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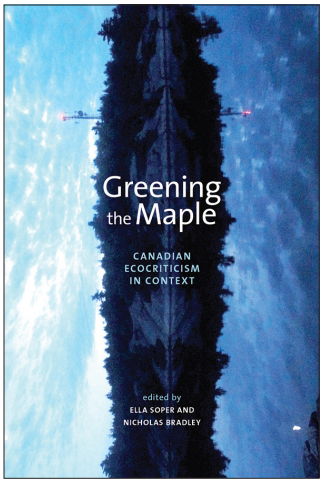

GREENING THE MAPLE:
CANADIAN ECOCRITICISM IN CONTEXT
edited by Ella Soper and Nicholas Bradley

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Afterword: Ecocritical Futures

Ella Soper and Nicholas Bradley

This book has traced a genealogy of ecocritical approaches to Canadian literature. One of its defining premises has been that the current state of the field – vibrant and in flux – owes a considerable debt to scholarly investigations that anticipated ecocriticism proper and to inaugurating ecocritical analyses and explorations. The present, in short, is tightly linked to the past, even as the breadth, diversity, and theoretical sophistication of contemporary environmental criticism throw into relief the tentative character of some of the preliminary forays included herein. But what does the future look like for ecocriticism and Canadian literary studies? Making predictions about emerging critical trends is liable to make the predictor soon look naïve or simply wrong: in addition to the inherent difficulty of forecasting, the speed with which ecocriticism has transformed itself, and continues to do so, threatens to render any speculation almost immediately out of date. This afterword nonetheless offers a brief set of suggestions (or proposals) for ecocritical futures. The aim is not to be programmatic, but rather to begin the task of looking ahead prompted by the necessarily (and intentionally) retrospective outlook of *Greening the Maple*.

As the chapters in this collection amply demonstrate, certain genres, authors, and works have lent themselves repeatedly to ecocritical examination. New trajectories will doubtless emerge as the range of subjects expands further. The works of many notable Canadian authors, of the past and the present, have yet to be brought into the ecocritical fold. This is especially true of diasporic writing, which tends – to risk a gross generalization – not to rely on the familiar literary tropes of Canadian wilderness. That the animal story, the nature lyric, and the meditative essay have been recurring subjects of ecocritical analysis is no surprise, but conclusions about Canadian literature will surely be altered as a wider range of genres and modes receives sustained scrutiny. These include traditional literary genres to which ecocriticism has only belatedly turned, such as drama and children's literature, as well as emerging and metamorphosing forms, from experimental poetry to graphic narratives to literature shaped by and read on electronic platforms. More significant still, perhaps, are the opportunities afforded by an environmental criticism that does not restrict itself to literary studies but instead places literary works in conversation with other forms of cultural production and expression. Although interdisciplinarity has commonly been understood as a mandate of ecocriticism, scholars have, more often than not, worked within disciplinary boundaries. To make this observation is not to suggest individual failings; rather, it is to note the tremendous possibilities that remain for innovative forms of multidisciplinary inquiry into environments and cultures. The future of literary ecocriticism may well lie, at least to some degree, in a shift away from a strictly literary focus – although literary works will continue to be illuminated by now-standard methods and ideas.

In its conceptualization of Canadian literature, ecocriticism has room to become increasingly multicultural and multilingual, informed by and respectful of indigenous languages and epistemologies, and mindful of overlapping categories of identity and cultural affiliation. It can also become engaged with other transformations in the humanities. Community-based environmental initiatives, collaborative projects, and digital tools and techniques, to name only a few examples, will expand

the range of practices associated with ecocriticism, even as the conventional (and necessary) practices of interpretation and commentary flourish. Environmental criticism in coming years – interdisciplinary, politically engaged, theoretically robust, scientifically rigorous, sensitive to textual nuance, and perhaps also still attuned to the pleasure and hopefulness that environmental literature can provide – will certainly assume many shapes and have many aspirations. Our ambition in this volume has been to assert that ecocriticism's past affects its present, and that the shifting present configures perspectives on the achievements and limitations of the beginnings of the endeavour. The chapters in this anthology may be used as an introduction to Canadianist ecocriticism, but as the field develops, the genealogy that they trace will need to be revisited, revised, and supplemented.

The future of Canadianist ecocriticism will also be shaped by changes – often unhappy ones, in all probability – to physical environments. In the past decades, environmentally oriented studies of literary works have succeeded in demonstrating the persistence of writers' desire to engage, whether in celebration or in lament, the places in which they find themselves. This literary-historical constant, however, is perpetually inflected by environmental change. The anthropogenic causes of massive environmental disruptions, moreover, ensure that ecocriticism will have reason to retain its political significance and to preserve its transgressive edge. Environmental criticism, broadly understood, insists upon the central place of environmental concerns in the academic study of culture; in its public orientation, which includes teaching, ecocriticism claims a place in civic discourse for interpretation and theorization. One of the principles on which ecocriticism was initially based – that teaching and scholarship could not, in a time of ecological crisis, ignore the cultural dimensions of such crises and of responses to them – is still acutely relevant today.

In assembling the essays, old and new, that constitute *Greening the Maple*, we have sought to focus attention anew on significant, distinctive, and provocative moments in the history of environmental inquiries into Canadian literature and to illustrate the manifold ways in which

Canadian writing, for so long associated with a nature variously malevolent and benevolent, has reflected and disseminated beliefs and attitudes toward the non-human world. If there remains room in this critical discussion, as we have suggested here, for new directions, then we hope that the book will contribute by shedding light on the interrelations of Canadian literature and environments and by providing readers with a plethora of germinative ideas. Indeed we hope that the insights of the studies contained in this book, as well as the connections made evident by their juxtaposition, will expand and invigorate the study of environments and cultures in Canada.

Appendix: Taking Flight: From Little Grey Birds to *The Goose*

Lisa Szabo-Jones

In June 2005, at the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) Biennial Conference in Eugene, Oregon, a group of Canadians initiated events that would lead to the eventual formation of the Association for Literature, Environment, and Culture in Canada (ALECC) and the creation of its online newsletter, *The Goose*, which has since evolved into the association's journal.[1] At that time, ASLE had formal and informal affiliates in Korea, Japan, Europe, Great Britain, India, and Australia and New Zealand; Canadians were obliged to join the American umbrella organization.[2] Canada, because of its geographical proximity to the United States, tends to be seen to have cultural practices similar to those of its southern neighbour. Many Canadians present at the Eugene conference questioned the assumption of cross-border commonality. The creation of a Canadian chapter of ASLE transpired from a conviction that a distinctly Canadian ecocritical discourse exists, and that forming an ASLE-affiliated group would heighten the profile of

Canadian literature-and-environment studies within a predominantly American ecocritical world, as well as within Canadian literary and cultural studies.[3] *The Goose*, with its emphasis on regional specificity and the promotion of Canadian literature, arts, and environments, serves as a forum to counter broad cultural assumptions about North America; the publication's open-access, online medium (effectively a "placeless" virtual world) allows it to extend to wider global affiliations. *The Goose* may thus be viewed as simultaneously specialized in its primarily Canadian emphasis and grass-roots origin and cosmopolitan in its coverage of international material and its potentially global reach.[4]

This discussion is not meant as an exercise in finger-pointing; rather, my intention is to demonstrate how a Canadian ecocritical community flocked together and took flight, and how *The Goose* emerged from that formation. *The Goose* and ALECC have grown not out of a reaction to a devaluation of Canadian environmental literature, but as a response to oversight, an apparent cultural myopia rooted too deeply in the bounds of place-based research. Canadian critic W. H. New claims that people settled in their own place often seek and find meaning within that place, often excluding or marginalizing that which lives, thrives, and grows beyond the boundaries of their place.[5] As New further contends in "Writing Here," "people in place seek out meaning in the world they want to value; they attach relevance to what they see and give priority to: the things, the persons, actions, images that appear to give their lives stability."[6] ASLE's membership has a large American contingent: many scholars whose study and writing find meaning and value in local places that geographically abut but generally exclude Canadian referents. If bioregion, ecology, and watersheds are some of the common ecocritical tropes used to undermine the insularity of political boundaries while simultaneously attending to the local, these same tropes can also be limiting: the intersections of political, cultural, and social differences make porous those same ecological, bioregional, and watershed boundaries. Without local re-envisioning such as New suggests, often that which exists on and beyond the local's periphery loses focus, becomes overlooked to the extent that dominant versions of place inevitably exclude or marginalize other

versions of place. As a result, those marginalized reject these versions of place for alternative imaginings – they reorient priorities and reassert relevance, so that "'writing here,' in this context, turns from a study of literature-in-location to a study of the workings of a discourse."[7] New's observation could apply to the frequent American marginalization of Canadian conceptions of local, national, and global affiliations within ecocritical discourse. In a community that attends to ecosystems and ecological interconnections in literature, place, and culture, focussing too closely on living in place often prevents the movement and passage of critical cross-cultural thought. For an academic community immersed in the local, sometimes at the expense of cross-cultural comparison, myopia and insularity are an ever-present threat. The potential for alternative discursive practices to create new critical interchanges can stagnate, restrained by human-made boundaries.

During a roundtable discussion, "Internationalizing: Ecologically Oriented Literary and Cultural Studies," at the ASLE conference in Eugene, some Canadians present indicated that "internationalizing" included Canada. A desire for Canadian autonomy bewildered some Americans in the room; they could not understand why Canadians would feel the need for a separate chapter, particularly given that, as one unidentified individual noted, one aim of ecological studies is to transgress borders. Though there were grumblings (mine included) that stressed the distinct cultural, social, and historical differences that affect Canadian artistic and cultural production, the Canadians' disaffection stemmed not so much from a recognition of difference, but rather from the unanimous belief that Canadian literature and ecocritical work deserved a stronger profile within ASLE. I pointed out that from a Canadian perspective, the low profile of British Columbian writers in the conference's celebration of the Pacific Northwest bioregion did not do much to offset a sense of Canadian marginalization in ASLE.

For many Canadian members, the lack of Canadian keynote speakers at ASLE's 2005 conference served as evidence that Canadian environmental literature and scholarship needed greater attention. Within this context, Richard Evanoff's claim resonates: "while the historically

contingent and socially situated nature of cultural discourses can be readily acknowledged, effective dialogue between cultures on problems of mutual concern can be conducted only if the two groups are able to transcend their particular 'situatedness' and effectively take into account the point of view of others with whom they have relations."[8] (In fairness to the conference organizers, I should note that two intended keynote speakers from Canada, Don McKay and David Suzuki, were unable to attend.) Nevertheless, despite the high-profile Canadian scholars and writers who attended the conference – Laurie Ricou, Cate Sandilands, Pamela Banting, and Brian Bartlett, to name a few – Canadian representation remained scattered among the various panels and roundtable discussions. For whatever reason, ASLE did not want to take this particular cross-cultural risk. Perhaps a fear of low audience attendance played into the decision; how, though, do you raise the profile of and open dialogue with Canadian writers and scholars within an American organization without taking that risk? In June 2009, ASLE held its biennial conference in Canada for the first time – at the University of Victoria on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Thanks to the commitment of ALECC's Richard Pickard, ASLE's conference chair, Dan Philippon, and various other ALECC and ASLE members, there was greater emphasis on Canadian speakers (including Jeannette Armstrong, Karsten Heuer, Kla-kisht-ke-is [Chief Simon Lucas], Rita Wong, and Jan Zwicky) as well as participation by a greater number of Canadian scholars and writers. The conference helped to galvanize greater interest in ALECC and by association, I believe, in *The Goose*.

Because of Ella Soper's, Michael Pereira's, and my efforts, in 2005 *The Goose* materialized as a newsletter to address and open up ecocritical discursive practices in Canada and the United States, as well as to establish a Canadian ecocritical community. Through ALECC and *The Goose*, "we have at last begun to find each other and to establish the foundations of an interdisciplinary, national community"[9] An open-access, online publication dedicated to profiling literary ecological and environmental studies in Canada, *The Goose*, transformed from a newsletter to a journal, has become crucial in creating a network that extends across

Canada. Whether *The Goose* has, like its namesake, reached areas beyond Canada, I can only comment anecdotally; nonetheless, to access wider terrain through the Web remains one of the publication's primary mandates. In 2013 we will see this effort realized, as we have entered an agreement with Wilfrid Laurier University Press (WLUP) and the University's library, which will house the journal on a Digital Creative Commons platform and act as an archival repository. WLUP will assist in marketing and disseminating the journal. In addition, Canadian, international, and American scholars, ASLE, and the association's affiliates have helped much in extending *The Goose*'s reach through social media, citations, and personal and academic websites. Through such networks, *The Goose* opens borders and invites Canadian and non-Canadian scholars and non-scholars to participate in shaping and unshaping landscapes through visual and literary discourse. An imaginary political border cleaves (in both its meanings) local and global boundaries, which "allows for either/or, and for a *both* that is a uniquely interdependent fusion."[10] In response to such doubleness, *The Goose* does not estrange itself from, but rather complements, American ecocritical periodicals and newsletters and becomes a part of an assemblage that forms a larger, interconnected global ecocritical discourse. *The Goose* facilitates "a uniquely interdependent fusion" of global and local envisioning of place-based research and artistic production.

In 1991, Canadian ecocritic Laurie Ricou urged scholars to consider a new way of approaching literature, one that would breach critical preconceptions:

> The challenge for ecocriticism, as for all criticism, is to relate form to language. It's not sufficient to write about the environment, or to write about writing about the environment – although both these obligations are part of what describes ecocriticism. And it's not sufficient to go on a search to say there's another spotted owl in so-and-so's poem, or novel. Nor is it satisfactory to avoid connections by retreating into the metaphor that language is its own ecology.[11]

Ricou's interdisciplinary and cross-border research has for the past twenty years (and arguably longer) pushed critical boundaries of literary and environmental interconnections. His shift from regionalism to bioregionalism, from analyzing text to reading species and habitats "textually," opened up new critical models in Canadian literary studies for reading place-based literature. Environmental issues were present, yet interest in the study of environment and literature remained scattered. Ricou's call for analysis that goes beyond species sightings, or "retreating into the metaphor that language is its own ecology," hints at earlier environmental and regional literary criticism in Canada, and calls for examinations that recognize the complex relations between language, literature, and environment.

Ricou was not the only Canadian literary scholar pushing critical boundaries. During the 1990s and the onset of the twenty-first century, feminist, queer, poststructuralist, colonial, and postcolonial investigations into environmental and ecological writings appeared from critics such as D.M.R. Bentley, Gabriele Helms, Pamela Banting, Diana M. A. Relke, Dorothy Nielsen, Cate Sandilands, Susie O'Brien, and Rebecca Raglon. Yet a comparison of Canadian and American articles and books pertaining to ecocriticism during the 1990s reveals that, at least within literary studies, a Canadian ecocritical discourse and community remained marginal and unformed.[12] Today there is a substantial number of Canadian ecocritical articles, though book-length ecocritical studies still remain few.[13] Yet ALECC's membership and the frequent book reviewers for *The Goose* indicate that many young scholars and graduate students are participating in literary studies of the environment in Canada, and as Ricou repeatedly notes, it is this generation that will help ensure ecocriticism's legitimization in Canadian academic institutions.[14]

Admittedly, *The Goose*, in profiling both Canadian bioregional writings and Canadian environmental and academic networks, reinforces what may be a futile tendency: to identify a distinctly Canadian ecocritical thought, distinguishable from other national traditions. *The Goose* emerged from a need to draw the critical gaze north, to attend to writing

and research here in Canada. Pamela Banting observes that "one might think that just as Canada geese, wolves, grizzly bears, purple loosestrife, and the waters of Devils Lake transgress national borders, so too might the reading and critical practices of ecocritics, whose practices are rooted in the natural world."[15] Banting's point emphasizes, in many instances, what remains a one-way ecocritical cross-cultural discourse. Despite American ecocritics' recognition of and play with ecological boundaries, Banting's claim suggests, many Canadian critics are aware of Canadian and American ecocritical dialogue while few American scholars engage with Canadian environmental writing or ecocritical discourse. By observing a North American imbalance, a critical disparity, I do not mean to fault American scholars but to acknowledge a larger institutional dilemma: Canadian literary scholarship is generally overshadowed by American literary studies. Yet I cannot disregard that Ricou's assertion – "In a bioregion, Canadian is at once meaningless and still crucial"[16] – holds weight when one transgresses regional and transnational spaces. Ricou's comment, when coupled with Banting's point, can be taken to suggest that Canada is "still crucial" if Canadian scholars wish both to identify and to locate a transnational oversight and to negotiate Canada's own political, social, and cultural diversity. Keeping "Canada" on the map, so to speak, is both meaningless and crucial because from both Canadian and non-Canadian perspectives, the emphasis challenges settled notions of what it means to be Canadian, while remaining open to pluralistic viewpoints.

Arguably, with its emphasis on non-American content, *The Goose* practices and perpetuates the same critical myopia that some Canadian ecocritics accuse their American counterparts of enacting. Simon Estok claims that "ecocriticism has distinguished itself … by its commitment to making connections."[17] His comment illuminates the interdisciplinarity of the field, the discipline's commitment to playing out the metaphorical implications of ecosystem and ecological terminologies: edge effects and ecotones, for instance. *The Goose* makes those connections, at least for now, primarily within Canada. Connections between Canada and the United States, however, remain tenuous. Jenny Kerber, Cate Sandilands,

Rebecca Raglon, Angela Waldie, and Laurie Ricou are a few Canadian ecocritics who have repeatedly focussed on the forty-ninth parallel in order to emphasize commonalities as well as differences, and to make Americans aware of Canadian environmental writing. *The Goose*, by overlooking specifically American content in favour of a Canadian and international focus, perhaps undoes what these Canadian scholars have attempted. However, such endeavours, to borrow Huey-Li Li's observation of the relations between bioregionalism and globalization, become "essential to keep[ing] the boundaries open – that is, to situat[ing] the local in the global context. At the same time, [keeping in mind that] interlocking localities shape and form the global."[18] Attending to the intersections of the local and the global in the assembling and disassembling of a distinctly Canadian ecocritical discourse avoids over-determined definitions of place-based identity. But for now, *The Goose*'s Canadian emphasis is an appropriate over-correction. *The Goose* attends to cross-cultural emphasis by showcasing Canadian environmental literature to Canadian, American, and international readers. Ecocriticism's propensity for bioregionalism takes us to local affiliations, but there remains also the risk of insularity. As Canadian environmental thought becomes more visible, we must not settle too comfortably; rather we must remember that what instigated the movement for a Canadian ecocritical community was recognition of migrations, of fluid borders, of the "interlocking" connections between the local and the global. And, we must remember, as Laurie Ricou observes, "that U.S.-based scholars had the passion and concern to risk disrupting their discipline."[19]

The Goose contributes to shaping an environmental discourse in Canada, one that seeks not so much to be differentiated from as to complement other national discourses of environmental criticism – to add to the assemblages that comprise and help legitimize ecological and environmental studies, a field that in turn adds to the assemblages that comprise other discursive practices. *The Goose*'s textual condition (virtual, open-access) also connects a disparate ecocritical community, permitting readers to extend definitions of "here" beyond their own backyards. Ella Soper, Mike Pereira, Paul Huebener, and I settled on three sustaining

features: "The Regional Feature," "Edge Effects," and book reviews. We established these three aspects of *The Goose* to emphasize intersecting paths that connect readers to various Canadian ecologies: bioregional, interdisciplinary, and literary. As the ecocritical thought became more diverse, so did the journal, and so the sections we had initially created no longer seemed sufficient. We now let the journal's layout reflect an ever-changing development and diversity of contributions, particularly since many of our regional features have resisted a unified, distinctly Canadian identity. *The Goose* creates a forum from where, to borrow Tim Lilburn's words, "we must start again learning how to be in this place … of yielding, of stepping aside. This will be like breathing through the whole body, the new larger body of a place that might take us in." [20] (*The Goose*'s flexible format and content allow for comparison, allow for recognizing greater commonality, disjuncture, or tenuous skeletal connections both within a national and a global context – it offers a site to "start again learning how to be in this place" we call Canada.)

The Goose began in the fall of 2005 and is published semi-annually. Thanks to volunteer efforts, it has fared well. The reduced costs of online distribution do much to assure its survival. *The Goose* attempts to address interdisciplinary topics and manifold locales. Our editing is based on mutual editorial decision-making. Collaboration ensures that *The Goose* maintains a pluralistic voice, and contributors' diverse backgrounds ensure multiplicity. Contributors are free to choose the form and direction of their pieces with editorial guidance provided near the final draft stages. When soliciting writers for the regional feature, moreover, we do not always seek self-proclaimed ecocritics. Rather, we want to demonstrate that environmental consciousness persists broadly in Canadian culture. Intermixing ecocritical scholars with critics preferring different approaches and with non-scholars becomes a means of pushing beyond boundaries – discouraging insularity, opening up paths that might otherwise have remained overgrown with disciplinary biases. After all, as Canadian ecocritic Travis V. Mason commented when comparing *The Goose* to the Canada geese in Jacques Perrin's *Winged Migration*, "[Canada geese] don't just encounter other geese on their journeys" – and so

ecocritics, with their interdisciplinary and literary interests, do not encounter only other ecocritics in *The Goose*.[21]

The co-editors of *The Goose* cannot claim sole responsibility for the publication's growth. We aim for a flexible format, always leaving room to introduce new ecocritical and environmental expressions – academic and non-academic. Yet the publication's true success has depended on and will continue to depend on readers and writers who supported the venture from the onset. The dedication of our first contributors, including Pamela Banting, Travis Mason, Jennifer Delisle, and Adam Dickinson, and the generosity of new and established Canadian poets and scholars, led to a vibrant publication. Other contributors – such as Jessica Marion Barr, Brian Bartlett, Ken Belford, Tom Berryman, Sonnet L'Abbé, Alison Calder, Jonquil Covello, Don Gayton, Sue Goyette, David Heinimann, Nancy Holmes, Basma Kavanagh, Ian LeTourneau, Tim Lilburn, Leigh Matthews, Don McKay, Jonathan Meakin, Camilla Nelson, Emily Nilsen, Anne Simpson, E. Alex Pierce, Sandy Pool, Sina Queyras, a.rawlings, Rod Schumacher, Megan Simpson, Fenn Stewart, Harry Thurston, Maria Whiteman, Erin Whitmore, Rita Wong, David Zieroth, Jan Zwicky, and many more – have enabled *The Goose*'s content to expand. Their ongoing support demonstrates a commitment to literature and art as effective mediums in which to communicate environmental and ecological concerns. To be sure, there are risks to publishing in an open-access, online forum: a non-guaranteed readership, as well as the inherent copyright problems in open access. The benefits of online distribution, however, can often outweigh the risks; the potential exists for wide readership. Furthermore, the Web's formal attributes, with its endless hyperlinks, are an effective means of disrupting boundaries while drawing attention to specific physical places – such as Newfoundland and Labrador, the Thompson-Nicola Regional District, or Saint John, New Brunswick, regions that *The Goose* has featured – and while leading readers to overlapping literary and artistic terrains.

The continued dedication of particular Canadian ecocritical scholars and creative writers to *The Goose*, I believe, has helped materialize Canadian critic Diana M. A. Relke's call "to reinforce […] a growing

perception within the Canadian critical community that ecocriticism is a legitimate endeavour in its own right, rather than some ephemeral spinoff of 'real' literary studies – an endeavour that contributes not only to our understanding of literature and landscape but also to a vision of the future of literature and the species that produces it."[22] ALECC is a "placeless" community inasmuch as the membership is a virtually linked community. As a location for providing Canadian ecocritics a network and forum for communicating environmental issues, *The Goose* and ALECC have influenced a stronger ecocritical presence in Canada – and those locations, we must remind ourselves, were built by people. Whether either ALECC or *The Goose* has had any effect in shifting critical views remains a matter for speculation; yet, I would like to believe that the two, in creating a sense of community, have brought together a scattered group of committed ecocritics and writers and provided a place from which to legitimize ecocriticism in Canada. Regardless, ecocriticism has gained critical ground. For instance, in October 2007 many ALECC members attended the conference hosted by York University's Environmental Studies program and organized by Catriona Sandilands, "Nature Matters: Materiality and the More-Than-Human in Cultural Studies of the Environment." In December 2006/March 2007, *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* published a two-volume special issue, *The Animal*. During the 2008 meeting of the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE), the panel "Canadian Ecocriticism: Histories, Taxonomies, Trajectories," chaired by Ella Soper and Nicholas Bradley, attracted a large audience. At the 2010 meeting of ACCUTE in Montreal, Paul Huebener and I succeeded in co-organizing and chairing two ecocriticism panels (our first panel also filled the room). "Transcanada 3," organized by the Transcanada Institute (Guelph University), included an ecocritical call for its third and final conference in July 2008, diverging from "Transcanada 1," which, perhaps because it was held concurrently with ASLE's 2005 conference, featured only two Canadian ecocritical papers.[23] Other significant ecocritical conferences and workshops initiated by ALECC members in Canada include: the joint ALECC and Network

in Canadian Environmental History (NiCHE) workshop "Cross-Pollination: Seeding New Ground for Environmental Thought and Activism across the Arts and Humanities" (2011),[24] "Green Words/Green Worlds: Environmental Literatures and Politics in Canada" (2011), and "Underground Ecocriticism" (2012). In 2012, Travis Mason and I kicked off ALECC's "100 Mile Verses" trans-Canada series in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, and brought Don McKay, Basma Kavanagh, Brian Bartlett, and E. Alex Pierce to the town's local theatre for an evening of poetry. In 2013, poet Madhur Anand hosted the second reading series at the Ontario Veterinary College in Guelph, with poets Karen Houle, David Waltner-Toews, and Nora Gould. In addition, since 2005, Wilfrid Laurier University Press initiated the *Environmental Humanities* series; Rebecca Raglon (University of British Columbia), Marian Scholtmeijer (University of Northern British Columbia), and Michael Howlett (Simon Fraser University) launched the online *Journal of Ecocriticism*, the publication of the Canadian Association for the Study of Humanities and the Environment; UBC Okanagan's creative writing department established *Lake: A Journal of Arts and Environment*; and *The Malahat Review* published a special issue, *The Green Imagination* (2008).[25] But the most telling events, since 2005, that signal ecocriticism's established presence in Canada are the two biennial ALECC conferences to date. The inaugural conference, held in Sydney, Nova Scotia (2010), and the second, in Kelowna, British Columbia (2012), successfully brought together innovative scholars and artists from Canada and abroad. Plans are underway for future ALECC conferences.

In 1991, Laurie Ricou cautioned that "the current clamour to be 'green'" was not without an element of hype.[26] The "green" commotion has not decreased, but continues to intensify, particularly as the consequences of climate change and human negligence become more apparent. To be "green," much then as today, seemed a movement that frequently vacillated between "ethical commitment and cynical exploitation."[27] And so perhaps the emergence of "something called ecocriticism should prompt as much skepticism as fervour."[28] If, as Ricou claims, long before ecocriticism "nature has loomed large in the Canadian consciousness,"[29]

then a shift to an environmental and ecological emphasis would seem natural in Canadian literary studies. Initially, a few Canadian scholars did make this critical turn. But these Canadian "ecocritics thrum[med] like some scattered little grey birds among a flock of cranes beating their way into motion."[30] Ecocriticism remained "a here and there, almost underground phenomenon."[31] Within the last twenty years, however, ecocriticism in Canada has taken flight – become a different kind of bird, one with a wider wingspan and clearer formation. Granted, ecocritics in Canada are still a relatively small group, but *The Goose* and ALECC provide (inter)connections both locally and beyond that continue to increase our numbers. In linking interdisciplinary global and local pursuits, and by providing a homing position for critical "migratory flights," together ALECC and *The Goose* will help to keep Canadian ecocriticism aloft and from remaining an "underground phenomenon."

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NOTES

1 The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment Biennial Conference was held at the University of Oregon, Eugene, 21-26 June 2005. ALECC, originally called ASLE-Canada, began as an informal listserv network administered by Pamela Banting (University of Calgary). Banting launched the listserv in April 2005, and by October 2005 membership had gone from 8 to 100 subscribers (Pamela Banting, "Imagining Community," *The Goose* 1, no. 1 [2005]. Web). The jump in subscribers, I believe, derived from both informal and formal forums created at the Eugene conference (roundtable discussions and social occasions), which brought some Canadian ecocritics face-to-face for the first time. The presence of approximately thirty Canadians with a common interest in Canadian ecocritical studies made more tangible the realization of an actual ASLE-Canada chapter. Three figures who were instrumental in bringing these meetings together were Banting, Stephanie Posthumus (then McMaster University), and Catriona Sandilands (York University). After the first issue of *The Goose*, I sent e-mails to various Canadian arts and humanities faculties and graduate programs to recruit members for ASLE-Canada's listserv. The membership continues to grow. During Congress (an annual Canadian gathering for academics in the arts, humanities, and social sciences) of May/June 2006 at York University, a few members of the listserv met to discuss formalizing ASLE-Canada as an official organization. Concurrent online postings allowed members unable to attend to participate in the debate. Subsequent to this meeting, the organization elected an executive and created a constitution.

2 The ASLE affiliates are ASLE-Korea; ASLE-Japan; the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and the Environment (EASLCE); ASLE-UK (now ASLE-UKI, to include Ireland); ASLE-India; the Organization for Studies in Literature and Environment (OSLE-India); and ASLE-ANZ (Australia and New Zealand).

3 On 24 June 2005, as participants in a roundtable discussion moderated by Scott Slovic (University of Nevada), "Internationalizing: Ecologically Oriented Literary and Cultural Studies," Pamela Banting and Stephanie Posthumus advocated a Canadian association. As I recall, some of the Canadians who attended the ASLE Biennial conference were Laurie Ricou, Jenny Kerber, Catriona Sandilands, Ella Soper, Angela Waldie, Diane Guichon, Brian Bartlett, Alanna F. Bondar, Adam Dickinson, Michael Pereira, Mark Dickinson, J. A. Wainwright, Keri Cronin, Dominique Perron, Vermonja R. Alston, Erin Whitmore, and Rebecca Raglon.

4 I do not imply that *The Goose* has an extensive and wide global audience. Rather, to beat the flight metaphor into the ground, once I post *The Goose*, I no longer have control over its migrations, and currently I am unable to track the number of visits to each publication. With the move of *The Goose* to the Wilfrid Laurier University Press Digital Commons platform and the reformatting of the publication, readership will become easier to track.

5 W. H. New, "Writing Here," *BC Studies* 147 (autumn 2005): 19.

6 Ibid., 18.

7 Ibid., 19.

8 Richard Evanoff, "Bioregionalism and Cross-Cultural Dialogue on a Land Ethic," *Ethics, Place, and Environment* 10, no. 2 (2007): 151.

9 Ella Soper-Jones, "Letter from the Editors," *The Goose* 1, no. 1 (2005). Web.

10 Laurie Ricou, *The Arbutus/Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest* (Edmonton: NeWest, 2002), 1.

11 Laurie Ricou, "So Big about Green," *Canadian Literature* 130 (autumn 1991): 6; Ricou's emphasis.

12 For a more detailed examination of the development of ecocritical studies in Canada prior to 2000, see D.M.R. Bentley's "Preface: The Absence of Neoconservatism and Ecocriticism in Canadian Literary Studies" in *Much with Nature: Ecocritical Essays on Canadian Writing*, a special issue of *Canadian Poetry* 42 (spring–summer 1998): 5-15.

13 When compiling reading lists in 2007-2008 for my doctoral candidacy exams, my section of Canadian ecocritical "voices" was comprised of a significant number of unpublished dissertations. This outcome, I believe, is more indicative of 1) the growth of the field in Canada; 2) the legitimization of the field in Canadian universities; and 3) the emergence of a generation of Canadian ecocritical scholars newly graduated, rather than the Canadian publishing industry's reluctance to take on ecocritical works. The Wilfrid Laurier University Press *Environmental Humanities* series, led by series editor Cheryl Lousley, for instance, has already made a notable contribution to the field.

14 Ricou's claim has shown fruition in the creation in recent years of tenure-track positions at Canadian universities that specified and/or support research interests in environmental literary studies. There is also the movement of established Canadian scholars into environmental criticism and animal studies: Dianne Chisholm (University of Alberta), Jodey Castricano (University of British Columbia Okanagan), Nancy Holmes (University of British Columbia Okanagan), Harry Vandervlist (University of Calgary), Robert Boschman (Mount Royal University), Glenn Willmott (Queen's University), Alice Kuzniar (University of Waterloo). Because of space, there are many other academics I have not mentioned, a number of them doctoral candidates – not to mention non-academics (artists, activists, writers) who also participate in the ecocritical community in Canada.

15 Pamela Banting, "Imagining Community," *The Goose* 1, no. 1 (2005). Web.

16 Laurie Ricou, "Pacifist Poetics," *Canadian Literature* 185 (summer 2005): 6.

17 Simon Estok, "Bridging the Great Divide: Ecocritical Theory and the Great Unwashed," *English Studies in Canada* 31, no. 4 (2005): 198.

18 Huey-Li Li, "Bioregionalism and Global Education: A Reexamination," *Educational Theory* 53, no. 1 (2005): 62.

19 Laurie Ricou, correspondence with the author (4 Feb. 2009).

20 Tim Lilburn, "Going Home," in *Thinking and Singing: Poetry and the Practice of Philosophy*, ed. Tim Lilburn (Toronto: Cormorant, 2002), 184.

21 Travis V. Mason, correspondence with the author (7 Nov. 2008).

22 Diana M. A. Relke, *Green(w)orlds: Ecocritical Readings of Canadian Women's Poetry* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999), 317.

23 In May 2005, approximately a month before the ASLE Eugene conference, the University of Ottawa hosted "The Animals in This Country: A Canadian Literature Symposium." The symposium organizer, Janice Fiamengo (University of Ottawa), subsequently published an edited collection of conference papers: *Other Selves: Animals in the Canadian Literary Imagination* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2007).

24 This workshop resulted in the publication of a co-edited collection by Liza Piper and Lisa Szabo, *Sustaining the West: Cultural Responses to Western Environments, Past and Present* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), which brings together environmental critics from the arts and humanities; a large number of the contributors are from literary studies and are ALECC members.

25 It is worth noting that because of their editorial efforts as well as their own writing, Laurie Ricou (*Canadian Literature*) and D.M.R. Bentley (*Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews*) have sustained a Canadian ecocritical presence since the 1990s – and some would argue since as early as the 1980s.

26 Ricou, "So Big about Green," 3.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

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30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

Notes on the Contributors

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Ecocriticism is the investigation of the many ways in which culture and the environment are interrelated and conceptualized. As an approach to literary studies and other forms of cultural inquiry, it aspires to understand and often to celebrate the natural world. It has been hailed as one of the most timely and provocative developments in literary and cultural studies of recent decades.

Greening the Maple brings into view the development of ecocriticism in the context of Canadian literary studies, in which it has a rich and vibrant past and present. An indispensable introduction to ecocriticism in Canada, the essays in this volume survey the rise of the field, reflect on its beginnings, and look ahead to its future.

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