds coherence through patterns of words that enrich one another across lines and throughout a piece using repetition of sounds and pauses, using pattern:

> The most attractive things, in biology, physics and art, have a deep patterned complexity, pattern laid on or emerging from pattern, suggesting time and labour in their assemblage, suggesting, as well, motion. One way to render this phenomenon is mathematics; another way is rhythm or song. (Lilburn 2018, 123)

Lyric is momentary in its creation of these patterns, but it is also timeless. Simic writes that "what the lyric poem says is that all present moments since the beginning of the world are" (Simic 1996, 172).

Lyric as understood by poet Jan Zwicky is best defined through relation. It is, she writes, "thought in love with clarity, informed by the intuition of coherence; by a desire to respond to the preciousness of the world" (2011, L102). Lithe, poignant, musical, orphic, rooted in a love of the world, lyric nonetheless rejects "the 'outpouring of subjective emotion' connected with the rise of Romantic poetry" as corrupt and based in the ego. Lyric, instead, "springs from love, love that attends to the most minute details of difference; and in this attention experiences connection rather than isolation" (L69). In this, it validates the individuality of a body, embracing difference, oddness, unexpectedness and polyphony:

> To claim that lyric experience is open to the world is not to deny the existence of other perspectives. It is to deny that the existence of other perspectives renders our own ontologically opaque. What lyric perception is *not* conditioned by is the human ego. (L233)

This is an important point to note when bringing the concept of lyric into the field of geography. Much of lyric's traits would seem to mesh well with qualitative geography – its emotional, personal explorations, its attention to difference and pattern, its dedication to a charting of the experience of being in the world. But an intuition of coherence in the world can raise the spectre of NRT's pre-political body, where a feminist argument would protest the notion of universal understanding or experience, calling it a return to humanist geography's conceptions of the primacy of the human in relation to other species, and the homogeneity of human experience itself. Lyric understanding, however, focuses not on a singular experience of coherence that is identical for all, but rather on a clarity that is briefly transparent (read: transparency as an "utterance [that] reveals the presence of the world *through* language" (L260)) and has "gestural integrity" (L259).[2] Lyric points to each thing *as it is*, akin to phenomenology's focus or to Kant's description of noumena. A.R. Ammons' poem "Poetics" helps to clarify:

> **Poetics**
>
> I look for the way
> things will turn
> out spiralling from a centre,

[2] I say briefly transparent because lyric, in Zwicky's understanding, is not a mode of being in which humans live; it is, instead, a place that we visit, a place removed from the opacity of the unconscious, the dailyness of domestic life, or the constraints of time.

the shape
things will take to come forth in

so that the birch tree white
touched black at branches
will stand out
wind-glittering
totally its apparent self:

I look for the forms
things want to come as

from what black wells of possibility,
how a thing will
unfold:

not the shape on paper – though
that, too – but the
uninterfering means on paper:

not so much looking for the shape
as being available
to any shape that may be
summoning itself
through me
from the self not mine but ours. (Ammons 1977, 61)

Interestingly, Zwicky also argues that lyric thought is proto-linguistic and calls attention to our particular capacity for language-use, and how this "cuts us off from the world in a way, or to a degree, that is painful" (Zwicky 2011, L132). Language becomes a burden that highlights loss, but not the loss of connection; rather the loss of silence. "Lyric art is the fullest expression of the hunger for wordlessness" (ibid).[3] Thus, Zwicky avoids the perpetuation of a Cartesian dualism of nature/culture and the divide that language makes between humans and other species. Instead, she gestures toward an integrity many of us may have felt when immersed in the world in one or another situation (in a city late at night, in a field on mid-summer's morning, while participating in the state of flow that can occur during the creation of art) and the wordlessness that seems to surround that experience. In Zwicky's words, "Lyric speech enacts an integration informed by a desire whose sustained fulfillment is impossible: the archer who strains to make the ends of the bow touch – even though this can happen only if the bow breaks" (2011, L134).

[3] It should be noted that this "hunger for wordlessness" is very different from a new cultural geographers' tendency to "[prostrate] [her]self before the aesthetic power of landscape," choosing silence rather than critique in the face of a pleasure that is tainted "by the specificity of social relations" (Rose 1993, 99). That art is not exempt from political critique should go without saying. Of course an author is informed by and influenced by many factors when producing a work; a geographer is similarly responsible for his or her interpretation of these texts. Zwicky's silence instead refers to the trickiness of language as a tool of representation (as well as a performance or an affectual way of exploring care), not an eschewing of political responsibility.

In this, the lyric form is well-situated to respond to the calls by Meinig (1983) and others for the creation of art within geography, as it seeks to provide descriptions of momentary events and states of emotion while also gesturing toward larger affectual states and politics in the world.

Elements of lyric

When looking at lyric poetry, then, what constitutes a successful lyric poem? What can it add to the world? For Emily Dickinson, when reading a poem, the top of one's head should come off. For Barbara Guest, a poem is "the productive tension" between "the desire of the poet to control," and "something within the poem that desires the invisible" (2002, 19). For Robert Hass, who focuses much of his work on the power of the image in poetry, "literature is a long study of instances" (Hass 1984, 303). Basho, during a teaching dialogue with his students, once said, "The problem with most poems is that they are either subjective or objective." "Don't you mean *too* subjective or objective?" his student asked, "No," said Basho (in Hirshfield 1998, 101). When asked if poetry plays a role in social change, Adrienne Rich answered, "Yes, where poetry is liberative language, connecting the fragments within us, connecting us to others like and unlike ourselves, replenishing our desire" (Rich in Rankine 2016, np). "Art is not a service," adds Louise Glück, "Or, rather, it does not reliably serve all people in a standardized way. Its service is to the spirit, from which it removes the misery of inertia" (Glück 1994, 93). The image-making that poetry involves, argues Wallace Stevens, is "primarily a discipline of rightness" (in Hirshfield 1998, 18), where the unexpected and previously unexpressed adds to the knowledge of the world. In a notebook, Wittgenstein writes, "Words are probes…Some reach very deep, some only to a little depth" (in Hirshfield 1998, 119).

All point to a distinct wilderness in poetry that cannot be harnessed to "will-directed shaping" (Lilburn 2016), though of course it can be built, organically, around a theme or subject (see Bishop 2008; de Leeuw 2015; Price 2006). The difference between creating with a political will and creating with a theme in mind seems to be the looseness that the act of creation itself needs. Glück concurs:

> Poetic intelligence lacks…focused investment in conclusion, being naturally wary of its own assumptions. It derives its energy from a willingness to discard conclusion in the face of evidence, in fact, to discard anything.
>
> This flexibility and this intensity of purpose give the sort of eerie steadiness of mind Emily Dickinson has; even poets who stray wildly, intentionally, display such steadiness, since its essence is attentiveness to the path of thought. (1994, 94-95)

I argue that certain elements in a poem are necessary for its success and for its communication and transmission of emotion and understanding. Without them, the poem dies, and cannot do its job of communicating with and moving its reader. In my experience as a poet, these elements are easily seen when they are missing, but harder to define when they are present (as it is hard to teach a good poem, but easier to teach a mediocre one). Recent work in geopoetics (Magrane 2017; Bristow 2015) has chosen to focus on close readings of poems in order to show how poems work and what they are doing. They examine music, diction, rhythm, voice, and other metric elements of poems, as well as how they contribute to geographical knowledge. To take a step back from the intricacy of an individual poem, however, is also important in order to put forward an argument on what many successful poems seem to contain. This chapter will examine ludic play, resonance, aperture and failure as four major elements that are present in creative works of poetry. This list should not be taken as a comprehensive list, but as highly personal, and also one that admits that there is something a poem contains that cannot be defined, because it seeks itself to speak of the indefinable. Simic writes, "all that comes from deepest emotions and most intense visions and radiates from the core of a good poem, eludes critical analysis" (1996, 173). That caveat, and the acknowledgement that the best lyric poems are often created in and also "shadowed by solitude and silence" (ibid., 173) needs to precede any discussion of what poetry does, and how it does it.

Ludic elements

What makes poetry successful not *just* as a political object but as a piece of art? Firstly, poetry has ludic elements, which serve to free the poem from polemical speech, and allow it the latitude to arrive to unexpected places. I argue there are four elements in ludic play that must operate in the creation of poetry; three are suggested by Lilburn (2016): metaphor-making, a contemplative gaze and a form of mimesis (often found in image-making). I add a fourth: oddness or strangeness.

Metaphor

Metaphor-making is a "non-reductive…intuition [that] forms surprisingly heterogeneous wholes" (Lilburn 2016, 3). In metaphor, there is the enlarging tendency – a poem reaches out past itself through the linking of two seemingly unlike things: a heart and a red pepper (Sinclair 2001); Hayden's music and a house of glass (Transtromer 1997); the art of losing and a small glass vial of asbestos (Acker 2009). To work within geopoetics is to give credence to the positive power that poetry has, and to acknowledge that most authors want to do good through their work,

and seek to include rather than exclude, to facilitate care, not damage (for exceptions, see the work of Kenneth Goldsmith in Steinhauer 2015). This is not naivete; this is the same reasoning that led Zwicky to reject the practice of the 'negative review' in poetry criticism in Canada. Thus, metaphor should be acknowledged as an effective tool to push both language and the reader to understandings that reach beyond simply rhetorical device or linguistic ornamentation. Metaphor, as argued by Bifford (in Dickinson & Goulet 2010), can help in the "cultivation of ecological responsibility because metaphor enables ontological insight…[seeing] and [hearing] more clearly actual relationships that inhere in the world because of the kind of thinking metaphor engenders" (192). Metaphor can change how we understand a poem and how we understand the world and the actions we undertake *in* the world. Apprehension and understanding of metaphor enliven a more profound and connected way of thinking about the world, and can be seen as an extension of geopoetics as a form of attendance; to attend is to grasp relevant detail, to notice and respond to particularity, to acknowledge that "ontological attention is a form of love" (Zwicky 2003, L57). Metaphor thus becomes integral, in geography, to understandings of affect in nonrepresentational theory; it can help with facilitation of care and emotional knowledge in feminist theory; and it can help encourage the empathy and imagination needed for more-than-human interactions and explorations. In short, it has transformative power for how we attend to the world, how we comprehend it, and how we act within it.

Metaphor is extralinguistic. It is outside of the normal bounds of what representation through language can achieve (though this does not mean it is non-linguistic, but that it is linguistic-plus+). It cannot be defined, yet it forms a connection between two unlike things to give understanding of a third, unstated term. "The heart is a red pepper." The two terms, *heart* and *red pepper*, name on their own. But they do not contribute to a third understanding (a third term) until placed together in a relational metaphor. And even then, the only way we can deconstruct this third term (using language) is by describing qualities of the first or second term (it is red, chambered, hollow, grows in strange ways, full of seeds, bitter but sweet, pith-filled, with a tough skin but a malleable interior), and not by describing the indescribable third term itself. This third term is the gesture beyond language. It is a kind of dance, a throwing of language out into the wilderness, and an inviting of wilderness into language. What, then, does metaphor do? It has the potential (when used well) to show us the kinship or likeness between seemingly unlike things. It refuses the dualistic thinking that is a common method of dividing disciplines. Through valuing of intuitive connection, metaphor has generative capacity to show

us the world as unknowable, beguiling, a thing of beauty that can gesture toward (not solve, not quantify) a body in the world. Metaphor can open a sphere of understanding that, for a brief moment, need not be pre- or post-political. It need only apprehend the gestural capacity of language to exceed itself, to create a bridge between one species and another, one world and another – to dance, to fling out an arm and point, to make a movement toward connection and understanding, to generate new worlds and subjectivities.

Contemplation

The second ludic element is contemplation or absorption, of "striking individualities, especially, most tellingly, the least obvious ones" (Lilburn 2016, 4). This is an attention to the *thisness* of things, their individuality and inability to be mistaken, when one looks long enough, for anything else. This attendant gaze is based in the contemplative act, and involves an intellectual and emotional alertness, a lightness, a permeability to the world. Zwicky (2003) calls this contemplative act one of love, an act that thus has political possibilities. To acknowledge *thisness* and to engage in an act of love demands (at its best) an ethical stance toward the things of the world, and the recognition of their agency and vitality (Bennett 2010).

Mimesis

The third element of serious play is a form of mimesis, a "floaty, drifting, non-compulsive, multi-channel," during which the poet apprehends and replicates the real within the "affect-rich atmosphere of contemplative attention" (Lilburn 2018, 4). Also carrying political import, mimesis acknowledges the world as worth repeating, as having something to teach, in the way that artists replicate master works in order to learn their techniques, but also in the way that the world can show humans what to do, what to harvest, what stories to retell. Simpson's (2014) chapter on the first harvesting of maple sugar water is an interaction between the natural world, the squirrel's knowledge and the Nishnaabeg child. Replication is not just about learning something new (how to tap and harvest maple sap) but "the reproduction of a loving web…within which learning takes place" (2014, 9). Mimesis is a conversation between the world and the artist without agenda, focused not on control or extraction of knowledge for intellectual or monetary profit, but on free-flowing attentiveness that wanders without agenda to "the leaf at the edge of the frame, the deer with the injured foot, the blue of a dress" (Lilburn 2017, 4). This "drifting experience" is at odds with overt political agenda, but it is nonetheless political through its slowing down, its attention to detail and its impractical eye (Zapruder 2017, np).

Strangeness

Fourth is an element of ludic play that seems the most playful of all – a strangeness, in subject matter, in approach, in voice. Strangeness (the trait of being odd, unexpected, strange) situates some of poetry's draw – it is something that catches at us, even as it continues to seem (and often presents itself) as useless, an oddity that does not fit into capitalist ideas of use. Zapruder calls oddness a "defamiliarization, a method of countering the habitualization" we experience in life when touching and moving through the world of objects (cars, furniture, clothes, landscapes) as well as the experience of language itself, where "we start forgetting the true significance of words" (2018, 42). Poetry makes language, and experience, strange again, "jarring us awake" (43). But the act of making the ordinary strange is certainly not specific to poetry; I also see it in physical comedy, such as the joyous films of Buster Keaton that heighten those moments of clumsiness at the meeting points of ourselves and another thing or person. There is a comedy and oddness in both the antagonism and agonism between people and things (think of the house's facade falling around Keaton's body in *Steamboat Bill Jr.* or his classic all-suffering expression behind the bubble of a diving helmet). Humour, amidst sadness, oddness and pathos, creates a world in which people keep their balance not through mastery of things, but through, as Allen Grossman writes, the "comedy of participation" (1992) and abandon. Oddness is endearing; we remember and love the laughable fear Wordsworth feels upon rowing out from the bay and seeing the mountain appear like a monster above the water during "The Prelude" Book 1 (1953). Or Simic's odd and surprising images (like a fat fly in a matchbox held by a lunatic (2016)), which seem to come from an uncanny undiscovered land between Yugoslavia and America, or McKay's "Knife," "Fork" and "Spoon" poems. When face up, the tines of a fork beg; when face down, they say: "anything that moves" (2000).

The key to the elements of play that Lilburn describes, and which have been echoed by many other poets (see Dobyns 2016; Oliver 1994; Hass 1984; Zapruder 2017; Sinclair 2017), is an unintended result of effort that overtly political poetry, which serves more as an amplification device in the service of an issue, cannot sustain, as the "net political loss…in the power of metaphor making and contemplative noting" is too great (Lilburn 2016, 4). As Susan Stewart argues:

> In beginning to make a poem, we claim some measure of freedom from the context of the situation…To make [a] work is to free such making from the very context that proposes it…A work of art does not communicate something that is already understood. The work is a determined outcome built from an inchoate, merely suggestive, beginning. Just as

> beauty appears to us as somehow artful, works of art come to be by fulfilling or manifesting their own initiating nature. (Stewart 2011, 54)

Resonance

I now move from ludic play to a second feature of good poetry: resonance. Resonance is both the emotion a poem contains and a combination of the rhythmic and auditory elements of a poem. It is present, for Zwicky, not just in poetry: "What numinous dreams, mystical experience, unparaphrasable lyric poems, a great deal of music, and the natural world all share, I believe, is resonant form" (Zwicky 2012, 208). An ineffable experience, resonant form in a poem is a kind of atunement or integration of its parts. For me, as a poet who employs musicality as a largely unconscious and necessary force in a poem, resonance is the affect a poem creates when read aloud or in the mind; it is the after-effect of a poem's words echoing after it has been finished. Resonance is what distinguishes lyric writing in particular from critical or scholarly writing. It is the combination of all the effects of language working together to push an understanding toward the reader. Without it, the poem is not more than the sum of its parts.

Aperture

A third element present in good poetry is the presence of aperture, a poetic device that has been noted by poets Allen Grossman (1992) and Lyn Hejinian (2000). Aperture can lead to several interesting points of reference for geographers interested in geopoetics (perhaps especially those who don't quite know why they are interested, but know that they are). For Grossman, aperture in poetry is additive (*this* and *this* and *this*…), and, taking its structure from the world, not the mind, "finds the world rising within it, not as a symbolic totality, but as a whole" (Grossman 1992, 335). Closure, for Grossman, "is the enabling structure of aesthetic humanism" (331). This is not to say that aperture in poetry is stable or calming, or professes to speak of universal truths. For Grossman, closure in poetry is totalizing, where aperture features each individual thing in the whole as participatory.

Aperture also lends itself to geographical understanding through the concept of care, which Grossman argues is the fundamental principle by which the poetry of aperture may unfold. Art which works within the ethics of care demands a kind of openness to the world. It is a whole-hearted engagement with that which it cares for. It is, by necessity, devoid of ego, empty of the moral value of work, free from virtue. This understanding of a caring poetry can be found echoed in Lawson's explorations of caring geography (see Lawson 2007 & 2009), with its focus on the "deeply social character of our existence and the ways that caring relations of dependency,

frailty, grief and love all shape the ways we reason and act in the world" (2009, 210).

Form is also an aspect of aperture. Hejinian writes:

> I can only begin a posteriori, by perceiving the world as vast and overwhelming; each moment stands under an enormous vertical and horizontal pressure of information, potent with ambiguity, meaning-full, unfixed, and certainly incomplete. What saves this from becoming a vast undifferentiated mass of data and situation is one's ability to make distinctions. The open text is one which both acknowledges the vastness of the world and is formally differentiating. It is form that provides an opening. (2000, 41)

Form, in Hejinian's understanding, does not mean always writing sonnets. Though it is spatial, as it places a line of words on the page and breaks them; words interact within the line, through lateral reach and "out of the text into the outer world" (50), gathering meaning and relation as they move. By form, Hejinian does not mean fixture but "an activity" of bringing clarity and articulation to the work of poetry (47), though she also names the decisions and constraints we place on poetic language in order that it produce the meanings we wish: "Writing's forms are not merely shapes but forces; formal questions about dynamics – they ask how, where, and why the writing moves, what are the types, directions, number, and velocities of a work's motion" (42).

I raise the concept of form because geographers have wondered whether poetry can be brought into geography *and* used a research tool (see Boyd 2017; Butler-Kisber 2001; de Leeuw 2003; Eshun & Madge 2012; Hawkins 2015; Hawkins & de Leeuw 2017; Madge 2014). Questions of form raise questions of familiarity with creative techniques. In tandem with this work, there has been questioning of the purpose of creation, who should be creating, and the ethics of the creation of art by those who have not worked for years to attain skill and expertise in making art (see de Leeuw & Hawkins 2017; Hawkins 2011, 2014, 2015; Ward 2014). I argue it is not form on its own (which can be experimented with by both geographers and artists) but the combination of form with aperture that produces a truly successful poem: "the conjunction of *form* with radical *openness* may be what can offer a version of the 'paradise' for which writing often yearns – a flowering focus on a distinct infinity" (Hejinian 2000, 42).[4]

Failure

The final element present in creative works of poetry is its embodiment of failure. I can

[4] This is not to say that geographers do not also use structure and form to express and solidify their arguments. Lorimer (2008) discusses the various methods geographers have used, including "essays, photo-essays, travelogues, prose-poetry, ethnographic and site-specific portraits, storytelling, life-writing and memory work" (2008, 2). Ward (2014) acknowledges that "scholars have long understood the power of structure to influence meaning, particularly where it might disrupt conventions (see Wylie 2005). Wylie's work in particular has garnered criticism for being "overtly self-centred and introspective" (Blacksell 2005, 518), a criticism that strikes me as a failure of imagination and aperture to creative, personal work within the boundaries of geography.

best describe my understanding of this element by first noting the points of contact between new materialism and geopoetics. Following the lead of Stacy Alaimo (2007) and Karen Barad (2007), I see geopoetics as an entangled geography that can share elements of trans-corporeality in its manner of portraying and recognizing the world. Poets such as Tranströmer, Hass, Simic, Christensen, Rilke, and Bishop have long recognized the threshold point – a kind of ecotone between bodies, entities, species, places – that language helps to identify. For many poets caught up with the successes and failures of language and representation, this threshold between writer and world can seem like a barrier, beyond which one cannot proceed. From Tranströmer's "Vermeer":

> It's the pressure from the other side of the wall.
> It makes each fact float
> and steadies the brush.
>
> It hurts to go through walls, it makes you ill
> but is necessary
> The world is one. But walls… (1997, 190)

For many poets, this threshold between world and language presents a possible failure of communication, though one that also contains its own possibilities. For Hejinian, in her essay "The Rejection of Closure," poetry permits us to distinguish ourselves from the world, and "while failing in the attempt to match the world, we discover structure, distinction, the integrity and separateness of things" (2000, 56).

New materialisms, however, provide a way of resituating these supposed failures. Instead of a barrier that creates the familiar nature/culture dualisms, Alaimo argues for a continuous, connected material understanding of our bodies with the rest of the world. The environment, she writes, citing Fromm, "'runs right through us in endless waves…water, air, food, microbes, toxins entering our bodies as we shed, excrete, and exhale our processed materials back out'" (in Alaimo, 2010, 11). This recognition of nature and culture as one continuous fabric (Casey 1993) allows for passage between disciplinary boundaries and across thresholds, highlighting a relational materiality of bodies and the world, allowing matter to be open, constantly in flux and in exchange, rather than static and fixed. New materialisms, writes Alaimo, have called into question the boundedness of bodies, of non-human actors (such as dirt) and even of text, through Vicki Kirby's rereading of Derrida's dictum, "there is no outside of text" into a "posthumanist horizon, as [Kirby] refuses to delineate the human, the cultural, or the linguistic against a background of mute matter. Nature, culture, bodies, texts all unravel into a limitless 'force field of differentiation'" (Alaimo 2010,13). What if, asks Kirby, we are not the only ones who read,

and nature itself might write?

In case Alaimo's understanding of trans-corporeality conjures ideas of a new anthropocentrism, she takes care to locate the centre (if there indeed be one) of such communities as extended through the "multiple, often global networks" (15) that make up the world, denying "the human subject the sovereign, central position" (16). Identifying viscous "porosity" rather than "fluidity" as her best understanding of transcorporeality, she also ensures that political and ethical accountability for environmental disaster does not diffuse into the wider non-human world when (as with climate change repercussions) it belongs primarily with human beings.

Alaimo's identification of an interconnected material self as representing a "profound shift in subjectivity" (2010, 20) places the human as part and parcel of the wider world, rather than separate. There is no wall; instead she sees porosity. Rather than a focus on the integrity or separateness of things, Alaimo sees their emergent, complex, multi-dependent relationships.

Alaimo's work has implications when examining failure in poetry. In an interview, Michael Clune and Ben Lerner discuss the negative capability of poetry – a poem as a tracing, on its outside, a negative figuration of what it cannot actualize. Language, when arranged, as insufficient to what it seeks to describe. Clune mentions Allan Grossman:

> There are these hilarious passages of Grossman where people try to give him examples of successful poets – What about Sharon Olds? What about Ashbery? – and he's always like, No, they failed. The point is that it's not difficult, it's impossible. It's a structural thing. (2016, np)

The "ghostly" sense of lyric poetry as loss or failure which inhabits many poets' understandings of what is possible when writing also taints any expectation of a universally representative poetry. But by bringing trans-corporeality into an understanding of poetics, the language of a poem might not be viewed as a failure but instead a world of multiple agencies, colliding and emerging toward varied understandings. Failure recalibrated as play and possibility. This gives additional ludic potential to geopoetics – as a creative force that can assert the constant interchange happening between bodies and the environment, and that dares us to "imagine an epistemological space that allows for both the unpredictable becomings of other creatures and the limits of human knowledge" (Alaimo 2010, 21).

The answer to whether geographers can participate in creative practice will thus depend not only on acquiring the skills to use the apt form for their subject, but also whether they can accept living as scholars with a radical openness to play, incompleteness, multiplicity, and

possibility which gestures toward but does not provide firm answers, that contains "messiness" (de Leeuw 2017) and variousness. In short, it depends on whether these scholars are open to failure. To separate and distinguish means increased possibility for unexpected, open connections, and – most surprising for me – humour and joy. Aperture also has a ludic quality, as described by Lilburn. The poetry of aperture, argues Grossman, is the poetry of "the comedy of…participation," which can enhance kinship and connection while acknowledging the complicated nature of relationships that result from engagement with the world (1992, 335). Readers can see examples of this in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation, where the pathos/comedy of falling short or failing is practiced.

Finally, I suggest that, along with the previously explored elements, the process of how a poem comes into being shares much with non-representational, performative and affect-based methodologies. As outlined by Dewsbury (2010),

> the point is that procedure is not known. The point is rather, that something performative in research itself, something experimental and creative, and above all problematic, will occur if certain proscriptions are raised instead. (3)

The point is a poet doesn't know where she is going in a poem. If she does, then the poem is most likely going to arrive to the air or the page dead. Bringing poetry into the discipline of the geohumanities thus foregrounds Dewsbury's problematics, and his edict, taken from Beckett, to "fail again. Fail better." The object of study "for performative research literally comes into being through being enacted in the practice of the research itself" (Dewsbury 2010, 4); the poem must proceed without known procedure, without research plan or established academic habits, and instead with passion, conviction, openness, ludic play, flexibility, a beginner's mind.

Politics

Linking my arguments back to the wilderness poets or eco-poems used in this dissertation is the constant question of politics, and especially, in reference to de Leeuw and Hawkins' (2017) work, the standards of what comprises a good environmental poem, and the questionable validity of poetry, and particularly eco-poetry, that avoids the "carnal or the messy" (316). In particular, de Leeuw and Hawkins see little current work that is "either explicitly sexually arousing or radically feminist and embodied" and that "privileges the carnality of bodies, opting instead to enact a sage focus on the mind of a presumably heteronormative white gender-neutral (read male) subject" (2017, 316). It seems, however, that de Leeuw and Hawkins are referring to subject matter as much as to style. For instance, de Leeuw's (2013) *Geographies of a Lover*,

cited in de Leeuw and Hawkins' article as an example of these more messy, fleshy geographies, still succeeds in Lilburn's appraisal of a successful poem. Its metaphors are intense and unexpected; its practice is absorbed in "persistent, charged, purposeless attention" and its replication of the landscapes of the narrator's lover's body and the landscapes of the north are anything but pre-planned or will-directed; they respond with "drifting, non-compulsive, multi-channel" attention even when fixated on the relations between each setting (Lilburn 2016). There is thus nothing I see in Lilburn's and my understanding of a successful poem that limits its production to the heteronormative, Global North. A good storyteller anywhere draws surprising connections, pays attention to her subject and narrates what she 'sees' without sacrificing the flexibility to respond to left-field images.

To harness creative work within geopoetics solely to the yoke of political agendas can lessen the power of creative writing and, indeed, de Leeuw and Hawkins acknowledge that creative practice sits uneasily within research-oriented departments and perhaps should continue to do so. Using creative practice without critically examining the reasons for its use, the time needed to develop the skills to produce quality works, or asking creative works to "cohere with academic values and metrics" risks "instrumentalizing them, [and] may produce end-oriented practices as opposed to critical open-ended potentials" (de Leeuw & Hawkins 2017, 319).

Other political concerns have also been raised, in regards to the work of Zwicky, McKay, and Lilburn in particular. McKay has been accused of using poems "to reiterate his poetics, rather than to *be poems*"; his "all-or-nothing adherence to randomness," poet and critic Zach Wells argues, hides an "essential *in*attention" that contains instead "his own inward-gazing particularity" (2014, np). Lilburn's work has received critique from poet Sonnet L'Abbe for an "anglocentrism" and "self-styled shamanism [that] is in fact quite stunning" (L'Abbe 2018, np). Canadian critic Michael Lista wrote of Lilburn's *Assiniboia* that the book features "a conspicuous environmentalism that mask[s] a deep-seated misanthropy; a vain self-regard for its own social consciousness; diction and cadences that [are] more noisy than musical" (Lista 2012, np). And Zwicky has also been critiqued by Lista in a long and wide-ranging social media debate over the merit of the negative review, with his belief in stark honesty pitted against her desire to spend her time building rather than tearing down poets and poetry.

There are valid critiques of ecopoetics, a larger movement to which these three writers belong, which fault mainstream environmentalism for its pervasively upper-middle-class whiteness, thus identifying West Coast eco-poetics itself as a racialized, white settler-colonial

genre. McKay, Zwicky and Lilburn are white settlers with European roots. All three have been or are employed within academia, a historically white environment. I understand whiteness from Kobayashi and Peake (2010) as a constructed position that goes hand in hand with power and privilege, placing itself as the norm against which all others are measured and viewed. It is a way of seeing, a "set of cultural practices and politics," and the centralized, moral ground, and thus helps to shape the surrounding environment "to produce landscapes that conform similarly to ideals of beauty, utility, or harmony, values not immediately associated with 'race' but predicated upon whitened cultural practices" (Kobayashi & Peak 2010, 394).

In answer to these critiques, I have a variety of things to say. It would be remiss to view McKay, Lilburn and Zwicky as purposefully perpetuating the colonial project, despite their heritage, and to view a choice to use their work in geography as such would be a grave misrepresentation of the nature and intent of their work.[5] I acknowledge, however, that intent and effect do not always align. I also recognize the warnings issued by Tuck and Yang (2012), but I assert that McKay, Zwicky and Lilburn do not fall into Tuck and Yang's traps of Settler nativism, adoption fantasies, colonial equivocation, conscientization, or at risk-ing / Asterisk-ing Indigenous peoples. By choosing to remain in North America, one could argue that all Settlers are engaging in some form of re-occupation and homesteading. In this, McKay, Zwicky and Lilburn are complicit; as am I, as are my committee members, who live in the colonies of Canada and Australia. But these three also critically engage in many non-metaphorical decolonial actions that I believe make their work decolonizing. They interrogate the actions and history of settler home-making in North America; they ask how settlers might connect themselves to the world in the wake of ongoing Settler/Indigenous struggles, by pressuring and critically investigating colonial understandings of landscape and place, and by offering solutions that move us further toward a viable future for the planet. Is this ultimately decolonizing work? They do not engage, a far as I know, directly with Indigenous repatriation of land, but I think that despite this, that it is. They rethink a relationship to land; they critique, stridently, the neoliberal machinery that has brought North America since colonization, and the planet, to this ecological precipice.

Lilburn's work expressly focuses on decolonizing the European gaze which has accompanied settler movement on the North American continent. He writes that most immigrants

[5] Yet it must be stated that intention and effect don't always align. A work or a project can have a decolonizing intent while simultaneously having a recolonizing effect. See Bradley 2007; McGurk 2018; Tucker & Rose-Redwood 2015.

to Canada live four feet off the ground, as if they have never really landed in the place in which they arrived (Lilburn 1999). His most recent work takes the project of decolonization seriously, and one of his life's projects has become to attain fluency in SÉNCOŦEN, the W̱SÁNEĆ language of the Straits Salish people on Vancouver Island. Zwicky and McKay work to unsettle language and relationship to place, questioning the dualist division of humans from nature. McKay's persistence in using capitals for names of all species (not just ones named after humans) unsettles the species-ist logic of placing humans above the red-breasted nuthatch or the Steller's Jay. Zwicky's attentiveness to the particularity of the world is an act of courteous attention, an attempt to bring St. Benedict's "listening with the ear of the heart" back into relations between humans and the world.

The inclusion of Indigenous voices into geography is paramount for the difficult work of decolonization to occur. However, this is not to say that we should jettison writers of non-Indigenous origin who have helpful things to say about the colonial experience, about how to relate to the land and species that inhabit the world alongside us, and how we might shift our perception when attending to the world. To focus on Lilburn, McKay and Zwicky constitutes an insistence that those voices who are attempting to 'speak to the wild' are heard, and, in doing so, I take heed from the words of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014), who invites the academy to contribute to decolonization through care for the natural world:

> if the academy is concerned about not only protecting and maintaining Indigenous intelligence, but revitalizing it on Indigenous terms as a form of restitution for its historic and contemporary role as a colonizing force (of which I see no evidence), then the academy must make a conscious decision to become a decolonizing force in the intellectual lives of Indigenous peoples by joining us in dismantling settler colonialism and actively protecting the source of our knowledge – Indigenous land. (22)

In this light, the further development of conversations in geopoetics should not at all be limited by subject matter and indeed a diversity of messy, fleshy (as well as contemplative, measured) works should be encouraged. Geopoetics is nascent; much room remains to explore ecopoetics, political poetry, and spoken word poetry, to name but a few genres. This exploration should not be done, however, at the expense of development of skill and a de-legitimizing of poetry as simply another research tool, but as a potentially transformative, inspirational, world-changing practice in its own historied right.

Cautions

If lyric poems tend to contain the elements described above, elements which seek to

invite and include a reader in the experience of a poet, then care must be taken to critically engage with poetry, and elements of poetry, that can also work to exclude. Poetry is not always a benign device (de Leeuw 2017). As well, some recent movements in North American poetry, such as the conceptual poetry movement, spearheaded by poets such as Christian Bök and Kenneth Goldsmith, and supported by critics such as Marjorie Perloff, are making poetry that many do not consider poetry at all, given its propensity to copy and appropriate text, and to place emphasis on concept over original words. Care should be taken to note what poetry cannot do, what harm it might do, and what happens when it is co-opted for exclusionary reasons, rather than used as a tool of connection or understanding. The final section of this chapter charts these possibilities. This caution is for practitioners new to geopoetics who might otherwise see this chapter as licence to embrace lyric poetry as a faultless panacea.

In 2015, Kenneth Goldsmith performed a poetic work, "The Body of Michael Brown," in which he read, verbatim, the autopsy report filed by St. Louis County as a poem at Brown University. The performance, and the piece, garnered severe critique. In an obviously failed post-racial America, Goldsmith's work was seen as insensitive and shocking, another example of conceptual poetry as "the building blocks of white supremacy" (Wilkinson 2015, np). Goldsmith failed to contextualize the poem as a protest piece before reading it, causing many to view the poem as using Brown's death and his body for the purposes of his own art and "questioning the 'colonial aesthetics' of conceptual art" (Steinhauer 2015, np).

The exclusion created by conceptual poetry can be racialized, as poets of colour argue that the seeming anonymity of conceptual poetry's magpie tendencies (as it collects from the internet and other bodiless voices found in media in order to make its pieces) discount what it is to live when "race is forced upon the ordinary day" in a multitude of ways (Chiasson 2014, np). Claudia Rankine's work provides a stunning examination of this everyday racism, which permeates trips to the grocery store and every other extraordinary and mundane event for a racialized body. Conceptual poetry can also exclude through an excising of identifiable marks of expression and feeling or beauty, turning what is usually an evocative art into "a violin played by a hairdryer" (Simic in Wilkinson 2015, np). Much of conceptual poetry is made up of other writers' words, directly transplanted into the poem, a gesture that can hold little emotional power.[6] Goldsmith's books are often so monotonous he brags they are uneditable (editors can't

[6] Reuben Rose-Redwood (personal correspondence, 2019) raises the example of Allan Pred's "Benjaminian style of geographical writing, which is quite creative in its assemblage of different quotations/voices into a single piece of work. If done well, this can be quite successful. Perhaps the conceptual poets are just doing a really bad job of it!"

get through the lists and litanies without falling asleep). With poetry already perceived as difficult or an elite art by many, conceptual poets widen that gap between artist and reader. Being smart can start to look like being exclusive.

Lyric poetry, with its contrasting emphasis on identity, metaphor and precision, is also not free from critique due to its exclusionary possibilities. The white page – the location where most lyric poetry sees public distribution (even if it is also read aloud at readings) – has been criticized by race theorists for its whiteness and its invisibility (Senchyne 2012, 145). The white page, valued for its purity and ability to simultaneously highlight the black text of a page while also disappearing into the background, creates a white/black dualism that serves to reinforce notions of whiteness as normative and all other ethnicities as having colour (Dyer 1997). From white sheets to white floors to white pages, the constructed colour comes to represent something pure, clean, unblemished, refined: "The whiteness of the page makes type legible at the same time as it naturalizes the social structure of whiteness as absence, making race appear 'present' on the body of its others" (Senchyne 2012, 151). Though beyond the scope of this project, future work in geopoetics should look to slam poetry, spoken word poetry, Indigenous song and storytelling, which all serve as alternatives to this white page normativity.

Lyric poetry's use of linguistic devices can also present critical difficulties, as Primo Levi's dictum underscores. The dangers of metaphor have been explored recently by M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008), Paul Celan (2001), and W.G. Sebald (2011). These writers question the potentially damaging effects metaphor can have, and language's abilities to constrain, label, omit, or fail to do justice to atrocity. Celan's work, written in his native German, grapples with how to use a language of death (his immediate family were murdered by Nazis) to write poetry. Language, driven to the point of anguish by Celan, falls apart. "Die nacht ist die nacht," writes Celan, eschewing the power that metaphor can have to create new meaning or understanding (in Felsteiner 2001). In translating experience of the Holocaust, metaphor can fail, or turns in on itself, until only the stark declarative is left: "the night is the night." Celan's poetry, on the page, dwindled from long lines to single words, as if forcing the German language through a crack, his grief making that opening smaller and smaller.

Two Canadian writers, Jordan Abel in *Place of Scraps* (2013) and *Injun* (2016), and Shane Rhodes in *X* (2013) and *Dead White Men* (2017), also eschew traditional understandings

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See Pred's 1995 *Recognizing European Modernities* for a Benjaminian example. I concur, but I still argue that the point of Pred's work is not primarily creative work, but scholarship, whereas the primary aim of Goldsmith's work is as a creative endeavour. Whether this succeeds in fulfilling the definition of "creative" is another matter.

of metaphor and lyric in their works, and provide a more successful example of the conceptual writing noted previously. Abel is from the Nisga'a First Nation; his works focus on West Coast histories of Indigenous and settler relations, and social understandings of land, territory, ownership and violence against Indigenous peoples. Abel uses found texts (such as Canadian land treaties signed by the British Crown and First Nations in the 1800s, or in 1840-1950s Western novels) to create new "present-tense interventions" (Abel 2013). Abel uses the ethnographies of coastal First Nations, penned by Marius Barbeau in the 1900s, using erasure to deliberately omit words and make new meanings and connotations. Metaphor is thus made through the new relationships that words from the original text spark with one another.

Rhodes, an Ontario poet, has long focused on decolonizing his own work. He also uses texts from history to examine and acknowledge historical and present-day settler-Indigenous relations. In his creation of *X*, Rhodes struggles against the European tradition's tendency to make poems "that [are] tidy and beautiful" (Rhodes 2013, np); his poems work in contrast to an understanding of metaphor as resonant and ordered. Simone Weil equates beauty with order (2001, 100), and Zwicky equates the experience of beauty with a sense of the "loseability of the world" (2011, L70), a beauty which becomes apparent in lyric moments in poetry (Sinclair 2015). But by resisting the tradition to create beautiful images, Rhodes signals his "[wariness] of beauty and how it can be used to override logic." Beautiful words in poetry can "dazzle us with their rightness yet they can also mask or divert our attention away from what is actually going on around us" (Rhodes 2013, np).

An example of this wariness of beauty also features in writings on atrocities in addition to those of Canada's dealings with First Nations during colonization. NourbeSe Philip's work charts the poetics of the fragment, as it attempts to put voice (even if it is a shattered voice) to the murder of 133 Africans on the slave ship *Zong* in 1781 so the captain could collect insurance monies. Like Lilburn's work, which addresses the sorrow that is inevitable when faced with colonial atrocity, NourbeSe Philip's shattered poetry addresses the unaddressable, the fractured, the narrative that cannot be told but must be told, using a tool of representation, which simultaneously cannot represent because this "would have meant ordering an experience which was disordered (and can never be ordered) irrationally illogical and unpredictable; it would have meant doing a second violence, this time to the memory of an already violent experience" (Philip 2008, 197).

Built into Philip's perspective is a deep distrust of language, which is a way of

recognizing language's limits to represent and to impart understanding, and its possibilities, through the works of Philip and others, for more disruptive, partial, fragmented meaning that can better address the realities and complexities of the colonial experience (de Leeuw 2017). In particular, the English language is a "wound" for her, which has never quite rid itself of the history of slavery and violence, similar to how Paul Celan struggled with writing about the Holocaust in German. De Leeuw notes that though a surge of new work exists that strives to bring creative work into geography, almost none of this work "tackles the ways that writing might work to not tell, to un-tell, or to break the traditions of telling so as to narrate and undertake geo-graphing in radically and new critical ways" (de Leeuw 2017, 315). Philips' personal relationship with language is also one of distrust.

But I am leery of work that strives to be purposefully difficult and takes alienation of the reader as a goal. Indeed, Philip's interviewer pushes to understand why she seeks a wide audience while also publishing work cited as "complex and abstract" (Philip 2017, np). Many who have gone through the public school system have been taught, inadvertently, to hate poetry, or at least to feel that it lies beyond understanding for all but a super-educated elite. Breaking tradition involves experimentation, which can be harder still from which to parse or draw recognizable meaning. Conceptualist poets' works, as well as L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poetry, experimental poetry and surrealist poetry (where some of the roots of conceptual poetry's traditions lie) can also alienate some readers, thus also risking that "second violence" (de Leeuw 2017, 315) through the production of work that few feel educationally prepared to follow.

Similarly, taking a critical stance on metaphor and its limitations can be productive when considering what might be beyond metaphor's reach to address. McKay (2001) acknowledges a failure of metaphor when attempting to write of trauma, genocide or atrocity. Philip (2017), too, distrusts language that attempts to speak of historical horrors in a beautiful way. Still, though, de Leeuw does not advocate fully dispensing with traditional ways of writing and, in defence of both the contemporary lyric and philosophy on poetry, I would urge the same. Geopoetics is at too early a stage in its resurgence to reject lyric writing or scholarship because of its adherence to traditional forms. There is much to be taken into account, from authors who can further geopoetics while also paying heed to politics. The choice to be contemplative, to pause in front of an object and learn how to see it, rather than responding with aggressively productive meaning-making tendencies, is also a political act. Lyric is not inherently an anodyne. Care should be taken to acknowledge the negative possibilities of metaphor and poetry while still

considering ideas of reparative reading (see Sedgwick 2002) and of recognition and enchantment as much as negative hermeneutics (see Felski 2011) when examining what metaphor and poetry can and can't accomplish for geopoetics and geography.

Sedgwick's work reminds us that addressing challenges related to gender and racial equality can send a critical scholar down a rabbit hole of practices of attack and negative affect, with practices that are "tied to a notion of the inevitable," whereas there are "features of queer reading [and reparative reading] that can attune it exquisitely to a heartbeat of contingency" (2002, 147). Sedgwick uses examples of queer-identified camp art to show how a practice can either be seen as mocking and demystifying a dominant culture, using paranoid reading, or "additive and accretive," full with a "glue of surplus beauty" and an understanding of "the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture" (149-150). The emphasis here is on a ludic sense of the world – a play ethic (Meeker 1997) that, like metaphor, with its additions (literally, in that two unrelated words add together to form a third understanding), uses a combination of precision and wild excess to perform a new possibility for the world.

Acknowledging what ameliorative aspects literature contains and what pleasure it is able to achieve – in this case, through use of attentive, resonant, breath-catching metaphors that seek to connect writer (and reader) with a thing in the world – give credence and intelligibility not just to the critiques of language's inadequacies, but also to the ways in which language *tries*. For Sedgwick, "hope, often a fracturing, even a traumatic thing to experience, is among the energies by which the reparatively positioned reader tries to organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters or creates" (2002, 146). Another name for reparative reading, argues Sedgwick, is love.

Rita Felski's *Uses of Literature* (2008) provides a similar defence of reparative reading, arguing for recognition and enchantment as ways in which literature connects us to both known and unknown states of emotion. To Felski, "recognition is not repetition; it denotes not just the previously known, but the becoming known" (2008, 25). To employ reparative methods opens the door to thinking about literature that is "additive and accretive," that values emotion, that wants to "assemble" and collaborate (Felski 2008, 149).

I thus see an opening for examining poets who have chosen as their subject the issues prominent in post-Truth and Reconciliation times and spaces through changing not necessarily the forms of poetics being practiced (though innovation is certainly a welcome characteristic in

much poetry being written today) but the manner in which they approach writing about the world. If poetry can be a site of exclusion, it can also be a way of creating an emotional geography, a creative cartography of what the world does to the body, and how the body responds to and lives in that world. In particular, the charting of anxiety (about the body, about race and gender) is evident in recent Canadian lyric poetry (see Blythe 2015; Johnstone 2017).

Cree poet Billy-Ray Belcourt's debut collection, *This Wound is a World* (2017), is an excellent example which won the 2018 Griffin poetry prize. Belcourt's anxiety centres in the body, with his body as one of many landscapes into which he does not fit. He dances, "my arm hanging by my side like an appendage my body doesn't want anymore" (Belcourt 2017, 17). With deft, clear language that shocks with its straightforwardness and plainspoken power, Belcourt creates a map of what it is to be Indigenous and queer, and to ask the question, "How do you mourn something you can still see in the mirror?" (2017, 34). As a form of emotional geography, Belcourt's work offers Indigenous readers "a rare opportunity to see themselves reflected in literature" (Brunet 2018, np), thus serving as a situated knowledge of what it is to be Indigenous, queer, and living when "one of the conditions of native life today is survivor's guilt" (Belcourt 2017, 23).

Transgender poet Ali Blythe, nominated for the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize in 2016, also chooses the body as the site of his focus, in his debut collection *Twoism* (2015), which charts his experience inhabiting a body that did not feel like his own. Similarly, Johnstone's (2017) *The Chemical Life* charts the author's history of discomfort with self through experience with Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) and anti-anxiety medications. Both use traditional lyric form to explore new territory in emotional geography.

Finally, to see oneself reflected in literature, especially when considering one's relationship to land, may involve a rethinking of what language best suits this exploration. Lilburn (2016) has, since his relocation to the West Coast, been studying the Indigenous SENĆOŦEN language of the WSÁNEĆ nations. He considers the language a chthonic tongue "in possession of unusual powers" in that it "encourage[s] an escesis of looking that…approaches autochthonicity" (1). Lilburn's use of "chthonic" refers to a dwelling of, in or beneath the earth (OED); language as coming from the earth or the land. To use the original language of a place may open opportunities for understanding of place that a settler language cannot provide. Tsartlip Nation member Philip Kevin Paul cites SENĆOŦEN's vocabulary as one of story, in that each word provides a rich back history of relationship, things named for

what they do, for the attitude one should take in their presence, for the ideals a people should live by, for "the manner in which we are taught to look," for the reaction of the namer to the thing:

> EN SW SELAWE, our most honouring name for sockeye salmon (the name really implies I'm your pitiful one); it expresses the namer's feelings when he realized to what extent our people relied on the sockeye for our very existence. (Paul nd, 3)

These new manners of approach to emotion and connection can provide direction for geographers who are looking for ways in which to practice a critical, decolonizing geography within the bounds of both creative and critical writing.

Conclusion

To conclude, I now turn to a story about teaching figurative language within geography. I give my geography students exercises in metaphor construction or show them how to enliven their language (so that they're not falling back on well-worn descriptors for landscape such as "amazing" or "great"). In one exercise, they fold a piece of paper in half. On one side, they write five abstractions. Then they pass it to another person. On the other side (without looking at the first side) the second student writes down five things they can see in the room. We pass papers again, and then read the pairs out loud. The reactions upon hearing the pairs are consistent year after year. Upon matching up abstractions (sadness, tenderness) with concrete images around them (a flickering light; one shoe in the corner), they gasp. Particularly resonant combinations illicit disbelieving laughter, sighs, sometimes tears. The pairs (sadness: one shoe in the corner; anxiety: a flickering light) instantaneously show students the power of playful, resonant, open language. The pairs show it much better than lecturing for half an hour could ever do. The immediacy of a successful metaphor needs no further explanation; it does its own work. It enlivens not just the poem or the description of a meadow during a field trip, but also the students themselves. Suddenly, the world is a little less quotidian, a little more dangerous, more interesting.

I see my students' reactions as indicative of a wider feeling of anticipation and excitement in the field of geohumanities, and specifically geopoetics. Geopoetics is currently experiencing an exciting time in its tenure; scholars are taking seriously the proposal that art can, and should, contribute to geographical work, and that it can and should do geographical work itself. But "these political and daemonic powers would be diminished or imperilled if too heavy a charge of will-directed shaping entered the discipline, and art could have less striking maieutic effect as a result" (Lilburn 2016, 4). Elements such as ludic play, cultivation of resonance and

aperture, and recognition of failure can lift a poem into accord and help to ensure its success as an artistic piece. Scholars should remain cautious of poetry's ability to exclude, misappropriate or otherwise do harm through its use of subject matter or language. This is what poetry has to offer geography, in its ability to go beyond analytic scholarship and attend to the nameless but integral aspects of what it is to be in the world.

In the developing field of geopoetics, what poetry cannot do is just as integral to what it can do. Robinson (1986) remains doubtful that "the good step" can actually be taken in our writings about the world, whether in prose or poetry. In this, he recognizes language's failure, its desire to gesture back to wordlessness. Writers (and other makers) may never write something, he admits, that *can* equal the arc a dolphin makes as it rises and falls through the water. Nor, perhaps, should we. The simultaneous sublimity and frustration of poetry is that it is, and is not, equal to that which it describes.

Chapter 2: The Art of This Geography

"Geography is a garden that contains the road, an art form capacious enough to include analysis" (Ley and Samuels 2014, 205).

Introduction

In 2017, the poet laureate of Victoria, British Columbia in Canada published an anthology of poems for the Pacific Ocean called *Refugium*. In her introduction, Yvonne Blomer writes that the creation of the anthology came out of her grief, finding herself "disturbed, listless and despairing" at the state of the Pacific Ocean and what faces us in the coming decades of climate change: warming waters, waning sea stars, falling sea bird populations, and waters inundated by innumerable pieces of plastic. As the planet faces climate change, there is a new sadness, she writes, quoting Tim Lilburn, which our species is just beginning to come to the edges of: "the interiority appropriate to a catastrophe of such magnitude does not lie within the bounds of our current imagination," argues Lilburn (2016, 2). There is no precedent in human history that can fully situate and prepare us for the already arriving catastrophe of climate change. The sorrow that these two writers refer to is familiar to me.

The applied nature of much of the research in human geography addresses a source of this sorrow: the Anthropocene and climate change. But nonrepresentational theory (NRT), with its focus on intangible, processual, atmospheric affects, or the intricacies of lyric experience – a temporary state that inevitably yields way to the quotidian needs of food, shelter and resources – can seem far away from the pedestrian concerns (climate change, environmental degradation, inequality) that trigger this sorrow. As a poet who entered geography after being entranced by environmental posters in the department's hallways, I still ended up in an unquantifiable margin of the field, an ecotone (Magrane 2017) where theory might seem at first very removed from practice, but is still somehow needed. The world of presence, absence, affect, emotion and poetry can "deepen and embrace the grief, to remember the deep connection…to give shape and specificity to…panic" (Blomer 2017, 17). Blomer published her anthology not out of frivolity or as a vanity project. Her belief, and my own, is that this kind of thinking – poetic, lyric, "beautiful and pointless" thinking – is essential for this period in history (Orr 2012). Poetry, and lyric thinking, is a refugium for the things many hold dear, even as it is an elegy to the things being lost. Magrane (2020), in his recent work on climate geopoetics, adds that geopoetics as it is

concerned with climate change is also a project "about play and experimentation" and "alternative ways of making worlds" (14). Western civilization in North America as well as global-industrialist civilizations, such as China are still struggling to be at home in the world, and to do this with ethics, courtesy, and grace. I would add that geopoetics and the work I see it doing in conjunction with NRT also provides an opportunity to break down supposed barriers between the human and more-than-human world and to posit a momentary forfeiting of the self. In a recent exchange in *Dialogues in Human Geography*, Magrane interprets my position: "the promise of momentarily suspending a critical suspicion of 'a universal emotion or state' is that it might foster empathy across difference, whether human or more-than-human" (2021, 41) Thus, in this chapter, I turn to understandings of lyric and metaphor, and theories on affect and emotion in landscape in order to honour our failures, the complexity of the position humans currently find themselves in, and to acknowledge the complexity of emotional connection to place and the possibilities inherent in lyric experience as all integral to finding our way out of this mess.

How do humans (and here Lilburn seems to refer particularly to Settler existence in North America) live in the world as if it were home (Lilburn 1999)? What would home look like, philosophically, scientifically, poetically? Who should contribute to this conversation? This chapter will examine threads of thought from poetics and from nonrepresentational theory in order to uncover and advance rhizomatic and bodily understandings that link them, arguing that creative practice has capacities and capabilities to extend our repertoire of understanding of 'how to live in the world'.[1] Geography's strength has been its willingness as a discipline to embrace with agility ideas from outside its traditional boundaries and to creatively incorporate them into new and exploratory research. Recent work in creative geographies has begun to answer geography's call for more metaphorical, embodied, partial knowledges. By exploring ideas on lyric and domestic experience, as detailed by poet-philosopher Jan Zwicky, and concepts of metaphor, as explored by Zwicky and poet-philosopher Don McKay, I will identify points of connection between poetics and more-than-representational geographies, addressing certain aporia against which critical geographers are running up. Metaphor and lyric experience highlight the linguistic and ontological desire *and* failure to know an other; yet failure also contains its inverse: a connection with Wylie's (2009; 2017) work on "absence/presence" as a

[1.] It should be clarified here that I refer to NRT but think of it as more-than-representational theory, as offered by Lorimer (2005) and Schurr (2014), rather than nonrepresentational theory, as I believe this name more accurately describes the theory's aims and interests. NRT (the acronym stands, because of its wide use) is not just concerned with producing theory that is not a representation (while using words to do that work) but with that which eludes our ability to represent through its nebulous, affectual characteristics, that which is *more* than what can be represented.

framework to explore how many people relate to the world. Incorporating poetics will help to illuminate gaps in knowledge and theoretical limitations, but importantly, it will hopefully clarify and reframe NRT's interest in affect and emotion, especially as these involve non-tangible relationships with the material world and bodies-in-the-world.

This chapter will proceed by first briefly outlining the current state of the geohumanities and its points of intersection with NRT. Hawkins writes that the geohumanities "unsettle relations among theory, praxis, scholarship, practice, and application" (Hawkins et al. 2015, 216). Through their forms, which differ significantly from traditional academic inquiry, they can reach a variety of audiences, and tackle a wider array of subjects. But as Magrane (2017) argues, one of the most important contributions that geopoetics, in particular, may offer, is its ability to unsettle ideas of (re)presentation. By offering a different form (poetry, lyric autobiography) in which to think, they "also encourage the discipline to seek rigorous ways of understanding how to read, view, evaluate, and approach such forms" (Magrane 2017, 13).

I focus next on providing a brief context for geopoetics' interventions in NRT, examining their understandings of affect and emotion especially as they involve non-tangible relationships with the material world, their places of divergence and agreement, and their contributions to the question of how to live in the world, a question posed by both geographers and poets concerned with human/world interactions. In particular, I look to the work of Pile (2009) for critiques of NRT and to Vannini (2016) for its justifications.

I next provide key points of intervention into NRT using the poetics of Zwicky, in order to clarify and help to add to understandings of its theories and assuage geographic critiques of NRT (especially amongst critical feminist geographers) as overly-theoretical, masculine in focus (and in practitioners), and dangerously pre-political in its conception of a body in the world.

Specifically, I focus on mapping Zwicky's lyric coherence onto NRT's understanding of a body-in-the-world. NRT's understanding of pre-political experience is what I argue is actually lyric coherence, which recognizes both the myriad details of each component of the world, while also gathering together to form an integrated whole. Lyric coherence thus becomes a political gesture: it advises an ethical engagement with the non-human world that both recognizes individual particularities and a coherence or resonance present in the world itself.

I focus on McKay and Zwicky, both internationally recognized poets and scholars, who are unique in the world of poetry, because of their particular relevance to NRT in geography. Both poets have chosen to dedicate part of their time to composing non-fiction theoretical works.

The non-fiction choice, in itself, is not unusual; other poets have seen fit to pronounce on the best way to write poetry (Rilke 1989, Young 2010, Oliver 1994) or to provide "how-to" prose on poetry, writing elegantly of poetry's forms and techniques (Hugo 1992; Dobyns 2016), its spiritual dimension (Hirshfield 1998) or as a field guide to poetry's themes (Felstiner 2001). Zwicky and McKay, however, claim poetry's techniques themselves as integral to understanding the world, and to living in it as if it were home.

Scholars have focused on Don McKay's poetry to show its musicality (Abeysekera 2011), its use of metaphor (Bushell 2011; Coles 1991; Bartlett 2006) and its humour (Babstock 2006). His poems and prose on poetry chart the missteps and longings that humans undergo in their interactions with the world and the wilderness inherent in not just the natural world but all entities and objects. Wilderness, for McKay, is a metaphor for the unknowability of the other, and the need for a Levinasian ethical approach to "the other" (McKay 2000). Poet and philosopher Jan Zwicky, in her ground-breaking works, *Lyric Philosophy* (2011) and *Wisdom and Metaphor* (2003), presents an alternative to logical positivist thought, arguing that philosophy has arrived at a crossroads where the power of resonant language and lyric experience to contribute to philosophical thinking and to understand and speak about the world must be acknowledged.

Their philosophical poetics have furthered work on human/world relationships, on conceptions of wilderness, on understandings of forms of philosophical understanding (in Zwicky's case, lyric versus domestic understandings) and on resonance, which loosely translates in geography as a form of affect.[2] I know few other poet/scholar/philosophers working so deeply on these issues; Tim Lilburn is one; his work focuses more deeply on questions of autochthonous interactions with land and the incantatory power of language. There are emerging scholars continuing this trio's work, collectively known as the "Thinking and Singing Poets," such as Warren Heiti, Sue Sinclair, and Adam Dickinson; their work will likely be increasingly relevant to geographers as it enlarges.

I conclude this chapter with a focus first on McKay's understanding of the term "wilderness" as a metaphor for all things in the world that "elude the mind's appropriations" (McKay 2001, 21). I use this as an example of how we might come to better relation with the world within geographical thought. Secondly, I look to Zwicky's description and understanding

[2] Zwicky's work has also extended into mathematics, connecting the gestalt apprehension that takes place when understanding a metaphor with the similar gestalt understanding of a mathematical proof. Her most recent work, *The Experience of Meaning* (2018), focuses largely on gestalts, arguing that they show a path forward for reconnection of the arts and sciences.

of lyric versus domestic experience, and map this onto NRT's scholarship on absence/presence and a body-in-the-world. I propose that lyric experience has the potential to rethink the concept of the depoliticized body, and to clarify NRT, through both accounting for individualized experience and identifying the possibility of brief access to a resonant underlying coherence to the world. Finally, I focus on Zwicky and McKay's conceptions of metaphor as identifying a 'third space'. The not-one-not-two relationship of both lyric understanding and metaphor highlight both the particularity of a thing and its unification with another.

In addressing these scholars' investigations, and when considering the intervention of creative geographies, the goal of this chapter is not to simply address problems with NRT, nor to refute the valid critiques of universality, but instead to think about what creative geographies and geopoetics in particular might offer, and how geopoetics might generate new knowledge through its particular approach to the practice of geography.

Creative geographies

In attempting to map aspects of the philosophical poetics of McKay and Zwicky back onto the shape of NRT, it will help to first clarify and provide background on what "the creative" means in relation to geography and how this work might contribute. As addressed in the introduction of this dissertation, art has a long history within geography (Hawkins 2013), appearing as landscape depictions, map-making and geographical or writing. Marston and de Leeuw identify three periods of "artistic and geographical flowering" that "represent a fertile moment in knowledge production and creativity unconstrained by disciplinary boundaries" (Marston & de Leeuw 2013, viii). The first period is characterized by the work of Alexander von Humboldt and other Romantic artists and geographers who combined the natural sciences with the arts. The "creative" of creative geographies during this period was the production of drawings and descriptions of landscapes and species that gave both geographical information and provided an artistic (if sometimes overly realistic) version of geographical places (Marston & de Leeuw 2013; Martinson 1981).

Marston and de Leeuw (2013) identify two subsequent periods of creative expression within geography, during which "the creative" has been repositioned, becoming a practice and product in its own right that has the potential to add to geographical scholarship about the world and about landscape and place and our relation to it. The second period, as a counterpoint to the rein of positivism in the scientific community (and beyond), flourished in humanism, with phenomenology and studies of the humanities providing a more nuanced, qualitative approach.

Marston and de Leeuw write that geographical interest in creative practices not just as "counting and measuring" tools but as political and critical forces (as well as a form of knowledge-making) emerged thanks to new cultural geography, which "marked a significant shift in the nature of the interpretive approach geographers took to a variety of creative practices and how their products were understood to work in the world" (2013, iii). The late 20th century interest in Marxist, late-Marxism, postmodern and poststructuralist theory changed the way that visual art was interpreted by geographers: "Comprehensions of painted scenes as mimetic representations were replaced by understandings of aesthetic productions shaped by the dominant power relations of the day" (Hawkins 2014, 5). This helped to move art from being merely a "data point" to being able to offer a key critical role in the understanding of landscape studies and studies of place and space. Postmodernist geographical study of art in these decades also encouraged an unprecedented interdisciplinarity between art and geography, and gave new validity to the work art can do to address and unravel political and socio-economic issues. Music, fiction, poetry and visual art ceased to be read simply for their contributions to landscape geography and came to be valued – as cultural geography opened into critical geography – for the social and political power that they possessed as works of art in and of themselves (Marston & de Leeuw 2013, x).

For Marston and de Leeuw, geographers have now entered a third period of interpreting and working with creative practice. The "creative" in creative geographies now represents not just the work of artists themselves but the practice of art making "as a mode of disciplinary knowledge-making, collaborating with artists and [geographers] venturing into the practice of politically explicit creative works" (2013, xi). Scholars both within and outside of geography have thus recognized that arts that use place and landscape as their subject can be "a source material for their studies, a perspective on how people experience the world" (Yi Fu Tuan in Hawkins 2014, 7).

Hawkins' recent explorations of the interweaving of artistic practice and geography involve a recognition of art as more than a hermeneutic tool. Citing Deleuze and Guttari's work on machinic practices, Hawkins argues that art "does not, or does not only, mean or represent; it produces, it circulates the world, independent of its makers, with singular power and properties" (2014, 11):

> Art encounters emerge as thoroughly creative encounters, obliging us to be aware of the possibilities they present for experiencing and thinking the world differently. Art...is...less *about* meaning or sensation than *creative* of it. (Hawkins 2014, 12)

Hawkins' assertion sets art far outside the boundaries of positivist, objective social science, and

opens the door to different interpretations of being in the world – interpretations which are familiar within the art world but nascent within geography. Art produces "blocks of sensation, sensation that is not tied to a person, but that is liberated, out there in the world" (Hawkins 2014, 11). An artistic object of representation is different from one of encounter, as O'Sullivan (2006) argues; thus the possibilities for connection through art as an encounter are also different. Through the experience of art as encounter, our typical ways of being in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted. The encounter thus operates as a rupture in our habitual modes of being and thus in our habitual subjectivities. It produces a cut, a crack (O'Sullivan 2006, 1). As Hawkins (2014) confirms, art has the opportunity not just to represent feeling, but also to create it. An encounter with art becomes a step into sensation, into transformation. And this changes not just the interaction but thought and action during the interaction. Creative geographies ask that this encounter be participatory, that humans acknowledge and experience the sometimes-uncomfortable process of engaging with the world. I will return to this idea at the conclusion of this chapter, arguing that this step into sensation might even be a step into lyric coherence, a gestalt or common understanding, a state which cannot be sustained, but that nonetheless can be experienced.

Recent work in the geohumanities during Marston and de Leeuw's third period has also begun to recognize points of intersection between the creative geographies and NRT, feminist theory and even ecology. Thomson investigates, as a visual artist, how more-than-written art works, akin to more-than-representational work, can "add texture, depth, and context to an arts practice" (2013, 244). Barnes (2013) adds that texts themselves can also "have the potential to be modes of engagement that are more than representational artifacts" through recognition of pages, and books, as places, designed and typographically set "spaces of interpretation" that unfold temporally, are processual, open and unfixed (166-67). Baldwin (2018) uses field journaling as a tool to connect with place. She cites Hawkins (2015) to argue that artistic practice allows her to "compose world relations (between humans and nonhumans, and their environments) differently" (248). Field journaling is not just world-making or an exercise in mimicry, but a way of "envisioning a world of care" that "extinguishes the 'extinction of experience'" and "bind[s] her in place" (Baldwin 2018, 91).

Thus can work in geopoetics act as a kind of space of intervention, a textured practice, or an experience of care, all of which gesture toward or can add to understandings of more-than-representational scholarship. Before adding to this work, I will now turn to a brief outline of

NRT, its appeal to artists, and a summary of the criticisms of NRT, before finally illustrating points of intersection between NRT and the poetics of McKay and Zwicky as well as places where geopoetics might clarify NRT.

Nonrepresentational theory

Non-representational theory (NRT) focuses on embodied experience, multiplicity, and a postmodern understanding of *being* as a fractured force that is forever thrown into the world (Maddrell 2009). This work stems from geographers' frustration with an insistently objective, positivist stance. It has found voice through Marxist and feminist theories and the politicization of traditionally-bound disciplines through questioning gender, sex, race and class, and specifically through NRT's return to the body as forever having incomplete, contingent, practical encounters with the world. These encounters are forever shifting; "they are *not*…stable 'building blocks' of the world" (Castree and MacMillan 2004, 473).

With the advent of poststructuralist thought, the world fractured and multiplied across both the humanities and the qualitative arm of geography. These fractures produced shifts in Western thought and thus in geographies, allowing for the questioning of binary divides, but also for greater sensitization to and expression of "a wide range of social, cultural, economic, and political relations" (Maddrell 2009, 427). NRT theorists, working in contrast to Marxist and feminist theory, argue that NRT is "*not* a political programme but it *is* a politics, a politics of the creation of the open dimension of being" (Thrift in Cloke et al. 2014, 73). Feminist geographies has conversely sought to provide a critical response to academic assumptions about power and knowledge; to work as antidote to the absence of women's lives, stories and voices in academia and in its subjects of study (Burnett 1973); to focus on performativity of gender and sex (Butler 1990); and on the roles and social relations of women's positions in society and spatial constraints (Tivers 1978; Bowlby et al. 1982). The concept of situated knowledges cemented feminist theory's exploration of the partial perspective, which was an antidote and answer to the promise of objective vision inherent in traditional, positivist geographies (Haraway 1988). Feminist geographies are entwined with the body, and though I concur with this focus when life takes place in Zwicky's domestic sphere (2011, L143), there is another sphere in which NRT and creative work is interested. As this work expands, it is both clarifying and complicating understandings of bodies in the world and of the politicized body; a new era of geography may be emerging.

Since NRT's advent, however, wider opposition to its methodologies and assertions has

developed. NRT focuses in on relationship with place, landscape and dwelling, drawing from the works of Heidegger, Derrida and phenomenology more generally as well as from critical geographies, to posit and explore an embodied and affective relationship with the world. In its attendance to the theories of intensities, immanence and becoming, NRT shares ground with hybrid geographies, more-than-human geographies, performance theory, actor network theory and, I argue, creative geographies (Acker 2020; Bennett 2010; Glass and Rose-Redwood 2014; Sedgwick 2002). In its attention to subjective experience, the bodily senses and emotion, it shares concerns with feminist geographies; but the commonalities largely end there.

Critiques of NRT focus in three areas. Firstly, they concern questions of emotion and affect. Corporeality and dailiness are central to NRT geographies, but the NRT often universalizes human subjectivity, ignoring questions of race, class, gender and sexuality (Thien 2005), resulting in a field of inquiry criticized as being "cut loose from individual lifeworlds" and their politics (Lorimer 2008). Secondly, there are critiques around questions of power. If the body is the site of happenings for nonrepresentational geography, some geographers object to NRT's tendency to separate the body from its fleshiness, functions and political place, arguing that physical attributes shape structures of power in the world. Many have found nonrepresentational theory to be too "ungrounded, distancing, detached and ironically disembodied" (Bondi 2005, 438). Failing to differentiate between sex, race, etc., can perpetuate the naturalization of a "masculinist and abstract" (Colls 2012, 442) stance in geography. NRT fails to take into account the multiple, embodied, situated, incomplete knowledges that are explored so well in feminist geographies. Finally, some also fault NRT for the role discourse plays in embodied experience, arguing that explorations of situated knowledges should be inherently embodied, based in qualitative, real experience rather than disembodied theory.

Cresswell (2012) perhaps gives the best summation of criticisms of NRT, raising so many that by the end of his article, one begins to wonder if, aside from its preoccupation with landscape and dwelling, NRT is actually a geographical theory at all. Cresswell sites NRT's "textiness" and reliance on social theorists and philosophers much more than geographers, its lack of connection to empirical study matter, its connections with humanistic geography, the status of the subject (and thus its eschewing of identities such as class, gender and race) and its insistence that there is no stability (á la Derrida) in the world. If "anything is possible," Cresswell asks, then "what accounts for things staying more or less the same?" (2012, 103). In the same sense that humanism supposes a big picture which does not take into account individual

injustices that pertain to race, gender and class, so NRT's lack of structure, argues Cresswell, does not account for the difficulty of changing the world, and instead presents a big picture where the only differentiations are 'life' or 'the subject'. Thien (2005), Bondi (2005), and Tolia-Kelly (2006) critique NRT's focus on the universal, which negates social theories of difference and power geometries, including those pertaining to gender, ethnicity and class. Finally, Castree and MacMillan (2004) present an interesting response to NRT's rejection of representation, arguing that though representation can be problematic in several ways (its freezing of what it represents; its entanglements with power and the primacy of vision; its inadequacy to the thing it represents), it is still a primary means of registering the world. Representation is a politically useful tool for categorizing things and for creating alternate "counter-hegemonic representations of the world," which can have "real and meaningful affects" (2004, 476), and its ability to lend certainty and gravitas to academic positions should not be underestimated.

Pile's (2009) work on emotional and affective geographies also takes aim at NRT's representational methods and its reliance on affect as opposed to emotion in describing how humans experience the non-material world. Emotional geographies see thought as a "psychological object" whereas in affectual geographies, affect is not part of consciousness, nor of unconscious thought. Pile sees this as the central struggle that separates emotional and affectual geographies. But this also means that it is hard for emotional geographies to explore spaces "in-between" one person and another, or a person and their environment. Here, affectual geography becomes handy for its ability to discuss affects that do not reside *in* a person but instead in the spaces in-between and around them. Pile (2009, 16) is critical of the metaphors (of circulation, transmission and contagion) that NRT scholars such as Thrift (2008, 235-43) have created in order to describe such in-between spaces, calling them "a chain gang of metaphors (or resources, or assumptions)" that rests solidly in representational practice and in language (Pile 2009, 17). He cautions against emotional geography tying itself to "an increasingly cognition-centred, humanistic and romantic view of expressed emotions, where accounts that display ever greater poignancy and intimacy become the stock-in-trade of the caring researcher" (2009, 17).

Understandings of NRT and what it posits can be enticing, however, for those from within strands of geography and other fields that have connections to the arts. Artists (Zwicky 2014; Northrup 2013; Bushell 1996; Ruefle and Leuzzi 2015) often describe their process as very similar to the entangled, creative methodologies of NRT: "as practitioners of poetry you are practitioners of madness, rack, and honey. You are mercy-givers who execute. You are

executioners who show mercy" (Ruefle 2012). For critical geographers, it is aspects of NRT rather than its overall argument that appeal: the phenomenological approach, the fight against timidity, the relational ontology (Cresswell 2012), and the lineage of theorists from which NRT draws is familiar to and valued by both critical geographers and artists.

Scholars like Whatmore (1999, 2006) and Bennett (2001), crossing back and forth between feminist understandings of multiple, embodied knowledges and the work being done in Actor Network Theory and NRT itself, cite Deleuze and Guattari to argue for rhizomatic, bodily understandings of the world. And, from within feminist geography, scholars address and question the distinct positions feminist geographies and NRT hold on conceptions of the pre-political/political body (Colls 2012). For instance, Colls takes up Grosz' term 'force' (informed by Irigaray and Deleuze and Guattari's work) to explore the idea of difference as "not pre-given, hierarchical or oppositional" (Grosz 2005, 441). Rather, Colls concurs with Grosz that a rethinking of corporeal specificity might provide "a new direction for a more abstract approach to feminism, the kind of abstraction that is needed to bring about new frames of reference and new kinds of questions" (Grosz 2005, 173). It might be useful, Colls argues, to reflect "on the liberation of 'contained' subjects by questioning and rethinking the terms through which we call for an attention to difference" (Colls 2012, 441). Colls' work has been cited recently by Adey, who takes up her call for a different "ethos of engagement" (Adey 2012, 200), one in which pluralism and generosity of response open doors for more creative, experimental, hopeful, assemblage-like engagements, and by Schurr (2014) who calls for a feminist nonrepresentational geography. Work by Coddington (2015) argues for the continued decoupling of feminist geography from gender, opening the door to wider understandings of the political in everyday life. Garrett and Hawkins' (2013) response to Mott and Roberts' (2014) article also revisits Colls' and Grosz's work through a suggestion that geographers might "begin from somewhere other than the particular understanding of socially differentiated bodies" (2) in order to further 'place' exploration.

Reinterpreting nonrepresentational theory

These previously mentioned scholars' make inroads into a more nuanced understanding of a body in the world. I suggest that future work in this area might look at the connections between feminist geography and the geohumanities, or even between feminist theory and NRT. My goal here, however, is to clarify NRT's position through a mapping of Zwicky's lyric

philosophy onto NRT's understandings of landscape and subjectivity. To address this, I first turn to NRT's focus on landscape. Of particular interest is the recent flurry of publications by John Wylie, Tim Robinson and Mitch Rose on presence and absence, specifically centring on walking through landscape, as well as dwelling and displacement in landscape and the geographies of love. For Wylie (2009) the profound absence one is faced with when immersed in a landscape is both a reason to despair and rejoice. As he relates when trying to see the sea-in-itself during a walk to Mullion Cove, "something is *already* displacing the moment from both without and within" (276). Wylie despairs the threshold which cannot be broached; simultaneously he can accept the notion that "to be 'in love' [is] already to be lost, or lonely" (284), as "the visible world funnels towards this inaccessible and unimaginable point of disappearance" (Wylie 2017, 10). Thus, the geographies of love, rather than being a union or an absorption, lie in "an unrequitable gap, in a love founded in loss, withdrawal and absence" (2009, 284); they lie "somewhere deep in the eye of the beholder" (2017, 10). In 2010, Rose published his response to Wylie's 2009 article. Identifying his own humanist tendencies as perhaps the place where he and Wylie (who are collaborators and friends as well as academics who work in similar areas) differ, Rose offers a clarification of where he and Wylie part ways:

> So Wylie and I stand back to back, wondering at the absence in the heart of the visible. For Wylie, the hole is the threshold where landscape dissipates into light and air. For me, the whole signals a pre-ontological summons that gathers. (2010, 143)

Rose's response gave greater legitimacy to placing absence and presence at the centre of inquiries; explorations like these strike me as fertile ground for the geohumanities. In support of this hunch, in 2012, Wylie published a paper on Tim Robinson's work, "Dwelling and displacement." Robinson is a writer from western Ireland whose books on the Aran Islands (1986, 1995, 2006) have garnered praise from academics and nature writers alike, and who focuses with keen attention on the act of walking through, and dwelling in, a landscape. The crossover from academic paper to commercially published (though meticulously researched) non-fiction was notable. Wylie's paper also cites writer Robert McFarlane in the acknowledgements; McFarlane is a writer in Robinson's vein, who takes long walks through his UK homeland as well as locations abroad, posing questions on the nature of home, landscape and belonging. Though I am chagrined that Wylie did not turn to female nature writers such as Kathleen Jamie or Annie Dillard, I am still curious. What are these geographers finding in the nature writing of McFarlane and Robinson that speaks to NRT's explorations of landscape and subjectivity? I am encouraged and excited by this recent work and its cross-discipline venturing,

but there needs to be more. There is a lack of, and an opportunity for, greater collaboration between both fields of inquiry. Specifically, I see similarities in the work of NRT geographers, who query the boundaries and limits of embodied subjectivities, with the wilderness poets Zwicky and McKay.

Where common ground may thus be found is through engagement of the producers and products of the creative fields. Interventions from other disciplines – specifically from those who can offer a creative, embodied, alternate perspective – can provide an interesting opportunity for clarifying NRT and adding new scholarship to understandings of emotion and affect when in contact with the world. I see this turn to sensuous, emotional, creative methods in the work of geopoetics scholar Eric Magrane, whose seminal article, "Practicing Geopoetics" (2015), outlines the possibilities for this kind of work. He advances these possibilities, and those of human-non-human engagement, calling a poem "a sphere in which to critically-creatively engage with concepts emanating from new materialist and posthumanist trends in the humanities and social sciences that work to de-center [the individual liberal humanist] subject' (Magrane 2020, 9).

Though Pile's cautions about metaphor and affect are useful, I find them unnecessarily disparaging of figurative language, a tendency which suggests "a hegemony of timidity" (Vannini 2016, 15). In fact, more-than-representational theory has called for a validation of metaphor's ability to simultaneously succeed even as it fails:

> In wishing to do away with the repetitions, the structures, the orders, the givens, and the identities of representation, non-representational theory is quite ambitious. It seeks novelty and experimental originality. Rather than to resemble it seeks to dissemble (Doel, 2010, 117). It wants to make us feel something powerful, to give us a sense of the ephemeral, the fleeting, and the not-quite-graspable… It does not refute representation but it pursues it in parallel with differentiation (Doel, 2010). It wants the impossible, really. No wonder then, as Dewsbury (2009) puts it, it is destined to fail it. And yet, as he incites us to do following Beckett's famous dictum, in the end our job as non-representationalists is to simply to fail better. (Vannini 2016, 8)

Vannini urges a geographical engagement with backgrounds, events, affective resonances, and relations and doings (practices and performances). The methodologies of NRT, he explains, do not force a focus on *not representing*, but on finding out what language – after recognizing its poststructural failures and the crisis of representation – can still do. This means making "dance a little" the "methodological skills that human geography has so painfully accumulated" (Latham 2003, 2000). It also means a fight against timidity in research, which can see a well-packaged qualitative research article refuse the messy, sensuous unfoldings of more creative, performative

research methods. Vannini goes as far as to say:

> The very accepted format of the typical journal article with its focus on what happened during research procedures indeed might very well be the most forceful weapon with which the hegemony of timidity asserts its conservative power. (Vannini 2016, 16)

Instead of jettisoning traditional research methods, Vannini, along with Dewsbury and Latham, argue that these methods need to be "imbued" with creativity, with more emphasis placed on partial knowledges, the unsaid, the sensuous, the emotional. I now look to McKay and Zwicky's understandings of lyric and metaphor in order to suggest clarifications for NRT.

Lyric & wilderness

Lyric poetry has the ability to "gesture towards affective and sensory qualities that mediate empathy." As Bristow argues, "the lyric moment is alert to the mutability of the observed and the observer" (2015, 18). He continues:

> In poetry, we are abnormally sensitive creatures; acutely and often discomfortingly attuned to perilinguistic wavelengths. The lyric registers personal, felt experience. Lyricism configures feelings and structures thought; it reflects on our capacities as humans to fulfil our potential for experiencing joy, surprise and delight while honestly admitting pain, grief and sadness into the home of our being. (Bristow 2015, 18-19)

In attending to the world, lyric recognizes both the individual and universal aspects of emotional engagement, and avoids the hard distinctions between them that Pile and others have drawn.

An encounter with art (Hawkins 2014) and with the world is a chance to think about the opportunities inherent in any form of communication with an other. McKay identifies that other as a variety of 'wilderness':

> By 'wilderness' I want to mean, not just a set of endangered spaces, but the capacity of all things to elude the mind's appropriations. To what *degree* do we own our houses, hammers, dogs? Beyond that line lies wilderness (2001, 21).

Wilderness exists in all things both sacred and pedestrian (McKay 2001) and humanity, he arges, would do well to acknowledge its presence and its pull. Wilderness, in the Canadian literary tradition of Atwood's *Survival* (1972) or Frye and Hutcheon's (1971) garrison mentality, appears, respectively, as that hostile other that humans must either fight against to survive or shelter from to avoid its indifferent violence. For McKay, however, wilderness is present in every thing on the earth, including not just wolves and fir trees but fridges, suburbs and forks. The strange, voiceless complexity of our fellow objects is an opportunity for decorous engagement, rather than a cue to flee. Lyric presents this opportunity; it affords us brief access to a world that is both present/absent.

As in Robinson's "good step," writers can struggle to make a "single step as adequate to

the ground it clears as is the dolphin's arc to its wave" (Robinson 1986, 19). Encounter opens us to possibility (including possibilities that lie beyond the works themselves). In elaborating on his metaphor of the good step, Robinson writes, "one can speculate that the structure of condensation and ordering necessary to pass from such various types of knowledge to such an instant of insight would have the characteristics of a work of art," though he also acknowledges that this moment lies beyond even the work itself, and would rather be like "a reading of that work" (20). So the performance of the art itself becomes equal to or capable of surpassing the object of art.

I would go further to suggest that the moment of *creation* of the work may also often surpass that object. Zwicky (2011) argues for two different types of experience in the world: lyric and domestic experience. A lyric experience, for Zwicky, is experience set free from time; it is a direct, unhindered connection with the world, it "bespeaks an awareness that is vulnerable" (71L); it is "thinking in love with clarity and coherence" (153L); it is rooted in resonance (in that it is Orphic), in particularity, in precariousness, in the ephemeral nature of the world. In lyric, experience one is attentive to the world; one is *struck*. The position precludes ego, control, power or the surrounding structures of discourse that complicate relationships between one thing and another, even as the experience of lyric coherence also "preserves the *distinctness* and *particularity* of its component details" (Heiti 2017, 91). That is to say, all things being experienced in lyric coherence (including the participant) are still individual, but they are also part of a "wholeness that is not merely additive" (Zwicky 2011, L66). Humans cannot live in lyric, argues Zwicky, but can visit and let it inform existence in domestic experience. Domestic experience is life lived within the constraints of mortality, time, technology and relation. Domestic experience is not a negative, quotidian opposite to lyric experience. Instead, it is a way of living that recognizes both the necessity of tool use (language) and the temporality of lyric experience; it "is not so much a static mid-point between these two contrary moments in human desire as it is an active acknowledgement that the tension between the two cannot be resolved" (Zwicky 2003, foreword). The domestic "refrains from attempts to eradicate difference…it leads to genuine cohabitation with art, technology, and the natural world" (143L).

To be always and forever in the world (as when one is creating art) is to reside (briefly) in lyric experience, a variety of time not one of us can inhabit for extended periods (Zwicky 2011b). For Robinson, too, no one is capable of inhabiting this metaphorical good step, for it is a way of living on the earth that is "a momentary proposition put by the individual to the non-

individual, an instant of trust which may not be well-founded, a not-quite-infallible catching of oneself in the act of falling" (Robinson 1986, 364). Art's ephemeral inhabiting of a creative space/time is connate with NRT's examination of presence/absence.

The pre/political body

Zwicky's understandings of lyric and domestic experience also have particular relevance when examining nonrepresentational geographies' understandings of embodied relationships to the world. One of the primary objections to NRT's interest in immanence, in the pre-political body, and in force relations beyond the realm of representation, rests in its failure to take into account the power relationships that bodies engage in with other bodies. For this, it has received considerable criticism. Feminist geography in particular takes issue with the concept of a pre-political body, arguing that bodies are always and ever situated in the identities of gender, race, ability, etc.

I concur with the criticisms aimed at NRT, to a point, and agree that a gesturing toward the idea of a pre-political state is problematic, not least because it erases the individual stories and complex situating of an individual. I propose a rethinking of this supposed pre-political state. What if NRT's attention to practice and affect is, essentially, an inadequately expressed description of lyric understanding or lyric coherence? Terms like resonance, presence, absence, immanence, "a series of infinite 'ands' which add to the world rather than extract stable representations from it" (Cadman 2009, 1) are the same vocabulary terms employed by Zwicky, McKay and others (Lilburn 1999, 2018; Lee 1974; Bringhurst 2006). These poets examine the resonant moment when one is both in one's body but also in touch with (perhaps even part of) a larger, gestalt whole – both a singular being and a coherent multitude. Lyric philosophy, like Magrane's (2020) climate geopoetics, is interested in a plurality of voices, in ethical engagement with the various entities and landscapes in the world, and it gives absolute credence to these particularities. Lyric experience also foregrounds a responsibility to material reality. Immanence in NRT is what I argue is actually lyric coherence, which recognizes myriad details and particularities, but which also gathers together to give access to the world as an integrated whole. Both separate and together, Zwicky's idea of lyric asks us "to attend to each detail *and* to the resonances among them" (Heiti 2017, 105).

Lyric coherence thus becomes a political gesture in that it advises an ethical engagement with the non-human world that both recognizes coherence and individuality. During lyric experience, writes Zwicky, "to fuse the self with the world is to forfeit the self" (2011, L133).

Though much critical human geography is focused less on the individual self and more with collective subjectivities (political, economic, social, environmental, etc.) and many geographers now adopt a 'more-than-human' approach to human geography, this gesture still chafes against many queer feminist radical critical geographers' notions of the political in that it ends up eschewing the individual self during engagement. But the more I examine Zwicky's work, the more unconvinced of this conclusion I become. There is nothing in her philosophy that I can see that eschews or negates individual experience or story. The dearth of critique of her work also supports this. I suspect suspicion remains, however, because there is discomfort with what I see as the end point of lyric experience (and this is where I push beyond what Zwicky has written, and accommodate some of what NRT examines): lyric experience offers possibility for (briefly) a common or gestalt experience of the world. Perhaps by this I mean a commonly understood emotion. I mean that the world itself shows its underlying coherence, and that the participant or observer feels a part of this. Lyric is orphic; it "occurs in emptiness" but also in particularity; "rooted in the preciousness, the losability of the world," it is also open to the world, trying "to comprehend the whole in a single gesture" (Zwicky 2011, L70, 71, 73).

It is this gesture of an egoless connection with the world that I wish to bring to bear in both NRT and geopoetics. It is a gesture I feel is particularly important, in light of today's climate emergency and the heightening extinction of experience with the natural world (Baldwin 2015). In Magrane's (2020) essay on climate geopoetics, he calls upon Chakrabarty's (2009) climate change theses. Chakrabarty's assertion is that facing the Anthropocene demands "thinking simultaneously on both registers" of universal collectivity and understandings of difference (2009: 220). Magrane rightly points out that the "universalizing of humanity as a driver of the current condition…may undercut and/or prefigure the actions that could be taken moving forward" when considering climate change and who or what is responsible for its impacts (220). But this notion of a gestalt experience continues to dog me. Chakrabarty argues that "*species* may indeed be the name of a placeholder for an emergent, new universal history of humans that flashes up in the moment of the danger that is climate change" (221, my emphasis). And at the end of his piece, though the universal that Chakrabarty identifies "cannot subsume particularities," he provisionally calls it a "negative universal history" (2009: 222). Chakrabarty allows this consideration of a "universal that arises from a shared sense of a catastrophe" (222); I would argue that the catastrophe is occurring because many from the Global North have moved

so far away from any kindred experience with the world.[3]

For me, this moment when I am both in and outside of my body happens outside of the constraints of logical positivist thought; in short, it happens when I experience lyric understanding. Lyric experience invites something beyond subjectivity, beyond the ego itself. The being-in-the-world specific to NRT is a lyric being, a lyric understanding (even though it refers, in many cases to the geography of everyday life). Can one be simultaneously solidly within a body and also experiencing a gestalt understanding with the world? I think so. I have felt it while writing poetry. This lyric understanding informs our surrounding lives, lived within the relations of power, gender and sex, and also includes our individualities, but paradoxically, it also seems simultaneously to lie beyond them, and gesture toward a coherence that might begin to reconfigure relationships with the other. By contrast, domestic experience functions to highlight experience *within* one's body rather than the experience of one self *going forth* to meet the world. Through the juxtapositioning of lyric/domestic time with NRT, geographers may ultimately find that the two are, if not flip sides of the same coin, then certainly much more closely intertwined than initially thought.[4] If it is late on December 31 in the calendar of the earth's geologic age, this view of lyric experience or NRT's being-in-the-world may allow humans to (finally) step aside their recent hubristic assumption of being at center 'scene', allowing participation from, and understanding of, the non-human world in all its multiple, resonant material realities.

Metaphor

The examination of lyric/domestic experience yields a final potential point of

[3] I am aware that Chakrabarty has been critiqued for these assertions (see Boscov-Ellen 2020; Zizec 2010), especially given his status as a postcolonial scholar who has written extensively about difference, not universality. But even Boscov-Ellen nonetheless acknowledges the "solid rational kernel" to his arguments, especially in his identification of the difficulty postcolonial theorists have in thinking about nature and Marxism's stanch human focus, to the detriment of justice for and attendance to other forms of life. It is here that I think he is searching for some way to speak about the profound disconnection humans have stumbled into since the advent of modern, industrial societies. Though his arguments may leave gaps, they still point toward an aporia that lyric thought seems to be poised to fill.

[4] Presence and absence should not be lumped together when discussing this connection, however, I note the extensive conversation between Wylie (2009, 2010) and Rose (2006, 2010) regarding the absence or presence they respectively attribute to the conception and experience of landscape. Wylie proposes landscape as an "absence at the heart of the point of view" (2009, 278) whereas Rose identifies instead an "ache for presence" in landscape that binds us to a desire for connection which (may not ever) be satisfied. Nor should these positions be seen to cover the breadth of work in non-representational geography; these two positions characterize one of two strands of NRT which can be summarized down to either a belief in and focus on absence and distance or one in and on enchantment and connectedness, as is evident in vitalist geographies. The creative work I bring through geopoetics into NRT is meant to address and add to the former. There are others, beyond the scope of this chapter, that could converse with the latter. I suggest this as another area for future crossover work.

contribution by poetics and poetry. A person's experiences 'inside' and 'outside' of a body breeds two different forms of understanding of being in the world. She experiences the world as herself, and, for a brief lyric moment, experiences the world as it might be for something/someone else. The act draws a connection between these two experiences, creating new meaning that circulates between the two. A similar structure is created in the forming of a metaphor, when two seemingly unlike terms (a heart, a red pepper) are brought into relation, and the act of connecting the two (both are chambered, deformed, hot, hollow, globular, familiar, dense, symetric) creates a new meaning (Sinclair 2011). For Zwicky, metaphor is singularly important in understanding the difference between lyric and domestic experience.

For McKay, metaphor has the potential to unseat human dominance; his metaphorical explorations of wilderness bring the wild into our lives, our bodies, even our houses and their technologies. It is an opportunity to sing alongside a thing, to offer hilarity in language that speeds its connection and reaches for resonant image and veracity. Humans can come to relation with the foreign things and creatures through metaphor, "using language's totalizing tendency against itself, making a claim for sameness that is clearly, according to common linguistic sense, false. Except that it isn't" (McKay 2001, 68). Metaphor, as a relationship between words, carries meaning forward from one term to another, and then carries it back from the second to the first, so that both are altered in the exchange. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) show how metaphor is not just part of our daily speech use, but also an integral way in which the mind constructs its thought processes. By highlighting the importance of metaphor in our daily existence, McKay further argues that humans can reposition themselves as part of the world rather than separate from it, temporarily freeing themselves from "the mind's categories to glimpse some thing's autonomy," its presence and its voice (21).

Metaphor's force and power, and its ability to exceed understandings of the two, stems from how metaphor functions, linguistically. Metaphor, to McKay, is a third space/understanding/idea formed by the linkage between two seemingly unlike objects or things. The connection creates the third thing. This connection is both embodied (in that it acknowledges the peculiar and particular characteristics of each object) and a connection based in discourse. The third understanding that a metaphor creates is neither a real thing nor entirely idea-based. It is a strange amalgam of feeling, thought, objects and experience. NRT is critiqued for its turn away from embodied experience by critical geographers. But what if metaphor were the middle point, which took both discourse and practice and combined them into one possibility? Through

metaphor, things engage in dialogue; the result is neither not-two-but-one, nor not-one-but-two but a stretched relationship of understanding that both highlights the particularity of a thing and allows it a glimpse of coherence. It is, and is not: "to understand a metaphor is always to experience loss at the same time as connexion…Loss-in-connexion, connexion-in-loss" (Zwicky 2003 L56). Metaphorical thinking allows an enrichment of Zwicky's lyric/domestic experience. By acknowledging metaphor as a vehicle for discovery of both the connective power and the wilderness of language, we can sit in a "small retreat from language inside language…surrounded by our hardworking tools, exhilarated and heartbroken" (McKay 2001, 73). McKay's words recall to me Wylie and Rose's recent writing about the benches of Mullion Cove: the "opening-into and distancing-from" that results from an engagement of self with the world (Wylie 2009, 275).

Conclusion

It seems clear that geographers are asking for (and beginning to provide) new methods and a new language with which to enliven and advance critical geographies. From Meinig's (1983) early call for geography to be an art as well as a science to new work that addresses the geographies of care and love (Wylie 2012; Lawson 2009), the rise of creative geographies (Cresswell 2014; Marston & de Leeuw 2013) and the use of art in geographical inquiry (Barnes 2013; Dear et al. 201 1; Hawkins 2011, 2013; Thomson 2013; Magrane 2017, 2020; Acker 2017, 2021), more geographers are not only allowing for, but embracing, the practice of art as a critical tool in geography's explorations.

In citing specific examples of creative geography's potential, I have used poetry because, as a primary tool of representation, it occupies a strange no-man's-land which gestures toward both presence and absence. Paul Celan writes, "Speak, you also / Speak at the last, / Have your say. // Speak – / But keep yes and no unsplit" (2001). Poetry uses language's ability to exceed itself through metaphor and its ability to reach beyond representation through its gesturing toward that which cannot be said. Poetry's metaphorical qualities can also serve both NRT and feminist theory, helping to clarify NRT's preoccupation with absence/presence and a new understanding of the politics of bodies and worlds. Contributions of art to geography support a continued examination of emotional engagement with place and of aesthetics as they pertain to practice, to the body, and to the concepts of place and landscape. Art has become "something with agency, and productive of effects" including aesthetic, political and affective effects (Hawkins 2015, 240).

When examining poet-philosophers' work such as McKay and Zwicky, attention to practice is important. But there is something else that must conclude this chapter, and which threatens to elude definition. Hawkins (2013) hints at the idea, arguing that "these blends of the critical and creative, the conceptual, aesthetic and stylistic, demand a reconfiguration of disciplinary spaces of knowledge production, critique and evaluation" (66). Whatmore (1999) suggests that a new kind of "pungent" writing is needed in geography. She points to poetry as an example – writing that is emotional, kinetic, associative, metaphorical. At the same time, poets like Zwicky and McKay also petition for changes in how to write about and think about the world. McKay's examination of the failure of language opens the line of inquiry I wish to highlight. For it is failure that I believe is central to the journey of both geography and art, and to our current position in history. Poetry at its most compelling is often the work of doubt and humility, of the deft stumble that turns a self-undoing phrase. This is also true for geography, and any art that uses language. "What might it mean," asks Wylie, "for landscape to be a kind of vanishing act, for a sense of absence or disappearance to characterize the experience of landscape?" (2017, 10). Similarly, Vannini gives space for NRT theory to fail, and "fail better" (2016, 8). What they indicate goes beyond an understanding of landscape itself or the perspectival aspect of landscape, but to that of the very fabric of the world. Trying and failing with words is a fundamental part of the process of connection with the world. The world may turn away, but it always abides. For McKay and Zwicky, as well as for other poets and for geography, failure to apprehend and translate the world into words arises from attempts to capture its image through a direct gaze. There is something, then, about a sidelong approach to the subject of our relationship with the world that seems an apt way of advancing both creative and critical disciplines. Acknowledgement of failure also seems a good place to start from, when addressing the sadness and the grief inherent in the Anthropocene.

The perception of a subject – in geography, in art – thrown from or into the world by language thus relates to failure through a numinous, moment by moment naming of the world that is accomplished through a partial gaze, rather than a direct one. It is "coaxed from feelings of attachment and estrangement, intimacy and remoteness, togetherness and individuality" (Lorimer 2014, 584). Particularized moments of connection, though they contain a failure, also contain failure's inverse: a sense of kindredness. To be kindred means to exist in relationship to another, with degrees of nearness and farness, intimacy and distance; "our experience of landscape *is* the tension between approaching and departing, observing and inhabiting, leaving

and remaining" (Wylie 2017, 4). McKay (2000) employs cataloguing and naming as a way to engage with the world, disclosing a love that opens up possibilities for relating. The inverse of the failure of metaphor is the use of names as metaphors for the words they express. As a last option when language fails, or when humans are failing, they can employ apostrophe to express emotion, connection, or simply proximity – to be near as to be less separate. This, finally, may be what Wylie (2009) gestures toward in his call for a geography of love and his repeated exploration of the distances and intimacies one feels in a landscape. At the intersection of these creative and critical fields, with a common understanding both of failure's inevitability and its possibilities, lies compelling avenues of exploration. McKay and Zwicky, of the "Thinking and Singing" poets, are but two examples of many who furnish similar possibilities for scholarly-creative reflections. My wish is that this chapter opens up a bigger 'space' for geographers' future encounters with a wide variety of poets, poems and poetics, both for the conceptual insights and for the depth of 'worlding' they may afford.

Chapter 3: Lyric Geography

An abbreviated version of this chapter appeared in 2019. *Geopoetics in Practice*. London. New York. Routledge.

What are the poetic possibilities for unfolding place? How might creative process and product (specifically poetry and poetics) contribute to geographical thought? How can I use my training as an artist to find a way to talk about poems and place within the social sciences?

This piece is a geopoetics in practice. It is a response to a call issued by geographers for a more situated, creative, entangled way of writing about the world. The form reflects the content. Dialogue—that essential interaction between self and other, between disciplines, and within and outside the academy—should be an essential method in geography to enable humans to ethically engage with the world. Thus, the left-hand text is mine; the right-hand text features other voices. The right-hand quotes have been selected as a kind of curatorial exercise—a bringing in of authors from both within and outside of geopoetics. The quotes enter into conversation with one another; they also converse with my own work, on the left-hand side. The form itself owes a debt to Jan Zwicky, who, in Wisdom and Metaphor and Lyric Philosophy, provides an example of how academic and creative work might each speak more fully when presented in tandem.

Some of the left-hand text occurs in short prose vignettes; some takes place in more aphoristic prose; and some is poetry itself.[1] The vignettes of daily life (in Ajijic, Mexico) are meant to support the poems that were produced in place and to illustrate the concepts raised in the prose. The prose work sets the stage; the vignettes are my observations; the poems are the creative culmination of the study. I argue that, together, they offer a new way of doing geography within geopoetics.

[1] Poems from the left hand text also appear as part of Chapter 4's complete poetry manuscript.

There has been a call in recent decades, from geographers working in the wake of the cultural turn, for a different kind of geography. The call is for the inclusion of creative geography and specifically geopoetics in the discipline of geography – one that takes into account voices from the creative arts, and one that recognizes subjective, qualitative understandings of the world.

The call has a history.

Human geography began a turn away from positivist theories toward more relational, subjective experience in the 1970s (Philo 2009).

Performance theory, more-than-human geographies, nonrepresentational theory and feminist geographies have opened the doors for the emergence of the geographies of creativity and creative geographies. Recent decades have seen, if not an explosion, then certainly a flourishing of cross-disciplinary explorations between the social sciences and the humanities.

Emily Orley 2009, 159

[How] to produce rigorous scholarly research about artistic practices without losing all the creative and imaginative impulses behind the work that existed in the first place?

D.W. Meinig 1983, 325

We shall not have a humanistic geography worthy of the claim until we have some of our most talented and sensitive scholars deeply engaged in the creation of the literature of the humanities.

Philip Crang 2010, 110

Twenty years on from the publication of Peter Jackson's Maps of Meaning, the sense that Cultural Geography has lost something since then – novelty, currency, an articulated sense of direction and self-importance – is hard to resist.

As Michael Dear noticed, while writing Geohumanities, the call also brings attention to concordances between geography and literature that have been repeated through the decades. Scholars (Meinig 1983; Hawkins 2011; de Leeuw 2003; Dear 2015; Lorimer 2008; Magrane 2015) are calling for engagement by geographers in creative practices and products, and for participation of the arts in geographical thought. But what if Meinig didn't have it quite right? What if it is not just engagement in the literature of the humanities, but a rethinking of these academic divisions themselves, through creative work, that is necessary?	*Michael Dear 2015, 22* Sarah Luria and I discovered an unexpected overlap between our intellectual traditions in human geography and literature. Our very rough map included the following: 1960–1970: Neo-Marxism (in geography)/Marxist studies (in literature). 1970–present: Humanities/City as "text." 1980–present: Social theory/Cultural studies. 1980–present: Geographic information systems (GIS)/Mapping texts. 1990–present: Environmentalism/Eco-criticism. How had she and I not noticed these overlaps earlier? Surely other humanities and social sciences had analogous experiences of concordance?

Creative geographies pose more questions and opportunities than they can yet answer. This is as it should be. Poet-geographers like Sarah de Leeuw (2003) and Tim Cresswell (2014) are exploring what it means to be a practitioner in two fields. Harriet Hawkins (2011) is charting the territory that creative geographies might explore, and how artistic practice and product might be practised and used, respectively, by geographers.

What needs to happen now, in order to answer this call by geographers, is greater intervention by artists who have a vested interest in geographical thought, and greater exploration of exactly what might be offered by the creative humanities that could enrich the discipline of geography.

Hayles 1995, 48

What happens if we begin from the premise not that we know reality because we are separate from it (traditional objectivity), but that we can know the world because we are connected with it?

Harriet Hawkins 2011, 67

Whilst the poetic lyricism and expressive nature of these first-person accounts of being-in and moving-through landscape has led to charges of apolitical solipsism (Sidaway 2009), at the heart of these accounts lies an understanding of the human subject whose composition is conditioned on relations with the world, rather than being understood as separable from it. This relational ontology builds an ethics of landscape that can only be understood in terms of human / non-human relations, a mutual enfolding of self and world that inevitably moves us beyond the singular personal experience (Hinchliffe 2002; Whatmore 1999). What remains as yet largely unexplored by geographers is the potential of cultural production to develop these embodied and relational ethics of landscape and environment, and the capacity for artistically produced experiences of landscape to 'contribute to a shift in [environmental] consciousness' (Miles 2010, 19; although see also Hawkins et al. 2009)

The call by geographers includes several distinct requests: a change of process or approach, a change of language or tools, and a change of product or form. How should these changes be manifested? What do we gain by heeding them? I will first name these three requests – in order to open the field, so to speak, for the inclusion of thinkers from outside of geography – before attempting to answer them, through my own work on place and through an exploration of what poetry and poetics might offer geography.	*Heather Yeung, 2011, 209* Like the naturalist, the cartographer, or the surveyor, the poet's visual and aural engagement with a landscape seeks to map and determine spaces. However, the poet's eye is endowed with a freedom to observe and record sensations in addition to those that make up the concrete landscape. The poet thus communicates with a freedom of affect that the geographer or naturalist cannot notate, bridging the gap between the ready-to-hand of the geographer or naturalist's detachedly observed phenomena or specimens.

Voyeur We are wheeling through life as though in a grocery cart. Aisle after aisle after aisle go by, flavour and promise, but we are too small to reach. The good is beyond our grasp. But we look. We stare in awe at the patterns kaleidoscopes of taste. Meanwhile, the little trees outside soak up summer rains. The lake rises, branches burst forth in a tearing that is the person we love hurting us the first time. It's why as runners we stride so close to pass. We want to be closer	always closer, so loping, nearer, we gift sweat and breath. Bumping along the path, casters long gone, keys playing themselves a piano singing a waltz trails like a dog. We can look. We can look – something will sing for us. We can look. Love will break us but our work, cacophonous, continuous, will lift us like gems into the jeweller's silent eye.	*Eric Magrane 2015, 95* Geopoetics can have specific insights for practicing the orientations of site ontology. To elaborate, I briefly speak to my practice as a poet: For me, the impulse for a poem often comes from an image, a phrase, or an encounter rather than from a question or an idea. I think it's safe to say that this is true for many poets and artists, although, of course, there is no one way that a poem or piece of artwork arrives. Each piece might also be considered an immanent site itself, sometimes more object, sometimes more process or event. A creative practice that first approaches the site with a close attention to images, phrases, and encounters can aid a researcher in an orientation that suspends both transcendent categories and preconceived ideas of the final form that a piece of creative geography might take… …This points us toward a focus on emergence and encounter (Haraway 2008), a situational focus in which site-based art practices and encounters (Hawkins 2013a) have much to offer.

The first request: a change of process and approach

The first request is one for a change of process or approach, a turning from an approach that expects closure to one that expects multiplicity; it is the most fundamental divide between the sciences and the humanities. As Michael Dear notes, many social scientists come to research expecting "resolution and closure," whereas humanities scholars come expecting an accumulation of thought, multiple understandings that do not resolve but instead end on an opening into subjective, often embodied territory.

Michael Dear 2015, 20

Some years ago, at the University of California (UC) Berkeley's Townsend Center for the Humanities, I listened as a very eminent colleague expounded on the subtleties of Dante's Divine Comedy. She responded respectfully and gracefully to comments and critiques from diverse disciplinary perspectives, promising to incorporate them into her interpretive schema. But I became confused as the architecture of her original exposition garnered modifications, amounting sometimes to a small repair, later to a roomy addition, and even verging on complete renovation. The structure of her argument sagged under the weight imposed by these alternative framings and interpretations, finally collapsing (or so it seemed to me) into an undifferentiated bricolage of accumulated evidences. Unperturbed, other seminar participants politely enlightened me that humanities scholars typically welcomed an accumulation of interpretations. The last thing they expected was a resolution of such differences. What could I have been expecting? In retrospect, I had been unable to relinquish the tenets of my social-science training. I required resolution and closure! But I was rapidly learning that conversations in geohumanities would require more than a middle ground between the presenter's rich interpretive tapestry and my social-scientific baggage.

Recent requests in Geography have recognized and petitioned for more of the (sometimes uncomfortable) spaciousness of a humanities approach. These calls by geographers for greater input from creative and humanities-based practitioners have put us well on our way to greater interdisciplinarity and exchange (Magrane 2015). But work is still needed to aid the acceptance of creative work as a valid contribution to the discipline of geography and to the social sciences as a whole. What is hindering this process, and what would help facilitate it?	*Lynn Hejinian 2000, 229* I ask myself what's in a poem. …And I imagine what kind of vigilance is layered within the remarkability of all that I have requested. My values are held in change, vividly falling to one side and then the other, their fascination dependent in part on their very absence of order. …So, from the time I was old enough to know the facts, remember sounds, render rhythms, I thought work was as similar to life as one could suffer. …And I remember even as a child realizing that pleasure lay in arranging it. …Knowledge is always situated. *Simon Springer 2016, 2* It is high time, once and for all, to unchain our geographical imaginations from the shackles of our disciplinary past and boldly embrace the immanence of geopoetics. Yet my purpose is not to engage a polemic about what earth writing should look like in absolute terms by prescribing solutions. In fact, my objective is to do quite the opposite. I hope to open up debates about earth writing by advocating the un-disciplining of our discipline. *John Wylie 2009, 286* The geographies of love, in other words, would speak against any solipsism or narcissism, and equally against any sublimation of self and other…

I moved from studying in a humanities department to a social science department several years ago because the urgency of the world's environmental problems and my own interest. Sometime during that first year I realized I had arrived in a very different world from that in which I have spent most of my life. I was reading geographer John Wylie's (2005) paper on walking along the British coastline. It is a lyrical, exploratory essay, written in the first person. It engages with a particular landscape through poetic description and uses this landscape to explore how he felt when moving through the world – what he could and could not see, how he apprehended things, how he belonged and did not belong to a landscape in which he found himself, and what that meant for how humans engage with the world. The essay, and others of Wylie's, was criticized (Blacksell 2005; Sidaway 2009) for its lyric voice, its romanticizing of a particular landscape. His work in nonrepresentational geography has also been criticized for its lack of political awareness and avoidance of power relations as they manifest in the politics of gender, race and mobility.	*Mark Blacksell 2005, 519* Had [Wylie's essay] been rooted more securely in the wider literature on the coastal landscape, particularly relating to the South West Peninsula, and had it made more explicit reference to some of the political realities surrounding access to the countryside, then it would have been far easier to relate to its general case. *Tom Bristow, 2015, 5* The discipline of geography can learn from the way poetry implicitly articulates the significance of the experience of place to human emotions. This is how the lyric gives expression to the power of receiving and interpreting a sense of place through the creations of others.

In a conversation with fellow poet Emily Nilsen, however, we both recognized in Wylie's words not a lack of political rigor, but rather a deft attention to the unsayable, which I argue poets are trying to touch the edges of in their work. Poets worry little about the academy when immersed in their fifteen minutes of composition (which happens every few days or weeks, if they are fortunate), but they worry greatly about how to gesture toward, and say something about (or to), that unsayable miasma of the world that hovers in front of them like a ghost.

Critics of Wylie's work distrust his turn to subjectivity because it uses the first person to discuss landscape, thus falling prey to solipsism and narcissism. Critical geographers also distrust his supposed eschewing of politics in favour of an undifferentiated body in the world.

Thinking back to Meinig, what if it were not the creation itself of poetry, but the way that creation is viewed that has been the stumbling block for true interchange between the humanities and social sciences?

In a world without disciplinary boundaries, Wylie might be free to call himself a poet or a nature writer, and yet still be able to contribute to geographical thought. The criteria by which we analyze process or approach in geography may be too narrow.

Robert McFarlane 2015, NP

Literature has the ability to change us for good, in both senses of the phrase. Powerful writing can revise our ethical relations with the natural world, shaping our place consciousness and our place conscience… [It] is ethically alert, theoretically literate and wary of the seductions and corruptions of the pastoral. It is sensitive to the dark histories of landscapes and to the structures of ownership and capital that organise – though do not wholly produce – our relations with the natural world.

A.R. Ammons, 1971

Schooling

Out mountainward, I explained I've already
yielded to so much, truly, an abundance,

to seas, of course, ranges, glaciers, large
rivers, to the breadth of plains, easily to

outcroppings of bedrock, specially those
lofted amalgamated magmas, grainy, dense, and

easily to waterfalls double-hands can't halt:
but now I'm looking to yield to lesser

effects, wind-touch of a birch branch, for
example, weed-dip, tilting grasses in seed,

the brush of a slipped lap of lakewater
over a shore stone: I think I'm almost

down to shadows, yielding to their masses,
for my self out here, taut against the mere

suasion of a star, is explaining, dissolving
itself, saying, be with me wind bent at leaf

	edges, warp me puddle riffle, show me the total yielding past shadow and return.

But this is not to say that poetry (or Wylie's work) does not engage with important questions of politics.

Years before the conversation with Nilsen, in a meeting with Jan Zwicky at St. Peter's College in Muenster, Saskatchewan, I was worrying the idea that what I did as an artist wasn't helping the natural world enough. I confessed to her that I feared it wasn't an active enough response to the world's problems. She looked at me, "Poetry is a political act," she said.

Choosing art involves a great deal of sitting and thinking (or walking or drawing or reading or lollygagging) and precious few minutes of overtly productive behaviour; I could not see the value of what I was doing. As if the only way to have value was to invent a wind turbine that did not kill songbirds, or to prove the negative effects of a pipeline, or to increase the population of an endangered species.

Don McKay 2001, 66

The 'o' which sometimes precedes apostrophe – and is always implicit in the gesture, might be described as the gawk of unknowing. This is because that impulse to renewed address, with the genuine linguistic abjection which precipitates it, really is the radical of poetry: O cows, O leaves, O presences, O yellow warblers.

Sallie Marston and Sarah de Leeuw 2013, III

If the relationship between geographical knowledge-making and creative practices has an extensive history, creative expression produced by geographers has not been much examined for its potential for and as a form of political critique.

…we have been drawing attention not only to the political work these creative expressions do in the world, but also how they partake of and critique the politics of the production of knowledge.

My conversation with Nilsen relates to my talk with Zwicky through the question of process and approach in creative geographies. Taking poetry as an example, firstly, subjectivity is essential to a successful poem. Without the individual perspective a poem becomes dry and fails to move its reader.

Secondly, a poem (be it the erasures and recalibrations of colonial language by First Nations poet Jordan Abel, or the introvert imaginings of poet and scholar Mary Ruefle) trades on emotional connection between writer and reader. The connection is made through common understanding – what you feel, I have also felt – even if the described experience is totally distinct.

By arguing for an understanding of a common emotion, I realize I am treading in dangerous territory which could raise the specter of universal humanism, where a god's eye narrator claims to speak for everyone and actually only speaks for a selected, privileged few.

A commonly felt emotion (love, awe, tenderness, shame) is still subject to the individual politicizations and stories of gender, race, sex, ability, personal history. But as I argue in Chapter 1, I am writing of more than story; I am referring to emotional states, which are a poem's strength. I believe the experience of common emotions when doing a geography of landscape and place is integral to explore, if geographers are to fully recognize our humanity and our connection to the world, especially in this time of climate crisis and extinction of experience (Baldwin 2018).

Attending to the unsayable, attending to place and one's relationship to it, attending to an individual understanding of emotion is a political act. We need the sciences' attention to empirical knowledge; we need the social sciences' forms of political critique; we also need the emotion of poetry, which, though it speaks individually, can gesture toward the common.

John Wylie 2009, 287

Studies of landscape couched within literary, phenomenological or non-representational idioms may be felt to neglect or underplay both the contested historicities of specific landscapes and the highly differential nature of the landscape experiences of different cultural and social groups.

A…response might be to concede the point to a degree, albeit by delving yet further into the fractured constitution of subjectivity, as this paper has tried to do, in the hope of exposing further the inadequacies of any universalist, humanist or naturalist account of self–landscape relations.

Lakoff and Turner 1989, 215

If there is a villain in the Western philosophical tradition, it is the Literal Meaning Theory. That theory has, for two millennia, defined meaningfulness, reason, and truth so as to exclude metaphor.

Michael Dear 2015, 21

The fundamental source of fracture between the two cultures [social sciences and humanities] could more accurately be traced to practitioners' preference for a particular ontological or epistemological worldview, expressed most directly through the differing standards of evidence and burdens of proof that practitioners deploy or are willing to accept.

Tim Cresswell 2015, 5

[I]nquiry in the humanities is rooted in a time before disciplines when key thinkers were unhampered by the disciplinary boundaries we live with today.

The second request: a change of language or tools Human geography is poised at the edge of the social sciences, ready to launch itself outside of a disciplinary silo. Critical geographers have charted this possibility. The second request I note, a request for a change of language or tools, reflects critical geographers' desires. How do I say what I mean? What expectations do I have for the language in which I say it? From what position should the saying come from? How can I include not just the empirical but the metaphorical, the relational in my experiencing of the world?	*Donna Haraway 1988, 581* I would like to insist on the embodied nature of all vision and so reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere. *Sarah Whatmore 1999, 35* Rather than passing judgement on a nature that is always at a distance, such geographies have to be situated in terms of the hybrid networks which we (their authors) and they (as portable inscriptions of various kinds) participate in. Finally, and this is harder to put into words, such geographies must strive to find ways of exploring and expressing the kinds of sensible and relational knowledge of these hybrid worlds as pungently as the kind of writing [poetry] quoted at the start of this paper. *Simon Springer 2016, 4* When we make space for earth writing as a beautiful flourishing of geopoetics we place the earth at the center of experience, releasing the light and energy of a much more powerful geography. *Eric Magrane 2015, 90* [P]oetry—although done in a different key—can do some of the work of geographical theory.

And, finally, who should be doing the saying?	*Harriet Hawkins 2015, 2* [A]s creative doings become more popular within geography, there is a need to remain 'aware of and be thoroughly respectful of the often hard won sets of skills and expertise that denote these different fields….to take seriously the skills involved and the political and intellectual responsibilities' that inhere in these practices. In the absence of close attention to our creative doings, we risk geography's creative re(turn) becoming yet another, albeit practice-based, example of the discipline's trend towards 'research tourism.'

Springer (2016) has recently explored the divide between realist and metaphorical thought in geography (and run into interesting publication barriers for having tried to do so). What I want to point out is the tricky territory of who can use the language and tools of art (in my example, poetry) to chart an embodied, subjective understanding of the world. If we designate only those trained in the practice of writing poems as enabled to contribute creatively to geography, then we risk falling into the traps of power and privilege associated with publishing and global knowledge production. And the act of doing – the process of creating – is, as Hawkins argues, a part of the experience of coming to know a place or landscape.	*Bauch 2015, 104* For the most part until now, when geographers have written about art they have tended to analyze the various spatial components of practice in the art world. But in this article I urge that geographers and other scholars need to adopt practices of artistic production—of fabrication—to further their own agenda of describing landscapes. *Harriet Hawkins 2015, 10* In considering creative practices as geographical methods, we should perhaps neither fetishize expertise nor should we neglect the acquisition of skills. Rather, we might want to acknowledge that while skilled practitioners might produce creative outputs that are able to communicate to others, we should also recognize how creative practices might make geographical knowledge in the process of doing. In this case, less understanding finished drawings as providing 'packets of information' or 'representing nuggets of experience', but rather appreciating the very process of image-making itself as a means to come to know.

But if we open the process of poetry as research method to all who wish to contribute to it, we also risk devaluing the formal training that lies behind works of art, like poems.

As an example, some poetic metaphors are stronger than others. Some images pierce us; some leave us flat. Madge's description of skill and training is what allows a poet to take a first draft, born of inspiration and emotion, and turn it into a refined, working whole.

In her work, Zwicky compares a successful metaphor to a mathematical analogy. A successful metaphor has three traits: it involves seeing-as; it feels the way one feels when one 'gets' a math proof (it is fast); and it involves re-cognition that feels "like astonishment, or of things falling into place, of their coming home" (Zwicky 2008, 4).

If, as Zwicky argues, a good metaphor changes how we see the world not because it is a successful linguistic fiction but because it is true, then the risk in using metaphor unsuccessfully is not just the devaluing of trained artists, but of not coming to know the structure of the world.

Madge 2014, 180

Is poetry a creative process of thoughtful making, an act of expressing new and imaginative ideas and feelings that can be undertaken by anyone, or is it an aesthetic practice that can only be performed by those with particular skills or formal training?

Hayden Lorimer 2008, 182

In truth, what a geographical education does not always equip us with is a way with words; a language sufficient to do fullest justice to the intensities, to the properties and to the rich love of place.

Charles Simic 1990, 95

A poem is a place where affinities are discovered. Poetry is a way of thinking through affinities.

Jan Zwicky 2008, 8

It may be that the world does exist independently of human activity and discourse, and that writers whose metaphors are consistently strong are not just good at manipulating language, they are good at perceiving the way that world actually is.

…[W]e must take seriously the possibility that metaphors are not invented but are perceived, and that the true ones among them limn the structure of a resonant, mind-independent universe.

The point, then, should not be to demand every geography scholar become a practicing expert in both geography and art, but that the contributions of geography and the arts may build toward a larger understanding through equal valuation of their efforts. Instead of arguing for a geography that takes from the humanities, and listens to the arts, geographers should be arguing for a minimization of the barriers between faculties and disciplines themselves, in order that we might better see the connections between each. We should be speaking of a practice, of a kind of thinking and feeling and writing, that posits how to live in the world – a practice that does not just posit, but that lives this philosophy.	*Jan Zwicky 2003, L116* The real discovery is the one that will let philosophy resume thinking metaphorically when it needs to. *Editor's response to Wilson 2013, 313 Commentary II: the state of the humanities in geography* We define the humanities as the study of the human condition through subjective interpretive analysis, as distinct from the empirical analysis that typifies the natural and social sciences. *Tim Cresswell 2014, 144* Writers suddenly think they can 'be creative' without enough attention, practice or training. No one would think they could do complicated mathematics just because they feel like it but there are no such inhibitions when creative writing is concerned. Creative writing involves reading endlessly and writing with discipline.

This request for a change of language or tools, it seems to me, is a plea, by those working simultaneously in multiple disciplines, for legitimization from the larger academy of geographers. This is not a plea for permission exactly, but rather to have subjective, artistic experience taken seriously, to have it accepted by the larger academic community.

What is interesting to me is not only how this creative work is often viewed as inadequate by academics and critics, but how it is apologized for by scholars in geography who are making forays into the arts from geography. Whether it be Goulet's minimization of two of the three braiding voices in her piece on metaphorical thinking, or Cresswell's confession that poetry is something he is embarrassed to admit to be writing, scholars who seek to cross disciplinary boundaries are still making excuses for, or trying to justify, their curiosity and their hunches.

It is worth stating that it can be just as risky for an artist to take the time to publish scholarly work as for a geographer to publish poetry.

Still, this essay urges, why not just stop apologizing and get to work?

Clare Goulet 2009

Don't sweat the lichen stuff; you can read it to see what, if any, connections arise, or pay closer attention, or skip it; same with the Zwicky bits: each thread works independently and collaboratively, reader's choice. The lichen pieces make this paper itself a (rough) example of the kind of thinking it describes, offering a metaphoric reading experience, if you choose.

Tim Cresswell 2014, 142

I admired my colleague's willingness to admit to creative writing in the context of a geography conference. I am not sure why, but there is potentially something a little embarrassing about it.

Sarah de Leeuw & Sallie Marston 2013, xi

Publishing poetry, for instance, may not be the best way to secure tenure in a geography department, so it is a risk for a geographer to maintain creative practices outside or even in tandem with the production of more standard geographical scholarship.

Sarah de Leeuw & Eric Magrane 2019, 148

Don't be frightened. Which is not to say fear is not valid, born perhaps from cruel circumstances possibly imposed. But the earth is calling. The ground is calling. Your mouth holds words, a world of words, you can form worlds.

These apologies can be traced back to the western world's infatuation with reason and systematic thought, which persists despite geography's turn toward embodied, subjective research. Zwicky's black-frocked guardians continue to be impressed by realism and suspicious of situated, emotional or metaphorical explorations in all disciplines, including geography.	*Douglas J. Porteous 1984, 372* By putting Descartes before dehors, that is, by imposing the theoretical systems upon the world, rather than letting it speak itself, to oneself, geographers have developed an increasingly arid discipline. *Jan Zwicky 2011, L21* We are like the black-frocked guardians in a 19th-century English novel: certain assertions strike us as vaguely disreputable – we hear passion lurking in the wings, ready to rush in and wreak havoc with our heroine's hitherto faultless comportment. *Jan Zwicky 2011, L45* Art, as most of us have experienced, can give us access to complex possibilities of understanding and perception, remote from our own. What is most peculiar...is not how art does this, but why, given that it does do it, art has become divorced from what we recognize as thinking.

Over on this side of the fence that stretches between scientific reason and art, however, poetry routinely flattens me. It saves my life, after taking me to the edge of my capacity for experience. Again, subjectivity is what poets work within when writing poems. It is through the creation of individual metaphors, of images from individual lives, experiences and the attendance to landscape that a poet has the chance of writing something that can be felt by any reader.	*Sarah de Leeuw, public reading, 2015* Human Geography is actually part of the humanities. *Cole Harris 1997, xiii* Disciplinary boundaries are disappearing, and probably should; I am not even sure there needs to be a distinction between academic and non-academic writing.

The third request: a change of product or form

Poetry has certain qualities and uses certain techniques to achieve its impacts. Detailed in countless treatises on poetics by poets, some of the key achievements of poetry bear repeating here. To elaborate on poetry's forms is also to show how poems contribute to a clarification of the world. The techniques poetry uses: metaphor, lyric thought, care, awareness of the failure of language and a courteous attendance to the experience of the body in the world – these are what geographers mentioned in this essay (as well as others) have been enacting.

It will help to have a brief outline of what poets think about these issues before moving, in the last section of this essay, into an example of their methodologies in action. In what follows, I rely heavily on the poet-philosophers Jan Zwicky, Don McKay and Tim Lilburn, as well as the writers they have referenced as their guides. Choosing their work is deliberate. I recognize there are many other poets (Zagajewski, Milosz, Hass, Simic, Howe, Dobyns, Gass, Hugo, C.W. Williams, Orr, Szymborska, Koch, Hoagland and Hirshfield, to name a few) who have written valuable prose on poetry. But the aforementioned three, in particular, have been instrumental in exploring poetry's contribution – using philosophical poetics works on metaphor, lyric, courtesy, and failure – to thinking about human relationships with place and the natural world.

Heather Yeung 2011, 213

[I]t is in our engagement with the lyric voice that we can locate the aesthetic and ethical force of poetry as experience as well as lay the groundwork for our experience of the poem as space and for our analysis of the manner in which spaces operates in the poem.

Sarah de Leeuw 2003, 20

My conviction is that story of place is inextricable from geographic knowledge of place. A narrative, and by this I mean (like story) the recounting and representation in textual format of both real and imagined events (Soja, 1996), constructs an equally relevant depiction and representation of geographic knowledge as, for instance, one of geography's best-known forms of representation (the map).

Gabriel Eshun & Clare Madge 2012, 1411

One undisputed aspect and value of poetry is that it is often emotive and intuitive and can therefore "give language to the unsayable" (Cahnmann 2003: 32). For a postcolonial researcher, poems can therefore be an important means by which to counter "western" ontological privileging of reason over emotions, passions and feelings, as the affective nature of research topics can be brought alive.

Metaphor

Like Zwicky, I suspect that metaphor may give us the bridge that can span the gulf between the humanities and the social sciences, between poetry and geography, between one word and another.

Metaphor is, literally, a carrying-over of meaning from one term to another: *meta pherein*: to carry across. In its leaps and its linking of two previously unrelated terms, it unseats the stability of language to create a changed understanding in both—to carry over is also to carry back.

The use of metaphor, in poetry and in more traditionally academic prose, enriches understanding of emotional, situated, decentred geographies. Writers use metaphor because language is inadequate to the task of naming. Metaphor gestures, using language, toward an understanding that arcs between the two terms (object and image). A good metaphor affects not just the object, but the image as well. "The eyes are windows" changes how we look at houses. To make a metaphor is to point (with as much skill as possible), and hope.

Jan Zwicky 2003, L6

Metaphor is one way of showing how patterns of meaning in the world intersect and echo one another.

The ability to think analogically is a reflection of sensitivity to ontological form.

Mary Ruefle 2012, 4

You might say a poem is a semicolon, a living semicolon, what connects the first line to the last, the act of keeping together that whose nature is to fly apart.

Don McKay 2004

What I remember

about the Great Blue Heron that rose
like its name over the marsh

is touching and holding that small
manyveined

wrist

upon the gunwale, to signal silently –
look
The Great Blue Heron
(the birdboned wrist).

Lyric Lyric experience, for Zwicky, is experience set free from time; it is a direct, unhindered connection with the world, one which foregrounds the multiplicity and distinctness of entities, while also striving to "comprehend the whole in a single gesture" (2011 L152). Lyric is free from time. Domestic experience, conversely, is life lived within the constraints of mortality, time, politics and relation. The domestic is our daily existence, the pedestrian sighs of a dog while one is reading on a sunlit afternoon in a warm room; lyric is our exceptional existence, the profound, shiver-inducing sense of timelessness upon hearing the Varied thrush's song in an otherwise silent forest. Humans cannot, argues Zwicky, live in lyric, but we can visit. The domestic is where we predominantly exist. Lyric thought provides geography with brief access to the world as a whole – wordless, both individualized and coherent, transparent, resonant. In brief moments of lyric, we become entwined with place; we enter into an intensity of existence that links us to place and space. Lyric is the counterbalance to the necessary and domestic preoccupations of cohabiting with tools, art, the natural world, and technology. For a fully operational geography, as with a fully operational philosophy, I believe we need both.	*Jan Zwicky 2003, L44* Lyric thought is a kind of ontological seismic exploration and metaphors are charges set by the seismic crew. A good metaphor lets us see more deeply than a weak one. *Jan Zwicky 2011, L297* Sustained lyric desire is responsible for a certain intensity of existence – one informed by the unreachable ideal of a life saturated with meaning. And to reject the pursuit of lyric insight entirely is to abandon hope, to suffer a peculiar form of death. But as long as one is driven by an eros for coherence, to admit that incoherence is a fundamental aspect of human reality is to admit that one's way of being in the world can never come to rest in the world… Domesticity is an attitude emergent on what lyricism opens to us.

Care

Care, as Grossman (1992) writes, is a sense not only of the other but for the other. Contemplative care is an active state that embodies both a radical, ethical, active engagement with the world, it is a 'bewildered' astonishment, a state of having been 'struck', like Wylie, by what one senses. Care leads to a revitalized politics of engagement with the world. It leads to a rewilding of ourselves.

Grossman's phrase "troubled mutuality" points to the uneasy threshold I sense between the human and natural world, especially when one seeks to define that threshold through writing. When one's attitude toward the natural world is one of concern, "care" is the principle that helps explain this concern. Writing with care in mind demands that one face a subject openly, in respect and with humility, and with recognition that thresholds provide a place for the meeting of two separate entities. The ethics of rising to meet the other is an act of communication, be that other plant, animal or human, whereas attempting to find meaning solely within the boundaries of one's own language shuts the door in the face of that which one seeks to describe.

Allen Grossman 1992, 370

[P]oems are traces of care, vestigia as it were of a vast communal enterprise of troubled mutuality which overflows its moment in time (its natural occasion) and becomes as fiction the way of access to one another of unknown others... care is the principle of otherwise unaccountable concern which draws us toward the object.

Victoria Lawson 2009, 210

Care ethics begin from the deeply social character of our existence and the ways that caring relations of dependency, frailty, grief and love all shape the ways we reason and act in the world… Whereas much radical geography remains purely analytical and detached from the objects of its scrutiny, care ethics cannot be practiced in the abstract because they focus on the specific sites and social relations.

Harriet Hawkins 2015, 18

[F]uture trajectories for our creative geographies, and concerns with their variously skilled nature, might do well to pause and reflect on the potential of [representational] practices not just for researching differently but also as a source of hope for living differently in the world.

John Wylie 2009, 279

The depth and richness of memory-places and memory-objects demands in turn the attentive empathy of the researcher – they have to, for example, dig, recover, salvage and rescue.

Failure

Humans can be most emotionally receptive at the threshold where we use language to represent the world. Where the arc of metaphor occurs, and where we can meet the other in a gesture of care is also, however, where we fail. As Wylie (2009) argues, the impossible possibility of bridging the absence one finds in landscape is always just that: tantalizingly full of hope, simultaneously impossible. Failure is the kindred and yet lonely feeling we come to when we sense a threshold between ourselves and the world. The feeling is lonely, because to sense this kinship is to understand how fleeting it is, to sense its impossibility, and to sense our inadequacy in attempting to make a not-quite connection. Failure is realizing that love will tear us apart, that we are "always already broken-hearted" (Wylie 2009, 286).

There is a truth in admitting failure—a delicious, erotic release—and in choosing to engage anyway. "What can be expressed excludes what is of value," writes Zwicky (2003). Silence and astonishment go hand in hand at the edge of threshold. Language is unable to serve us as we would wish. We cannot say what we want to say. We can only attend to the resonant moment as it exists. Exists not for us, but because this is the world, when truly seen. The lack of speech we come to in these moments turns into a kind of ethical silence, a choosing to remain inside lack.

Failure also gestures back to Hawkins' (2011) distinction between process and product in creative geographies. As a geographer, she admits her lack of skill in drawing precludes her identification as a practicing artist. And yet, she continues to practice. This failure, this trying and making has in it the same repetitive and tender attention to doing as practice the great artists – be it Ruefle, or Giacometti. Failure is an endless attempt, a perseverance in the face of the knowledge that our tools are inadequate to the task at hand.

Don McKay Vis a Vis 21 & 65

By wilderness I want to mean, not just a set of endangered spaces, but the capacity of all things to elude the mind's appropriations. Poetry comes about because language is not able to represent raw experience, yet it must; it comes about because translation is only translation, apparatus is apparatus. For a long time before it becomes a speaking, Heidegger observes, poetry is only a listening.

Tim Lilburn 2002, 185

The world, though, will stay nameless, even as we learn our names for it; and this, though it may appear to be, is not erotic failure; a sense of the distance of things has a wonderful ascetic effect: it breeds deference; it provides optimum growing conditions for admiration. Then we may be fed and taught; knowing, in the end, is being looked after. It, this farness, returns us to our sober selves by relieving us of our self-ministrations, our self-priesting assurances that all is well or somehow will be. Keep to this distance, I say to myself – without any loss of desire for the far things.

Mary Ruefle 2012, 132

It is also the nature of poetry to determine or affirm one's existence. I say "existence" because it is very different than identity. I say "determine or affirm" because there is an option here: the great sculptor Giacometti once said, "I do not know whether I work in order to make something or in order to know why I cannot make what I would like to make." Perhaps when one makes something one affirms, and when one tries to make and knows they cannot (another kind of making) one determines. One determines that they cannot, one determines this by endlessly attempting.

Courtesy

When one goes up to a subject (a place, a person, a thing), when one attempts to learn about it without the intention of exposing its secrets, its hiddenness, one approaches in a kind of humility, in courtesy and in awe.

Lilburn's understanding of courtesy stems from negative theology, born of the western monastic tradition. But courtesy is also a theme running through the work of many other scholars and poets, with Levinas' 'other' as first philosophy (Levinas 1979) as but one example (for others, see Ruefle 2012; Robinson 1986; Merleau-Ponty 2006; and McKay 2001).

Courtesy is akin to attendance; it is coming to know something through attentive waiting, allowing knowledge to unfold itself, rather than forcing an encounter. Courtesy allows place to resonate, to create its own identity. Through courtesy, the perceiver resides in the asceticism of eros, heading toward the other in a contemplative, attentive, deferential pose.

John Wylie 2009, 284

To put this more positively perhaps, the geographies of love would describe a certain exposure to the other. The gap, fracture or absence that is their origin equally and always entails an openness, an originary exposure of the self to externality and alterity.

Tim Lilburn 2008, 182

We must start again learning how to be in this place, or at least I must. We begin from scraps. We should learn the names for things as a minimum—not to fulfill taxonomies but as acts of courtesy, for musical reasons, entering the gesture of decorum.

Rishma Dunlop 2002, 37

An erotics of place is necessary. An erotics of place engages us in thinking about how we know the world in sensual, primal ways. In academia, it is fear of the open heart that controls academic institutions and modes of writing research. To combat this fear, we need eros, a deep, loving connection to ourselves, to others, and to place. And within this eros, narrative scholarship becomes a way of loving ourselves, others, and the world more deeply. Scholarship becomes florecimiento, a flowering, or opening of the heart, a tawny grammar.

Practice-based geographies

The practice of art that responds to the world – using metaphor, lyric and other concepts briefly explored above – is also the practice of geography. Creative and critical methods are not only an example of artistic geographical practice, but a way of exploring place as a site or place of creation. Place plays an integral role in the relationship an artist fosters with her subject when she is writing. Both the experience in places as well as the memory of them after the fact can shape not only the poetry written but the understanding of place carried within a body.

Place is an inevitably human construction. We create meanings and constellations of stories-so-far in certain locations and these constellated meanings are what allow us to throw-ourselves-together (Massey 2005), negotiating the human and nonhuman world.

Mike Crang 1998, 44

If anyone were to look around for accounts that really gave the reader a feel for a place, would they look to geography textbooks or to novels?

Sarah de Leeuw 2003, 19

[L]iterary practices and visual arts are more than sites from which to draw geographic information (Salter and Lloyd, 1977; Bunkse, 1990) but are rather geographic practices unto themselves.

Eric Magrane 2015, 95

"With regard to research, studying a site is about openness and encounter" (Woodward, Jones, and Marston 2009, 276). If that is the case, a research agenda might not even begin with a question in the traditional social science sense, but with an immersion in a site that first pays close attention to the materialities and encounters of the site, and then intervenes in the site through a geopoetic form that is immanent to the site itself, one that is designed to enact, perform, comment on, critique, and, perhaps even recalibrate, the site itself.

Jerry Pethick 1989, 97

…the West Coast has put me in touch with a soft, allusive presence of Pacific rim influence…and a growing awareness of place within nature. But I periodically must go elsewhere so that other people and society, art and technology can have their turns pouring into me.

Though human geography has seen an increase in petitions for creative process and product, the apparatus of the scientific positivist machine is still working in fine form.

The acknowledgement of what poetry contributes – as both a political and individual art form – may also serve as a point of clarification for those who view nonrepresentational geography as a poor depiction of a realm beyond politics.

Poetry is the last step before language ends. It turns away from scientific methodology towards artistic practice, producing (not just translating) knowledge. This essay now turns, therefore, to an exploration of an individual experience of place and writing in place.

Simon Springer 2016, 24

In the end, we each have a deeply political choice to make. We can advocate a reformist geography that makes incremental changes by repeatedly shuffling the deck and rearranging the furniture, yet ultimately reinforces existing power relations through a blinkered focus on pragmatism. Or, in contrast, we can demand the impossible by fearlessly embracing a more visionary perspective that encourages the collective exploration of the earth as the center of experience, liberated from established ontologies, familiar epistemologies, and predetermined methods.

Tim Cresswell 2015, 7

I want the geohumanities endeavour to remain aware of the old version of what geo means – the many traditions of predisciplinary, disciplinary, and interdisciplinary engagement with space, place, mobility, landscape, scale, and territory that have formed the foundation of our current interest in geohumanistic research and writing.

Denise Levertov 1958, NP

Illustrious ancestors

The Rav
of Northern White Russia declined,
in his youth, to learn the
language of birds, because
the extraneous did not interest him; nevertheless
when he grew old it was found
he understood them anyway, having
listened well, and as it is said, ‘prayed
  with the bench and the floor.’ He used
what was at hand – as did
Angel Jones of Mold, whose meditations
were sewn into coats and britches.
Well, I would like to make,
thinking some line still taut between me and them,
poems direct as what the bird said,

	hard as a floor, sound as a bench, mysterious as the silence when the tailor would pause with his needle in the air.

Place and poems

How does one write about the place in which a poem occurs? Or the emotions that occur when one is in a resonant place? Like Wylie's (2009) benches in Mullion Cove, the place where a poem occurs does not remain static. It changes under different light. It changes depending on the person who has apprehended it or attended it.

The moments of apprehending a place with the intention of practicing poem-making, as well as the writing itself, are moments when the ghostly hovering of a more resonant understanding of the world comes close, when one is able to catch its coat-tail for a moment before it slips out of reach. As a poet, Massey's (2005) idea of place as incorporating a throwntogetherness is especially powerful when examining the act of writing a poem. Throwntogetherness brings in the geography, as Massey points out, of a living, changing landscape that is and is not home. The places where poems are written are records of the constantly changing effects of culture, environment and weather on a writer.

In my own case, I wrote poems in Ajijic about connection, loss, home, inner emotional landscapes, and outer cultural landscapes. They are a geography of lyric experience in that they chart physical locations that served as interior exteriors – safe zones – where I can connect with the emotional and intellectual sphere where a poem's beginning lies. I write to chart what these places mean to me in the world. Place impels me; it is the actor. Place also unfurls around me; it becomes the subject.

Doreen Massey 2005, 140

What is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or of the eternity of the hills. Rather, what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman. This in no way denies a sense of wonder: what could be more striking than walking in the high fells in the knowledge of the history and the geography that has made them here today. This is the event of place.

Don McKay 2009, 4

A mystic who is not a poet can answer the inappellable with silence, but a poet is in the paradoxical, unenviable position of simultaneously recognizing that it can't be said and saying something. . . .[L]anguage is not finally adequate to experience and yet is the medium which we – the linguistic animals – must use. What to do? The poem's own soundplay holds the clue: "we must answer in chime, a term suggesting both rhymed resonance and one that harmonizes compatibly with the appeal."

Place is integral to most poets. I argue that place is ground zero for both a connection with the physicality of the world and an opportunity to experience lyric coherence, an "echo of the image of integration" with the world (Zwicky 2011, L219)..

In Zwicky's poem "Glen Gould…", whether a reader has been north of Superior or not, the physical details provide specificity that anchors the emotions the poem creates. They also allow for a reader to substitute in their own details, specific to their own place (e.g., hearing music, seeing light on bare rock, driving while thinking of someone) while still accessing the poem's "precise and nameless" joy.

In Zwicky's poem, the speaker's experience of joy is outside history—it is thus outside of time, if only briefly. Creative work can field this experience. It turns the normally ever-visible tool of language into a tool of glass: transparent; the resonance of the world passes through to the reader.

The poem uses place—the details of a location and the emotions one feels in response to these details—to evoke an experience of coherence, the lyric resonance of the world. As a work of art, which is produced by humans, it also acknowledges humans' residence in the domestic realm, one of temporality, tool use, language.

Jan Zwicky 1998

Glenn Gould: Bach's 'Italian' Concerto, BWV 971

North of Superior, November,
bad weather behind, more
coming in from the west, the car windows furred
with salt, the genius of his fingers
bright, incongruous, cresting a ridge
and without warning the sky
has been swept clear: the shaved face
of the granite, the unleafed aspens
gleaming in the low heraldic light, the friend
I had once who hoped he might die
listening to this music, the way
love finds us in our bodies
even when we're lost. I've known very little,
but what I have known
feels like this: compassion without mercy,
the distances still distances
but effortless, as though for just a moment
I'd stepped into my real life, the one
that's always here, right here,
but outside history: joy
precise and nameless as that river
scattering itself among
the frost and rocks.

Jan Zwicky 2011, L221

In a profound image, words do not suddenly become adequate to the world; but their inadequacy no longer impedes our access.

The following pages contain three parts: a description of daily life in the place where I wrote these poems; an exploration of how this place affected what I created; the poems themselves. The description and exploration are observations of place; the poems are the culmination of a study of place. All, however, should be seen as creative work that contributes to a geographical understanding of a place: In this case, the highlands of central Mexico.	*Miranda Ward 2014, 757* [A]ny line between "creative-critical" writing and "traditional academic writing" or "overtly creative writing" is not always going to be clear, and nor should it be. *Emily Orley 2009, 159* I found it impossible to take up the two positions of critic and practitioner simultaneously: analyzing my artistic practice made me too self-conscious and disturbed my creative process. I found, however, that I could inhabit the 'site' between the distinct positions by concentrating on my writing as practice, juxtaposing creative modes alongside more traditional academic forms. *Owen Sheers 2008, 173* Landscape and poetry share the same grammar and semantics of association and suggestion, if not the same vocabulary.

I lived in Ajijic, Jalisco, Mexico for six months in 2015. I was filled again and again with music, food, language, birdsong, the shouts of the truck driver selling his wares up and down every street, until the shell of my skin overflowed and I walked every evening spilling out the edges of my body. Until the ground itself bore the record of my perambulations. Until my own body expanded into the landscape. Until I was the smell of guayaba, garbage, dog, tortilla, smoke, meat, fat, brick, dust.

Sarah de Leeuw 2015, 80

Your skin membrane a watery system
veins like tributaries thin splinters and blue
sparks. I brush up against
the estuary of your heart aortas
draining into the salty rush
oxygen uptake breathing from the side
of your mouth red blood cells
like salmon roe. Riparian ribs. Swim me
swim me your body seal-slick
you take me in your mouth

Tom Bristow 2015, 92

[O]ur sense of place is related to our sense of affective being, which is constituted by the many selves expressed by a person during the course of one life. These selves pass by us while we are in transit…Conversely, the lyrical self is rarely divided like this; however, it offers a singleness of eye from which we witness the calamitous division of the world and the emergence of protean selves.

Ajijic

Ajijic is a village on the shore of Lake Chapala. Surrounded by volcanoes (including the regularly erupting Colima), Mexico's largest lake, and 8000-foot mountains, the village nestles into eight blocks of sloped land between the mountains' precipitous rise and the lake's shallow expanse, and extends for three kilometres along the lake edge.

The village streets are cobblestone. Murals by local artists dot the walls of buildings. On one, a circle of life: a man catches fish swimming down from the air, while a woman standing in water gives life to fish from the palms of her hands.

Along the lake's edge runs a walkway, approximately two kilometres long, called the Malecón, where I walked each evening. During each day, I worked on a shaded rooftop that I took to calling the nave espacial or spaceship, for its resemblance to a ship's cockpit and its limitless view.

Emily Orley 2009, 190

The first stage [of engaging with place] involves a self-reflexive awareness of ourselves in place. This begins with a close, hushed and stilled observation of the place's details. If the visitor in a place is still and quiet enough, and pays close enough attention, she can become aware of what the place is 'doing' around her, as well as her own response. This cannot be rushed.

Tim Lilburn 1999, 78

I want to go back. It seems ludicrous to want this. Want to bed down beside things. I don't want to be alone in that part of me that wants some familial relation with the grass. I want to be married there, home, quiet, looking around. I want to go back. Maybe it's just that I want to be heard as matter, heard as animal, want to be heard in this broad a way, and want the rest that such recognition would spread along the whole muscle of self.

Each afternoon, I completed a daily perambulation that took me to the liminal zone of lakeshore and then back to the house where I watched months worth of midnight thunderstorms, rain pelting down and the windows lighting up the interior like a cave. Each place I passed through contributed to my writing process: streets I became familiar with, corners where certain foods like tamales or comida casera or drinks like ponche were sold; the corner where Gabriel worked washing and parking cars; playgrounds that were full or empty depending on the time of day, the alcove where Max's aunt sold chicharrón; sidewalks, groups of trees at the corner of Marlene's house with its green, shaded patio; views of the mountains from Marika's rooftop or the roof of my own house. Passing them was akin to passing touchstones. It was as if I were sketching myself into the body of the town. I sought to become part of the village's story as it unfolded itself in its routines, socializing, and trade. I wanted the connection not just to the natural phenomena – birds, trees, mountains – but also to the people. Using Lilburn's courteous gaze was my tactic when writing purely about landscape. But to dwell in Ajijic was, as in Heidegger's understanding of dwelling, a closing of distance between people and things.	*Rebecca Solnit 2001, 112* [W]alking wasn't only a subject for Wordsworth. It was his means of composition… In The Prelude he describes a dog he used to walk with who would, when a stranger drew near, cue him to shut up and avoid being taken for a lunatic. *Harriet Hawkins 2015, 7* Creative geographies therefore not only offer chances to meet representational challenges of contemporary ways of thinking place, but they potentially become the means to intervene in the processes of place-making. …There is almost a fetish (indeed Taussig names it as such) of drawing that focuses on its corporeality – image-making understood as a sympathetic practice in which to make an image of something becomes to be connected to it, to know it…To draw is to discover, to be led to see, to be drawn into an intimate relationship with the object. So it was with my drawing in the field, this was a practice of slow careful looking that was not so much about recording the place but discovering it, coming… to know. *Martin Heidegger 1993, 28* Dwelling involves a lack of distance between people and things, a lack of casual curiosity, an engagement which is neither conceptual nor articulated, and which arises through using the world rather than through scrutiny.

Tripe and Cake

The body is an animal
out of which longing springs.

The hands, spiders. Eyes,
mustached bus drivers. Forehead,

a corrugated tin roof
over spangled Guadalajara girls.

I am a saltshaker of happiness.
My thirst knows this plastic table

like the back of your hand.
Why won't you cave to the unachievable pleasure?

My shaker breaks loose and cartwheels the main street,
through dust heaps, potholes, past the nicked

knuckles of the stone worker. It settles
in a foundation crack. It wicks back and

forth in the evening's drumroll. It dries
and shims the leftover heat. It wants things.

It's almost three and dressed as a gypsy.
It's eating tripe and cake.

It's not speaking because it can't
and eat it and want it, too.

Brenda Hillman 2006, NP

Four survival tools for contemporary culture that poetry is especially good at providing…: the sense of who we are in our environments; the understanding that every word and phrase matters and can be of interest; the idea that meaning circulates on many levels; and the conviction that the strange mystery of our existence can be represented.

Rebecca Solnit, in Elkin 2013, NP

Poetry is a philosophical and descriptive foray into the world, and it has some permission that I want to give myself sometimes, to make associative leaps, to ask the reader to work a little, to evoke as well as define. Somebody yesterday was using that phrase of Paul Klee's, to take a line for a walk: I want to take the language on a walk. So I feel close to poets in a way, for that permission, that freedom, those explorations of what language can do.

Nicholas Bauch 2015, 110

By uncovering the unseen in a landscape, a Scapelore also builds toward a celebration of the vernacular. A Scapelore is about the local, the mundane, the banal, the quotidian, the unassuming. We encounter many landscapes on a daily basis, most of them visually, and most of them as a repetition of what we have seen before. Breathing life into these quotidian landscapes is one of the express purposes of conducting a Scapelore.

My daily destination for the four months I lived in Ajijic was a small stone wall on the Malecón, with the mountains at my back and the lake before me. I sat there each early evening as the light faded. Waiting for a poem to happen felt like attending to the rich tapestry of a complete but unhinged life. I was peeled open. As families passed, their toddlers on tricycles, or couples sauntered by, their conversations barely audible, I felt the connection I had with the world both expanding and contracting; what I wrote took in the world around me, and both was and was not a bodily representation of what I heard and felt.

The wall on the lakeside edge has a lip on the stone to allow one's feet to rest when sitting. The land, the lake, and the trees curve forward in one's peripheral vision. A group of willows frame the view of the mountains to the west; the mountains rise steeply, putting a kind of pressure on the back of the neck when one faces the lake. The lakeshore itself is flat, sandy. Depending the whims of the adjacent state of Michoacán, which releases water from bordering dams, a green water lily called lirio may blanket the foreshore and the shallows, rising and falling like a second stretch of greened earth.

John Ashbery 2014, 145

Any day now you must start to dwell in it,
the poetry, and for this, grave preparations must be made, the walks of sand
raked, the rubble wall picked clean of dead vine stems, but what
if poetry were something else entirely, not this purple weather
with the eye of a god attached, that sees
inward and outward? What if it were only a small, other way of living
like being in the wind? or letting the various settling sounds we hear now
rest and record the effort any creature has to put forth to summon
its spirits for a moment and then
fall silent, hoping that enough has happened? Sometimes we do perceive it
this way, like animals that will get up and move somewhere and
then drop down in place again…

In the summer, the sun falls behind the mountains to the west of Ajijic at approximately 8pm; I arrived to something extraordinary. A man stood beside a red car on the sandy lakeshore. The car, a hatchback, sat with its trunk and doors open. On the roof were two portable speakers. In the back lay an alto saxophone and a tenor. The man, in his 60s, variously stood looking at the lake, arranging things inside the car, pouring a drink, or adjusting his speakers—out of which music drifted. John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Gilberto Gil, Keith Jarrett, Michel Guglioni, JS Bach, Lionel Richie, Carlos Jobim. Occasionally, he would join in with a saxophone, letting the notes hang in the falling light, over the strolling couples, the horses, the birds, trees, and moving water.

People gravitated to him. They would stop and ask him about a song, ask him to play at weddings, let their dogs play with his dog, or just stop and listen to his soundtrack, the evening's landscape made audible.

We became friends; his name is Armenio, but I called him the Dictator, because he chose for us. It was an affectionate term. His musical choices were always apt. I would sit in the wide curve on the wall that was the last lip before the grass and sand, with families passing behind me and his music filling the air between us. And I would write to a soundtrack that was a man trying to teach a town about music other than banda and ranchero. Even after we met and became friends, it was a tacit agreement. He created his work out on the sand; I created mine while sitting on the wall. If he saw me arrive, which he usually did, he would lift his chin in the self-sufficient and quietly euphoric acknowledgement of an artist working near another artist. I think we both felt, to quote Bachelard, that we had been "promoted to the dignity of the admiring being." His music made the place we came to each night a studio for our respective work. Most of my poems were written at the feet of his choices.

Gaston Bachelard 1969, 184

When this elsewhere is in natural surroundings, that is, when it is not lodged in the houses of the past, it is immense. And one might say that daydream is original contemplation. If we could analyze impressions and images of immensity, or what immensity contributes to an image, we should soon enter into a region of the purest sort of phenomenology… In other words, since immense is not an object, a phenomenology of immense would refer us directly to our imagining consciousness. In analyzing images of immensity, we should realize within ourselves the pure being of pure imagination. It then becomes clear that works of art are the by-products of this existentialism of the imagining being. In this direction of daydreams of immensity, the real product is consciousness of enlargement. We feel that we have been promoted to the dignity of the admiring being.

Hayden Lorimer 2008, 182

In short, acoustics matter as much to the poetics of place as they do to poetry. When read aloud, and when experienced in person, inventive geographical writing is carried along by its rhythmic qualities. Place condenses when it is formed of breath, intonation, emotion and stress.

Robert McFarlane 2010, 118

[L]anguage does not just record experience stenographically, it produces it. Language's structures and colours are inseparable from the feelings we create in relation to situations, to others and to places. Language carries a formative as well as an informative impulse.

The Dictator

The Dictator puts on Music for 18 Musicians,
Section IV. The last hours
of the year, before Maximino
gives his children to the Americans.

They still live in two rooms
beside his carpenter's
workshop illuminated by stars
by night, by dusk by day.

Section V begins.
The iron worker has finished
his calla lily doors. He's doing
something pedestrian now, maybe

the framing for a toilet. The carpenters
drag their new saw inside, up
the furred cement stairs. In two rooms
two beds sleep five, on the roof

the cistern, the tree that hides
bathing, the neighbours from which
there is no invitation.
In an hour, the bats will emerge

from their little ceramic shells.
As the last of the sun stumbles
into the lake the Dictator,
parked at the edge with his extraordinary

car battery and his ridiculous heart,
turns up the speaker on the roof
and keys up some Lionel Richie,
then a little Brahms. It's early

J-D Dewsbury 2014, 20

We want so much from words, to hear some words: do we fail to realize that they say more than we know; that there are silences, gaps, which communicate so much, too much. How do you write that? …Representation does matter, but it's not all that matters. And getting some grip on the world, to know how to go on, to write to others, perhaps as pleas for help in trying to work out how to go on. But if there are so many words, then in writing, even if not directly in life, innovating with our expressive mediums to create new worlds is a healthy part of it, so experiment. Animate the adventure of writing, and of life itself.

R.P. Blackmur, in Hillman 2006, 158

Words, like sensations, are blind facts which, put together, produce a feeling no part of which was in the data.

J-D Dewsbury 2014, 148

This practice of writing drives something out of you and, like a mirror, becomes a screen for presenting your self to yourself; and the future calls as always, here materialized in whatever medium your activity is becoming archived in, but not in these moments within any precise destination but with the hope and munificence of open lines of flight that someday, someone, somewhere will share the ecstatic point that the writing is bringing into the world.

Lionel Richie so it’s okay.
Notice the stomped,
broad-leafed grass, the gelatine air
at its inconsequential fulcrum,

the last cloudbank spitting
out a star. Is it possible
he is playing out our life?
Baker, Sosa, Ibañez, Bach,

pulled in all directions,
all incomputable, we are
little racing dogs just bathed.
Someone lights a bonfire

in the field of the gypsies.
Maxi’s four children
fix themselves at the edge.
The oars of the fisherman

flake the mother of pearl lake
as the Dictator pulls
out all the stops, slides
on his black gloves, lifts

his wine from the car’s
roof. Cities fall. He takes
a drink, they bubble up again
as the dust of the unremarkable

end meets its maker, the one
with the skin of damp gold
and the mind of a dog
and the hearts of a child.

In investigating place through lyric and lyric description, I mean to do the work of geography through creative product. But I also mention my interactions with people in place (the Dictator, my self as part of a community) in order to address a change in my relation to place which has occurred since the beginning of this research, a change which occurred while I was writing this summer. My turn toward writing about place not just through place itself but through relationships with people in that place; my walking through places and identifying the feelings and ways in which I interacted with them; this was a turn toward dwelling at home, toward accepting my impact on the world, toward choosing to engage with place rather than distance myself from it.	*Ali Blythe 2015, 62* I am placing the future you in my perfectly unappointed room with the numerals on the door by typing minuscule code into a glowing handheld campfire with my thumbs. Soon it will rapidly become impossible to separate what is happening to my body from what you are doing to it.

Interior place

Being in Ajijic saved me through an intertwining of myself with people and landscape. This is a risky thing to say in geography; I can only qualify this by pointing to other artists, such as Lilburn, who built a listening cave in the side of the Saskatchewan hills and slept in it for a summer, hoping to connect himself bodily to the land. Or McKay, who calls a porch a place of threshold between the human and natural world, where communication between the two has a better chance of occurring.

My geographical practice, similarly, acknowledges walking through places and charting my feelings and the ways in which I interact with people as both a creative practice and a turn toward dwelling at home, toward choosing to engage with place rather than to distance myself from it.

Charting the journey to where the creation of a poem takes place (the walk through the village), as well as the place itself (the last curve of the Malecón), shows how a writer arrives at the act of creation; it demonstrates the intertwining that can happen between place and geographer; it validates artistic process as well as product. The place where a poem happens is a world unto itself. It is its own geography, its own emotional landscape. Attending to that place is also a form of courtesy. This is the gift that the place receives. The gift that the poet/geographer receives is not just the poem, it is the arrival at a version of home. Geography could learn this form of exchange from poetry. When I wrote what is now my third book of poetry in Ajijic, the mountains, the lake, the Dictator, the children riding behind me on their bicycles took what was a tired, sad, singular person and linked her back into the world. Poetry is, in the end, about charting an attachment to place, and this becomes a reciprocal relationship. Geography should be no different.

Matthew Zapruder 2010, 100

I have lived in the black crater

of feeling every moment
is the moment just after
one has chosen forever

to live in the black crater
of having chosen to live in the black crater

Tim Lilburn 1999, 65

Sorrow is the alteration of self before extreme dissimilarity; it is admission of the unlikeness of what one cranes toward and one's exclusion from its beauty, its community, and thus is what knowledge of the thing's uncontainability feels like; sorrow is what fashions courtesy, work of reverence, toward what one would know utterly.

Jan Zwicky 2012, 199

Hypothesis I: It is the meanings of certain experiences that are ineffable.
This would explain why we seem to be able to say so much about the experiences themselves, while continuing to insist that they are indescribable.
But what is meaning? Meaning, I would like to say with Robert Bringhurst, is what keeps going.

Toward the end of my time in Ajijic I took a small trip to the other side of Lake Chapala for a Sunday meal. I travelled with Mino, his sister Eulalia, her husband Juan. We would meet their daughters, their daughters' husbands and children in the village of San Pedro, where we would assemble at a chicken shack, stop for cups and napkins, stop for fresh tortillas, stop for gas, stop for juice, and stop for tequila, before finally arriving at a small park that lay between the village and the lakeshore – another Malecón, where Mexican families gathered with music and food for extended lunches, lifting folding chairs out of the truck box, laying out an enormous meal, turning up the stereo, and enjoying the light through the shading willows and the grass underfoot and leaning against the warm fender of the truck's nose while watching the children careen back and forth.

I didn't know any of this when the morning began. But I could imagine it, having been to enough family gatherings during the previous months. I could imagine the languidness, the laughter, the easy pour as the men filled their plastic cups with ice and drink again and again. When we started out, there was just the cobbled street where we lived, the 1980s truck with its cracked windshield and metal dashboard, the beer held, our gaze forward into the bright noon, wedged into the front bench seat. Jorge turned the engine over. Eulalia was teasing Mino. She squeezed my left hand. On my other side, Mino leaned against the door and threw his head back in laughter. The houses drifted by and we turned onto the carretera climbed the hill to the outskirts of the village. We passed the spot on the lake where so many of my poems had taken place. I hadn't been in a vehicle for perhaps two months. I loved the people I was with like family. My heart broke open, then, I think, in that village, as we left it. My chest swung open like two doors, and a profound release spread from it to the rest of my body. As if some inner muscle I had not even known I was clenching had suddenly and completely relaxed. I had never felt the sensation before in my life. I have not felt it since. It was like arriving to place as I was leaving it. It was like dwelling at home as I was carried from that home.

Rishma Dunlop 2002, 33

Today, as a poet, as a [geographer], I reject my former professors who criticized "mixed" metaphors, who told me in Honours English that if one was to write literary criticism as a scholar, one could not be a creative writer, one would have to choose. I refuse to choose.

Tim Cresswell in Kate Anderson 2003, 280

The challenge for cultural geographers of landscape is to produce geographies that are lived, embodied, practised; landscapes which are never finished or complete, not easily framed or read. These geographies should be as much about the everyday and unexceptional as they are about the grand and distinguished.

John Wylie 2009, 286

The geographies of love, in other words, would speak against any solipsism or narcissism, and equally against any sublimation of self and other, any abolition of the spaces between us, any coincidence of self and landscape. They would introduce an element of difference, distance and absence anterior to any claim to presence or communion.

Don McKay 2000, 59

Have you heard this? – in the hush
of invisible feathers as they urge the dark,
stroking it toward articulation? Or the moment
when you know it's over and the nothing which you
have to say is falling all around you, lavishly,
pouring its heart out.

Hesitating Once to Feel Glory

Sometimes I think we can see
the world before it began,
and that's what makes us
so sad. Before the world began

there were swallows flying
across a lakeside field
as the sun allowed the trees to shade it.
There were leaves fallen

during dry seasons that made
a golden road. And there was
silver and stone and clover,
and a man on horseback

with a dog with no tail
that loped across the field
in a lazy semi-crescent as though
drawing the orbit of a small moon.

There was a burro
on a ten foot length of rope
stomping a dust patch in the earth.
And there were pelicans

with injured wings handfed
by a waiter and so many willows –
so many! growing by the water's edge.
There was the clink of bottles

Tim Robinson 1986, 363

Among the echoes of all these steps – rash or wary, ritualistic or whimsical, processional or jiggish, trespassory or proprietorial – it is impossible to isolate the particular resonance I had hoped to amplify further, that of the good step, the one equal to the ground it covers… Having now acted out to the best of my capacity the impossibility of interweaving more than two or three at a time of the millions of modes of relating to a place, I can feel in the tiredness of my feet what any sensible thinker would have gathered from a moment's exercise of the brain, that the good step is inconceivable. And this book in its oblique and evasive way had undertaken the conceiving of what I knew to be inconceivable.

before the world began
and so its sound still
makes us melancholy
the way ice can, booming

on a river in spring
or tilling a glass in a woman’s hand.
Stones, too, uncovered from earth
pockmarked with clam houses,

and also clams. Pianos, there were
pianos too, their cascade made us
restless, they could not offer
more nuance than the half note.

Things kept coming
before the world began, and stacked
and tumbled over themselves
in drifts like snow,

insensible. The world
before the world was annotated,
expansive, all the stones
the boys could throw

never hesitating once to feel
glory, to feel jealousy,
boredom, and the nostalgia
the grass feels as it clambers

above itself, and loses
its former lives in the clean,
disintegrating thatch
and dust and clay.

The sadness of the alternate
armed rower, who walked his boat

to shore! The sadness of the far shore
and the thud of a foot against a ball,

the bent hook of wire hanging
from a tree's lost branch stub,
the question in the ibis' voice
the sudden flash of a red bird

like a compass of ink in the brush.
Before the world began
there were bells that never
rang the correct time, and wings

and spheres of sad eggs in water.
The burrow walked his circle
and the carpenter never saw
his children further

than 6th grade. He never
painted his room yellow or cooked
on anything but a burner
on a board. And the neighbour,

after the party, she never
gave the plate back though
she said she would,
she always said she would.

Chapter 4: Hesitating Once to Feel Glory

Preamble

This manuscript of lyric poems explores in creative form understandings of the lyric poem, conceptualizations of home, place, landscape, wilderness, and the geographies of anxiety, love, and emotion. A geopoetics of attendance profoundly informs my own creative process and helps me to situate myself in landscapes close to and far from the West Coast, where different narratives shape each culture. I have arranged this collection of poems, entitled *Hesitating Once to Feel Glory*, in two loose parts: the poems' locations begin in my West Coast home, range to the West Coast home of my father, in Los Angeles, then further to Mexico for the central portion of the collection, and then return to the West Coast for the collection's close. Physical location, however, is only one point of reference for the work. More pressing is the emotional geographies of each piece, which address ideas of attendance, care, failure, anxiety, absence/presence, wilderness, home and lyric experience. This collection is the creative product that accompanies critical work I have written, and which has set the creative work's stage. The poems are very personal and are situated mainly in first person; they address loved ones: friends, family, even a dog. The subjects are taken from my own experience and foreground my thinking about place and home, while attending to details of my relationships with others. As this chapter falls under the category of a creative work, it is exempt from needing ethics clearance at the University of Victoria. To protect and respect the subjects, names in the poems have been changed.

Attendance to these other actors was my primary concern when writing each piece, despite use of the first person. My justification of this point of view can best be expressed by Bristow's (2015) examination of Alice Oswald's similar choice:

> In *Dart*, Oswald examined the extent to which the lyrical first-person pronoun can register a truly situated ecological mind by closing the anthropocentric and, to use Derrida's neologism, phallogocentric gaze, instead resting silently, "contracted to an eye quiet world. [Oswald 2002, 6]" (126)

It is this "eye quiet world" that I seek in writing in first person in these poems. The eye-I allows attendance that is my own, a personal experience of coming close to an other, of trying to perceive and acknowledge the world. Even when third person does appear in the poems (in "The Dictator," for example) the observations are my own; third person is my artistic choice, one that removes the narrator from the poem's foreground, allowing what she perceives to take primary

place.

In addition to attendance, my own emotional experience is an integral part of any poem I write, whether its subject is focused on that experience, or focused on a place, a person or another being. In that, these poems are based in the lyric form, a poetry that most clearly, for me, elucidates relationship with place and emotion, and has a wide enough scope to incorporate philosophical argument as well as story. The thinking done within a lyric poem is also a particular kind of resonant thinking. It centres, as Zwicky has argued (2003, 2011), on atunement – the relationships between particulars in a poem that, though ordered, produce a poly-dimensional coherence. This, and this and this…, it says, in an ontology of numinousness and addition. Systematic thought, in contrast, is linear in spatiality; it is bounded in time. It says: a, then b, then c. Lyric thought is more spatial than it is temporal in nature, as it relies on this clustered resonance of particulars in order to transmit meaning more than it relies on an ordered, time-dependant system of argument. The clustering, image-centred timelessness of lyric thought and lyric poems allow me to explore fragmented but intense episodes of emotion and images of place. Though the poems also have elements of story, and story-telling as a device surfaces within some of the pieces, the framework of each is grounded in image and lyric understanding. In this, it is similar to recent work by Culver (2015), whose work on Zwicky's "thisness" focuses on images (photographs) and stories about these images that demonstrate her location of "thisness" within her practice as a visual artist.

A common refrain of many lyric poets is that the emotional particularity of one writer's experience translates into a wider understanding of experience for the reader (see Hass 1984; Simic 1990; Dickinson 1960). The personal becomes one example of commonly experienced emotions of desire, hope, fear, loneliness and so on. This should not be confused with the assertion that poetry creates universal understanding – that meaning in a poem works identically for each person. Lyric poetry written from a personal perspective does not attempt to speak *for* others, nor to assume that there are universal truths that apply in identical ways to disparate ethnicities or genders. Instead, it works to impart one individual truth as a way of creating recognition and understanding of both the writer's experience, and how that might relate, whether tangentially or directly, to the reader's experience. Emotional experience in my work is a way to pay homage to each thing in the world as "totally its apparent self" (Ammons 1977, 61), as paradoxically, seeing a thing *as itself* calls into relief both its particularity and my own, as it also calls into clarity the connections between these particularities. These simultaneities of

authenticity help to explain why humans turn again and again to poetry to help us understand the world we live in, as well as how we feel when in that world. Emotional experience in place, thus, is as important as (and goes in tandem with) academic explorations of place. Lyric poetry as written in this chapter works intersubjectively: under the understanding that all beings are particular, individual actors in the world, and that recognition of this individuality can result in shared, though distinct, understandings of various emotions and of what it is to be in the world.

Thus, what follows in this chapter is a collection of poetry that plumbs the shapes of the places in which poems were written, akin to how Bren Simmers (2015) struggles with feelings of anger and loss as gentrification overtakes East Vancouver in *Hastings-Sunrise*. This collection also explores the shapes of my emotions while in place, akin to how Terrance Hayes' work in *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin* (2018) tracks his anxiety as a Black American within Trump's American landscapes. My interior emotions mesh with exterior places; they cannot be extricated from one another. In this way, I see these poems as contributing to understandings of anxiety in place (see Kearns & Collins 2012 and Wylie 2005 for work that touches briefly on this affective state) and furthering emotional geographies' explorations of situated knowledge through creative work (also see Orley 2009; Bolland 2015; Boyd 2017) as well as adding to understandings of the absence/presence noted in landscape by Rose (2010) and Wylie (2009, 2010) in NRT's scholarship. The entangled, simultaneous absence and presence that I feel in place and landscape can be deftly explored through poetry's ability to speak about the unspeakable. It works, as Simic says, by proclaiming that "there's something more real than ideas, something that remains, as it were, always stubbornly unformulated, but which as readers of poetry we have no trouble experiencing and savouring in poems we love" (Simic in Wright 1995, 72-73). It is to the unformulated, the unspeakable, which poetry can refer; this is also what it can add to geopoetics.

In these poems, the tangible place referred to in each poem provides an opportunity to explore a different facet of my intangible interior landscape. It is interesting to me what was written in each landscape. In Mexico, where I was often happier, the poems explore emotional difficulty – a longstanding battle I have with anxiety and depression – as much as they do the surrounding landscape and the people within it that are dear to me. Perhaps the safety and happiness I felt there gave me room and support to explore harder feelings; I can only guess. On Canada's West Coast, where the first and third sections of this manuscript were written, my attention shifts to the difficulties facing places themselves – in the west, those of decolonization,

environmental destruction, and conceptions of home. This gives the manuscript a loose shape, as the poems' locations move from west coast to the interior highlands of Mexico and back again. It also anchors the poems in two specific places or regions.

By placing the work in these two regions, I also see these poems as furthering work on regionality as expressed by Stewart (2013). Stewart calls regionality an "alignment with something tentative, ephemeral, incidental though powerfully felt" (276) in which noticing particularities and a simultaneous feeling of home and displacement form a "prismatic ecology" (281). As Stewart explains, "Depending absolutely on its angle of approach and the way it catches light, [regional] writing becomes an energetics of what happens and also a carapace of spent and living forms" (2013, 284). These poems are meant as a geography of what happened and happens when I am in these two regions, a speculative topography of the everyday sensibilities consequential to living through things (Thrift 2007 in Stewart 2013, 283).

Positioning the text

As temper to the above, however, I also must acknowledge my positionality during the research and writing of Section Two of this chapter. My subjectivity, knowledge and education all affect how I do research, how I interact with others, and the final products of my research. I am a 46 year old racialized white, Anglo-European-American settler woman with a Canadian and an American passport who is a member of the Jewish diaspora, who has a significant accumulation of post-secondary education, and who has lived and worked in Mexico. I enjoyed many privileges and benefits when dwelling amongst Mestizo Mexicans that the people I came to call my community could not easily attain in my country. I acknowledge not only my own privilege, but also the ways in which this privileged position influenced the relationships I had with locals, the opportunities I was able to enjoy, the poems that were written, and the ways in which I was treated by those I came to know. Being a racialized white, Anglo-European-American settler to Canada who is a member of the Jewish diaspora, it is often too easy to forget that whiteness, though perceived as unmarked, is still a racialized positionality. It is "only invisible for those who inhabit it" (Ahmed 2004, para 1). In Latin America, specifically Mexico, whiteness is entangled with a familial identification with Europe (Spain), even though most of the country's inhabitants trace their origins to both Indigenous and Spanish roots (Rubi-Castellanos et al. 2009). The idea of the Mestizo in Mexico has been both venerated and denigrated since the country's inception: "on one hand, Mexico's indigenous inhabitants are the authentic source of a cultural patrimony that has coalesced into the nation; on the other hand, that

same nation is founded on their abandonment" (Lund 2012, 1). To complicate matters, whiteness in Latin America may be constructed and attained through association with a higher class, and not just through the colour of one's skin (Telles and Flores 2013; Figueroa 2010). Thus, living in and writing about Mexico and Mexican people was a uniquely fraught situation, full of complex understandings of privilege and context. This was ultimately complicated by the production of creative research, where my own emotions and experiences influenced the art that came out of my experiences; the poems are a form of meaning-making, which is unavoidably coloured by my positionality. My poem "Lost in Translation" attempts to acknowledge this complexity; others in this section do so more obliquely. In all instances, while I lived in Ajijic, I attempted to mitigate divisions and misunderstandings by speaking Spanish not English (including to other expats living in the area), sharing what I had, and trying to learn about and respect local traditions and cultural practices. I'm sure that this was partly a failure. But I also feel that by bridging the language barrier I was much better equipped to engage forthrightly and warmly and with what Kevin Paul has called the basic unit of intercultural communication between Indigenous and settler peoples in Canada – curiosity (Paul 2018). To show interest in another's culture, to want to learn and give time to learning, can mitigate many barriers. It cannot, however, fully rectify the privilege inherent in differences of class, ethnicity, gender and education.

Chapter sections

The first section of this chapter contains a series of poems (three of which are also present in Chapter 3 of this dissertation) that reflect on what it is to be a settler in a colonial landscape, and to feel both at home and out of place, followed by a long poem on my father's family's history as immigrant Jews in America in the 20th century. It features work that represents the first time I have turned my gaze home in almost 15 years. The act of doing so made me realize how much I've learned about *how* to see from my history on the coast; there was a sense not of deja-vu, but of return. With that, comes a feeling of loss. As Zwicky writes in her enigmatic poem "Autobiography," I've spent a long time looking away from the birth, the dawn of my world (Zwicky 2011). These pieces follow a common line of feeling – they exist predominantly in a state of unsatisfied desire – they question what it is, as Chamberlin (2014) writes, to be from a place when you have not inherited its stories. In this, they are a creative practice that adds to recent creative and critical geographical work on ecological grief and loss stemming from climate change and social-ecological change (see Braun 2002; Cunsolo & Ellis 2018; Kearns & Collins 2012; Lave 2012; Prudham 2012; Rathwell & Armitage 2016; Tschakert

et al 2017; Ward 2014); work on feminist care ethics in relation to environmental destruction (see Gardiner & Thompson 2016); and place attachment theory (see Brown & Raymond 2006). These poems miss what used to be the coast, they mourn the changes in landscape, they stumble through the inadequate job of living in the world that my antecedents and I have found ourselves in as settlers. The melancholy that arises when I think about the West Coast of Canada is the feeling of treading on a place that has never been fully embraced (by its relatively recent European arrivals) and that has belonged to and been inhabited by another culture for thousands of years. Laurie Ricou argues that whether the first encounters between First Nations and Europeans occurred in the liminal space of a "beach-boundary" or inland, as migration spread westward, as in the United States, the problem is that the stories of recent arrivals have eclipsed those of the original culture's (2002, 154). Original names are eclipsed by a colonizer's names (see Tucker & Rose-Redwood 2015; Murphyao & Black 2015) and cartography can reproduce violent spatialities (see Blomley 2013; Hunt & Stevenson 2017), as though one had laid one cloth over another on a table. Veracini calls this the "non-encounter," a "circumstance fundamentally shaped by a recurring need to disavow the presence of indigenous 'others'" (2011, 2). And the problem is also that this *keeps happening*, as though the West Coast is perpetually being reformed and rediscovered as a blank slate. Explorers pave the way for colonialism and colonial settlements; logging gives way to homesteads; Gulf Island hippies give way to Ontario and American retirees. Cottages and cement factories decimate Indigenous' winter villages. Then a century later, giant stucco houses (that often lie unoccupied most of the year) replace the cottages and factories. It is the story of much of human history, but it is perhaps more caustic here, more disturbing, because the history is so recent and so visible. The takeovers are not far enough in the past to dissolve into pretty pottery shards on a hill's ravine as they might be in Italy or Spain; they are in focus, they are still underway. The first section of this collection of poems (as well as the non-fiction chapter in Chapter 5) addresses these losses, what Relph (1976 in Seamon & Sowers 2008) calls the insideness and outsideness of place.

I don't know what the solution to this cloaking of one world by another might be, though other artists have made suggestions (Celan 2001; Lilburn 1999, 2018; Tranströmer 1997). I suspect it may involve turning more to story and viewing the multiplicity of language and story as a focal point as well as the spaces themselves. Stories, told by those who refuse, resist and survive colonization, can help to mitigate some of the missing connections to the land from which most settlers suffer (see Cameron 2012; Christensen 2012; de Leeuw 2017; de Leeuw et

al. 2017; DeSilvey 2012).

This section ends with a long poem, "Los Angeles Elegy." It is a personal narrative, anchored by lyric moments in my family history in Los Angeles and by a choice nine years ago not to continue with a pregnancy, and thus to tacitly admit to myself I was likely not going to carry on my family line, my family's story. The poem juxtaposes scenes from my family with the agonizing decision this is for many women. "My west ends here," comments the poem, admitting both to the changes I see in the landscape around me and to the end of my family's western migration and its stories, over the last 100 years. In tying together the physical places of the West of North America with my own story, I seek to juxtapose the idea of the West as a new start, a possibility, with one of the West as an ending, a place where one can go no further. It is this simultaneous opening and closure that the idea of *west* provides, as a geographical place and an imaginary possibility, that I think helps to make this part of the world so fraught with both creation and destruction, and such a rich landscape for creative geographical exploration.

The second section of this collection turns its focus to interior landscapes, with the places and people around me serving as trigger points for this exploration. This section is based entirely in Mexico. The work adds to geographical scholarship on emotion and affect in place (see Anderson & Smith 2001; Pile 2009; Wylie 2005; Kearns & Collins 2012) as well as creative work on emotion (Tranströmer 1997; Blythe 2015) and as a response to the ecological disasters of the Anthropocene (see Robbins & Moore 2013; Weisman 2008; Subramanian 2015). The poems in this section are both explorations of place and chartings of an emotional geography of hard feelings (such as anxiety, fear, anger, sadness). In particular, they look at the anxiety I am feeling in the face of climate change and ecological disasters, a sadness that has been noted as of late by both scholarly and creative writers with ecological interests (see Cunsolo & Landman 2017; Magrane 2017; Lilburn 2016; Sinclair 2017; Bringhurst & Zwicky 2018; Zwicky 2016). Hidden in this sadness and anxiety are two related emotions: anger, which also frequently surfaces in this section as the inverse of the sorrow that living in the age of the Anthropocene engenders, and amusement, which surfaces as comedy or lightness when describing people, places or objects. The graceful stumble that is a source of poignancy in lyric poetry, and the pleasure of that grace, is among the things that makes poetry my chosen form. I have an increasing need to temper the seriousness of hard feelings with a corresponding lightness; comedy provides an entry to this release. I am often surprised by the comedy of falling short or failing, an expansiveness which can be found in the serious but oddly joyous poems of Matthew

Zapruder (2010) and Mary Ruefle (2010), where our clumsiness at the meeting points of emotional and material worlds is deftly embodied. Poetry that plays the line between grief and humour or between anger and joy can heighten to extravagance both the antagonism and agonism between people and their emotions, and between people and the world, as well as the seemingly willful capacity of the world to offer us a leg up. Humour, amidst sadness or pathos, creates a world in which people keep their balance not through the mastery of things, but through, as Allen Grossman writes, the "comedy of participation" (1992) and abandon. This section will explore how sorrow, anxiety, anger, and comedy can trace my experience of impending ecological disaster, while acknowledging the complicated and often beautiful nature of relationships that humans have with one another and with the world.

Connecting this section, and its humour and anxiety, to geography, is a thread of vital materialism that weaves throughout. Like Odradek, the spool of thread in Kafka's short story "Cares of a Family Man," this section is populated by saltshakers that decide to cartwheel down streets, by a stepladder that sinks its feet unsteadily into the shore, by clouds that spit stars and mattresses that choose to hold someone aloft. The link to Jane Bennett's (2010) and Karen Barad's (2007) work is not accidental. Part of creating a geopoetics of place, for me, involves acknowledging the agency of the myriad entities around us, whether they be animate or (supposedly) inanimate. The reasoning behind this choice is partly ecological:

> In a knotted world of vibrant matter, to harm one section of the web may very well be to harm oneself. Such an enlightened or expanded notion of self-interest is *good for humans*. (Bennett 2010, 13, italics in original)

These poems take seriously the thing-power or vitality of all matter, and thus the interconnectivity of our own bodies with things around us, in a web of interdependence that speaks of relationships involving comedy, as mentioned above, but also care (see Grossman 1992). Recognizing the agency of things encourages an ethical relation and a deeper kind of looking – an attendance – to surroundings. The work in this section aims toward new materialism, in that it strives to recognize the individuality and vitality of all matter (which is eclipsed when one is constantly replacing and not abiding with a thing in a disposable culture). It seeks to recognize the multiplicity of all matter – that it contains not just itself but shades of other things, other species, other kingdoms, acknowledging the way we are all *becoming*, rather than fully defined or static. Recognizing the vitality in all matter also levels the playing field, creating a universe of more and less complicated matter, which needs to govern itself more from a place of ethics than one of hierarchy. Finally, working within the latitude of new materialism

verifies much of what poets also suspect to be a truth of the world – that is, that we *cannot* know anything, that the "gap between concept and reality, object and thing" is ineradicable, that "the most that can be said with confidence about the thing is that it eludes capture by the concept, that there is always a 'non-identity' between it and any representation" (Bennett 2010, 13). This gap, Kant's distinction between noumena and phenomena, has also been called a mystery or a failure; the process of accepting the gap can involve the practice of negative dialectics or a recognition of non-identity. Vital materialism, in contrast, creates a materiality in which the focus is on human and other beings' participation. More than a life which will always "exceed our knowledge or control" (14), it is simultaneously where the ethical responsibility of this participation is always apparent. For, as Barad states, "not even a moment exists on its own" (2007, 396); these poems strive to give voice to myriad kinds of matter through an acknowledgement of the "entangled phenomena that are intrinsic to the world's vitality" and through attempting to be "responsive to the possibilities that might help us and it flourish" (396).

The collection ends, in a third section, with a return to West Coast landscapes in order to find some solace in the themes explored throughout the poems. For me, solace comes through both an acknowledgement of the importance of relationships (between people, objects, places, and animals) and of the failures that are inherent in any relationship. This section is fragmentary, in that it offers no hard and fast conclusions. Mark Winston writes that "poetry and science share at least one trait: building from fragments" (Winston & Saklikar 2018, 151). Geopoetics, similarly, is primarily about attendance to things, and not about coming to conclusions or answers. I include fragmentary pieces that are "fundamentally ragged…beyond conclusion, coherence, or closure" (de Leeuw 2017, 309). Even as they investigate nascent emotional states – of happiness, of being in love, of desire, of grace – they do not rest there, as I believe none of us do. They acknowledge the difficulty of being in the world, and the attention, nonetheless, that must be given to all the things and beings of the world. They seek to attend, not to smooth; they are an attempt to "meet the universe halfway" (Barad 2007, 396).

In summation, this collection of poems is an attempt to invite emotional understanding into geography, and provide a full manuscript of poetry as valid contribution to the field of geopoetics. I argue this form of charting an emotional geography is as central as the exploration of landscapes in the poems themselves. I see this work as integral to geohumanities and geopoetics in that it explores not just place-making, but acts as a practice-based contribution to emotional and affectual geographies and to place-making studies, as well as adding to Canadian

contributions to “lyric scholarship” (Lehey 2011, np), which have seen a quiet flourishing in philosophy and literature departments across the country (for examples, see the work and teachings of Nicholas Bradley, Adam Dickinson, Clare Goulet, Warren Heiti, Kathleen McConnell, Richard Picard, Sue Sinclair, Adam Sol, and Rob Winger). Despite this, I do not yet see creative work flourishing in geography departments where the positivist method is still king; this work acts as an intervention into the established academic hierarchy, which often places creative work far below critical work in assessments of worth, of merit and of contribution to scholarship.

My poetic response to living in a world which is changing drastically (mostly for the worse) involves turning to poetry as one of a multiplicity of voices, a turn that can allow room for polyphony within both academia and geography. In the end, I agree with Lilburn that I am not interested in making poetry useful (see the epigraph for this dissertation or Lilburn 2018, 107), even if it is also a form of care. But I am very concerned that it have a voice at the academic table, and not just as an art studied; poetry must be a voice unto itself, adding the embodiment of ideas in creative form. Geopoetics, in contrast to much scholarship on poetry within the humanities (I’m thinking particularly of literary criticism), offers a seldom seen opportunity for practicing artists to contribute creatively at a time in history when their voices are especially needed. Geopoetics has fashioned the opportunity for me to say, in the end, that ultimately, any answers to the questions I have raised here may have to be posited by the poems themselves.

Hesitating Once to Feel Glory

Accepted for publication, 2021. Forthcoming with Nightwood Editions, 2022.

Section 1

Little Scar

I think the long repeating nightmare I used to have
of walking a knife edge that zigged and zagged between two endless darknesses

was in fact poetry
lying in wait. Not for me but for itself.

Poetry is not interested in me.

I'm staring down at the river, where
through trees I can see the rocks I stacked last night to tear its clarity into light,

to make it speak.
The rocks thread silver across the flow.

On one side of the silver a still transparency, a printless mirror. Leaves

building up against its edge.
That's sorrow. That's

what sorrow looks like. Unmoving,
artless, pellucid clarity.

On the other side of the thread: little trembles, a city seen

from far away on a hill at 4 am through a heat mirage next to a person
to whom you might pay the highest compliment

of *curious*. This water is loose seeping, a falling away
from itself. I think that letting through is joy.

In just two hours, the sun will leave the river and the river will be water,

a line of rocks
holding everything back,

An unlit shaking scar
through which it all, lead-lidded, still thirsty,

tries to slip through.

Hook

I miss the grizzled sailors at Telegraph
who smelled of wood smoke, tobacco and rot,
gave us line when ours snagged,
yanked us out when we tumbled from the dock.

I miss the booms, groves filling the sound, ghosts
of toilet paper escaping the through hull, the yellow cloud,
the unbunching turds we scrambled to see. I miss the grey shacks
at Coon Bay while we waited for slack, their white bread, ham fish
hooks, the peeling, beached hulls. A boy my age, lit from within,
ran to the waves, wetsuit askew, alone. I miss
the fires at Montague, the rainstorms we chased to stay
always under the god pelt. Fish condos, docks with red railings,

I miss when the Feds owned everything worth anything on the sea,
prawn boats always full, logs the size of houses, everyone we knew
living aboard or building one in their yard. Then we cursed
out every powerboat on Channel 16, sidled up
to sandstone at Gabriola, nabbed flounder, threw
the same dogfish back cast after cast, his mouth
a bloody mess, still he went
and went for the bait.

I miss the shadowed side of Genoa, water
marine marble – cat's eye
a swirl of orange, someone's old tarp trailing
like a last curtain.

Weather was the first voice: *sea rippled*, *sea one foot chop* –
it shone doubled with phosphorescent constellations,
oil lamps, alcohol stoves and no regulations
so we floated, mornings, empty Sun Maid
raisin boxes to see if the swans would eat them.
They would. A branch shook on shore
from the left weight of a giant bird
watching summer hook itself in my skin, watching
the last child unencumbered poke his finger
through the net of a crab trap and be punished twice,
once by his father, once by the crab.
Sea amethyst, sea emerald, sea live and jade,

it whirled below the blue-tarped cockpit, under Vega
and the Lyre, a coat we smoothed and dragged and wore –
out of which we could pull, and into which we put,
our shining, unraveling lives.

If this is your land, where are your stories?

Anchored in Tribune, air stilled; surf crept closer to the hull.
Then all other boats had left the harbour. The bottom dropped
from summer as the *Qualicum* arrived. By the time we readied,
breakers were 12 feet and a man on an adjacent boat,
his safety equipment, all his lines stowed, waved us – were we all right?
You gave thumbs up but I wanted to hail and shuck myself,
crawl to his side. It was our boat; you ordered me below,
steered us out and crosswise through the mess,
the hull slamming like skip rope into a colder stone.
Our mast pitched side aslant to the foam surface,
while I cried your face grew red. I had no stories.

In my years afloat, the hardest I had was the bitter slice
of a pop can, a fish hook, dusk deadheads.
I have no stories. When the wind rose I held the smash
of the bunks, while you drove us through troughs, took
the green water cross as we rounded the point,
trued the stern as we skidded to Deep Bay.

From shore of shelter we found, a late downpour
couldn't wash me. I am captain of this
heater, that tarp, the snubbed anchor,
the tins of corn and beans, the lamps.
In the end, no one becomes their father's daughter.
In the end, stories are told by those who decide
when to take the turn, the punch of a cross sea.
In the mountains, the glacier turns away.

To be from a land, need we say yes
not just to making but the cockpit's well
as the wave downs? No to my blue eyes,
your hand on the tiller, the common disaster –
sea offers the whole tale, the whole world I say I was from.

Flying West After Einstein on the Beach

Anvil clouds ratcheting up the uncertain line
where white distance meets blue. Before the mountains,
stripes and squares of farms, the occasional, reckless

disorder of rivers. Rivulets muscle into the plains
intimate with wind farms and pump jacks,
crops throw their back into the dark folds and flow.

I am caught between the love of an opera
and the sadness of the fields. The music thinks itself
mosaic, an ever-shifting pattern: light, numbers,
foliage, the advancing parade of punctuation.

It grows ornamental as conversation
on the shortest night, on a balcony bar,
a tree lavish between deck
and midnight blue. For five hours the world

on the edge of its chair.
To repeat the phrase, the rap on the door,
the studied breath, until one is let in. I don't know
how notes measure against form. I don't

know how tone in its waver
is so unflawed, even without the violin's meander. Or how,
even as the insisting erasure of a hand can charm cloth –
like a field, like a continent of fields – the hand also remembers

the earth's strangeness, all its feral, uneven darkness –
This is about stories left on the table, all of us
leaving, forever waving like siblings
as the plane retreats into the wings.

Gone West

Desire for a nation that is material and experiential
will always be frustrated by our history.
But Ishmael's tenderness – the whale's roll from crusted back
to rubber flipper to the pearl-shell cream
of the underside, its secrecy, erotic sheen.
Carr, at Skeedans, stepping out of the canoe, watching it
scroll to its tether's end, an empty thing writing itself in water.
A dog at her side, her arms laden. The Indians
disappear into their houses. She's like a star-struck potato.
She sees land glowing from within.

Ten years ago, someone pointed the first real estate sign
outward, toward the ferry and its passel of desires,
fixed atop a cliff in Active Pass. This could be your midden,
your salmon run, sandstone cliff, camas field, transformer rock –

go north now, not just west, find silent islands,
and there we are preceded by logging donkeys, alders
parting their treads, a cruise ship's exhale of disappointment. To what
can we listen now, that does not spit coins, whir as it cleans,
pluck toothpick trees like a mythical monster
in a Disneyfied meadow, or needle that old itch to survey and name?

Last night, on the beach outside this cabin we've escaped to,
the ruffled, mineral-delicate borders of clam gardens
materialized in the spring tide midnight, moon-lit aftermath
of a day's downpour. Mussels, barnacles fused, a pelt
knitting the piled lines of rock. Pastures of sheened sand
speckled with clam bubbles. The water
so low we could have step-sunk across the breadth of the bay.
Above us rose the old-small, new-large houses

their TVS casting cobalt light, fire pits sloughed and mossy.
Oyster shells yawned. Sea lions cajoled from the far side's pier.
The lines of rock and Limoges-thin lace radiated out like continuations
of the Point: ghost-thoughts, shell-sharped. We could hear the worry
worry of sand pipers, the rust and rubber squawk of a heron,
the million shells breaking every time our feet set down
and the far drone – almost freshet stream, almost wind in firs
almost hand trailing in water as a canoe webs two islands –

of the highway, creature by creature carrying our chances away.

* lines taken from Misao Dean's *Inheriting a Canoe Paddle* and Emily Carr's *Klee Wyck*

Preparing the Beds, Early April

And then there is earth (the edge
that holds the sea) –

the dog's nose tilling and tilling
black warmth, we ruffle over the mounds

to a patch of moss brought from the old
home, it holds three shooting stars,

each leaf a pleated mouth,
come with the root

and dirt of a forest this spring
cut down. To live on this island

is to walk just ahead of a chainsaw.
Waiting for swallows, our three poplars

turning green fire, her paws
whisper *green leaf, green leaf*

while the strait wind pushes
fences to their knees.

Los Angeles Elegy

*
Like the photographs of Susan Burnstine – edges
of building and sky felted,
people, windows singular clarities
of stubbornness in uncertain light –
this is how I see our migrations
west, where marriages ended,
where the boat nudged E dock
tied with knots I was taught, then pretended

not to know. Our history frays.
Los Angeles' lemon yellow mornings,
my father, with a 14 year-old's solemn hilarity
poured ketchup on his chest and lay
with knife in hand, waiting for his mother.
In turn, she vowed never to teach him Yiddish.
The San Fernando Valley walkups
grew around them, field-seeded
amidst the clock and gutter of a foreign tongue
he writhed in bed watching locusts and fire.

*

City of jade and piss,
hills kind as scorpions dipped in mud,
the air's pawnshop ease, men with bagged bottles.
Walking the ironed streets,
climbing to the lookout, drinking
at the Independent or stealing Mayday rolls
from the bakery's doorway, wind tracing

through louvered doors, I did not once think
of you, how long I had waited for
the nebulous period to pass, ticking off
months since August's bed, last light
of summer bleeding the curtain.
I thought *where coffee, where Didion?*
her arms around Scorsese. I bought
A Time of Gifts, I lit no candle
in that butter-coloured light. The gutter
of memory. The open drawer, the clasp
of purse or cut that won't close.

*

The family’s west
ends here.

*

Three men and two women around a fire late at night. The men
talking. One woman gathering firewood, one
curled into the fire's heat, staring at the island's river. *Do you*
still see Michael? Sometimes, yes, for dinner; we mostly talk about film.
Sand and gravel river flats, water nudging the fire. *I was working with his wife.*
When is her play premiering? Water gulping, clop like horses' feet,
the V where current parts, moonlit in the dark.
Sabrina was in Berlin, too. She took her daughter?
That sense of German guilt is all encompassing. Bone strike
of the deeper ribbons, wash of the stones. *She doesn't*
do anything by halves. One woman lets her bundle of branches
fall fireside. The other shifts feet further from the glow.
In a photo, her bones cauterize the light.

*
Above the Valley, pica call from edges
of their dirt burrows,
every push of wind
brings avocado pollen from the pine.
Sunday morning languor,
padding the wood floors, radio mumbled,
an extravagance of solitude, thick disarray of books across the bed.

At reunions, we all end up reading,
one with glasses askew, one dreamy
beside the empty pool, one practicing his swing,
late night record player needle climbing
the hill then falling back
        as a wind farm's avid seas.

*

Two sisters and their brother: Ida, Sadie and Gus in 1919
against the clapboard of a Detroit house
likely since burnt or stripped of copper. Maybe
now a writer's house, part of the artistic
restoration, like the discovery of a mixed tape
from the 90s, how *good* the transitions were,
how they sent secret messages to the recipient,
said everything, said: I admit no change of heart or key.

With his sisters, Gus stares out the side of the frame,
happy, lopsided, still a little whole, still flanked
by family that will later invent him
mad, lock him in a ward with no wide lawns or
copses of elms but a puce-walled
hallway, a night nurse who smuggles him paints
and pens, a pharmacy of want.

*
You probably shouldn’t, they said,
if you have doubts.
You should have it,
they said.

It may be a long time, it may be a long time
a long time looking
away.

*
They went west, leaving Gus for Arizona, LA, Canada,
leaving for feelings, feelings
of awe – Ida's son, my father,
nudges his gun behind the cramped counter
of the service station, Ventura Boulevard. It is 3am
and he is eating a horse meat sandwich,
memorizing terms and their non-clinical counterparts:
depression, ennui, apathy, melancholia –

feelings of want – four cousins careen back yards
of the Valley, super soakers and crew cuts,
a trampoline, every third spring missing, hot pops, desert heat,
someone puts their hand against the wall to steady, someone
quotes Skinner, someone disappears inside

and takes too long to come out –
feelings of duty, that seep especially from women, attach themselves
like a favoured car, a movie set, a title, a plated walking stick, a ramshackle porch
built to distinguish one mind from another, one life from another,
one madness, one infidelity, one daughter, one brother,
one painting, one tree.

*
If you were an orange rolling suitcase
left by a woman on a boat gone to glimpse
whales off the starboard bow
you would crane
slowly to one edge of yourself,
then the other, your eyebrow handle
raised in wonder.

Instead, you may be one of Jansen's Strandbeests, built and set
loose on Holland's sand, wandering when wind
makes it so. Upon sensing water, you turn from the wave, upon wind
drive your face into ground, pinioned
to face everything that comes.

*

You were a mollusk. Ruby heart.
Shape shifter.

*
We left the I5
for the intimacy of the oaks and pitted fields,
sang *Lullaby of Broadway* and
You Are My Sunshine. A branch chirped and then fell dumb.

After we got here,
said the guide, there was more wilderness
than before we arrived.

You’re like Gus,
they said.
Good he didn’t have kids either.

*

She sat in the first room. You were supposed to put on this gown, with no back, and carry your clothes and shoes in a basket. She placed her coat and sweater in, her shirt. She put the gown over her pants and shoes and sat. A nurse came in, looked at her, left. She watched the minute hand go round and wondered if these were the moments that would unravel like a spool of golden thread forever. Another nurse came and knelt by her, and asked her some questions. She continued to nod, to say yes. But your pants are still on, said the nurse. And your shoes? Do you want to take those off?

*
Jade bottles, bags of cactus, exodus, then
much later, a host country a coast an island

some Jupiter’s beard and the orange butterflies,
as if practicing, I killed by loving.
But first, only snow forts, water colours
the thud of a river, freezing and

unfreezing on its way to the sea.

*

The other night dear, while I lay sleeping
Go flying, go flying, over the moon.
The May baby gone, far side of the world.

I dreamt I held you in my arms
When I awoke dear, I was mistaken

I'll hold the umbrella to shade you from light,
go sleeping, go sleeping as the stars drift from sight.

Section 2

Tripe and Cake

The body is an animal
out of which longing springs.

The hands, spiders. the eyes,
mustached bus drivers. The forehead,

corrugated tin roof
over spangled Guadalajara girls.

I am a saltshaker of happiness.
My thirst knows this plastic table

like the back of your hand.
Why won't you cave to the unachievable pleasure?

My shaker breaks loose and cartwheels the main street,
through the dust heaps, the potholes, the nicked

knuckles of the stone worker. It settles
in a foundation crack. It wicks back and

forth in the evening's drumroll. It dries
and shims the leftover heat. It wants things.

It's almost three and dressed as a gypsy.
It's eating tripe and cake.

It's not speaking because it can't
eat it and want it, too.

Tacos

The best part of the day is the night.
I go searching for tacos, unhappy
as I walk. The streets are empty
except for people piling firewood
for the holiday. I am the ghost that passes.
The road ends. I backtrack
through some trees
to the stone pathway. Ahead,
a highway materializes.
I turn the corner. A car dealership, a man
behind glass adding numbers
in a store full of fans. Then, a naked bulb
suspended above dirt,
smoke, plastic chairs. Hotdogs?
Tacos!
Radishes float like little wounded hearts.
I am a compass needle swinging
yes to everything.
It is important to hold
their greasy, hot circles properly.
Three, or better, two fingers. Approach
from the side. All of the sauces.
No one talks to me, but I manage not
to spill. The trucks waft past. The daughter
smiles at her father. I belong
somewhere, but then they are finished and
I am an unmatched sock again,
old love silent at the other end of the country.
The girl with braces, the staring father, the brother
wicks my plate of its plastic bag.
I am the doubtful guest.
So I get up and the plastic bag
rises into the air and follows me
like a silly translucent mule. It is the pale
little mule of quietness and
of the strangled look a man gives
to the air when presented
with the affection of a woman, a mule
with a wooden saddle, a mule loaded

to the traces with sorrow but
never, ever, no
never with regret.

Favourite Things

One: the cypresses
bending in wind

their tips super-
sensitive sea pens.

Two: the occasionally
marching marching band

tubas saxophones trumpets,
three blocks away

sometimes lets its clarinet have the stage.
Noodling. A klezmer flourish

that breaks old stem into new
hummingbird into humming

and bright bird.
Three: the mind briefly at rest.

Stones in its closet, the air-proof,
cauterized shell of stillness.

allowing breath.
Green wind,

green mountains,
jade air west to the sea.

The Trumpet Speaks to the Crowd

I live behind a small farm
with roosters that speak as they like,
which is always,
and a donkey, some sheep,
and a cow, or so say
my neighbours. None have seen her.
There are six cypress trees.
Five tilt their heads in unison, agreeing
with any judgment I pass.
The sixth is contrary and swears
to no allegiance.
Joy impossible, then ever-present
as they get it together. Their heads
loll; it depends. It
depends which key I use.
One opens another prison.
One hangs at the throat
of a bull named Bodacious,
whose habit of knocking
rodeo kings in the head with his own
has allowed several surgeons
in El Paso to afford third homes.
Sense ships up the road again,
to a café where a trumpet
with a woman's vaudeville body
looks at the boy selling pies and
judges him, beautifully. I could
eat all of them, she says,
and buys none. A little god
like a tse-fly finds her ear. It wears
false eyebrows and a moustache for
comedy's moment of pause. Two canals
diverged in a wood
and the fly takes the most sonorous,
turns shrill to coronet, failure
as a philosophy that thrills
the folds, as though
in a darkened theatre
with one's heart pumping, hooked

to an unseen apparatus that
whisks blood to and
from the naked roof,
it had found the answer
to anything.

The Whole Fish

I come from a long line of imaginaries.
Our lives are spent wasting like debarked dogs.

We save the best for the lost. Our beauty
legendary but off-putting.

We are not trustworthy. We don't
pull the grain in time. We clean the house

out and sell the treasures. We are the stick
measuring drought, not the water's balm –

everything we touch, everyone we
think we love. So, Imaginary,

do you recognize me still?
Our letters down to three lines,

written in each other's countries.
Let's imagine our possible life:

one desk, two writers, one heart, two
languages, one landscape, two minds.

At dinner you eat the whole fish.
In the night a child with blackest

of humours grows an inch a day between us.
In light the woman you do not cheat with,

the man I do. A few rainstorms, a cough,
a kiss, some Coca-Cola field workers,

so much wind. Here are the eyes,
the bones, the fins. Can I go now?

Is this enough?

I didn't think so.

Interiors

I am trying to become an envelope
with nothing but dust inside, I fold
my edges so sharp

I score myself
trying to crawl inside.
This is after the wedding, the sad

18 year olds three months gone,
not touching the whole ceremony.
She tried to smile, accepted

a tissue from her father. Marriage is
not a prison, he spoke, when asked.
Do you know where I am? I know

what you're feeling. I know you won't
say it. We could go on like this forever,
like the bus entangled in Nueve Calles

the neighbourhood's men trotting
to rescue. In a 36 point turn
he fulcrums the corner. The briefest of waves

after he finds the straight and
grounds the pedal. It doesn't get better.
Fucking is nothing, but desire,

well, it's like a midnight clam dig
when deep down you feel
what you want

in the dark and the muck
only to have it take you in its mouth
and cleave you to the bone.

Hesitating Once to Feel Glory

Sometimes I think we can see
the world before it began,
and that's what makes us
so sad. Before the world began

there were swallows flying
across a lakeside field
as the sun allowed the trees to shade it.
There were leaves fallen

during dry seasons that made
a golden road. And there was
silver and stone and clover,
and a man on horseback

with a dog with no tail
that loped across the field
in a lazy semi-crescent as though
drawing the orbit of a small moon.

There was a burro
on a ten foot length of rope
stomping a dust patch in the earth.
And there were pelicans

with injured wings handfed
by a waiter and so many willows –
so many! growing by the water's edge.
There was the clink of bottles

before the world began
and so its sound still
makes us melancholy
the way ice can, booming

on a river in spring
or tilling a glass in a woman's hand.
Stones, too, uncovered from earth
pockmarked with clam houses,

and also clams. Pianos, there were
pianos too, their cascade made us
restless, they could not offer
more nuance than the half note.

Things kept coming
before the world began, and stacked
and tumbled over themselves
in drifts like snow,

insensible. The world
before the world was annotated,
expansive, all the stones
the boys could throw

never hesitating once to feel
glory, to feel jealousy,
boredom, and the nostalgia
the grass feels as it clambers

above itself, and loses
its former lives in the clean,
disintegrating thatch
and dust and clay.

The sadness of the alternate
armed rower, who walked his boat
to shore! The sadness of the far shore
and the thud of a foot against a ball,

the bent hook of wire hanging
from a tree's lost branch stub,
the question in the ibis' voice
the sudden flash of a red bird

like a compass of ink in the brush.
Before the world began
there were bells that never
rang the correct time, and wings

and spheres of sad eggs in water.
The burrow walked his circle

and the carpenter never saw
his children further

than 6th grade. He never
painted his room yellow or cooked
on anything but a burner
on a board. And the neighbour,

after the party, she never
gave the plate back though
she said she would,
she always said she would.

The Dictator

The Dictator puts on Music for 18 Musicians,
Section IV. It is the last hours
of the year, before Maximino
gives his children to the Americans.

They still live in two rooms
beside his carpenter's
workshop illuminated by stars
by night, by dusk by day.

Section V begins.
The iron worker has finished
his calla lily doors. He's doing
something pedestrian now, maybe

the framing for a toilet. The carpenters
drag their new saw inside, up
the furred cement stairs. In two rooms
two beds sleep five, on the roof

the cistern, the tree that hides
bathing, the neighbours from which
there is no invitation.
In an hour, the bats will emerge

from their little ceramic shells.
As the last of the sun stumbles
into the lake the Dictator,
parked at the edge with his extraordinary

car battery and his ridiculous heart,
turns up the speaker on the roof
and keys up some Lionel Richie,
then a little Brahms. It's early

Lionel Richie so it's okay.
Notice the stomped,
broad-leafed grass, the gelatine air
at its inconsequential fulcrum,

the last cloud bank spitting
out a star. Is it possible
he is playing out our life?
Baker, Sosa, Ibañez, Bach,

pulled in all directions,
all incomputable, we are
little racing dogs just bathed.
Someone lights a bonfire

in the field of the gypsies.
Maxi's four children
fix themselves at the edge,
the oars of the fisherman

flake the mother of pearl lake
as the Dictator slides
on his black gloves, lifts
his wine from the car's

roof, pulls out all the stops.
Cities fall. He takes
a drink, they bubble up again
as the dust of the unremarkable

end meets its maker, the one
with the skin of damp gold
and the mind of a dog
and the hearts of a child.

Coming to Pieces

That night he waited for me on the street and we drove to Chapala
in a 1980 Ford he borrowed from his father. You switch gears
by grasping the steering column in both hands and counting the clicks.
We walked the malecón and the docks where waves were breaking
against the fixed fingers and *lirio* washed up against the shore
after its travels through Oaxaca dams, down river, into the ever-
shrinking lake. I could tell he felt afraid near water.
On a bench at the shore we drank tequila until
the plastic bottle was empty then wandered without direction
in the gentle truck. At Tacos Moya we had five and I was
still hungry. We drove to Rincon, a small turn between villages
where the road grows dark and the wetland spills under cliffs
and crickets, pelicans and ibis stretch themselves into filigree.
Speaking and touching. At one point I thought I might be
breaking into blossom, but having learned to curb it
I pushed at his skin, which was like the antler down on a deer.
It's *your* skin, he said. I gift it to you.
The west wind faded and bats flew over us.
We both had to work in the morning. When we talked
we faced outward and married one another's arms
and fingers and heads to one another's bodies, and it felt
like becoming a planet, out in the dark, with a fragrant light
tearing our lives into pieces where each met its edge.

Approximate a Singular Feeling

The history of the Americas
could be illustrated by the bushes
I planted on my neighbour's
property, who is due back this morning.

In the rising storm the rose branches return
to shadow puppets, but no one snickers
behind the screen. Reading right to left
I watch the giant sky picture change.

Here's the brief reprieve
from the undertaker's eye, o then
we will suffer. Meanwhile, on a soccer pitch
a teen playing a *Torrito* sets

to running. Shooting roman candles
out his ass, the stick and paper effigy
on fire around him, he's thinking
about kinds of kissing: the Moby Dick,

the Hygienist, the Panini.
I'll tear myself away from you
as one would leave a friend,
wrote Salomé. All I'm doing

is sitting in this room waiting
for the machinery of our heartbeats
to syncopate sometime
into a clarity like Claude glass.

There is not much to see.
A desk, a lamp on fire,
some dreaming pencils. Our hymn
to life is at the fulcrum of

an imaginary errand for oranges
and cheese. Our arms full,
it's either the beckoning of distant
shining things or the kitchen's damp.

We’ll not reach either.
The kitchen of our impossibilities!
Together only for the hesitating
moment, the song wavers, we are marched

separated back to what it knows. Ours
the miniscule pendulum
careening from kismet to the glorious
crying of the food in its plastic bags,

the noise of a thousand cities
a murmuring hush in our ear,
to be cut in two, to be turned inside out,
to be taken to you on any midmorning.

Hovercraft

The trouble with introspection
is it keeps changing its mind.
Most of the time I sit on a precipice

of memory built somewhat like
a camping mattress. The dust mote floor
an inch away, the wires blanketed

like a Cuban mezzanine, it's hard
to find a supportive position. Outside,
the lavender plant is frozen.

One of the draughty spaces
in my chest is in the shape of a dog,
and at least one, your hands

resting and waiting above a meal.
The mattress hovers me.
It is from the Realm of the Kings,

as is the glowing silver
barbecue on the deck and all
my sad little cooking implements

stolen away from warmer people.
I know you have this trouble, too.
It's like we're made of table cloths

strategically printed to show
our failures as breezy ferns
and a wafting of trumpet flowers.

The streets below continue
their gentrifications and ablutions.
You're floating above me

like a crane fly, its rocket tail tipping
until the little Japanese bowl of its head
tilts a bucket of bare twigs

onto my chest, which has begun
to retreat into itself the way
a cloth’s weave can pull a strand

back inside its own skin.
If I can’t be a thread any more
I want to be a hole.

Fealty of the Short, Dark Feeling

I've been experimenting with which additives
make the black crater inside myself
shrink or grow. The recipes amaze.

Loneliness fills it with what I imagine
potash looks like. A particularly tender person
burns the interior like a November pumpkin.

I'm like a porch dog on the top step
arrowed toward the world. Occasionally
I slump down and make a half-hearted nest

in the grass. Mostly my interiors are clearcuts
on some northwestern island southern people
think is perpetually covered in snow and

eastern people think is evidence
of our weakness. We're just a minority here,
amongst the brightening alder stems

and the occasionally uncut fir standing
like a starved sheriff in the field. My west
is a peculiar mix of fermented berries

and machinery parts covered in moss
that makes the cogs shine like onyx,
which I have always wanted to put

in a poem cage, and adorn like a Christmas
palm. I know I will never be good.
My worry machine is not the shape

of a country in the Americas. It does not purr
as the machete's blade rises. It is a soft
multiple feeling like being alone

on a lakeside walkway in the midst
of 100 families, then returning weeks later
on someone's arm and not even recognizing

the place. A dog finds the entrance
to the crater, enters as through a
rabbit tunnel, her tail faintly swaying.

The invincibility of appearances
is where failure becomes universal,
something even you are doing. It’s where

the poem cage’s front viewing window
opens to the public and everyone
can see the prey I eat wasn’t caught by me.

The Dictator Before the Rainy Season

Every few months about 10 seconds
of natural happiness.
My head's brick oven lifts its top
and the new ceiling is just stars.

Then it's okay that I am
a painted table cracking and peeling
in a hut without a floor,
supporting torn coasters marked

with phone numbers by men
who want to take me
to the south side, show me
their horses in Wyoming. But

mostly it's my grandfather –
his batting hand and dizziness,
carless, his clubs in the corner
his brown eyes turning

from the pages of the television
to the flickering elms, their
leaves dropping and re-manifesting –
that lives inside the black

crater that is my displacement
and my 6pm euphoria. We all
live for something. The dictator's
name is Armenio. When we met I

could feel the myth folding in on itself
and closing its own edges like
a chiton. The pieces locked and the thing
was gone and saved as we are gone

and saved when we touch another.
Sometimes he is in a field cooking meat
or playing a saxophone with headphones
and sometimes he parks his car

around the corner from my house
and barrels Bel Gilberto until
I come down with a drink.
It is four months since the last rain.

The hills on the far side of the lake
apologize. It's a murky territory of dust
when a person comes up to you,
takes you to his tiny, red-walled rooms,

offers orange juice, sets up
the battery-powered speakers.
Go ahead. Touch the mirage.
Tell him all the inconsequential facts:

the prize you almost won, the small
parade of ants that skirted then
tracked your foot as the *gaviotas*
like white napkins stole away

from a black dog and the wind
brought the cardboard set down.
Unlicensed, a stretched cord
powering its electrical intelligence,

the weather cranks north
an inch a day to new understandings –
how to keep the fallacy
that music or humans could do anything,

how to lift the clouds' tenor
into infallibility, how
his horn feels, gutted by the rag
in the hatchback's nest.

Airless Wonder

As the cake glass cover descends
my breath ups the humidity. Outside, the burro
continues his circles, spirographing his life away
and the fishermen, up to their waists, advance

without ceremony into the profuse
medium of medium. The music tries to lead
and my leash catches short. My cake glass
is made of clear lead and loss. The worry machine

clocks its 24 hour shift. Its workers,
their caps of kestrel feathers, their hands free
to lock my throat. Work will set you free,
whispers the grass and the broken speakers

and the metal of the constantly conversing
swings. I look for a drinking straw
somewhere discarded, with the leftover
breath of a person not unhappy,

a person for whom chest high waves do not deter
from calmly lowering a net into the opaque water
scooping out the silver, slight fish. To reach
without seeing. To be a diver in the dark. To have

no glass. The clear air and the wet turmoil
of their forearms. They do not startle.
The water hits their lips, the net is heavy, the silver

close. Little carp with their pale rose bellies
below the concrete walkway, the ardent damp.
One turns in the water. I lift the glass:
disaster. I keep the glass: disaster.

The 13 Year Sleep

In the sideways moving sea
of Progreso, we admitted
to fear of everything. If I dream

of you again my skin may disappear,
I will be pure air, mixing
with the Belarus snow, the bay

where my parents fought their little fights,
the little hillocked civilization of polished stone.
When your letters arrive the world

opens at its shellfish fracture
where all the sea meets all the shore.
The particularity of sound becomes

the theme time radio hour of loneliness.
St. Francis' wooden arm loses
another chunk to the beasts. The metal worker

reduces shard after shard to dust, then
melts it down, begins again. The sheets
in the dryer have buttons. Buttons

that throw themselves against the metal drum
in an unsyncopated admission. Am I leaf or
flower? Do I change my own colour?

The art of losing is the art
of multiple feelings, colliding
like blood cells in their race from one

low-pressure wall to another.
Multiple feelings are like wanderlust.
They're not satisfied cleaning a car.

They slam the door, run to the neighbour,
launch and mate in mid air, a touch
and it's done, only to fall to pieces

when the beetles arrive, landing and breaking
their own wings off their own bodies
then walking into the earth. Would you like

a new country? In every one
yours were slew. In Russia
it was an orthodoxy; in America,

a wife; in Canada, an academic;
here, six cypresses, their skirts dying, their heads
aiming to the possibility of a star.

Ardent

My father said I'd do it all again, all the sorrow and delight,

and I was hovering somehow above the green kitchen
and the hide chair, the chain link and the women calling

for their children as the boy kicked the ball
the wrong way on purpose. I'm wearing three layers of feeling.

The first is willow green, innermost, brushing my skin
like nettles. I love its electric. The second is plasma,

newly discovered like the giant pasta tubes
that surround the earth, and in the third

all but the most ardent extras have gone home. Any day
now I shall be released to the Bangladesh runway

its burnt out plane a little hulk from a different dimension,
a researcher of longing, no one selling Heineken

from a cooler in its unlit aisles, no one with a line to God.

I had my father over the summer I was in the crater.

His wife was burning and burying her father
by the great lake no one swims in. I jerked through rooms

that had held a ridiculous marriage. He watched me drink,
sitting below the swallow's nest and the dark firs.

I came out to open air for the first night in months, drawing
our history in my book, eating what he had brought

or he ate it, at any rate. Our talk was a silliness like kissing
while laughing – he still wanted me to think he was cool.

Death had been a balm. I looked back
to the couch I'd made bed, the interior of the dark,

from the sharp, sweet surprise of arbutus air. We
were taken in by weightlessness, by solstice hill.

Since then I try to slow down
but I can’t. I try to slow it down but I can’t.

Levitation

I begin the rainy season's daily
deconstruction, put on the guise
of a cantankerous woman. All I ever wanted
was the same table and chair
in a hundred places around the world.
And someone at night to talk to. Like you.

Without my nest I wander to the water
where wind is gleaning hills, making
light into mantles. A couple
I imagine as French unwrap a bottle of wine
set glasses on their bench. He wears
dark glasses and a chocolate bar moustache.
The soccer game beyond them has

no out of bounds lines. The boys
chase the ball across the path and off
the walkway and sometimes they play
in the air above the blossoming sand.

Lost in Translation

Maya came over this morning.
She never phones, she just comes.
We drank coffee. I was trying

not to be nervous, to speak more
into the microphone of translation.
Then she was crying, about her son,

who feels guilty not earning enough
before his first baby comes. His wife Fina
is eighteen and has skin like gold

dust. The echo in transmission
caught up to itself as she wiped at her eyes.
I forgot to offer a tissue. I watched as the minute

hand ratcheted our relationship
back to first words. Don't cry,
I thought. I took a breath and ate the air

that is someone else's country.
Who was the person who thought
up being drawn and quartered?

What was it like outside? What happened
that morning? It wasn't
until a week in I realized the hours

in the kitchen's bird clock weren't matched
to their songs. Northern Oriole was singing
White-throated Sparrow's song. Now

I'm speaking with a clock in my lap,
unsure how to proceed. It seems wise
to defuse the object that steals

by reducing its voice. But sometimes a voice
is a sob. She asked for tissues,
then we went shopping.

I bought her flan, she bought me bread,
we ate croissants, drank milk. She told me
more stories of the people on our street.

Tu suegro, glancing to see how I'd take it,
kicked three of his sons out of their houses.
She didn't like the croissant but saved

the worst for last and then ate it all.
Before she left she did all the dishes.
When she walks it's like she's gliding.

Automatic Pilot

My brain's main man picks off
any new growth from
its badly cut limbs, stores the

wretchedness in the crater. I would
blame it on him, but it's me
who suspects you'd steal coins we're saving

for the next game of pool. He brings out
his rototiller, churning through air like a lake
weed machine. When he's around too long you

become pieces, your hand or an
emotion diced into Chimichurri while
racking up the next game. O

my little rototilling mascot, won't you
ever get fed up? My cup threateneth not
to run over. In my sky throne, the rainstorm

I plow through gives way to children
careening from the rubble of cars,
the damp sweet smell of the world as it saunters

out from under its secret tree.
I am the operator of those incessant
tappings you hear at night while trying

to sleep the sleep before the interview.
I am the interviewer. Please believe me.
My galaxy became sad. I, too, wanted to be yours.

Geodes

Up in my starship, I realize
all the eyes are away shopping
at Walmart. I operate the sky paddles,

stop and pick you up. We go for a joy ride.
The hummingbird mascots, radio collars
operational, show us their cloud pictures.

My fingers leave the controls, your thin
body unfolds itself like a nebula
as we drift through the galleries

of each galaxy unseen. Each solar system
is up and running. In some the baubles
shine, in others, a stampede of dust

overtakes us, veers us toward a green
thunder that sounds
of our long ago rains. Outside the bubble

of the skylight the occasional junk ship
hawks spectacular mangos and packets
of glowing seeds. It's from you I learn

nowhere is my home. We are flying
through the star pods, the thick glass
and metal flukes enduring the blows.

The crystals inside us begin
to magnify, to reach and fuse.
In ten thousand years they'll display us

in the latest incarnation
of a museum – examples
of how an insignificant shell

can house, sealed from the world,
an inner chamber
of intricate light, of arc, of gold.

Voyeur

We are wheeling through life
as though in a grocery cart.
Aisle after aisle after aisle go
by, flavour and promise, but

we are too small to reach.
The good is beyond our grasp.
But we look. We stare
in awe at the patterns

kaleidoscopes of taste.
Meanwhile, the little trees
outside soak up summer rains.
The lake rises, branches burst

forth in a tearing that is the person
we love hurting us the first time.
It's why as runners we stride so close
to pass. We want to be closer

always closer,
so loping, nearer, we gift
sweat and breath.
Bumping along the path, casters

long gone, keys
playing themselves
a piano singing a waltz
trails like a dog.

We can look. We can look –
something will sing for us.
We can look.
Love will break us

but our work,
cacophonous, continuous,
will lift us like gems
into the jeweller's silent eye.

A Shadow No Matter How it Tries Cannot Turn to Gold

Watching the traditional singers
    Kate calls a choir
I remember the rows

of dolls my teacher
    collected
from around the world

displayed in her tiny studio
    a converted garage
in glass cases above the piano

grey lace on the top board
    hundreds
of tiny eyes staring out

in their finery
    the flamenco red
of the Spaniard the wimple

of the English nurse
    the Mexican ruffles
like those on stage now

at her Christmas parties
    pizzas
we ate on her floor

the sky pieces
    emerging
from the keys

someone after
    built an addition
on her tiny house and the garage

is a garage again the whistles
    the voices
the keys the whisper of air

moving through the cabinet
    kept me
from committing crimes

I have been convicted of
    or that
I may have in those moments felt

her finger punching the correct key
    as the manifestation
of all the electric anger

running like a lamp's current
    through my hands
I waited once for her

to give me one
    she must have
ordered them as she never travelled

and she didn't and I was eight
    and livid
her piano too loud

fourteen years leaning back
    when I was doing well
forward to point or pound

when I stumbled her husband
    on an oxygen tank
and then not there

my father began writing cheques for twice
    what she asked
each week a little fight

their eyes stare now
    from another collector's
shelf or a St. Vincent de Paul's

I'm going to throw this clay

cup to the floor
I’m going to ask for my love

and be naked
when he arrives let him
come and come inside me

while rain inundates
our room I’m going to
pull the women

in their white lace
off the stage
and hurt them

10,000 Concordances and 1,000 Illustrations

Is it because you know it will end?
Is it because you flaunt it that you need it?
Do you want more?

Will you be taken in the night, walking
under verbena, the cupola, the bóveda?
Is the river of rainwater dark? Will our nights

prevent the vehicle's leer? There is a geyser
in our barrio, it follows your steps.
It shakes down your friends. It whispers up

the corner boys, trembles images
that should be good and clear. We are not good.
No one likes this much joy. Let the hunt begin.

Let the worker in Michoacán lever the gates
open late at night, shunt the water and its martial
lilies into the engorging lake. It thunders

over the spillway, it rakes the metal rivets, sheens
the once river mud of the sluice, the midnight
channel. It is your family dying on the one blank curve

of highway where the train tracks cross
and the train that was not supposed to cross
at that moment was paid to cross

at that moment. The money appeared
on the Minister's desk like a caress. Let the water
take you away. The dam doors close like a jaw.

The lilies star onto the lake. By dawn
implanted in the shallows,
or adrift like cut up sentences – I love…

You were… It should have… Make them… In the calm
green of shallows they catch on fences
built on mudflats during times of drought.

Open When Alone

Hello, old feeling.
It’s not been long enough.

Access to the central holding
facility of joy has been curtailed

for all those not in a pool
or cutting pine

with an antiquated saw. *Pendejo,*
call the boys, while a love song

croons, its accordionist high
on playing the straight man. Again

and again, the flicker into new
territory, then out

to alight like Napoleon the hummingbird
on the chain link, just inside

the zone of ownership.
Every time he flies past he takes

another handful of dust off
my body. By tomorrow, just

the sheen of mechanicality,
like how a swimming pool changes

from turquoise to white smear
when used as it should. Little

voice, you’re like those coloured
flags planted atop the next

to furthest jungled hill. It will
never be easy, say your flickering

oyster shell forms. You’ll never get out of this alive.

Another love song concurs. *And*

I'm hungry and cold, adds the singer,
her armies all

burned at the edge of the city.
Give me the pass, I whisper

to the little voice. You can
have my first born, my money,

the almond croissant I'm eating by pieces
to pretend I'm not eating

the whole thing. You can
have the North's lotus eaters

the Western Districts and my moon
rising with Pluto, poor Pluto,

in one of 12 houses, which was told to me
this morning but because I

am without any earth apparently
leaves my head immediately.

I see a bare arm gleam
at the pool's edge and think I

might just believe in Innisfree,
in the guillotine operator

shading his eyes, seeing his wife,
hooking the leather strap to hold the

metal blade before stepping off the wood
platform through the crowd.

I am tired and volcanic. I would never
have made a good Penelope.

I'd have taken the suitors one

by one in the infinite cushions

of the day bed with its view
of the sea, then had them

brutalized by dogs. One of the boys
paddles to the concrete

edge of the water, levers out
to his waist, then falls back in,

he does this again and again
and it is the most pleasurable

thing in the world,
obviously, to use

himself between mediums
like this to be

briefly, perfectly,
both latch and key.

El Dictador

Sometimes I think he is all of us.
Sitting on the tailgates of our cars

in the tumbling light, staring out
at the weighted storm that will not

pass overhead but slant south
missing us, magneting the berry farms,

pine forests, the volcano that coughs.
Playing each track as a balm.

There was that moment
sang Shirley Horn, when my heart

sitting beside the back tire beat
wildly against its instrument case. When

the white bird picked its way closer
and ate all our pain. He puts his lips

together, trying to look elsewhere.
The lake turns to river and begins

to slick by. Leaning back, he watches
things of wood and wing, things of praise

and shame, the larger skiffs
and the smaller tempests. Every night

the spark of the speakers, holding
his hand out, filling it, handing us

a world broken by Milanés
into faultless rafts. Are you

ready to go anytime? he asks.
Are you ready to go?

Miraculous Failure

I started reading your books in hopes
of a secret message in the lines.

I wanted a little,
a cloud pulley, another traveller operating

delicate lines like gossamer.
There was nothing like that poetry.

Occasionally, things were amusing –
the Virgin of Guadalupe's image

as a vagina, when your protagonist
sleeps with his one lover, before

he becomes a simulacrum. Nothing
like the poetry to which we turned

with its ghosts and the identical
black crater to mine,

which like the peeling scroll
of this table I followed

until it too ate me and spit me
into the brightness that waters.

The scroll just keeps going,
unrolling

until I turn gold, transferred
to skin like a Delhi temple.

I won't shake it off.
There's nothing left of you

there was nothing like our poetry
always bone blue, always talking to me.

Section 3

Fitzgerald

I leave alone and paddle
into the sun from Loon Bay's shade.

The lake is a child's skin. The sun
a burning hand. Cliffs

holding lodgepoles, Kingfishers.
A woman suns herself on the small island,

jumps in. No engine no voice.
The lake the colour of first sex in a year.

Brief, dark, bottomless, without generosity.
It is freedom from thought. I am in the canoe

and cannot see the canoe's red.
I am the girl on shore feeling water

lick my shoulder blades.
I am my dog on shore, swimming out,

giving up, turning back. I am the canoe,
revolving an island of wind.

I am the granite cliff and the sex hits me
like a perfect paragraph of Fitzgerald's.

I want Fitzgerald islands and
Fitzgerald sex, Fitzgerald meals

under a dozen stars, alone, the glow
of a green light across the bay.

Chesterman

I am a mole at its burrow's edge, fixed by
the grey sun. All day, 12 foot ten second sea,
southwest 25 knots. My back to the salal

it's growing sandier and sandier. With a boom
another roller lands, the horizon stands up, sits down,
a Parkinsonian but delighted crowd.

A boy jumps like a fox in the dusk air.
I consider breaking out the officially-happy-again card.
Decide to delay. Crossover clouds

smother the sunset; my dog on the wide beach
is a pool of mercury on the deck of a ship at anchor
in a casually protected harbour.

Walking, we pass the maintenance man, readying
Frank Island's love cabins with presto logs
and a cooler of champagne. The metal wheels

of his cart drag; he sighs. The sea subsides,
surfers festoon it, metal filings to a magnet,
their dogs motionless on shore. Sometimes,

the mind is a hopper, and it doesn't bother itself.
Everything, even the cart's imperfect tracks,
is paradise, silvered hi-balls, white noise,

no storm moving soundlessly in
and the surfers like rickshaw drivers
whose feet never touch the ground.

Love

It is likely that my father and my dog
will die the same year. They are both

in their retirement. They complain.
They smile. They look as if

they wish there were something
more they could do for me.

The universe of tinnitus presses in
like the swell of a drama.

I'm not mad, I say to my ex-love.
I'm not going to be mad anymore.

I'm lying in this bed. My father is
by the sea, worrying. My dog,

her back to me, hangs her nose
off the edge, out into the space

between comfort
and the hundred year floor.

She sighs when I touch her
and does not move closer.

Step

I think the dial of my heart just broke. All the feelings
rushing through the porthole that is or was my brain

and now speaks to praise circuits, his new
use of motherboard, a drawing she made on a dock on the sea.

House wrens do this, let their young be
raised by others. Sparrows' second clutch, their cut rate bodies
hunting bugs above the gutter, looking at me.

There's a bear in my chest and it wants to kill everything

not good enough for the one suturing all my electronics, the other
up late, watching the video of the swearing cockatoo.

You think it's too much for me. It's not enough.
I'm too tired to finish this. Tomorrow,

woodwind instruments, cooking classes,
her head on my shoulder in bed and
I get a head rush like at the doctor's,

but the first in my life where I am, supposedly, the one who knows.

Who can solve the puzzle, the errant heart
creeping to each bed. Little door in the heart. Little

hole in the life. My heart hurts. My head hurts.
No where deft or close enough.

Grace

This little insect,
a miniature cricket,

    thread legs
    body of an angular banana,

navigates the folds
of the Basho palm in fits

and starts. Every
morning in his life,

    as the storms lift
    then drop, he stops
he has hireath, he gambols, he has *querencia* he bows.

Curtain

The wind knocks the lakeside tansy and sorrel down.
We need not fall apart to feel the feeling.

The stems rise again in the intake between gusts.
Maybe we have the blue cloak of translation, a dog

shepherding our sounds. Maybe
someone plays for us while we sprawl

on a stone floor in night's blue. Maybe it is our story,
named what we could have been

had the poles been reversed, the losers
the victorious, the pen the page. Under the scroll

of water the hyacinths rise and fall as new land.
The shore takes them up as corsages,

pins its own breast. Maybe we will be saved by loss,
the green bouquets held by force

while the shore climbs its stepladder.
The stepladder's feet are

unsteady in sand. The green
nudges a world briefly lithe and learned.

It flickers in our minds, flames itself
out, carbon from coal,

rising as it falls.

Chapter 5: On Not Traveling Up Tod Inlet (*SȽITĆEŁ*)

Published: 2018. *GeoHumanities* 4:1. 220-229.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the WSÁNEĆ peoples for their care and knowledge of SȽITĆEŁ (pronounced Sneet kwulth or Sngeet kwith), their ancestral home. I would like to acknowledge the diverse and numerous peoples who have lived at SȽITĆEŁ and/or contributed to its restoration.

"Fish
fowl
flood
Water lily mud"
– Lorine Niedecker, "Paean to Place"

In a sense, SȽITĆEŁ is a womb of WSÁNEĆ people.
– John Elliott

Prelude

This chapter is structured as a paean for the multiplicity of Tod Inlet and SṈITĆEŁ (the inner bay of the inlet), on Vancouver Island, British Columbia and for what lived and lives in and around it. The piece explores the social and cultural geography, the history, and the cultural significance of a geographic place which has experienced profound changes since colonization. The creative form is meant to respond to and converse with the various voices still present in SṈITĆEŁ's past and present.

Ice

Tod Inlet, on Vancouver Island, British Columbia – which stretches like an inverted comma running south then east from Saanich Inlet's Brentwood Bay to the mud bottom, piling-scattered calm of its inner bay – isn't frozen all winter. Freshwater ice forms on the surface of its narrow, two kilometre marine reach only during its annual or biannual cold spells, spells that do not affect neighbourhoods as close as Brentwood Bay, just a kilometre to the east. In January 2017, I explored the inlet during one of its winter periods, searching for understanding of the strangeness and complex history that shrouds its geography.

Tod's microclimate is created by the heights of the Malahat mountains and Willis Point's Partridge Hills, Finlayson Arm to the west, and the District of the Highlands hills to the south (Arney 2014). The hills and mountains support a dry, coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem, with arbutus, big-leaf maple, Douglas and grand fir. California quail, violet-green swallows and big-horned owl frequent their heights. Finlayson Arm and Tod Inlet are extensions of Saanich Inlet; they wrap around Willis Point in an embrace. Each waterway's lengths are steep, studded with volcanic and metamorphic rock formations, and until the recent die-off, with sea stars. In the summer, the slightest touch of the water activates phosphorescent dinoflagellates; they light up like a galaxy when summer swimming across its narrow mouth. But in winter, when the rest of the south island is hit with snow that melts within the day, the Partridge Hills get a foot of powder; the whole inlet can freeze from inner bay out to its green navigation entrance marker. In the Hills, there are often ditches full with waning snow a month later. Tod's freezing is an event undergone by almost no other body of ocean water on the south coast (Nanaimo Harbour last froze in 1876 (Nanaimo Museum NP)); Tod is a land of four seasons in the midst of the south island's gentle temperatures.

An academic answer as to why the area sees the fluctuations of weather unseen in lowland regions of the South Island isn't forthcoming. Geologist Christ Yorath notes that "a bedrock sill at the north end [of the inlet] restricts water circulation, resulting in poorly oxygenated bottom waters in the deeper parts of the inlet" (153); could the lack of circulation also result in colder winter waters? The Partridge Hills receive the benefit of weather that has first passed over the 600 metre peaks of the Sooke Hills, and that this air, dried and cooled, may influence the 240 metre summit of the Partridge Hills and their surroundings as though they were much farther from the ocean. The Partridge Hills in turn provide deep shade to Tod Inlet and form one half of the funnel-like channel that swivels a westerly wind into a southeasterly gale as it exits the inlet, cooling as it goes.

It was this wind that blew for a week in early January, and helped freeze the inlet solid, a skiff of snow lying on the three inch thick surface as it rose and fell with the tide. While the inlet was frozen, I couldn't access further than its mouth, by boat. Under the ice, the normally clear winter water grew cloudy, opaque. The ice was too thick to row through, too thin to walk on. I could trace the shores of its inner bay by foot, using the Gowlland Tod Provincial Park trail that connects the bay to nearby Wallace Drive, but the only trail through the Partridge Hills leaves the shoreline, winding away from water up into the reaches of the hills. Thus the areas of the inlet I explored were those impacted most by human history: the entrance, with its small flotilla of liveaboards, and the inlet's inner reaches. The middle was inaccessible, impeded by first ice, and then by a subsequent snowfall, which blanketed the area with more than 50 centimetres. While the snow lasted, the high ridge trails, too, became difficult to access by foot. It came to seem fitting that my explorations occurred during these weather events. During my research, the freeze, the snow and the curtailed access came to represent larger ideas about the inlet itself – those of inaccessibility, of beauty, and of sorrow.

Childhood

When I first floated on the waters of Saanich, then Tod Inlet, I was six weeks old. My father probably pushed the point, eager to show me off to the sailboat I had been named after. My mother was probably anxious and cold. She was fresh from her first cesarean section, 28 years old, and may already have begun to hate the 25' Maalea and the rules of sailing my father insisted they follow: only mud bottom anchorages (of which Tod was one); no night travelling; proper radio etiquette when calling marinas on the VHF. I don't know where we went next. Likely

to Sidney Spit or back to Annette Inlet, where they'd rode out a hurricane together four months before. It would have been early July, that six week old trip, the sea like thick wine and the wind vanished for the summer. Maybe he forgot to tie the halyards down, and they chimed, all night, as we three were rocked to sleep at anchor.

SN̲ITȻEŁ (Sneet kwulth or Sngeet kwith)

The entirety of Saanich Inlet, including Tod Inlet, is a glacial fjord, carved during "multiple glacial advances of the Wisconsinan Stage of Pleistocene glaciation" (Yorath year, 153). The ice receded approximately 13,000 years ago, exposing deposits of limestone in Tod's inner bay and by the Malahat's Bamberton, sediments of silt and clay in the inlet itself, and surrounding sediments of glacial till (on the Saanich Peninsula) and fractured Volcanic, chert, limestone, and argillite formations in the Partridge Hills. As the glaciers receded, the inlet transformed into a hospitable oasis, now a protected marine park that forms part of the 1280 hectare Gowlland Tod Provincial Park. In WSÁNEĆ culture, Tod Inlet's name is SN̲ITȻEŁ, which translates into "Place of the Blue Grouse" (Elliott 1983, 23). For over 2000 years before the arrival of European colonists, WSÁNEĆ peoples inhabited the inner bay of SN̲ITȻEŁ, creating several year round village sites; remains of shell middens attest to the rich food resource the inlet provided, including salmon, shellfish, herring and deer. As oral historian Elder Dave Elliott says, the inlet with its surrounding Garry oak meadows, coastal Douglas-fir and deciduous forests was a place for warriors to train, to "practice survival, fasting and self-renewal" (Elliott 1983, 107), as well as a "doorway" to winter hunting grounds and "deer hunting grounds" (110). It was also the beginning place of the WSÁNEĆ peoples themselves, an origin landscape. In WSÁNEĆ oral literature, the creator placed the first human on a rainy night in a meadow at the head of SN̲ITȻEŁ. His name was XÁLS, rain, and in learning about the world, he came to understand that "at that time, everything could communicate and was connected, whole. Everything was human – animals, birds, plants, even large boulders" (Elliott et al. year 107). The meadows where he arrived were Garry oak ecosystems, which were eventually divided and allotted to WSÁNEĆ families and used for the harvest of camas and other bulbs for carbohydrate needs, as well as a place for treaty signings, and a place to bury their dead. Meadows were passed down matrilineally; they were one of the most valuable ecosystems in Coast Salish territory (Acker 2012, 48); it seems no accident that XÁLS' life began at SN̲ITȻEŁ.

Habitation of SṈITȻEŁ continued until approximately 500 years ago, when a Haida raid drove the WSÁNEĆ from the area (Arney 4). Eventually, the site was reclaimed as a winter village; in summers, the WSÁNEĆ would travel to neighbouring gulf islands to gather berries and attend the sockeye salmon run (4). In 1904, however, the WSÁNEĆ returned to find their village site "had been replaced by the buildings, machines and smokestacks of a developing cement quarry" constructed by John and Jennie Butchart, of the now world famous Butchart Gardens (4). The Butcharts constructed the factory – as with so much south island development of that period – on the inner bay's shoreline, directly on the top of the village site and its surrounding Garry oak meadows.

Night

In August, the stars in Tod Inlet invert and fall into the sea, reborn as millions of pulsing, gauzy meteors. Moon jellyfish, Aurelia Aurita, are bridal white medusae with a flower-petal patterned centre, into which their long cilia filter and gather plankton, mollusks and other medusa into their body for digestion. Moon jellyfish carpet the sea from July onward, multi-dimensional, bumping up against oars and hulls, stranding themselves on the shorelines, so thick that at night, with their glowing mounds kissing the surface, it seems you could walk on their round bodies out to the boats at anchor. The sea as a silver-stoned field.

Tod Inlet

The Tod Inlet cement factory quarried limestone and created cement from 1905 until the 1920s. To operate, the Butcharts hired foreign labourers, including over 200 Sikhs from the Punjab and Chinese, many of whom came after completion of the construction of the trans-Canada railway left them jobless (Gray nd). The whites working at the factory lived in company-built houses and brought their families with them, but the Indian and Chinese immigrants were restricted by the immigrant Head Tax of the early 1900s, and lived in "male-only" shantytown shacks they built themselves, with outdoor cooking and plumbing facilities which often led to sickness, death from exposure, and the spread of diseases such as tuberculosis and typhus (Gray, nd). Asian workers were not accounted for in census records of the time; archival work is just beginning to uncover the difficult history of the Sikh and Chinese workers, who were paid half as much as Butchart's white employees. Records mostly exist in a smattering of photographs and on the site itself, where artefacts – including glass jars, pottery, handmade shoes, ivory

toothbrushes and cooking implements – are still being uncovered today. After the limestone was mined from the area, the Butcharts dismantled the factory and turned their spent quarry into the famous sunken gardens that attract millions of visitors each year (Gray nd). Surviving Chinese and Sikh immigrants eventually brought their families over (once the Head Tax and the 1923 Exclusion Act were eliminated in 1947), and settled into Victoria's community (Gray Beyond NP). The surrounding lands were eventually sold to the Province of British Columbia for parkland in 1994. Restoration of Tod's native ecosystems, undertaken by SeaChange and other organizations, began in 2006 and continues to this day (Acker 2017; Arney 2014). Ironically, volunteers often use the old cement foundations of company houses to delineate plantings of red-flowering currant, ocean spray, Indian plum and snowberry. Near the shoreline, others are reconstructing a Garry oak meadow ecosystem.

Winter

The moon jellyfish persist past their usual summer period. I lean over the gunnel of the rowboat and their bodies stretch as deep as the winter water allows me to see – 25, sometimes 30 feet. "They are late," I say to Paul, of the 37 foot farrow cement sailboat moored next to mine. The Aliban has two deflated zodiacs listing at its side; a rain tarp hangs in the water amidships. "They're in this inlet all year round," he corrects me. How would I know? I remember them from Montague Harbour on Galiano Island, leaning over my father's zodiac and watching their constellations as we rowed from dock to anchor in summer's long twilight. These days, Tod Inlet, or rather, the small thumbprint that etches out a protected nook at its entrance, has only been my summer haunt; come winter, I abandon the boat to its community and the storms they endure and settle for anxiety that rises with the wind, and lowers with cursory checks from shore come morning.

Place

Place has a long history in the context of geography. Since the 1970s, when geographers began to give it particular attention, place has come to be understood as intricately tied to cultural and natural history; it is shaped by location, locale, emotional connection, meaning, "fields of care," and ideas of geographical identity (Cresswell 2008). What we build has an affect on a landscape, which in turn affects how we understand a place. Similarly, undifferentiated space becomes place through our experiential perspective, our understanding of "the unique

combination of physical and cultural attributes that [mark] one place off from another" (2009, 172).

Layers of history in a place affect not only its terra, flora and fauna – changing the contours of a bay, adding pilings, cement, ceramic and glass – but also its feel. Tod Inlet differs from entrance to inner sanctum; it was a difference I had not previously put a name to, but its feeling is something akin to nostalgia heightened by sorrow, a kind of melancholic discomfort that only occurs when one reaches the inner bay, either by walking the path through coastal Douglas-fir and deciduous forest from Wallace Drive, or by rowing up the inlet from its steep-sided entrance (when it's not frozen). It should feel like a remote, untouched place: there is no road access and you must walk or boat in. The steep reaches of the Partridge Hills hide the sun by mid-afternoon and the west half of the inlet is blue with shaded trees and dark basalt, creating a sheltered marine cirque. But to take the path to the inner bay is to tread on over 100 years of industry, on the memories of factory workers who succumbed, without their wives or families, to disease or exposure; it is to enter a place where loneliness feels predominant. Broken crockery pokes through the dirt; cement washing pools harbour ferns and moss; a cleat for steamships, its snub metal nose still intact, languishes at the water's edge; cement paths wobble and heave through the forest; next to the pier sit the fragments of rail lines used to move limestone; and over top of every relic, mounds of invasive blackberry, sweet pea, broom, ivy and spurge laurel creep backward up the path, greeting visitors as ardently as the native pink trilliums that appear in April in the first forested minutes after leaving Wallace Drive.

A long history of changing use in Tod Inlet affects how I think of it, how I feel in it and how it resides in both my memories and in the present. The inner bay confronts one flagrantly with the past, despite being within the confines of a park. The experience is very different from that of walking through the second growth forest found in the Partridge Hills, which fringe the middle of the inlet. Though they are also a post-industrial, logged landscape, in 50 years their flora has healed so thoroughly that they seem to eschew nostalgia. In the inner bay, one is instead witness to a past that will not dissolve. The peculiar constancy of cement takes the rich canvas of the world and repaints it, permanently. As an analogy, one might imagine finding Bachelard's house in a clearing – built, rather than residing in the imagination – and built, moreover, with little thought to nests, shells or doorways.

Water

If the inner bay's past is mostly silent, the outer bay's vanishing culture isn't going quietly. Accompanying it are the rumble of generators, the bleat of a goat, kept with collar and lifejacket on the narrow deck of a rotting motor-cruiser, and the languid conversations held by mostly men in tenders and zodiacs, sailboats and barges. Security guards, marine mechanics, disability pensioners, farmers from Quebec, hermits: all have stories, all depend on the reliable fresh water cascading from the Partridge Hills. Many consider my dinghy a community vessel, which means that it isn't always in its place, but that when its painter is cut by irate landowners who dislike the liveaboard community, someone always rescues it as it drifts out into the bay.

Liveaboards

Fred's truck is at the end of the lane when I arrive, late in January. Last night the winds gusted to 90km/h and this morning, everyone is checking their boat, or helping someone whose vessel has dragged. A spring tide has risen to the earthen banks that ring the sand and rock shoreline; the bay's collection of abandoned and shore-tied dinghies are floating, pulling at their tethers, and mine is in nearly two feet of water. I fit the oars, row out and check the sights on Bird. It's hard to tell if she has moved. The cement mooring weights, visible in 30 feet of clear winter water, have stretched into an elongated triangle; their chains stretch away from the southeast wind funnel of Tod Inlet's reaches. My position between neighbouring boats, however, is about the same; if I've dragged, we've all dragged. On the south side of the bay a metal sheathed boathouse has been blown 300 metres and lies within the ecological no anchor zone, marked by yellow and white buoys. Fred, in his red and white barge with overhanging aft cabin and rectangular front ramp, guns his engine on the other side of the bay, pushing a trio of boats back into place, dragging their 5000 pound mooring across the ocean floor, idling while they re-secure the stern-tie shoreline. "Not so fucking far," he shouts, as they clamber over rocks and under overhanging arbutus, "Fuck, don't you understand where you need to be?" Three weeks ago, he dropped my new mooring with the same mixture of big-hearted aggression, complaining the whole way, then offering hot chocolate after the job was done. Will, the owner of the trio of boats, looks up from shore and waves. He's in sweatpants and a parka. His hat is askew. He laughs as my dog leaps off the bow to chase a harbour seal.

Flow

Tod Inlet is salt water, but it is fed significantly in winter by Heal, Durrance and Wray Creeks, as well as by smaller streams from the Partridge Hills. The three creeks feed first into Tod Creek, which itself helps to drain both Maltby and Durrance Lakes, and then into the inner bay of the inlet. There are 14 subdrainage areas in the Tod Creek watershed, including Maltby, Spotts, Osbourne, Wallace, Holt, Fraser, Wray and Killarney, names of European settlers to the area (Friends nd). Almost none of the streams or areas bear First Nations names on settler maps. The streams that cascade from the hills into the outer bay are clear and clean; armed with droppers of iodine, the liveaboard community uses them as a drinking water source. The creeks that empty into the inner bay, however, are in various states of decline, thanks to 150 years of channelling, farming, industry, residential septic contamination and changes to drainage in Tod Flats, a set of seasonally flooding fields southeast of the Inlet. Tod Creek used to support a chum salmon run before European colonization (Friends nd). Stories contributed by the University of Victoria's community mapping project for Saanich Inlet tell of 65 pound salmon, caught during Cowichan Bay's annual derby, and catches of "27 big salmon in a day" off Willis Point (Coastal nd); most of the stories, including Jen Elliot's of spearing herring and dogfish in the upper reaches of Tod Inlet, are from the 1960s or before (Elliot NP). No one now seems to talk of return of the salmon, though protection societies for Tod Inlet itself, and for many of its feeding creeks, have outlined restoration plans that include the rewilding of Tod Creek Flats, protection of Killarney Creek from nearby Hartland Landfill leachate and the reintroduction of trout (Friends nd).

Land-based development has changed the water courses; water-centred life has its own impacts. At its entrance, Tod is ringed with boats, as though festooned by the detritus of a BC more of Spit Delaney's era than of today's (Hodgins 2011). Tighter federal regulations, implemented over recent decades, limit or prohibit the discharge of marine heads (toilets that empty with a through-hull into the water) (Ministry nd) but many, myself included, don't follow the rules. Organizations like the Saanich Inlet Protection Society, SeaChange and Saanich Inlet Shorekeepers are lobbying for changes to foreshore and anchoring regulations, which would allow local government to begin enforcing maximum anchoring times, restrict mooring installations, enforce holding tank regulations and prevent boaters from living aboard even if regulations are followed. It is this last point that has been particularly contentious; as property

values rise, new, wealthier owners are less inclined to appreciate a bay full of boats in various states of upkeep. Occasionally, a vessel will break free of its mooring and drift (as mine did last fall) or sink under the weight of a heavy snow. Most vessels are occupied, however, by a community that has chosen a simpler lifestyle, hauling water and fuel, driving to work in vehicles parked in increasingly rare unrestricted parking areas, or collecting disability and talking to visitors of the old days, days that harken back to Woodsmen of the West, to Relic, in The Beachcombers, or to the myriad characters I grew up with on the docks and anchorages of the Inside Passage. They smell like diesel, smoke, oil, the damp – some of the most comforting smells in the world. They are an eye in the cove, keeping watch on adjacent vessels; they are a scourge on the landscape. They are independent, amateur naturalists, who can tell you exactly how many kingfishers nested last summer; they are polluters and shiftless thieves. In the entrance to Tod Inlet, Orlando and Duke Senior's camaraderie continues; the sea is our last Arden.

Liveaboard voices

Paul: Yes, marine engineer, navigator for over 30 years. Soon as I fix the engine, do a little work on the cabin top, I'm doing the offshore passage, going south. God damn coastguard, they come on my boat I just lift up the shotgun, smile and ask them how they'd like a lead letter, delivered quick. Same with marine shops that don't do like they should, same with bad rum, bad beer, those characters down the way: boaters that call themselves mariners. What are you doing there? That line not coming loose? Stuck? You'll want a rope wrench for that. What they call a knife on the sea.

Fred: Paul's a jackass. Marine engineer? He told you that? A hobo, living on a zinc-less hulk that fouls my anchor chain. Look at the rust stains, the buckets of bolts, the hull's a fucking pottery teapot. Idiot. Yah, I helped him during the storm. They all call me in the middle of the night because I have the barge; I don't come 'til morning but it makes them feel better, while they're careening all over the harbour. People who live on boats that call themselves mariners. Huh.

Mike: We came free around midnight, during Friday's storm, god it tunnels out the inlet like a banshee. Spent the whole night drifting, fending all three boats off whatever we were running into – we even hit the ferry dock. Yah, all the way on the other side. I called Fred round

2am. He's just towed the mooring back in. We're okay now. Shore line was what did it – wasn't secure enough. Under a rock now. Should be fine. We need to get rid of that third boat – the sailboat is too much weight. Beautiful day today. That dog of yours always swim that well?

Rowing

A decade ago, when we first got the boat, I bought a fiberglass tender from a 14 year-old boy who used it with an electric motor to fish with on Spectacle lake. It leaked immediately, but slowly, and a sponge in the bottom kept our feet dry. We went rowing one evening soon after with a pair of curved, cedar 10 foot oars my friend Jim, the pirate, gave me. He never told me where he found them; I never asked. We rowed up the inlet in August's blue, long-lasting dusk. The trees were sapphire, the boat's inner hull was pale, the surface of the sea, as we glided in with the rising tide, was robin's egg and raven's wing. A kilometre in, talking of books or the movements of the boat or something amusing someone had said, I looked up from the pull and realized we were mid journey – there was no view of the inner bay, no glimpse of the outer. Above us loomed the hills we lived in, emerald second-growth, right to the water's edge. The gardens were invisible behind a fringe of trees. Saturday night fireworks had ended for the season and no other boats jostled for room. There was nothing visible that had been built. There was no memory and no unraveling future. We had a bottle of wine and a camera and all the photos are blurred and ecstatic.

Landscape and dwelling

The pinnacle moment to examine when attempting to understand Tod Inlet/SṈITȻEŁ may be that 1904 Fall, when the WSÁNEĆ returned from their summer salmon grounds (likely scattered throughout the Gulf Islands or even as far as the mouth of the Fraser River) to find their village gone, buried under pilings, railway tracks, a multi-story factory, and its accompanying shacks, houses, and sundry buildings. Tim Ingold, in *The Perception of the Environment*, argues that "telling a story is not like weaving a tapestry to cover up the world… Far from dressing up a plain reality with layers of metaphor, or representing it, map-like, in the imagination, songs, stories and designs serve to conduct the attention of performers into the world" (Ingold 2011, 56). But moving into SṈITȻEŁ's inner reaches meant not a conversation but a takeover by Tod Inlet's new owners, a covering up of the old with no regard for its stories or songs. The loss of a landscape, a winter village, a place that had sustained thousands of years of cultural history, not

only left a mark on the culture and memory of WSÁNEĆ peoples. The absence of stories, and the tangled, difficult stories of displacement and temporality that followed, disrupted what geographer John Wylie describes as the life that is embedded "within lived-through landscapes" (Wylie 2012, 8). SȽITȻEŁ became the site of a present absence, permanently marked in concrete by loss. Worse, the cover-up was accomplished using men from two additional severed cultures – Chinese and Indian workers separated from their families, lives and stories. The acute but dissipated sadness that is particularly palpable at the head of Tod Inlet is the result of that severing of performers from their worlds, of the lifeline that is not just a way-finding but a "wayfaring" a "world-composing" (2012, 9). An interruption of this composition stops the song or story mid-tale, leaving the unsung to linger in the air as the pilings from the factory still stand in the bay.

Complicating this story is the second, also disappearing history of Tod's entrance's community, a ramshackle group of people like that of Mike, in M. Wylie Blanchet's narrative *The Curve of Time*, who buys or pre-empts "wild little Melanie Cove" in order to "'Go off somewhere by [himself] to think it out'" (Blanchet 2011, 66). These days, Desolation Sound's Melanie Cove is a bustling destination for Canadian and American mega-yachts owners, as Brentwood Bay has become a retirement mecca where multi-million dollar, oversized houses are quickly replacing turn of the century cottages; every bay now has a quantifiable resource value. Willis Point only gained two-wheel-drive access in the 1970s; the coast as hideout or as an end of the world "Deloume Road" refuge is fading (Hooton 2010), but its past is recent and the remnants remain. We can place purple martin swallow boxes on the pilings of the inner bay, legislate an end to liveaboards, or even invite WSÁNEĆ peoples to collaborate on ideas for the restoration of SȽITȻEŁ. This will protect a created ideal of the present; a home for the past and its displacements has not yet been found or acknowledged.

Conclusion

This dissertation engages with poetry and geography in a space between genres which Magrane (2017) has referred to as an ecotone (in ecology, the word refers to the liminal space between two different ecosystems – Douglas-fir forest and Garry oak meadow, for example) where a liminal space contains elements of both but can be categorized as neither. I see geopoetics as the ecotone between poetry and geography. I have argued that geopoetics is a form of attendance: a way of looking and seeing or otherwise sensually apprehending the world; a manner of opening oneself to experience; an attention to emotion and affect that goes beyond simple observation or quantification. I have defined my sense of geopoetics and poetry (Chapter 1), used geopoetics-as-practice (Chapter 4) as a tool to point toward new understandings at the threshold between poetry and prose (Chapters 3 and 5) and as scholarship to clarify theory in NRT (Chapter 2).

Geopoetics, as I explored it in this dissertation, is also an act that can serve to reimagine the politics of the Anthropocene and provide a way to engage in what Julian Hoffman calls "active hope" in the face of continued destruction of wild places on earth (Robb & Hoffman 2019). Geopoetics as active hope is a dynamic turning toward alternate ways of imagining the world – those that take a stance against ends-serving capitalism, consumption and destruction – either through their invitation for a polyphony of voices and experiences, or through creation of an alternative imagining of the world. As an example, I was offered a writing residency conceived by Sarah and Brian McLoughlin and their daughter, Margo, which takes place in their former summer cottage in Black Creek, on Vancouver Island. The McLoughlins donated their 11 acre waterfront property to the District of Courtney in the 1990s. In 2016, Margo began offering the cottage as a space for writers to inhabit for a month while working on new projects. I was awarded a month in the summer of 2019, during which I completed a draft of this dissertation and began a new book of poems. In this case, geopoetics as political act involved the belief by a surrounding community that poetry matters, the imagining by a regional district that a cottage on their property can be put to such a use, and the attention of the writer herself, who may find herself filling the 23 hours of the day not dedicated to the physical writing of a poem with watching a lone elephant seal snort and dive on its travels along the water's edge, or notice a

kestrel's hovering, or the improved landing skills of a young eagle, or the quality of silence at midday in August as smoke drifts south from Russian wildfires over the coast mountains. None of this achieves anything, as Teare has commented of rhetoric and activism in the face of "environmental destruction sanctioned by our most basic symbolic systems" (Teare nd). But the uselessness of poetry, as Lilburn (2017) understands it, is also its great strength. Geopoetics presents an opportunity for geography to turn fully to an attendance of place not with the primary goal of documentation, quantification or theorizing, but as a way of bearing witness, of directing active hope toward the preservation of the world, and of legitimizing evocative language and emotional response to that which we are apprehending (see de Leeuw 2019 for a similar argument). Eric Magrane (2020) writes that poems are "signposts on the path out of disaster"; yet it isn't just the poems themselves that are the signposts – it's the act of believing in, supporting, and giving time to the expansive waiting that poems necessarily engender. Attendance is active but its production time is small; most of the time spent in a posture of attendance looks like idleness or unproductivity. It is not.

As geography provides room for the arts, so the arts can contribute more to the importance of place and formation of landscape – interpretations of the world that make us human, that make us thinking, and feeling, beings. Creative geographies can decentre and dislodge long reinforced habits of objectivism and positivism, allowing for multiple knowledges, subjective understandings, closer interchange between body and world. Geopoetics is well-placed to do this work, linking ideas with other fields both within and outside of geography and encouraging the kind of intra and interdisciplinary work of attendance that needs to occur if our species is to survive.

Where do we go from here?

A dissertation is necessarily a finely directed exploration. It cannot do "all the things" (Brosh 2010). Nor should it. I have presented a particular politics and a particular set of writers and this work will serve, hopefully, as only one of many future positions and sets of writers explored through geopoetics work. Ultimately, my selection of Zwicky, McKay and Lilburn was based on their philosophies of poetics, their position in Canadian letters (it would be an error of omission to fail to address their work within a dissertation on geopoetics and wilderness writers when the field itself is so nascent), and my sense of how I might add to geopoetics through an

examination of work that has been extremely influential on my own practice as a West Coast nature poet. I selected the three writers from the "Thinking and Singing" poets who work not just in poetry but in prose (including prose on poetry and poetics as well as philosophy on wilderness). All three devote considerable attention to geographical concepts – of place, space, landscape – and attendance. Their exploration of lyric and metaphor as related to the concept of wilderness is particularly useful, and unique in Canadian letters. They query both their art and the ways in which their art can surpass both genre and disciplinary boundaries. Bringing these poets in particular into geographic scholarship has hopefully shown how their theories contribute to new geographical knowledge in geopoetics, and also allows this work to contribute to nonrepresentational theory, feminist geography and post-human geography. Their ideas – on lyric versus domestic understandings, on explorations of humans' attachments to place and of emotional experience in place, and on a possible way forward toward a decolonized way of living in the world – demand attention within geography.

Poets referenced in this dissertation are not meant to be, in any way, a comprehensive list of authors who have looked at metaphor and place. There are other Canadian poets (Christian Bok, Carmine, Michael Lista, Starnino, Zach Wells, for example) whose interests are predominantly urban landscapes, and whose work tends toward the masculine and intellectually severe (Wunker, 2013). Several have been critical in the past of work which focuses on landscape and place, and for its supposed rehashings of the Canadian wilderness trope (Starnino, 2007) or its critique of positive reviews by poets who just *happen* to use wilderness or landscape as one of their primary subjects (Cran, 2013). My query, however, has centred around how to live in a world of ecological and geographical diversity, a topic integral to me as a West Coast poet, and uses the work of three poet-scholars who have significantly contributed to this canon.

Shane Rhodes has argued (in conversation with Lilburn (2012)) that, as North Americans, we should be looking to Indigenous philosophies and stories for the lessons they contain instead of continental writers, from whom we are divided by distance and history. This, too, has been problematic in the past (see Bringhurst's Haida myths, Andy Suknaski's poetry or Duncan Campbell Scott's work for appropriating use of Indigenous materials). Lilburn is cautious about discarding settler history in favour of a culture's stories about which settlers ultimately know little. Speaking from his own background as a European settler, he claims his heritage; the myths and philosophies of the Greeks and the Enlightenment are not so far off: "they are us" (Lilburn

2017, 192). I concur with Rhodes that attention to Indigenous voices is paramount, and especially for future work in geopoetics. Sarah de Leeuw (2017) argues for the inclusion of writers of colour, queer writers and marginalized voices when examining how poetics might contribute to a radical "re/configuring" of geography (306). In the end, both these arguments are valid. In the interests of limiting the scope of research, this dissertation has focused on three Canadian poets whose intertwined contributions to the relationship between people and land have, in Canada, arguably profoundly impacted the field of contemporary nature poetry; without examination of these writers, the field of Canadian geopoetics would be overlooking keystone works. Future research possibilities in this area are rich, however, and I now turn to lines of inquiry which can continue to enrich geopoetics and its contributions to geohumanities and environmental humanities.

Nature poetry 2.0

Much work remains to be done in the area of nature writing and its contributions to geopoetics. I focus on Zwicky, McKay and Lilburn's prose works. Their poetry also serves as important examples of writing which works "to not tell, to un-tell, or to break the traditions of telling so as to narrate and undertake geo-graphing in radically and new critical ways" (de Leeuw 2017). Cresswell (2015) has begun this exploration through his recent doctoral work in poetry, "Topopoetics," which includes a chapter on McKay's *Strike/Slip* (2006) but exploration has not yet been attempted within geography. Lilburn's retelling of Louis Riel's story through an operatic long poem meant, as he has said, to be sung challenges the single-voiced lyric and work designed to be received primarily on the page. McKay's poems in *Another Gravity* (2000) break down under stress and grief into what he terms materiél, the fragments, supplies or apparatus used in war. His work, stretching to an un-metaphor'd scream, eschews traditional tropes and figurative language of poetry to rage against what words cannot do (i.e., prevent atrocity, bring a loved one back, solve the climate crisis).

There are other Canadian settler poets concentrating on the relationship to the natural world, examining coastal, northern and eastern landscapes (Bird 2019; Blythe 2015; Bowling 2006; Bringhurst 2006; Houle 2019; Johnson 2015; Kidd 2019; Martens 2014; Nilsen 2017; Siebert 2010; Simmers 2021). There is great potential for these poets (and others) to add to geography's understanding of place. Their voices should be invited into the conversation. I cite Canadian poets in particular because I have noticed the tendency in recent work by some of the

discipline's forerunners (Cresswell 2014; de Leeuw 2017; Magrane 2017, 2020) to primarily cite work by US and UK writers and scholars. Canadian letters has a lauded history of work on wilderness poetics and poetry. There is an opportunity for this work to encounter other disciplines with a force that has been long cultivated within ecopoetics and literature.

Voices & forms

Magrane (2017) examines four American Indigenous women poets who contribute to climate narratives and geopoetics. Further focus on Indigenous voices is paramount to inclusive and meaningful work within this sub-discipline. Canadian Indigenous poets' voices are growing in strength and number. Jordan Abel, Billy-Ray Belcourt, Thomas King, Philip Lee Maracle, Philip Kevin Paul, Waubgeshig Rice, Janet Rogers, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Joshua Whitehead are but a handful of many Indigenous writers whose work should be brought into geography as a mapping of place and experience by those whose voices have been historically silenced and marginalized.

Urban poetics and poetry (and other poetic forms such as landscape art and graffiti) that represent diversity in voice, in culture, in location and in format (on and off the page) provide other possible directions for work which goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. Urban art is particularly important during the climate crisis; over half the world's population now lives in urban areas (UN 2018); geopoetics in the Anthropocene will therefore need the contribution of creative practitioners who explore life in urban areas. These writers can speak to sustainability, place-making and emotion as it relates to the realm in which most humans will live in the future. There are interesting opportunities to make cities and the lives of their inhabitants (humans and otherwise) better, through learning how creative and emotional means can enrich urban life, provide alternative perspectives, and offer new solutions to the pedestrian problems of crowding, transportation, place-making and work. For examples, see the film biography of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's work, *Megalodemocrat*, in which he "influences an architecture in public place" through digital landscape art (National Gallery of Singapore, 2018) or Soledad Sevilla's visual work on abandoned urban landscapes (Sevilla 2019), which investigates what happens when nature retakes an industrial area.

The poets examined in this dissertation base their work on the page. But there are writers who are radically changing the way the page is used in their own work, in order to deconstruct colonial histories and the unspeakability of many of colonialism's violent acts through

deconstruction of the written word and the page itself (see Abel, 2016; Philip, 2008). Work on the creative tools of art, including understandings of lyric thought and metaphor (including metaphor's failures and successes) can happen off the white page, away from traditional narratives, or outside of the boundaries scribed by white, European literature. For example, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014) points to spoken and recorded story as a form of creative work which can subvert academia's reliance on the white page. Future work in geopoetics can look to storytellers, spoken word artists, and landscape artists who tell story through writing on the land itself. The "radical possibilities of geopoetics" (de Leeuw & Magrane 2019) lend themselves to spectacularly diverse voices, feelings, thoughts and silences.

Geopoetics can ultimately serve as an ideal place to make connections between various sub-disciplines within geography. In this dissertation, I have demonstrated the potential for geopoetics to address the affect/emotion divide, to respond to critical geography's cautions against universal emotion or experience, and to serve as a form of attendance. More work is needed on the relation between emotions and affect in the realm of landscape and place. Geopoetics also has the potential to further post-humanism and new materialism, and in particular, the vitality and agency of things in the world, and the places of connection that exist between geopoetics and vital materialisms, with its striving for ethical engagement with the entangled matter of the world. Metaphor, again, seems to me an ideal tool to enliven objects, to unseat the assumptions inherent in animate and inanimate categories, and to identify both the uniqueness of and the affinities between genres, fields, cultural groups, landscapes and even species.

Landscape art & field journaling

Creative work in visual art (and particularly landscape-based visual art) has much to contribute to the conversations currently underway on the subject of landscape, and its related terms of perspective, absence and presence, as seen in the work of Wylie (2016, 2017). Artists' contributions can provide a key perspective on the distancing (and connecting) aspects of perspective-based landscape work. Landscape-based visual artists such as Marlene Creates and Peter Von Tiesenhausen in Canada as well as Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy in Britain have made extensive explorations of what it is to be in a landscape, how to place oneself in it, and what the relationship between landscape and artist yields. These are fruitful areas for future work in geopoetics, because writing on the land is another form of geopoetics, or "earth-making"

(Magrane 2017, 9).

Field journaling is another vein of creative attachment to place that is just beginning to be explored as a method of uniting one's tools with one's ability to care (Baldwin 2018). Field journaling offers the opportunity to assuage the "extinction of experience" (Baldwin 2018, 77) that faces our civilization as it advances further and further into the technological age, and severs its connections with much of the natural world. In a class I redesigned and taught in 2017 and have taught twice since (GEOG 391: Landscapes of the Heart) as well as my Community Mapping class, field journaling comprises a primary element in the course assignments. Students are taught how to attend to and connect with place and landscape, using small exercises in perceiving and translating the world, the tool of a field journal and the employment of various drawing, water colour and writing techniques. Field journaling itself could be applied as a technique and practice in the geohumanities (and, indeed, Harriet (2015) has touched on this potential), thereby reinvigorating the creation of a field journal not as a tool of observation, conquest or categorization but one of resonant, experiential creation (Baldwin 2018; Cosgrove 1999).

Sorrow

In recent years, August on the coast (and in many other parts of BC and Alberta) has been a month lived under the pall of smoke, which comes mainly from BC's forest fires. These fires make evident the changes occurring in ecosystems across the province. In summer 2018 and 2019, fires were intense. In 2021, this trend continues, In 2018, I attended the Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts as a performer, reading with poets Yvonne Blomer and Philip Kevin Paul, from the anthology, *Refugium*, that I mention in Chapter 2: a collection of poetry on the disasters facing the Pacific Ocean and its species. The smoke was so thick that we couldn't see the surrounding hills in Sechelt. Writers coughed as they read. I woke one night, after an evening of long conversations between Kevin and his partner, Yvonne and my partner, about colonialism, about the idea of home, about the losses that the WSÁNEĆ Nations (on the Saanich Peninsula of Vancouver Island) have collectively endured. I thought about the dry ocean spray (also known as KÁ,TEŁĆ in SENĆOŦEN) on my walk to campus, how almost none of my first year geography students can identify the plant, let alone tell me that it was used for crafting fishing spears and needles, due to its dense, metal-strong boughs. I thought about the continued criticism my front yard garners from surrounding neighbours – it is planted with native species and is thus wild-

looking; they seem to prefer an antiseptic, colonially-imposed vision of gardening. We are still living four feet above the ground, having never landed on the earth (Lilburn 1999). I thought of the orca whale from the Salish Sea J-Pod, who carried her baby with her for 17 days after its death, and the rest of her pod, which we saw on our trip over to the Sunshine Coast, the group bisected by a whale-watching boat. A wave of emotion hit me, a truck of sorrow. I was inundated under it. The feeling was akin to lines from Karen Solie:

> An inaudible catastrophic orchestra
> is tuning, we feel it in the air
> impelled before it, as a pressure
> on the brain. (2015, 40)

My sorrow could not easily be assuaged, and it still can't. I write this during a 40 degrees Celcius heatwave on the coast in June 2021. It has broken all existing records in BC and in the country, the town, Lytton, with the highest temperature burnt to the ground in a resulting forest fire. It is becoming obvious that not only are we living at the end of an era, but we show no discernible ability to improve not just our actions but our philosophy toward the planet upon which we live. I'm not the only one writing about this sorrow (see de Leeuw 2017c; Lilburn 2016 & 2017; Sinclair 2017; Paul 2018; Zwicky 2011a; Zwicky & Bringhurst 2018). This state, however, which Lilburn calls "an amalgam of at least shocked astonishment, unparalleled dismay and an inability to find durable ground for ontological optimism," needs to be explored more thoroughly in both geopoetics and geography (Lilburn 2016, 6). Some have begun this work (see Magrane 2017; Bristow 2015; and to some extent, Wylie 2017), but more is needed. For, exactly when we are facing an ecological crisis that "exhausts the powers of human language and emotion," we need geographers and artists to begin to chart the edges of this sorrow, and the ways in which it might teach us something, or even catch us up before it is absolutely too late (Lilburn 2016, 5).

One of the ways in which this work of dwelling in and taking account of sorrow might be done is again through the work of metaphor. Recent work on metaphor within geography (see Springer 2017) has touched on its power to open academic writing to the more nuanced and intuitive understandings that metaphorical language can allow, and on its communicative power when engaging members of the public on issues related to climate change and the Anthropocene (see Magrane 2017). But comprehensive scholarship within geography on what metaphoric language and metaphor itself can contribute to geopoetics and geography is still incomplete.

Final thoughts

Doing work in geopoetics is not a matter of learning a new language, but of realizing that geography's own languages are already being spoken by another discipline. As Magrane quotes Retallack, poetry is "the linguistic laboratory and playground of the improbable" (2020, 11). This experimentation and play excels in interacting with other disciplines. It is here that critical geographers (and artists) can concentrate future efforts – giving art the time and space to add to geography not only from within the discipline or from within the humanities, but from a new space that recognizes what art (and particularly poetics) *has already said*, throughout history, on the subject of how to live in the world. Above all, the most exciting role at this moment in time is perhaps that of the artist, who can stand and listen and attend and then point, as metaphor points, to the seemingly incongruous but spectacularly *sensible* connections between these fields.

Ultimately, I suspect that a geopoetics of attendance is also a geography of love. Akin to Wylie's (2015, 2018) lean toward landscape, Zwicky's (2003) temporality of lyric, Lilburn's (1999, 2016) foregrounding of sorrow, and McKay's (2001) attendance to the wilderness in all things, geopoetics is a geography that cranes toward its subject, refusing the separation of emotion from intellect, art from scholarship, human from nature. Geopoetics can encompass and address the strangeness of coming in contact with another, as well as the utter unknowability of the other. For a long time, I thought of this strangeness in terms of dualisms. There was me and there was the other – me and wilderness, me and another human or another species, my understanding and the thing I could not reach. But binaries create uncrossable barriers. Better, I have realized, to focus on the ability to apprehend that strangeness, and to face it, to acknowledge it and not turn away. Geopoetics is an attendance to that which is strange. It is a geography of love in its most strident form. Poets cannot look without falling in love. And I argue that anyone writing on the earth – *geo-graphy* – comes in contact with this same ardor, itself a kind of geo-poesis: earth-cultivating, or earth-making. One makes connections with the earth, even as one's love for it makes one aware of the distance from others that all beings share.

I end with a poem as illustration of this love, in order that this dissertation keep its intent to use practice as scholarship.

Metier

Let that one morning all displacement ships away.
A wavering left – vestige of forest, sweet plain
where water was. Every city crack distinct as foreign
script, the mind collects but does not alter, combusts
into crowds, alleys to the interior plaza,
an inappellable expression
of startle. White pages mobile like winter swans –
can I say it? I love this more than anything,
anyone: to watch, a failure,
as the beautiful, uncaught line swings
in wide circles around the dusk-lit crane.

As below, the smaller oaks, their brown sails filling,
drift the meadow like old men – this bench, that,
wherever the pretty ones pass them by.

(Acker 2012, 57)

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