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"Discursion and Excursion:" Poetry of Bodies, Place, and Landscape in the Ecocritical Movement

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“DISCURSION AND EXCURSION:”

POETRY OF BODIES, PLACE, AND LANDSCAPE IN THE ECOCRITICAL
MOVEMENT

A Thesis

Presented To

the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

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Master of Arts

by

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Title: "DISCURSION AND EXCURSION:" POETRY OF BODIES, PLACE, AND LANDSCAPE IN THE ECOCRITICAL MOVEMENT

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Abstract

My thesis project focuses on the current literary field of Ecocriticism, its historical transmutations, and the correlation of the pastoral genre, as one begins to understand current human understandings of "nature." By applying a deeper understanding of the Deep Ecology movement, along with shifting understandings of the human and the non-human, specifically in our usage and attention to landscape and wilderness, I hope to explore the role that the aesthetic, and the function of the poem, can play a crucial role in the environmental movement. By building a foundational understanding of our cultural context and critical theories of Environmental criticism, I hope to illuminate the necessary ways that place, body, and language/perception all interact with each other to create a specific experiential moment of nature. This environmental epiphany can be modeled best in the poem that reflects the "thisness" of nature, as Hopkins calls it, and emphasizes the aura/essence of the land with which we interaction. This project will apply its theoretical concerns to the poetry of Brian Teare, who illuminates many of the concerns of landscape, perception, and bodily engagement.

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Introduction

In Leslie Stephen's essay "In Praise of Walking," he praises the virtues of the physical body moving through landscapes, emphasizing the type of thought, attention, and aesthetic joy that the progression of body over land can bring to the individual. For Stephen, the poetry of walking is a pure: the body in landscapes creates an awareness and connection that avoids reinforcing the powers of force or exertion for the benefits of a simple jaunt. Stephen does not merely advocate the beauty of walking in the sublime regions of the Alps but also smaller walks through the Fens, the Lake District, and the urbane streets of London. In these accounts of walking, what matters is not the specific landscape but the attention to the environment and its stimuli to the mind. Stephen is not concerned with the "disembodied spirits" who write of experiences of nature independent of the physical machinery of the legs, but rather pursues an earthly, bodily element to his experience of landscape: "My passion for the mountains had something earthly in it. It is associated with memories of eating and drinking" (679). In short, Stephen walks and pays attention.

Stephen connects mind and body as movement gives meaning to a life:

If I turn over the intellectual album which memory is always compiling, I find that the most distinct pictures it contains are those of old walks... The memories of walks are all localized and dated; they are hitched on to particular times and places; they spontaneously form a kind of calendar or connecting thread upon which other memories may be strung (676).

There is something about localized bodily experiences of landscapes that Stephen finds fitting to mark an intellectual life by. Theorizing further the nature of Stephen's walks, Scott Slovic writes of the psychological phenomenon of "awareness" in nature writers that focuses on the experiential moment of place or nature and the interior landscape of the mind. This awareness stems from the nature writer's sense of self and non-self alongside the ability to calling out what passes before the eyes. It is an art form of attention and observation, cultivated by the experiential moment. In Slovic's view, the attention with which nature writers study environmental consciousness and attempt to stimulate it in readers is the foundational aim of all environmental writing. If so, this language of walking and bodily experiences of place creates a useful paradigm for the modern Ecocritical movement and conservation struggles.

By emphasizing the continuation of the pastoral into the post-pastoral and then eco-poetry, Ecocriticism's transformation in a digitizing world, and interdisciplinary concerns of ecology and human/non-human relationships. I will examine how writers of the modern era, in particular poets, have constructed appeals to return to an aesthetic experience of nature, whether wilderness or other landscapes, and away from the commodification, abstraction, and simulation of nature. By using "aesthetic" as an adjective to experience, I mean the faculties by which we perceive beauty and appreciate the sentiment of a place or experience. If we operate under the Greek root of *aithestai*, or "to perceive" or "perceptible things," we are led to the late 18th century understanding that "aesthetics" was that which related to perception by the senses. An aesthetic experience is one that we perceive through our bodies, sights, sounds, and feeling. The

action of perceiving nature or landscape through the poetic function often can create an interesting form of understanding of space that continually changes the ways in which we understand nature. Combining the aesthetic with the ecological examines how the poet or environmentally aware observer psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually enters into a bodily experience of landscape, and then seeks a method with which to describe these localized sentiments. How are these feelings and experiences perceived, aesthetically rendered, and preserved in our modern world, which leans precariously over the edge of environmental demise? This raises a more “practical” question: what role can the poetic experience play in generating environmental awareness?

I will also consider how tenets of Deep Ecology reject the practice of “anthropomorphizing” the landscape, or explaining by human projections or actions, in order to affirm the palpable and experiential essence that nature carries within itself. Even this notion can be further examined through Gerard Manley Hopkins “thisness,” which derives itself from Dun Scotus’ Medieval philosophy of “haecceity.” This will require analyzing the growth of the environmental movement in comparison to the ways in which Romanticism and Modernism viewed, constructed, and destroyed space, both natural and urban, and how the Postmodern continues to reshape these notions. The binaries between human and non-human, wilderness and civilization, melt into each other and transform into a space in between, what some pastoralists have previously called the “middle landscape.” This also requires an understanding of the phenomenological underpinnings of the Deep Ecology movement, along with landscape theory, to re-evaluate the ways in which we valorize and categorize the non-human environment we experience. Today, we are attracted to a nostalgic form of wildness that often operates under the guise of

“authenticity,” one that manifests the ancient, ever-fleeting pastoral myth. Yet at the same time, we are wholly committed to the progress of our digital world, often overcoming the earth in pursuit of this mythic goal. In a digital and technological age, the pastoral enfolds into the simulations of space, the picturesque rather than the sublime, making nature safe and manageable. Thoreau and Faust hold hands in this space of paradox. We long to receive from nature and yet establish ourselves apart from it as masters. We want the harshness of nature, vis-à-vis the “rugged” and wild experience but create a safe, dreamy nature devoid of its perils and essence, where wilderness becomes a non-place of human projections rather than confrontation. How, in this pastoral expression along with the environmental movement, do we balance the harnessing and controlling, along with respecting and embracing?

Another question: How does an aesthetic experience of nature, generally constructed in the literary genre of the pastoral, continue or change in an age of growing technological simulation and virtual reality where we have little experience with landscape? In considering Walter Benjamin’s notion of “aura,” one discovers that aesthetic perception and experience merge together in language to connect with space and place and offers a necessary alternative to commodification or simulation, creating an avenue for furthering the environmental movement. This conception of “aura” with the poetic function, and bodily experience of landscape, creates a healthy localization in place-attachment that moves away from ecology’s tendency to abstract environmental concerns. As we continue to move away from organic modes of living towards more digitized expressions of culture, there is an escape from the world of nature and its powers paired with a necessary call to return to the natural spaces and places that

surround us. This is a tenuous balance. One must pair realism with localization to avoid romantically sentimentalizing space that envisions an Edenic return to natural “purity” or escapism. Bodily experiences of place create awareness, perhaps “rootedness” as Simone Weil might say, of localized environmental value. In consideration of “place” as it is tied to landscape, along with how we bodily inhabit these realms and then create aesthetic forms from within, there is a species of attention that is demanded from a culture that becomes increasingly incapable of accessing nature.

By analyzing critical perspectives on the pastoral and Ecocriticism and then applying these structures of thinking onto the specific experiential moment of the “natural” within poetry, I hope to open up an area of study that examines the ways in which the experience of the “real” builds upon the aesthetic perception of the mind to further Ecocritical concerns and writings. Here poetry becomes ecologically instrumentalized and enhances our ability to environmentally perceive the world. As nature becomes an end in itself, the poem becomes an instrument to be used in defending our experience and the value of this “end.” The poet communicates a moment, an experience with nature, which acts as both activist and model. With this immediate natural experience, the poet may become the model of environmental awareness that many seek. The sight, or bodily experience of the landscape, is an aesthetic perception of the place, which is then turned into the localized language of eco-poetry.

I will attempt to connect these experiences of space, place, and body, to the environmental movement as a form of reversing the overarching reach of industrialism and commercialism by reintroducing an aesthetic appreciation of the landscapes that we live in. It is not that art becomes the handmaiden of activism, as many have decried, but

rather that aesthetic value precedes activism and localized value of landscapes become a good method of instilling an environmental value into people who are invested, psychologically and emotionally, with the landscapes around them. In thinking of Leslie Stephen and Scott Slovic's notion of awareness, we can see that physical bodily movement, an act that many ecologists claim chemically connects us with the environment around us, can work to create a vision and experience of nature that lends itself to the basic concerns of the pastoral, Deep Ecology, and Ecocriticism.

It is difficult to construct a brief literature review of Ecocriticism. The theoretical movement is still burgeoning and defining itself, and embraces a wide variety of disciplines. While William Rueckert's 1978 essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," first coined the term, many of the advancements began in the 1990's with Waage's *Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods Resources*, Nitecki's *The American Nature Writing Newsletter*, Harold Fromm's 1991 special MLA session on the greening of literary studies, and the 1992 formation of ASLE, Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment, along with the 1993 formation of ISLE, Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment.

Many scholars of Ecocriticism attribute little inter-field disagreements to the radical breadth of disciplines and concerns in a field that is broadly interested in how the literary applies to the ecological. Each critic iterates the purposes and goals of the field in different terms but with similar thematics, always refining and tweaking what has been said before. The trajectory of the field has been grouped into two "waves" of Ecocriticism, deduced and discussed by Lawrence Buell in the critical book *The Future of Environmental Criticism*.

For Buell, Ecocriticism isn't at the level of gender or postcolonial studies but is finding its path, apart from obstacles that are external and self-imposed. It has ancient roots: the "idea of nature" has always been an intellectual concern, and both creative and critical reflections have always taken interest in the *techne*, art or craft, and teleological aims of the material world. In Buell's distinctions, while the first wave focused on greater scientific literacy as a corrective to relativism, the effect of culture on nature, and celebrating nature while reversing harm through political action, the second wave emphasized a complex connection between science and literature, questioned organicist models of environment, and argued that natural and built environments are too mixed up for any nostalgic "return." "Ecology," etymologically deriving from the Greek *oikos*, meaning household, refers to the 'study of biological interrelationships and the flow of energy through organisms and inorganic matter.' (Future of Environmental Criticism 7). Alongside this notion of interrelationship, Environmental criticism strives to move the environment from "abstraction to tangible concern" (29).

What both waves agree upon is the reconnecting the study of literature with the land by using both academia and public advocacy. Since man cannot speak for Nature itself, the appeal to experience and narrative scholarship, has long dominated the field, along with is a plethora of concerns and cross-disciplinary analytical themes. With the environmental movement in literature, the study is understood less as a "monolith than as a concourse of discrepant collection," that are issue and paradigm driven (11). According to Buell, key practices of Ecocriticism are the conviction that practitioners of environmental literary studies should have a knowledge of the natural sciences, conceptions of "place" as symbolic structure, social construction, and ecology, as well as

continually questioning “anthropo-normativity” (Ecocritical Insurgency 669). Richard Kerridge argues that the field is largely based on the notion that the humanities and aesthetics can and do change culture. As the literary movement emphasizes the global environmental crises, this ideally leads to change in policy and societal behavior. The main concern is to examine texts from their environmental concerns and introduce this criterion to general public debate, largely by cross-addressing theory and ecology. All text are environmental because they are envired within a place that creates a relationship, and one must attempt to not disassociate place from literature but incorporate referential understandings of environmental values into how and what one reads. This amplifies the “reality of the environment to the subject of setting (Kern 260).

Timothy Morton suggests that the root awareness within Ecocriticism is “being unable to kid ourselves that there are realms unaffected by our existence” (300). In his opinion, the field of Deconstructionism offers the most conceptual restraint of our understanding of “nature” and avoids a safe and friendly essentialism. Bryan Moore in “Ecology and Literature: Ecocentric Personification from Antiquity to the Twenty-First Centry” proposes that the basis of ecocentrism is the “sympathetic recognition and observance that all members of land community exist for their own sake” (5). Thus, the movement is not necessarily anti-technological, as some have critiqued, but rather purports a low impact technology along with reverence, humility, responsibility, and an egalitarian agenda. This form “ecocentric personification” within Ecocriticism is an attempt to persuade audiences that all living things are connected. Critic Dominic Head’s essays, “The (im)possibility of criticism” and “Beyond 2000: Raymond Williams and the Ecocritic’s Task,” are concerned protecting literature from being compromised as a

vehicle for “Green activists” by unpacking the nuanced idea of how literary theory and its insight can be a meaningful pathway to reinforcing ecological ideas, not as a prescriptive term but as a designation of a multiform of environmental perspectives. Head affirms Lawrence Buell’s notion that the field must depict “nonhuman agents as bona fide partners” in the narrative as characters and objects themselves. Referencing Raymond Williams’s critical 1973 work, *The Country and the City*, Head sees Williams’ interest in limiting the growth and mitigating the damage of global capitalism and utilizing intellectual work within the field as a form of social dissidence. Greg Garrard’s landmark work *Ecocriticism* in 2004 provides a concise handbook to the foundational aims and understandings of the field, ranging from the pastoral to wilderness and the sublime to animism.

Referencing Caron’s *Silent Spring*, the text of modern environmentalism that begins with poetic language and relies heavily on pastoral and apocalyptic literary genres, Garrard affirms that the study of the human and the non-human must fall into the hands of literature. Garrard uses the image of “pollution” as a material, societal, and semiotic issue that Ecocriticism attempts to address. Thus, in Garrard’s opinion, “environmental problems need both cultural and scientific terms and analysis because they are “the interaction between knowledge of ecology and cultural inflection” (16). This aim is situated upon a tenuous balance to pay attention to the ways that nature is continuously culturally constructed and “on the fact that nature really exists, both the object and, albeit distantly, the origin of our discourse” (10).

Dana Phillips in “The Truth of Ecology” offers the most scathing review of his Ecocritical peers by asserting that many speak haphazardly of “fuzzy concepts fashioned out of borrowed terms,” which hardly mirror the complexity of nature found in scientific ecology (579). Because of this, the field is often reductive and ignores the recent history of ecology and gives itself more success than it has achieved by appealing “to the scientific authority of ecology, an authority which they then exploit rhetorically as a moral and philosophical sanction for their own discourse” (581). Thus, the realism in tackling environmental issues falls short, as debaters sharing common assumptions about the nature of reality are quite rare. In short, according to Phillips, “external mimesis” of ecology and the natural world is reductive and impossible. Terry Gifford takes up the charge of responding to Phillip’s attacks, specifically on Lawrence Buell, in “Recent Critiques of Ecocriticism” and argues that Phillips is not addressing Buell but, rather, attacking the first-wave of ecocriticism and its assumptions of simple realism. In doing so, Phillips denigrates the necessary foundational work of the first ecocritics, like Scott Slovic as the editor of *ISLE*, to begin the field while making sweeping straw-man claims about their contributions. In Gifford’s mind, Phillips hardly addresses Buell’s argument that the relationship between text and environment exists as rhetoric, performance, and ‘world-making’ (16).

The focus now must be to understand both nature and culture’s understanding of ‘place,’ exploring the dialectic between local and global while balancing an ecocentric focus that foregrounds nature alongside the anthropocentric agenda that focuses only on human problems. For Gifford, the field will move away from issues of representation and into the realm of public policy by giving attention to both social and natural environments

(22). In the continuation of Environmental criticism, critics agree that the twenty-first century's most pressing problem will be the sustainability of earth's environment, and that the responsibility for addressing this problem, or constellation of problems, will increasingly be seen as the responsibility of all the human sciences, not just of specialized disciplinary enclaves like ecology or law or public policy. Thus, the question of genre and what literary forms make this possible comes into play with our understanding of the pastoral trajectory woven into Ecocriticism.

Leo Marx's landmark work *The Machine in the Garden* purports that the pastoral turns the complex into simple terms and creates a unifying social force (101). The genre is indefinitely malleable for political ends, entrenched by nostalgia and often inaccessible middle landscapes. And yet, many ecocritics call for the rise of the modern pastoral genre and the need to reexamine the pastoral in light of environmental and cultural crises. Some go as far to argue that the survival of species depends on our ability to give language and images to represent our way of living within our environment. Finding a common thread within the pastoral can be difficult, as Paul Alpers argues in "What is Pastoral?," because the genre evades a coherent account of its aims: it can be a longing for innocence, happiness, or a Golden age, a medium for viewing the rural world, a method for communicating urban hostility, or a social tool for activism (437).

The pastoral is an ancient tool but more recently gives light to the ways Western culture has negotiated its relationship with the land it relies upon and other forces of nature, as well as inner natures (Post Pastoral as Tool 15). Historically, beginning with Theocritus' *Idyll* and Virgil's *Eclogues*, most classical Latin writers believed that an "Arcadian Golden Age was located in a primordial past in which human anxieties had not

yet surfaced” (Pastoral, 21). Theocritus’s *Idyl*, written for a court audience and accepted by many as the first pastoral text, established the word “idyllic,” an idealization, nostalgia, and escapist mentality of primitive and rural landscapes. Virgil’s *Eclogues*, written between 42-37 BCE, invokes a Golden Age as form of mediation against present instability and alienation. This “Arcadia” can be found as a thread throughout the history of literature: longing for an untouched, promised land where modern complications and struggles fade away among green pastures. The “comfortable” pastoral that has relied upon escapist thoughts and Golden Age theories often becomes an essentialist point of attack for critics of the genre, mocking it as bucolic fanaticism. Andrew Ettin writes of this pastoral vision in his 1984 *Literature and the Pastoral*, arguing that the pastoral is defined by “peace, contentment, belonging, and long affection, as well of easy possession” (129). The landscape becomes about atmosphere rather than collections of specific details and is valued more for its feeling rather than its distinct features. Here, the landscape does not call attention to itself and is emotionally comfortable for the perceiver, characterized by memories and continuity with the past.

This sort of pastoral is not suitable for many critics in their attempts to galvanize and depict societal and environmental issues: “What possible bearing can the urge to idealize a simple, rural environment have upon the lives men lead in an intricately organized, urban, industrial, nuclear-armed society?” (Marx 5). A popular and sentimental pastoral can hardly stand against an imaginative and complex pastoral. The attractiveness of the pastoral lies in the symbolic nature of landscape, but when this notion of moving from civilization towards simplicity is un-checked, it results in “simple-minded wishfulness” (9). Paul Alpers agrees that the genre must include the wild and

savage, not just the promised lands of milk and honey. For Alpers, the center of the eclogue tradition is the shepherd singer that attempts to reconcile man to the realities of his situation and stresses (Eclogue and Nature of Pastoral 353). The essence of the poem must consist of concrete localities and the fears, fellowships and beauty of the human experience, meant to restore nature as a home fit for human spirits (371).

This invokes the historical pastoral notion of “retreat and return,” as a cyclical method of relation the societal and natural. It must not be “wild amnesia,” as Buell calls it, but held up self-consciously as an alternative set of values. Gifford affirms this notion of the self-conscious retreat and return: the pastoral has no force when it attempts to preserve myths about the presence but achieves its goal when used to imply solutions for a better society. While the discourse of pastoral retreat may be viewed as an escape, it can also be used against the establishment to explore the complexities of society and nature as a form of returning to essentials. This creates a pastoral retreat that celebrates a place and returns with challenging cultural analysis (Pastoral 109). As Frederick Garber argues in “Pastoral Places,” the pastoral has always had an “energetic subtext” that holds a counterstatement to the bucolic conditions, one that often speaks of “disjunction, lacunae, and breakings away” (440). In his view, the notion of “nostalgia, meaning “a state of sharp discomfort brought into being by a desire... for a homecoming” is the performative force that can turn people back towards environmental ways (444). This return, paired with Garrard’s “Radical Pastoral,” emphasizes the genre’s role in raising the political and poetic questions of being and longing. This idea culminates in Terry Gifford’s “post-pastoral” which balances man’s place in nature and nature’s essence in itself. “Post” in

this usage does not mean “after” but the notion of reaching beyond the limitations of the historical and suggesting a collapse of the nature/human divide.

With the cultural climate, Lawrence Buell argues that genre of the pastoral remains a luminous ideal with radical forms in an age of ecology, becoming a means by which alienation is expressed and simultaneously mediated. The post-pastoral can represent an advocacy of nature’s presence for its own sake while refusing to defer human responsibility to the soil that sustains it. Gifford brings Hopkins into this conversation, whose poetry I will pick up later. Gerard Manley Hopkins’s poetry is a literature that demands we daily reexamine our relationship with ‘soil’” (Pastoral 150). Fundamental to Hopkins is the awe and attention of the natural world, undergirded by a sense of immanence in natural things. The post-pastoral requires recognition of the simultaneously creative and destructive universe continually in balance with birth and death, growth and decay, dynamic and always in flux. It understands that our inner workings can be understood alongside external nature and experience and cultivates an awareness of nature as culture and culture as nature. It asks whether awe can lead to humility, how we can understand inner nature by observing outer nature, and how human consciousness might be used as a tool to heal our relationship with the non-human. By asking what features of writing can point towards a healthy way of living with the earth, the post-pastoral, which we will examine in the rise of eco-poetry, can begin to heal the separation of culture and nature.

Philosophical and Cultural Conceptions of Nature

To set the stage for the environmental impact of the aesthetic, we must first understand our ever-shifting relationship to what we deem as “nature.” An understanding of Deep Ecology and notions of wilderness and landscape in the 21st century will best be served by tracing the transition of human and nature relationships throughout the Enlightenment up until our current Postmodern situation. If, as Martin Ryle argues in “After ‘Organic Community:’ Ecocriticism, Nature and Human Nature,” Ecocriticism should encompass both an immediate ecological response and a method of deconstructing our understandings of the culture/nature divide, one must concern themselves with the historical developments of our relationship between human nature and the inanimate. By discovering the relationship between the human and non-human and interrogating the environmental ethics of earlier ages, the field may better construe and address current relations with nature.

In Europe, Romanticism bloomed as a crucial moment for articulating nature’s complexity, cultural objectification, sentiments and needs that go further than its immediate usage, and contradicting the staunchly Enlightenment theories of Locke or John Stuart Mill that focused on land’s purely utilitarian usage. In the Romantic era, pushback against the Great Chain of Being occurred as thinkers began to propose a unity in matter and spirit, through individual self-realization and a utopian alignment with the natural world.

As Axel Goodbody points out in his essay on the Romantic roots of environmental thought, the period focused on the failures of the Enlightenment's project to conquer nature and to dominate emotions with reason (64). As everyday landscapes were slowly domesticated, the untouched wild became a pure, sacral, and sublime place, one that pointed out the pollution of the industrialized society and the consequences of more utilitarian approaches to landscape. The Romantic Movement brought about an ecology that saw man as part of nature rather than its master and domineer. As Kate Rigby has pointed out: "The possibility of perceiving the natural world not as an unchanging artifact of divine manufacture but as an autopoietic process of perpetual becoming was enabled by new research in the nascent sciences of astronomy, geology, and biology" (65). Studies began to illuminate the connection of animate and inanimate objects through electricity, seen in J.W. Ritter's work in 1800. This illuminated nature as an intricately interconnected and dynamic process that was continually transforming and had an impact on writers and thinkers who came to see the limits of human self-willed action within the environment.

If humans are incapable of harnessing and controlling a complex and complicated nature, perhaps it was better to stand in awe and fear rather than condescension. Kant's philosophy began to highlight the failures of "pure reason" in our ability to comprehend the reality of the world. If humans are not capable of fully comprehending the world, they are also incapable of fully manipulating nature through their aims of domination. Because of this relationships with nature became more focused on negotiation instead of mastery and "creating sustainable patterns of interrelationship" (68). Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* proves an interesting model as we see the scary consequences the human manipulation of

a “malleable” nature goes awry. With this shift in scientific and cultural understanding, Romantic poets began to adopt “affection” as a method of linking humans and nature together. Cowper, Blake, and Keats all sought to establish kinship with the natural in likeness but not sameness, creating a link in which the inanimate was equal and worthy of respect. Wordsworth became motivated by nature’s sanctity, not necessarily denoted by a transcendent being but, rather, an emanating spirit that offers a sublime experience. Garrard in “Radical Pastoral” proposes that this notion seems largely inspired by Spinoza’s *deus sive natura* which denies that the ‘Creative God’ is the “personal, intervening, loving, caring God too. God is nothing other than the universe, externally existent and utterly determined by the laws of logical causation” (455). This movement away from the spiritual does not negate the spirit of the landscape but highlights a spirit that is not imparted upon the natural but has a palpable and experiential spirit within.

Wordsworth’s interest rested in the relationship of the non-human to the mind, rather than nature for itself, as he reflected upon his own and others responses to nature rather than simply describing the landscape. While the sublime may be problematic in future constructions of the human/non-human relationship, specifically with the notion of wilderness, the Romantic “sublime” helpfully pushed back against bleak industrialism to use affectation to inspire emotional connections with landscapes and wilderness that deserve to exist on their own. In Wordsworth, we find that “the human mind is ‘exquisitely fitted’ to external nature, enabling the possibility of an imaginative sustainability in that relationship” and the erasure of a separate category of nature (21). This capacity within Wordsworth was an ability to love and learn from nature, creating an undifferentiated identity with the natural rather than a fully differentiated experience

apart from it. This capacity of attention is seen as a special and not general disposition, one that must be culturally developed over time. Moving forward, John Parham's helpful essay "Was There a Victorian Ecology" emphasizes the Victorian period's necessary contributions to our ecological understanding. In the Victorian mind, the crisis of a diminished countryside largely meant a crisis of faith. One must appreciate that the Victorian era was one of significant scientific discoveries crucial to ecology, as scientists began to better understand sustainability, chemistry, and ecosystems. The Victorian emphasis on harmony and balance created continuity within the movement and helped "us to understand a sensitivity to a balance in nature that also gives light to the Modernist movement" (171). For example, Ruskin's main concern was relating the rules of art to proper understandings of natural laws and the liberty that they contained (169). The main problem, ecologically, lies in the growth of the isolated individual in contrast to a holistic nature.

In the rise of Modernism, a split developed between approaches to nature. While, as Anne Raine laments, much of the conservation aspects of Modernism are overlooked, specifically the poetry of Harriett Monroe, the industrialized and isolated individual seemed to reach its cultural heights. On one end, Harriett Monroe, founder of Poetry Magazine and a fellow hiker of John Muir, wrote nature poems and fought for conservation. In opposition to Wyndham Lewis who fought for poetic thriving through technology, Monroe "saw poetry as a sort of national park to be preserved" (Raine 99).. Rather than a vehicle to extract truth from, nature becomes a place of human and societal construction that is intricately intertwined with cultural perspectives and worldviews.

This tension does not mean that Modernist work offers nothing of interest to the student of Ecocriticism. Raine argues that many of the key Modernist texts, like T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland," engage conventional ideas of nature by disrupting, defamiliarizing, distancing, or "apocalypse"-ing landscapes. Modernist writers felt themselves in the throws of historical change, witnessing revolutionary changes in what was perceived as "nature." Modernist texts offer key resources for ecocritics because of the immense changes in human relations with land and the planet through the meteoric rise of technological and industrialism. With the burgeoning critique of Cartesian dualism and interest in embodied perception, the era began to look at the earth as "planet," one that housed different perspectives of worldviews and notions of the human and non-human.

While some Modernist works continued the Romantic tradition of resisting the technoscientific objectification and instrumentalization of nature," (Raine 105) others leaned towards a post-apocalyptic dystopia, vis-a-vis *Brave New World*, in which we see the eventual consequences of our obsession with control and machinery (Raine 105). The focus across texts was the separation between the perceiver and the perceived, along with "the attack on dualistic thinking, the foregrounding of backgrounds, the exploration of the relation to language to alterity, and the self-referential nature of symbol making" (Cantrell 34). Building upon the tenets of phenomenology, Modernism's self-referentiality was a movement towards understanding that we are connected with what we perceive and are constantly in communication with it. Thus, in Modernism, the clear-cut dividing lines between reality and the perceiver as slowly blurred and being to disintegrate, a process continued by Postmodernism. Above all, Modernist fiction, Leo

Marx argues in *The Machine in the Garden*, leaves us with the elucidated problem asking for a solution: “To change the situation we require new symbols of possibility, and although the creation of those symbols is in some measure the responsibility of artists, it is in greater measure the responsibility of society” (365).

Marx’s charge lies within the hands of the postmodern, as the Faustian method of domination over landscape was enacted to an alarming rate, human and nature relations now must focus on the object oriented ontology of Postmodernism that examines the “translations” between the human and the non-human. Timothy Morton, in his essay on Deconstructionism and Ecology, has argued that all texts are inherently environmental as they organize space into meaning and non-meaning” (292). Deconstructionism within modern understandings of the human and non-human is necessary as the arbitrary boundaries between life forms are dissolved, and human domination is decentered through each discovery of interconnectedness. Morton etymologically highlights that “humiliation” etymologically means “being brought close to earth,” and Deconstructionism offers this return by showing that things in this world are more mysterious, uncanny and intimate than they seem (296).

Within the Postmodern break down of boundaries, semiotics and studies of discursive practices, the environment becomes an element of discourse that is populated with intentions placed upon it by others as a form of cultural narration (Mazel *American Literary Environmentalism* 35). The Postmodern moved away from “environment” being strictly a noun to “environing” as an action that is continually created through discourse. Arran Gare points out that the conceptual, unifying strands of modernity were programs – in knowledge, rationality, and the ability to structure society that emancipated the human

from drudgery. Postmodernism, alongside Deep Ecology, presented a complex ecosystem, decentralized power and elitism while instilling pluralism and ethics of self-realization (196). Postmodernism's reject of the metanarrative of "progress," paired with a plurality of heterogeneous language games and Deluze and Guattari's "Rhizome," opened up a more naturalist and holistic way of looking at knowledge. This knowledge was free from totalitarianism and characterized by a nomadic politics that emphasized the indeterminacy and unpredictability of human powers and gave back a sense of responsibility to all species

Mazel also argues that Postmodernism best understands that nature and wilderness are "discursive ineluctably shaped by the desires of the cultures that deploy them, and thus unavailable as guarantors of stable meaning" (187). A Postmodern ecology sees the nonlinearity and instability of ecosystems, and rejects more Enlightenment theories of an orderly natural system characterized by a stable community. In so many words, a Postmodern ecology understands that there is no full "return," and landscapes cannot be restored completely to their natural states. This leads Dana Phillips to argue that today's ecological energy must be focused on coping with the negative effects of historical misuse. This does not translate into an ecological apathy amongst Postmodern thinkers. Instead, the rejection of metanarratives and deconstruction of boundaries opens up potentials for the grassroots politics of the marginalized. The fight within the Postmodern, and the growing global village, continues to be pushing back against the "non-place" in which landscape and place lose their meaning.

Instead, a contemporary ecology creates a polyphonic grand narrative for the Deep Ecology movement using the philosophies of postmodernism, acknowledging its limits and celebrating diverse perspectives towards a common goal. If the transition of human relations to the environment created, as Christopher Manes proposes, a realm of silences called “nature” obscured by claims of global eternal truths or utilitarian necessities, then the Deep Ecology movement is a corrective to this trajectory (17). While the historical “Great Chain of Being” created a fictionalized version of Man vs. Nature, where Man became the sole subject and speaker of the natural order, Postmodernism and Deep Ecology have begun to restructure man’s place in ecosystems. While searching for reconfigured ways of speaking of human worth and purpose without objectifying the nonhuman world, Deep Ecology provides a new language that frees us from the obsession of human preeminence and restores a form of ontological humility.

In Deep Ecology, the human is intertwined with nature and does not necessarily have the language to speak of it or for it, but searching for ways to articulate a new relationship that does not accept familiar divisions. Based upon a notion of “concrete contents,” where reality is directly apprehended rather than structures to explain reality, apprehending the quality of things through their relations with each other. But, what does one mean by the word “ecology”? Ecology is a study of the “natural way of life:” a method of seeing that accepts a circular feedback with man and environment, and a push back against a condescending, rigid, linear understanding of otherness that searches for “room” in man’s world for nature. Ecology goes beyond mapping cultural developments to “question inherited ideas of nature, consider alternatives, and evaluate both.

Arne Naess pioneered the movement in the 1970s as a response to a false notion of an inexhaustible nature and environmental systems that use piece-meal management of issues to avoid collapse and disaster. Arne Naess grew up in the mountainous, coastal areas of Norway, and in his formative years was told to read Spinoza, who quickly became one of his heroes alongside Ghandi. While a professor in Oslo in the 1960's, Naess became aware of environmental activism through Rachel Carson and began to develop the philosophies of Ghandi and Spinoza into a philosophy called "Ecosophy T" that spurred the movement. In Naess' view, it is not the solutions that need revolution but the structures of society. A society focused on anthropocentric consumption and self-assertion must shift its focus towards other species' needs and the integrity of place, and experience the latent qualities that come from the earth while moving away from dualistic categories of language. What must be grasped is a sense of Earth's importance: "Naess wants to claim something more: that the world-in-itself is attainable by the human being who listens, watches, learns from feelings sensed out there, beyond the mind's narrow confines" (Rothenberg 155).

In "Ecosophy and Gestalt Ontology," Naess proposes that the vast complex of interrelationships is a joyful characteristic: "we participate in the world and try to be careful" (240). In *gestalt*, the whole is great than the sum of its parts –we experience *gestalt* spontaneously but can analyze its structure as the internal relationship between mind and body is paired with the experience of reality. Moving past the notion of association from nature, Naess argues that reality is a manifold of *gestalts* in which we experience the wholeness of an environmental experience. This is the crucial notion of perception and construction: we experience the concrete contents of reality alongside

abstract structures. For Naess, in “Self-Realization: A Ecological Approach to Being in the World,” it is the balance of the self that moves past ego that creates this perception of reality. While we often confuse “self” with ego, human maturity cannot help by identify “self” with all living beings. As the maturation of the self moves from the ego to the social self and then to the metaphysical self, Naess proposes that the final step can be the realization of an ecological self, where the meaning of life is fulfilled through the self-realization of the human and non-human and the respect and flourishing of both. By indentifying with others and increasing maturity, the self is widened and deepened to an identification and respect of all things. In this view, to fix the environmental crisis, an enlightened self-interest of humans and humans and the potential of joyful experience of all must be strived for. This movement of self highlights the eight points of Deep Ecology: first, both human and non-human lives have value independent of their usefulness. Second, richness and diversity contributes to this realization, and, third, humans have no right to reduce the non-human except for vital needs. The fourth point argues for the necessity of a smaller human population, and, fifth, that present human interference with the non-human is excessive and worsening. Because of this, the sixth point argues that Politics must be changed to affect economic, technological and ideological structures. The final two points look at a shifting ideological structure: that the shift must consist of appreciating life quality over increasing standards of living and that proponents of these ideas must fight to implement necessary changes.

For Deep Ecology to work, there must be a transformation of philosophical systems and the ways in which we conceive “nature.” To enact this shift, many ecological thinkers employ the system of phenomenology, looking for a suitable thought process

that moves away from Descartes' mind/body dualism, which created the non-human as machinery and dismissed organic views of life for a mechanized, impersonal worldview. Phenomenology worked as a challenge to Western assumptions about the "indefensibility" of things and a dominant natural-scientific conception of nature. It adopted Husserl's notion of "things themselves, followed by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Simone de Beauvoir, where the intentional relationship of all objects operated under the notion that the self and its world are inseparable. As Axel Goodbody writes, phenomenology is concerned with *phenomena*, Kant's notion of objects understood within human sensibility, alongside *nouomena* where objects are things in themselves which humans cannot directly experience. Built upon our experience of places and our lived worlds, it challenged pure scientific objectivity: "Edmund Husserl, founder of this school of thought at the turn of the twentieth century, distinguished between *Lebenswelt* (the locus of intentional activities of human beings) and *Umwelt* (the framework within which these activities are carried out)" (65). Phenomenologists focus on interactions between the self and the other, like Levinas and Husserl, who emphasized the manipulation of the other to fit the self and understanding the acknowledgement of the other as an idea that is constantly in flux. When it comes to the other, a felt ethical concern must be cultivated rather than an understood ethical obligation. This notion is specifically crucial when it comes to an environment that cannot necessarily speak for nor defend itself.

In Magdalena Holy-Luczaj's article on the foundation of phenomenology for the ecological movement, we see that the fundamental feature of "things" is not their ontic texture but their situated surroundings. Heidegger concludes an object's "thinghood" is

grounded in time and space, thus there are never two things exactly the same, moving away from the Platonic notion of forms. In this time and space define “a realm of reference to the things” and the realm of how things meet us (55). While time and space do not originate from things, man does not necessarily create time and space. For Heidegger, “Man and things seem to be on equal ontological footing. Moreover, there is no distinction between “more” or “less” complete things (whether they are alive, natural, or artificial) since thinghood is being-this-one through which being disclose itself” (56). This form of ontological egalitarianism, the idea that “to be is not just to exist but to show up or be disclosed,” requires an attention to the thing-ness of things, much like Hopkin’s “thisness” (Garrard *Ecocriticism* 34). Humans must not force things into meanings and identities for their own instrumental values, like treating resources as an insatiable reservoir, but must, using the Heideggerian term, “dwell” with the earth as a form of being.

If humans have a duty to let things disclose themselves in their own ways, a preferred method might be poetry as it enables a form of “showing up.” It is much of what William Carlos Williams meant when he said that there were no ideas but in things. Arne Naess models this with his philosophy: dissolving philosophy into poetry with associative thinking and intuition, though Naess resisted the form of poetry while employing much of its expressive language. Much of phenomenology, which pairs well with the Deep Ecology movement, is what David Rothenberg calls, “a witness for wonder:” “the truest, purest phenomenology is an exact delight in the reverberations of the environment around us” (154). The role of the Deep Ecologist or the phenomenologist is the call to teach others what must be done to keep wonder visible and

free. This phenomenology enjoys the world, the *jouissance* of experience, not because of the world's usefulness but as an identifiable place that we invest with emotions, language, and love. As Timothy Clark argues, when one strips nature of its experiential quality, as well as localization, it creates an abstraction that makes exploitation and destruction easily justifiable. Phenomenology is crucial to Ecocriticism because of its primacy of the experience over abstraction, where "value comes from a pre-given element of experience" and its work to describe the fundamentals of things as they present themselves to us in language and the arts (278). What Clark defines as "ecophenomenology" pairs Deep Ecology with the philosophical system to create a system of thought that is localized and place specific: while one cannot understand or grasp the abstract idea that the earth is dying, one can experience the individualized dying of a beautiful tree. Anne Raine highlights the personal perception in Merleau-Ponty's work with the involvement of the perceiver in what is being perceived, creating an embodied perception that incorporates Walter Pater's "sheer experience of the fleeing present" (107). This foregrounds the interconnectedness of humans, the non-human and phenomena, as perception and language arise from the "continuity between our bodies and the world," where a process of reciprocal exchange occurs between multiple centers of perception (107). This creates what Raine describes as a matrix of earthly life and energy. Modernism finds a phenomenological negotiation of perception between the perceiver and the natural world: participatory vision. Merleau-Ponty wrote of the kinship between all living organisms and coevolution, that makes humans enmeshed in the "wild realm" of the world as "flesh of its flesh" (Goodbody 66).

Language may be unique to man, but for Merleau-Ponty, it is born from our bodily participation in a landscape that speaks through sensory experience and “stresses its gestural, emotionally expressive qualities” (66). To have a participatory vision of nature, understanding that our bodies in landscape is what creates our experience of the non-human, one must move from perceptions of nature, Deep Ecology, and phenomenology into the cultural realm that nature and wilderness hold. How do we engage with landscape and nature with our bodies and is this a possibility any longer? Kris Fresonke argues that we must first disable “sappy” constructs that are often misapplied to nature: first, that the construction of nature by man is a stale metaphor that should concede some ground to essentials, second, that the idea of a tragic, persecuted nature that obscures true experiential nature in favor of a heightened, unreal nature, and, finally, that nature is easily accessible, as 52% of the population is suburbanites who experience nature through parks and lawns and not the “wild” nature of literature.

Complications occur when one tries to tease out the boundary lines between the “wild” and civilization, just as the natural and unnatural. We grasp wilderness through metaphors, not unmediated experience. The term wilderness has been adopted by environmentalists to communicate a care for nature, though the term originally meant “uncontrollable” or an “other” out of reach of earthly authority. Leo Mellor in “The Lure of Wilderness” illuminates this construction of wilderness that centers on the erasure of the human. In imaging landscape, wilderness is often rendered as *tabula rasa*, “scythed clear of human presence,” creating a naïve, if not dangerous, notion that wilderness and humanity cannot coexist, and one must win out over the other. For Mellor, wilderness “can be where we choose to find it, perhaps more precious in the small as well as large,

and might even be in the act of perception itself” (117). William Cronon argues that the distinction of “wilderness” is necessary for our desire to escape from our “too-muchness,” as the wilderness convention moved from a desolate wasteland to a therapeutic locale. Historically, wilderness came to embody the frontier myth of virgin, uninhabited lands, though this was only possible through the ironic, cruel removal of indigenous inhabitants. Once Indians were removed, tourists could enjoy the “pristine primitivism” of the Wild. This reminds us of just how invented the concept wilderness was, and how it came to be perceived as a place not harmoniously lived within but a place to keep separated. Cronon links the desire to wilderness as a flight from history, offering a false hope of escaping responsibility, predicated on the illusion that we can wipe the slate clean and return to a state before we left our marks on the world. By operating off the dualistic thinking that “wilderness is where humans are not,” it stops us from living alongside wilderness and offers no solutions to environmental problems (80).

Historically, wilderness, landscape theorist JB Jackson chronicles, has engendered hostility and fear alongside a desire for protection. While for primitive man, the forest represented alienation, the 19th century developed an aesthetic appreciation of wilderness that moved away from the Satanic wilderness of Puritan theology to a place of respite with the rise of wilderness tourism. Jackson writes in in *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* that medieval designations of land fell into three spaces: one where man created his own defined spaces, boundaries and fields, one where cattle grazed on open space without fence, and a third space that incorporated the unknown beyond. And, yet, today wilderness is hyper-predicated on the notion of boundaries and aesthetics, specifically in the American imagination. Focused on the Romantic sublime, the Frontier myth created a

scared wilderness where a strong, though not comfortable, experienced was invoked. Here steep mountains and raging rivers characterized the sublime wilderness experience, so intense that rational conceptions were overtaken by intense sensations, awe and wonder, and characterized by a representation of limitlessness that made man feel small. 18th century observers did not mirror Kant's dictum of "purposiveness without purpose" and sought an altered utility (Sayre 115). This notion began to be tamed by the tourists who sought out a domesticated sublime of a pleasant, bucolic landscape (a "safe wilderness") – along with a Rousseau-fueled attraction of primitivism – where the return to primitivism was the anti-dote to the overly refined modern world" (Cronon 71). While the awe of the sublime requires a sense of landscape's dominant ability and a grasp of infinity, and the understanding that the extensive ecosystem of wilderness is much larger than the scale of the moment, the landscape slowly transitioned towards picturesque scenes. Alongside the desire for the picturesque came the introduction of controlled boundaries and easily accessible "wilderness:" "The Salvatoran sense of fear and awe which a backpacker might feel has been for most people replaced by a Claudean picturesque simulacrum, in which the sport utility vehicle replaces the shepherd as pastoral mood accessory" (Byerly 65). This picturesque created a dangerous notion for wilderness as one only values the picturesque landscapes and leaves less aesthetic but critical landscapes open to justified exploitation.

If only certain boundaries created by humans specify "wilderness" and their value comes from the picturesque, then legally designated wilderness reserves quickly become simulacra as they simulate a tame wilderness. As Jack Turner writes:

when we deal in such abstractions, we blur boundaries – between the real and the fake, the wild and the tame, the independent and dependent, the original and the copy, the healthy and the diminished. Blurring takes the edge off loss and removes us from our responsibilities. Wild nature is lost; we have collected it; you can go see it whenever you want (33).

Abstraction displaces our emotion for the wild as we exploit wilderness for consumption or a playpen. By doing so we lose the most effective environmental weapon: emotional identification, a deep respect, care and identification for wild nature. Further, these boundary lines reinforce false dualism of wilderness as a place where humans are not. Rather than creating a space for humans to interact with nature, wilderness reserves and parks unintentionally lessen our interaction with “wildness.” Turner continues that if we have lost anything in America, it is our gross contact and experience of wild nature, and once that experience of wild nature is lost, we abuse it. Thoreau spoke of wildness as a quality rather than simply wilderness areas and associated it with the good, holy, free, and the vitality and force of life itself (Turner 107). What was intended in this experience of wildness was a less dense sense of time, a close space, and a keenly sensual experience of smell and sound and touch: “alert, careful,” full of care and aware of principles of old (Turner 27). What we often experience now is a several diminished sense of wilderness, indirect experiences mediated by photography, writing, and car windows, as the national parks are managed by the picturesque as a base for entertainment and bucolic ease. There is no freedom; there are permits that designate where you can and cannot go, but this is a poor substitute for genuine interaction.

Critics have argued that instead we must recognize an element of “wildness” in the everyday human existence where the line between the natural and unnatural is blended. This incorporates a history in which wilderness areas have been inhabited by indigenous

peoples for a milieu of years. “Wildness everywhere” presents a totally different perspective from a wilderness with a concrete reference to somewhere 'outside of human influence – reasserting the fact that humans belong with and within wilderness (Haila 129). This wilderness is one that sees reservation areas of all sizes: pockets of wilderness in “every schoolyard, old roadbeds, wild plots in suburban yards, flower boxes in urban windows, cracks in the pavement, field, farm, home, and workplace, all the ubiquitous margins” (Birch 350). If, as Wordsworth wrote, the world is too much with us, it is because we have failed to realize its proper relation to ourselves. Wilderness areas are not our slaves nor do they need our acknowledgement, and, yet, just because nature cannot acknowledge us does not ensure our right to dispense it. Likewise, our return to wilderness cannot rest upon a notion of return to primitivism but rather a reconnecting of reason, which has been severed from instinct and fails to see that we cannot survive on this earth while destroying our host. As Wayland Drew writes, wilderness is still able to suggest man’s proper place on earth but “it is a narrow, hubristic, suicidal, and tyrannical Reason which will not listen” (118). As we continue to operate off of the notion that we have done our part by protect wilderness areas, we justify our actions towards the lands and homes that we habit, setting our lives apart from the nature that surrounds us. Any method of viewing nature through a lens of dualism and separation will likely reinforce irresponsible environmental actions (87).

If wilderness is a space where we attempt to withhold our power to dominate or divide, then the recognition of its otherness must be a conscious, willed act alongside a state of mind that looks at our environment in wonder. The problem is if we only train our eyes to see the wonder in remote, pristine hideaways of landscape. Every landscape,

be it city or suburb, pastoral or wild, must have its place. While large spaces of wilderness areas remain necessary, Cronon argues that there can be spaces that remind us of wildness in our backyards and all around us, as we refuse to be dismissive of more humble nature or to privilege sublime landscapes over others (88). Connecting the nature of uncommon places alongside the nature of the ordinary worlds we inhabit begins to heal a divide that illuminates the false hope of escaping to the wilderness and preaching ecological doom. A solution focused on a unification of the body and landscape, land and community, that emphasizes human values and natural processes of human communities, creates a localized understanding in which the abstraction of “wilderness” is quickly expelled and emotional connections are forged once again between land and self.

Wilderness as an “out there” and “in here” duality can become both human and natural, living in a home that encompasses the wilderness and the garden. If wildness is a quality to be cultivated, then one must, as Wendell Berry has tirelessly written, make a home in nature, establishing an attentiveness to see the “wildness” in the planet as one that dwells everywhere around us. In turn, honoring this wildness means an attention and critical awareness of our actions in the use and non-use of wilderness and nature. A wilderness that incorporates human interaction does not necessarily equate to destroying pristine stores of resources, but takes up the charge of the Deep Ecology movement where man lives alongside animal and nature in an egalitarian awareness of the value of both animate and inanimate objects.

“This-ness” and Brian Teare

The question remains how linking Deep Ecology, with the pastoral and Ecocriticism serves a beneficial interdisciplinary exploration for the environmental movement. Environmental concerns have slowly drifted towards the purview of the aesthetic experience and narrative: an important emotional encounter with land and landscape. What is it that makes landscape experiential and necessary? The answer lies in perception and the artistic experience, the present moment and aura that poets have long sought after. The exploration turns from the concerns of the trajectory of Ecocriticism, the transmutations of the pastoral, the necessity of the Deep Ecology Movement, and our cultural interactions with wilderness to apply these threads to the poetic perception, experience, and languaging of a “sentimental” or aesthetic, a feeling of beauty, moment within nature: our ability to link our artistic concerns with the environmental, highlighting the role of bodies in spaces as a key conservation and literary argument.

When we come into a landscape, what are we experiencing? With the rise of virtual reality and the picturesque, it seems that little material reality is left to experience. In “The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin wrestles with similar concerns over reproduction and the experience of art or landscape:

In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new (“Work of Art”).

What do we do with an aesthetic nature that cannot be recreated? It can be virtualized but its resources that are necessary to human existence cannot be replicated. While, for Benjamin, photography freed man from the process of pictorial reproduction, it replaced the body for the eye and created an interesting effect in the perception of landscape: primarily the notion that one does not need an immediate experience of physical location to experience a specific place. Something must be lacking from this experience of the eye rather than the body and Benjamin argues that this is the “aura” of the original. By “aura” Benjamin means, “its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence” ” (“Work of Art”). The context of an aesthetic object or landscape matters because the placing in time and space gives the art or landscape a feeling of authentic experience: “If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch.”

Without this context and aura, perception follows easily into an abstraction that, when it comes to land as many ecologists have shown, leads quickly to exploitation. In photography or virtual reality, the aura of the work of art or the landscape withers as the plurality of re-creation makes the original essence of the land blasé and kitsch. Benjamin’s arguments must not be glossed over lightly as Luddite railings against new art forms. He accurately lays out that as human perception changes, so does humanity’s attention and existence: with the decay of aura comes societal changes and decays. Benjamin argues, like our treatment of wilderness, that the desire is to bring things

“closer” spatially ultimately results in “their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.” This is a problem of perception for

Benjamin:

“Uniqueness and permanence are as closely linked in the latter as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former. To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose ‘sense of the universal equality of things’ has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. Thus is manifested in the field of perception what in the theoretical sphere is noticeable in the increasing importance of statistics. The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception.”

When applied to landscape and our Ecocritical concerns, Benjamin’s essay is a crucial foundation for the argument that the authentic aesthetic experience is predicated by the body, space, and the context which contains the “aura” of the nature that we experience, separate from the human perceiver.

The “aura” of Benjamin’s landscape closely mirrors that of poet Gerard Manley Hopkins’s idea of “inscape,” “instress,” and “thisness.” Hopkins’s notion of “inscape” is the essential or individual quality of a thing or the uniqueness of an observed object, scene or event. This “inscape,” for Hopkins, is sustained by “instress,” or a force or energy. When compared to Benjamin’s “aura” the ideas seem to line up fairly well: Benjamin is concerned with the felt experience of an aesthetic object in time and space, and Hopkins is concerned with the energy that undergirds the essence and experience of each individual object or landscape. Hopkins’s “thisness” is based off of Dun Scotus’ *haecceity* and as Hopkins terms it, thisness is the “dappled distinctiveness of everything kept in Creation.”

Hopkin's inscape functions at a phenomenological level and gets extended into an enframed way of seeing, while instress is the force and energy of the inscape but also the impulse that acts upon the senses and actualizes the inscape for the perceiver. In the instance of landscape, the energy of the field imposes upon the senses to create an individualized, specifically charged perception of the site's uniqueness. While Scotus was alongside Aquinas as one of the great medieval theologians, he was often pushed aside as a marginal figure during Hopkins' time because of en-vogue pre-modern notions of abstract unity that did not agree with the current Aristotelian scientific canon. Hopkins' was brought in by "a materialist emphasis on being which, in addition, gave theological justification to the love of nature, and a support for his insistence on the need for intellectual coherence" (Parham 134). Hopkins was convinced that material being can give us an understanding of the universe, a Christological bodily presence that moved away from Gnosticism, and that non-human nature can affect us towards a perception of God as a sacramental element and communicable essence. "Scotus similarly reinforced Hopkins' belief that truth could be arrived not only through the observation of phenomena but also in the enframing of those observations within intellectual thought," giving Hopkins a confused intuition of Nature's living whole (Parham 135).

Proposed by John Duns Scotus in the 11th century, *haecceity* is a non-qualitative property that gives individuation and identity. It is not a "bare particular in the sense of something *underlying* qualities" but is a "non-qualitative property of a subject or thing" (Richard, 2014). *Haecceitas* stems from the Latin *haec* which means "this;" "thisness" is opposed to "whatness" or *quidditas* because it incorporates essence rather than just object identification. *Haecceitas* is where "each entity is conveyed by means of a characteristic

mode of action” (Parham 164). For Scotus, *haecceity* was a way to account for the non-qualitative properties that create individuation. This property is not limited to only sensate beings but to the inanimate as well. This idea differs from a Platonic notion of essence or “form” as each object within a form has its own individual essence that communicates with an observer. Thus, when applied to landscape, Nature is not merely a place for humans to posit their projections upon but rather a communicable essence to come into contact with. This argument is a bolster for the Deep Ecologists, furthering an interdependence between the human and non-human and preserving a palpable, experiential nature for the environment.

Hopkin’s instress stems from this experiential non-qualitative element of the non-human. Instress operates as an aesthetic and ontological principle from which truth may be conveyed. It is also an aesthetic form that conveys the ecological notion of “dialectical interdependence, in which all forms are sustained by a force of energy in the environment (Parham 129). If poetry is activated by the phenomenological moment where nature imposes on the human consciousness, then the poet’s own nature becomes instressed by an inscape in external nature. That is to say: the poet’s interaction with the *haecceity* of his or her landscape creates an interrelationship between the force of the landscape and the ability of the poet to perceive the environment. The meeting of body, natural essence, and perception comes together in the human consciousness as it perceives the inscape. It is the poet then, as Parham argues, who “breathes in the being of the world” and whose poetry is “expiration” designed to re-convey the ecological integrity of the nature upon which we depend. This poet is sensuously incorporated into this aesthetic experience of nature and conveys to the reader this sense of ecological intersubjectivity (Parham 164).

In the continuation with these thoughts of communicable essence and “expiration,” I wish to look at four main keys of the poetic experience of “thisness,” or nature’s essence, as it applies to the aura of landscape: perception, body and place, and language. I will apply these ideas of the body perceiving in landscape and attempting to give it articulation through the work of Brian Teare in *Companion Grasses*. Teare’s work focuses on the poetry of a place and emphasizes the idea that the landscape is a key experiential site for the poem and the poet. If “place-attachment” remains a key tool in developing ecological self-consciousness and sensitizing people to their connections to the environment, how do the poet and poem mirror this attachment? By “landscape,” I operate off the definition that it is a denotation of the external world mediated through human experience, which is inherently subjective, or to come in contact with the real and to corroborate this with our own individual ways of perceiving the world (Cosgrove 13). Artistic usage of landscape suggests a personal, private, and visual experience of place, and understanding the layered meanings of landscape obliges us to pay more attention to lands broader historical structure and processes. Denis Cosgrove writes of this experience succinctly: “landscape is an ideological concept” (15). It represents that ways that people have signified their own identities and posited their relationship to nature. If, as Buell argues, that “there never was an is without a where,” place in the poem is a space to which meaning has been assigned value and the range of sites that can be “places” is vast (Endangered World 55). Brian Teare speaks similarly: *all thinking always already*

takes place within landscape of some kind,

whether that be city or suburb or rural land (Appedix)

Place is constantly in flux, taken for granted in lived experience, and a highly malleable concept depending upon the worldview, social structure, and culture of the perceiver. As Edward Casey writes, place is what we feel “with and around, under and above, before and behind” (61), as something constantly in flux but also undeniably real. A place seems simple until one begins to notice things: it requires a repetitive attentiveness to environments. Psychologically, we become connected to those places that are attached to experiences and memories, often formed as a template in childhood and that go under reinvention later on in life. The poet attuned to place desires to create a place where space is valued and turns environmental space into places that creates a home and understanding within the reader. This is a consistent motive in Teare’s poetry, creating place through the experiences, details of the land, and the emotional attachment. As we move into the “spaciousness” of the place and the poem, one which Teare leaves a plethora of open space for, we see the extent of our human limitations: this vastness of space paired with place-attachment keeps us in a mindset of smallness, humility, and care. As Scott Bryson writes, space consciousness in the work of art “emerges from a mindful relationships with place” that relies on a deep knowledge of a landscape paired with humble awareness (105). Buell argues in *The Future of Environmental Criticism* that places are “centers of felt value” (63). And while attachment can easily fall into sentimental determinism, place consciousness involves a bonding of spatial and temporal orientation that is paired with the experiential moment of the land. This attachment is largely created through imaging alone, continually invested with accrued life experience and manifested in the work of art.

This poetry based upon a felt notion of place rests upon an understanding that a place existed long before a speaker arrived to signify it. It is also something “real” in the sense that it is material and an object that the speaker must recognize in spite of language games which also exist. Teare’s poetry in *Companion Grasses* utilizes this respect and attachment to place, leaving silence and open space to mirror the devotion to a place and humility within it, mirroring the poem to a song that the writer tries to sing. In “Quakkingrass” Teare writes: “the attention taxonomy requires / amounts to a species of singing” (32). The poet sings of place and a felt center of value invested with lived experience that becomes a method of signifying this experience to the reader. In one of the longest poems in the work, “to begin with the desire,” Teare writes of the balance between the kinesis and mimesis of the poem and the hike as “discursion & excursion” as one enters a landscape and place physically and pairs it with the discursive practices of the poem and the mind. The poem describes a hike on the 21st of May, at the edge of spring’s end and is an almost aimless walk about a place rather than a decisive hike, as Teare repeats multiple times the serendipity of the choice of trail. He thinks of Heidegger and the poem as a linguistic event of a place:

A linguistic event coextensive
With the hike itself,

The poem can’t hold the real
Fields, of course -- unsaid,

Implicit, “the poetic
Statement” can’t say
What it means to *be*

In the fields, locate their value
Or convey their biodiversity;

We're meant to discuss,
"first, to point out

the proper place or site of
something, to situate it,
and second, to heed that

place or site," Heidegger
writes, as we watch Hawks. (Teare 75).

The poetry of place blends the aesthetic experience and builds it from the *real*, understanding that the poem cannot hold the real form but mirror it as a way of opening up the landscape. The poem stems from the experience of the real field, of place, and extends the experience of the *real* into the poem. "to begin with the desire" focuses heavily on Teare's father, "dead now a year," and the ways in which place is heavily invested with memory: "returning / to this place to revisit a feeling" (93). Within the text, the memory of the hike and the poem that forms from it leaves space within the field of the page. Teare writes of the poem as being a transcriptive force rather than descriptive, transcribing a feeling and experience, rather than giving a simple image of it. "to begin with the desire" seems reminiscent of Naess' ecological ego, as the poet of place stands at the edge and lets nature come in for itself:

My mode is

Fundamentally standing
At the margin & letting,
Things in : from the north,
As though there thought
Opens, they enter, the field

Larger than singular, the path
veering sharply west (80).

Perhaps the most extensive example of Teare's poetry of place comes from the poem "Tall Flatsedge Notebook," as it brings together the fullness of the experience of place in the poem as a collage. Using sight, body, mind, and land, Teare annotates a hike and reads nature. The poem continually frames itself in its locality, listing Chimney Rock, Point Reyes National Seashore, and 59 Albion Street in San Francisco the setting, and lists a lengthy list of sources and outside work, consisting of Merleau Ponty, Luce Irigaray, Michel de Certeau, James Elkins, and William James, switching from paragraphs to prosody to quotations. This form of poetic collaging of a place highlights the many perceptive factors that come into play when one feels and enters into a landscape that is not merely a site for human projections but an experiential reality, a place full of meaning and memory. Teare speaks of the composition of the poem:

as for "tall flatsedge notebook" –
the layout of that poem
mimics my actual notebook –
in which i had quotations
and a hiking journal interleaved –
the bracketed bibliographical material
was a way to "annotate" the hike
the way what i've read influences
what i see and how i think about
and experience what i see –
and so it's worth saying that,

for most of the poems in
companion grasses, my process
was one of writing *en plein air*,
hiking on site and writing
during the hike – those notes
went into a notebook that
also contained reading notes
and sometimes research
on the site itself as well –
this always seemed appropriate
because all description
of landscape *is* a reading of it,
... and “tall flatsedge notebook”
marks how that knowledge is both
fully integrated into experience
and also in some way “marginalia,”
not consciously the focus of what is
primarily a physical, embodied experience (Appendix)

Teare’s desire to pay attention, his commitment to focus and name the specific locality of the places that his poetry situates, and the way he focuses on describing the “real” nature of the field highlights an ecological attentiveness that can create a method of place attachment in the reader and situates the poet as a herald of place: “You: the “world / We wanted to go out into / To come ourselves into” (43). Yi-Fu Tuan has

termed this experience of place paired with body and emotion as *topophilia*, “all of the human being’s affective ties with the material environment,” a pleasure from the fleeting beauty, a tactile delight, and a feeling of home (113). This term couples sentiment with place in which the landscape provides sensory stimuli through images that lead to joy. For Tuan, this sort of experience of place comes from being surprised by the beauty in the sudden contact of a reality one has not experienced before. This love of place must look like “the childlike enjoyment of nature” that places little importance on the picturesqueness but rather all the sensations that the landscape involves (96). And, yet, in this *topophilia* we must focus on the mediator of the experience and sensations: the body. Teare’s poetry is not devoid of physicality; it is not a metaphysical exploration of “nature,” but rather a method that takes the real field, inserts the body, and links the land to the mind.

Just as Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger argued, the body must be tied to an experiential environment: the impact of the landscape has long been registered on the body, as the cusp between the beholder and the world. Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy understood that we grasp external space through our bodily situation; it inhabits and haunts space. The phenomenological body continually emerges anew from its negotiations and experiences with the world and nature (Cantrell 35). Teare speaks of the experience of the body as a “deep intrication of body with site and language with place” in embodied experience in the poem, and speaks of the influence of Merleau-Ponty on his craft:

... *the visible and the invisible*

posits perceiver and world as mutually
enfleshing, as chiasmatic, going so far as
to question the line between the flesh
of the perceiver and the material of the world –
i can safely say now that that potential blur
between flesh and world i took as axiomatic –
but how to read / render that blur became
the major question (Appendix)

Using the body and touch to create a form of eco-poetry that relies on direct
experience of a world that exerts physical pressure on us, a “reality independent of our
imaginings” and a world that exists outside of our heads and language games (Tuan 8).
Someone who is an onlooker is not involved in the scene or the landscape, but involving
the body moves it from mere sight to experience of a place. This movement from sight to
actually engagement the land in our bodies draws a deeper significant emotional response
from the nature that we touch. Teare comments:

the reason i like
hiking and walking is that the activities
engage both body and mind and also
own the fact that *all thinking always already*
takes place within landscape of some kind,
whether that be city or suburb or rural land

or what have you – we are always working

out our thought within and between bodies
and in relation to where we find our selves –
my attempt in *companion grasses* was to dilate
my own sense of that site where body, mind,
language, and landscape meet, to capture
as much of the richness of that meeting
as possible

To return to “to begin with the desire,” Teare, without formality or a title, begins with a bodily experience of the landscape, where movement and perception are brought together and connected in the body.

we spend our seconds slowly
deciding a trail
to take, the slower to adore

more the rhetoric of a choice
& lend logos to whim’s

irrepressible stretchy
syntax, the poem for a time

both kinesis & mimesis, process
& scene, body & world, our
selves doubled, stationed between two

possibilities continuous
rather than discrete (72)

Teare uses bodily movement like a musical movement in a poetic discursive form, moving him from thought to thought and image to image, reinforcing the separate and important essence of the places and fields he comes in contact with. For Teare, this meeting of body, mind, language, and landscape is what enables the poet and reader to

hold the transcendent with the real, staying grounded by remembering the physicality of the hike on the body:

“we have to hold it instead
in our heads & hands
which would seem impossible
except for how we remember
the trail in our feet, calves,
& thighs, our lungs’ thrust
upward; our eyes, which scan,
trailside bracken for flowers;
& our minds, which recall
their names the best they can; (90)

The poetry of body in place is a question of perception and then of language: “the poet comprehends the communal nature of the world and the connection that exists ... yet he feels no language exists with which to assert the reality of this connection” (Bryson 111). What landscape humbly reminds the poet is that, while many aspects of nature are construction and depend upon subjective perception, there is experience which surpasses signifiers and a world greater than our words. In many respects, a crucial issue is that we have lost our ability to language natural objects and processes that our ancestors were well acquainted of.

Writer Robert MacFarlane has done extensive work to chronicle the various and deep terms of Gaelic, Welsh, and other United Kingdom dialects to recover words that connected natural processes to language. Highlighting that the Oxford Junior Dictionary has been replacing words like *acorn*, *ash*, and *lark* with *attachment*, *blog*, and *MP3*, he suggests a movement away from the language of the natural to the language of the

virtual. For McFarlane, this represents a lack of a “Terra Britannica,” where gathering terms for the land and its weather matter as a vital everyday practice of perception (“Re-Wilding”). Much like the Old English kenning, these dialects of old saw at words as “tiny landscape poems, folded up inside verbs and nouns.” Thus, MacFarlane turns to Hopkins, who, when lacking a word for a natural phenomenon, simply created one: “*shivelight*, for ‘the lances of sunshine that pierce the canopy of a wood’, or *goldfoil* for a sky lit by lightning in ‘zigzag dints and creasings.’ Hopkins sought to forge a language that could register the participatory dramas of our relations with nature and landscape.” This loss of even the words to denote natural processes matter because “language deficit leads to attention deficit,” and as our ability to language places decreases, so does our ability to understand them. It seems that to recover our “word-hoard” of landscape terms, writers must use particularized language of landscape, “precision of utterance as both a form of lyricism and a species of attention,” that focuses on each individual tree and landscape worthy of special admiration.

Teare makes this case in “to begin with the desire.”

to begin with the desire

to give thought to the site
(as Heidegger would say),

to language that which
“from a metaphysical –
aesthetic point of view

may at first appear to be
a rhythm,” is to risk authoring

context as part of the lyric,
only to fail at both (81).

Teare has the desire to reclaim this taxonomy of the land and give language to the site. But, in many cases, a failure of language is inevitable in the attempt to fully match the perception. Language, as postmodernism has shown us, shows up late, always lagging behind the perception of the experience. If landscape is as JB Jackson describes as “a portion of the earth’s surface that can be comprehended at a glance,” then the perceptive nature linked to language plays a crucial role in what angle the perceiver is able to take (Landscape in Sight 302). In “Fossils Tremble (Matter Gap)” Teare writes,

“If grammar better follows nature to die in cycle than culture
In ruin the gaps are different aren’t they - but neither

Better explains how to say
Anything where to put each word
So it lives differently in relation
To the real as it dies what is it
To be the leap from matter
To a transcendental grammar --- the relationship of language to the “real”

The question of eco and nature poetry has been how to put language in perception and conversation with its relationship to the real. David Gilcrest says that this is the mark of “sustainable poetry:” as the poet moves our gaze from the page, through language, to the poet’s involvement in an experience of nature, all the while recognizing the limitations of language in referring to an epiphanic moment of the land (18). The poet’s place, on the border of perception and language, “is both between the world and word and between desire and the impossibility of its satisfaction, especially through the offices of language” (18). The eco-poet is continually using the poem and language as an instrument to articulate an original experience in the landscape. In “Tall Flatsedge,” Teare describes the language he is searching for to describe the epiphanic moment of the hike, longing for a language as durable as the land:

I was making language
A stem to aspire to :
Durable flexible able
To register the shift quickly –

When shaken
To keep shape. (42)

If language is a perpetually shaking, failing thing, how can the poem stand by itself? Sharon Lattig argues that the perceptive poem is a “structural, linguistic tendency of the environment’s tendency to nest and to disjoin,” continually perceiving itself anew (456). It is this embodiment of language in both the landscape and the perceiver that is joined together through the body. For when we perceive a space, we rely upon past knowledge, our own imagination and dispositions, as well as the ways we construct and utilize our own language. Perceptions remain subjective and we, as subjects, are involved. As nature studying itself, the body and language attempt to connect to the “real” as best as they can. Teare writes of the breaking down of language, categories of thought, and the desire to name as the essence that connects the human and non-human:

Flowers then trees we don’t know nor rocks
Days to recite the names of them all
Seems heaven enough to us because what is
Language that “categories of thought
Embodied in individual living forms” thread through us
& things equally - matter a sidereal charity
& doesn’t it bract (63)

Here the imaginative constructions of space paired with language come out in the poem, as the information and atmosphere are rendered artistically within the poem. It understands that all knowledge of space relies upon senses and the ways that the embodiment of thought embedded within us must be parsed out with the body and the

senses. In one of his longer poems in *Companion Grasses*, “Susurrus Stanzas,” Teare explores the immense concern with how we perceive and use our minds to conceptualize the spaces that we inhabit:

The *there* where scale outpaces
The eye lichen a line to horizon
Steam to tide a dilation
In which seeing is thinking
To find a way a language
To where the human fails (18)

The eye sees, it perceives, and yet it is unable to fully translate the “there” that outpaces the eyes into a way of thinking or a language. But the body is *there*; the body is experiencing the interwoven process of seeing and thinking. He continues:

“human nature” is “to stand
in the middle of a thing’
to stand I want to get
closer to where material
touches language “impatient
with ruins” its obviate
architecture its structure
lung grammar sung
mortar undoing & undone
to write sight is itself
site’s re-vision a visitors
signature (18)

To experience the *there* of the material, to see it, for Teare, is to immediately create a mediated experience through perception. It is a grasp and merely a signature. While attempting to language the perception of site, he is inherently revising it through his own perceptive structure. The goal is to communicate the original, experiential moment of the material, though language continually obviates, creates ruins, and undoes the landscape. He succinctly states the goal of the eco-poet in following lines:

to hit vision

with image until
the sentence breaks
to let in the *there* (19)

The breaking down of language occurs in the midst of the need to attempt it. The goal is to try to christen and name the moment, the material, and to find a way to bend language like a stem that breaks to let in the actual landscape, the *there*. In attempting to language the perceptive moment of the hike, the place that Teare inhabits, he argues that there are two languages that must be attempted to join together. As he argues before for the “discursion and excursion” and the “mimesis and kinesis” of the hike and its discursive representation, there are two “grammars” that work together in one sentence to try to bring together the mutable and the fundament:

one
sentence two grammars to
marry the mutable to fundament
aseity assay or essay
to be a beautiful word
above all & wonder
just so toward “world
& flesh not as fact
or sum of facts but
as locus of an inscription
of truth” what I am
saying a sight
to stand on softly
fog enters the stanza
open to weather (24)

The desire to inscribe leaves one standing in the foggy mist of a landscape unknowable, inherently resistant to language, and yet an essential reality to stand upon. It is, one might argue, that culmination of what Charles Olson was reaching for in his “Projective Verse.” By embracing the field composition of the poem, the poet “marks off a plot of ground, traverses it in order to cultivate” for the poetic creation (Lattig 442).

The composition of the field, which marries the perceiver, the body, the mind and the landscape, is linked by the kinetics of the body by the open energy of the poet. As one perception immediately and directly leads to another perception, as the poet keeps moving, through speed and nerves and perceptions: “And if you also set up as a poet, USE USE USE the process at all points, in any given poem always, always one perception must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER!” (“Projective Verse”). Teare’s mimesis and kinesis merge together in the perceptive faculties with the movement of the body through the poem. As Olson writes, “every element in an open poem (the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense) must be taken up as participants in the kinetic of the poem” (“Projective Verse”). The poem and the poet move and, from this, all objects and landscape are wrapped up in this prosodic event: discursion and excursion molding together to create the sense of reality in this open composition. Rhythm and line match the breath and exertion of the poet.

For Olson, the poem comes down to the line of the land: “the use of a man... lies in how he conceives his relation to nature, the force to which he owes his somewhat small existence.” If man is connected in the larger participatory drama of human and nature, he will listen, creating this species of attention that we have been following, and create from this larger force. This projective act of the aesthetic, the artist’s act in the world, when connected with nature leads to larger dimensions. It is not easy to language the reverence of nature, but sound, breath, and language are man’s “special qualifications,” one of his “proudest acts.” When a poet decides to speak from these roots, in tandem with the nature that has given him them, the work reaches a “projective

size.” Teare in “Sweet Vernal (The Over-Soul)” looks at the final play between vision, perception and the projective size of the poem:

the problem with solitudes is
each fact is twice : once ours once its own : & so vision is question
& response is also twice sight besets the trees that are memory also
& wind water that touched shore so long ago it washes up here above

- you said soul knows only
the soul sight seems our own
& doesn't why a lake sound
high in the trees why the smell
of hay sweeter than seeing

Our sight and our experience belong to us, memory, and to the experience of the *there, o* or the real of the poem. The marriage of body, mind, landscape, and creation all merge together in the question of vision and response, memory and soul. If landscape *always already is* and language is always becoming, then the poet situated in the space with the body attempts to take this experiential moment and sing.

Environmental Application

What links Ecocriticism, Deep Ecology, and the poetry of bodies and spaces together? Namely, it is the importance of the aesthetic action in landscape, or what might be understood as the “felt value” of places. The poet acts as both ecological prophet and model for the methodology of experience and attention that can be brought to the non-human. In this method of looking at the world, embodied by Brain Teare, there is an enhanced instrumentalized view of the landscape and the poem. By instrumentalizing the looking and the perception, there is a value that is instilled that goes further beyond the poetry itself. It is a question of how the poet, focused on ecological matters, can put the reader into a moment and experience, as an almost activist action that further supports a complete cultural overhaul of the ways that we value the immediate experience of the landscape. Can the poetic experience, put simply, be a larger solution for the environmental movement as opposed to scientific facts and piece-meal solutions?

As seen in poetry of “discursion and excursion,” there is a recovered importance of the senses: the ways that we touch the landscapes in which we are passing. It is a poetry that reintroduces us to our bodies and, through this, reminds us of our ability to communicate with the non-human. This type of poetry is both model and enactor of an environmental vision that goes beyond simple perception and into actual emotional engagement with the landscape.

It is a method of forming community and communal experience. Just as communication with someone usually required some movement through physical space, with the advent of the virtual and technological, there are less requirements of the body. One is not necessarily required to have one's body touch or interact with the person or object on the other side, reminding us of Walter Benjamin's argument against print reproduction and the re-creation of safe "wilderness." When we speak to a person on the telephone or computer, it is a simulation of sight and sound, not directly a person's voice but a reconstituted digitized voice, lacking a direct access of experience. Without the body or the tactile, and only sight and sound, there is a lack of direct access that results in a lack of understanding or a lack of felt value. While we always have some form of technology in our movement (for even hiking shoes might be considered a form of technology), there is a balance between being caught up in the technology and using it as a substitute rather than methods to further facilitate healthy interactions with the non-human. It is a flattened aesthetic, a barely-there experience of the material. This can be remedied, however, by the importance of place in bodily experience of nature, perceiving and languaging as a way to give language to the ineffable or incommunicable, the "aura" of the inscape.

The necessity of eco-poetry and bodies in landscape emerge as a tool and counter to the political and scientific, substantiating the purpose of Ecocriticism and giving Deep Ecology a "felt" center. How is poetry a unique form in this countering? Brian Teare explains this relationship between reading, site and literature:

so in my work there's always the *felt* relation
of person and site palimpsested with a reading

of that relation, a reading that is always already
cultural and steeped in western ideas of “nature”
and “environment” and even literature’s own
relation to body / “nature” / “environment” –
this is particularly heightened in *companion grasses*
i do think poetry allows me to make visible the relations
that are always already happening anyway between
ourselves and our surrounds – though i don’t know
if this is a power specific to poetry – certainly some
prose works have done so – i **do** believe prosody
can render those relations (which are wordless and preverbal)

physical and visceral in a way that prose might not -
and layer semantic meaning / interpretation on top of
the aural/rhythmic physical experience of *melos* – it can
make music out of being in a companionate nonviolent
relation to what’s alive outside of ourselves – (Appendix)

Poetry gives the experience of landscape a feeling of layered “authenticity” that
may best communicate the aura of a site and relate the feelings felt between the two.
Teare speaks of prosody’s ability to render visible the relations that always happen
between the landscape and the body. If every understanding of nature is a “reading”
palimpsested with the felt experience of the land, then poetry acts an instrument in
rendering the two-toned semantics that instill a feeling of connection between the human
and the non-human, or the landscape and the reader. In many ways, this requires a

humbling of the political, where the poetic comes into power with its ability to perceive, relate, and complicate our understandings of “nature.” Teare mirrors this in “The Book Can’t Be Sung (Reading Walden):”

Your grammar so declarative it is

A government -- prophetic voice come
Closer bring your certitude so we can pinch
It to pith force it to the far wrong side
Of moribund bachelorhood we are stunned blood
We are inherited citizen dualism we must begin
To ring must in your eyes rebuttal stuffed
With spirit your whole ruddy skin stung with it (53)

Poetry moves away from a declarative grammar and away from a certitude of pride that assumes that we understand our connections with the natural. Jonathan Bate asks, what are poets good for? Martin Heidegger responds: *dichterisch wohnet der Mensch*, “poetically man dwells.” Returning to an understanding of the phenomenological, humanity is sustained by metaphors, imagery, and, as Heidegger proposes, the necessity to dwell poetically. Bate argues that poetry is the “authentic gauging of the dimension of dwelling,” by admitting man’s dwelling and “presencing being,” poetry becomes the primal form of building and a form of being rather than mapping (58). Eco-poetry acts as a clearing, a field of composition, that is open to the nature of being, letting things in as Teare calls it. Teare argues that “ecopoetry” emerged in 2001 and is layered with political and aesthetic thinking, but its major markers are, first, writing “concerned with and/or marked by the anthropocene” and, second, writing emerging after New American poetics and language poetry (Appendix). A broad category to be certain, the field of ecopoetics is something that one passes through, aware of poetic language operating as material and sign “coupled with a politics that sees ‘nature’ not as

Eden lost to industry but as one of the conditions from which the industry emerges”
(Appendix). The political aspect of ecopoetry, and Ecocriticism, accepts that just as the human and non-human are intertwined, so are industry and nature, both sustaining human lives and communities while also paradoxically contradicting the future and health of each other:

gone is ecological lament by a poet
utterly unmarked by their complicity
with culture and industrial capitalism
in the same way that mimesis of “nature”
by an impartial observer/naturalist poet
no longer remains an untroubled fiction – (Appendix)

To begin to use poetry as a healing agent and the aesthetic to create environmental transformation, complicity must first be acknowledged. This pushes the pastoral understanding into the 21st century: our interactions and understandings of the “nature” we seek to save aren’t simple and aren’t easy. Teare describes the task of the environmentally conscious writer in the 21st century as such:

the task seems to me to write from within
the messy interdependence foundational
to all ecosystems, an interdependence
capitalism has infiltrated and converted
to the illusion of dominance – some ecopoets
attempt to restore us to relations based in
true interdependence and some attempt

to resist complicity with industrial capitalism
through a critique of dominance through profit
and some work to do both at the same time –
the attempts most meaningful to me are marked
by the tension between restoration and resistance,
recognition of interdependence and acknowledgment
of the difficulty of sustaining true inter-relations
under the rule and ruin of late industrial capitalism –

How, then, to best negotiate sustaining relationships, recognizing interdependence, and mitigating the damages of industrialism? The answer lies in the power of the narrative in Ecocriticism and the experiential moment of the poem. We live in a cultural climate where “doomsday” approaches only create complacency, burdened by the weight of abstraction, rather than activism. Richard Kerridge proposes that because of this, environmental activists must embrace a range of moods rather than doom-and-gloom (363). Impactful aesthetic experiences may create a more meaningful connection rather than merely “awareness.” If the gap between knowledge and belief is a problem from the environmental activist, the body in a place can bridge the two together: the experience of the “aura” or “inscape” puts the knowledge and belief into the body as it works itself out in the land. Kerridge calls this the “concentrated revelatory moment,” in which knowledge and belief are connected. I believe that this is inherently the concern with the poetry of Ecocriticism: by using the body to experience this revelatory moment in landscape and using language to recreate this feeling a form of action where “felt value” is created.

While different forms and genres provide apocalyptic shock, realism and diatribes emphasizing the damages and consequences of our disconnect with the natural, the poetic engagement provides an emotional response to the natural environments we risk endangering. A love of the wild and its pleasures, as well as humbling acts, found in poetry of “discursion and excursion” integrates personal experience with landscapes that connects the person to the nature. This is what Rasheed Araeen argues in “Eco-Aesthetics:” “what the world faces today is not just a phenomenon of climate change, to be studied by scientists in their ivory towers, but the reality of its disturbing consequences faced by all life on earth” (683). Media and science may do an adequate job in describing the polluted water systems, threats of climate change, and the misery of people affected by ecological issues, but it does little to enable us to care about these issues. Araeen argues that what is needed is the creative imagination of environmental problems that can be aided by an artistic imagination and depiction of these objectives.

In “American Ideology Appraised,” Buell echoes this, as he writes that Aldo Leopold’s strategy was to “create a symbiosis of art and polemic,” in a way that rendered the environmental representation and the lyric of the work as entities that existed for their own sake but that also worked together to make the reader “more receptive to environmental advocacy” (11). By lulling the reader with the beautiful landscape, the feeling of the moment, and, then, breeching the critiques and solutions to the issues threatening the landscape, this advocacy works to preserve the aesthetic experience of the beauty and intimacy. Thus, in Buell’s mind, beauty becomes a form of action (11). It is literature’s ability to tell a new cultural story when it comes to understanding, relating with, and preserving nature. Just as in the political sector, people resonate most deeply

with narratives, stories, and moments that create feelings of value within. It understands that while humanity does use language to construct reality, there is a “nature” that consistently evades human attempts to explain and reason. It is a sideways truth that, perhaps, figurative language and experience better grasp for. There is an intentionality of the eye of the poet that gives a different level of meaning to the scientific reality. While literary scholars may fear science’s tendency to reduce the world to simple laws of physics and essentialism, there is a necessity of paring the scientific data with narrative to create a felt value. The notions of “center” and “periphery” play an important role in how we value the environment – while people structure space, geographically and cosmologically, with themselves in the middle, they place objects outside themselves in concentric zones that decrease in value (Tuan 27). This is crucial because it seems to suggest that if the environment and landscape are not in a close concentric circle of “space” in one’s experience of the world, it will result in continually decreasing value. As we drift away from our ability to language and value the land, our alienation with ourselves and the land becomes apparent. D.S. Savage writes in “Nature and Immediacy in Poetry” of the necessity of poetry in relating to our natural world. As language is brought to birth by man’s need for communion and articulation, there is a need of the human psyche to give language to a consciousness and inward urge to reinvigorate our communion with the organic world (300).

Scott Slovic makes this case for the narrative, for literature, in his book *Going Away to Think* when he argues that for there to be a shift in our cultural understanding of our relationships with the non-human, we must move from scattered pieces of information to an integrated worldview that influences daily behavior. He argues that

while the Western world believes in numbers, we fail to understand them and the human individual cannot conceptualize the abstract science and data of environmental decay (146). Numbers leave us with abstraction that does not translate into feeling or experience, but images, symbolism, and narrative work to give “life” to these facts: “quantification calls out for words – and for images and stories and, for the discourse of emotion” (147). Because we yearn for the specificity and uniqueness of experiences, it seems that our understanding of “discursion and excursion” in the aesthetic experience in the poem can serve as a powerful force to couple the lyric and beauty to the conditions and projections of the scientific world, as we seek to find solutions to our environmental predicament.

If we wish to find a solution to the Deep Ecologist wish to transform human relationships to the “wild” and to nature, and work with Ecocriticism to move the field forward in its goal to marry literature and eco-activism, the experiential moment of the poet in nature rests upon a final disposition: joy. A sense of the beauty of the moment and the value of the locality surrounding the poet translates into a sense of care and, what Arne Naess strived for, joy. Naess believed that joy was a condition for living and the key tool for the environmentalist: “the environmentalist sometimes succumbs to a joyless life that belies his concern form a better environment. This cult of dissatisfaction is apt to... undermine one of the chief presuppositions of the ecological movement: that joy is related to the environment and to nature” (250). While it is necessary to understand the severity of the condition, it seems that joy and love are much more convincing attitudes of those who wish to pay attention to the non-human. For Naess, modeling the “fruitlsliv” movement of Norway where outdoor living provides a fullness of life, the goal is to move

away from a glorification of immaturity, of unconquered passiveness and a lack of integration into the natural world, a problem that is easily solved by activeness, getting bodies into landscapes, and joy, the epiphanic, revelatory moment. This is the power of the eco-poet, eco-critic, and environmentalists everywhere: “Cheerfulness requires action of the whole integrated personality and is linked to a great increase in power. With the absence of joy, there is a no increase in power, freedom, or self-determination” (254). This integrated cheerfulness requires what Teare speaks of when he looks at the active connection between body, mind, language and landscape. The source of this connection is one that can be infinite.

For Wendell Berry, nature poet and critic, the poem and subject, like the landscape, come to be one, like lovers, in which “they are clarified and unabashed in each other’s presence” (83). This unification does not merely happen in the poem but in the real world. As the poet comes into contact with the land, he or she generates the work from this aesthetic, emotional encounter. In Berry’s mind, the poem regards nature, humanity, and God by the “conviviality” of the three: “It cannot pretend that we live in Paradise or in Hell; by definition, it must be a product of the land eastward of Eden” (90). This reflects Teare’s notion that the ecopoet must parse the interwoven notions of industry, complicity, beauty, and reality. We cannot merely reach back towards the pastoral nostalgia but must understand the east side of Eden, the complex and complicated world of constructions of “nature” and the materiality that we come into contact with.

How might we imagine “place” as home? Teare’s poetry is concerned with the places he inhabits, how they are invested with memory and emotion, and how to situated himself within them. Berry describes the phenomenological act of “dwelling,” of making our home in places and in nature. To preserve place and dwell within them, we must fill them with imagination and sight, seeing what is in them and imaging what they could become: “not to fill them with the junk of fantasy and unconsciousness... but to see them first clearly with the eyes, and then to see them with the imagination in their sanctity” (91). Berry seeks to clearly understand a place and to imagine what it might look with humans in harmony with the nonhuman life within. Here, then, is the gift of place – a mystery, a world without end that consistently evades us and gives us the gift of presence and sustenance. The poetry of place, of “discursion and excursion,” begins with the desire to see and feel, to work with words and images to give language to an experience of nature, and to constantly parse the networks of language, culture, and land that we inhabit.

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Appendix A

Below is a compiled transcript of emails I received from Brian Teare from February 23-March 2, 2016. Teare and I began conversation when I approached him, via email, about the topic of my master's thesis and the usage of his poetry within. Teare was more than helpful to answer general questions that pertained to my thesis and the transcript is included via his permission. I sent him questions about his general thoughts on the pastoral, eco-poetry, and landscape theories. What he responded with was very much in line with thoughts I was already generating for my thesis. Responses are left in their original spelling and formatting.

I

dear haley -

great questions - i want to answer this

in two parts, i think - the first addressing
space and body / theory and materiality /
places and thinkers - maybe the permission
to admit to and investigate all of those
intertwinings come from merleau-ponty ?
by which i mean i first *felt* this deep intrication
of body with site and language with place -
and each of those with each of the others -
not as intellectual practice but as embodied
experience – but didn't really know how to
go about making it happen / appear on
the page – but *the visible and the invisible*
posits perceiver and world as mutually
enfleshing, as chiasmatic, going so far as

to question the line between the flesh
of the perceiver and the material of the world –
i can safely say now that that potential blur
between flesh and world i took as axiomatic –
but how to read / render that blur became
the major question – that was answered
by rebecca solnit's *savage dreams*, in which she
writes about our inability to see landscape
without our cultural education as readers
of “nature” intruding upon all our relation –
so in my work there's always the *felt* relation
of person and site palimpsested with a reading
of that relation, a reading that is always already
cultural and steeped in western ideas of “nature”
and “environment” and even literature's own
relation to body / “nature” / “environment” –
this is particularly heightened in *companion grasses* –
it seemed to me the right thing to do to own
the ways “the fathers” have led me to read
my place in a landscape, and how “the mothers”
(like irigaray) have helped me to think about
relations between subjects and nature more ethically –
i do think poetry allows me to make visible the relations

that are always already happening anyway between
ourselves and our surrounds – though i don't know
if this is a power specific to poetry – certainly some
prose works have done so – i *do* believe prosody
can render those relations (which are wordless and preverbal)

physical and visceral in a way that prose might not -
and layer semantic meaning / interpretation on top of
the aural/rhythmic physical experience of *melos* – it can
make music out of being in a companionate nonviolent
relation to what's alive outside of ourselves –

//

the second part of this answer, which has to do
with pastoral, i suppose is foreshadowed in part one –
pastoral is always already with us in our relations
to “the natural,” whether we like it or not – particularly
our literary relations – a lot of eco poetic and some
environmental critics like to posit pastoral as a problem,
a kind of embarrassment in our literary history,
because of its idealization of landscape and labor and eros
and its use of the bucolic as a kind of idealized space
that enables certain forms of discourse to happen –
land becomes (back)ground to the figures of shepherds
and the figurations of poetic language – this is, feminist

critics remind us, also a gendered problem of seeing land and women as the necessary backdrops to male achievements – this seems true and useful, but it doesn't mean we toss out the pastoral when we critique it – it is almost impossible to rid ecopoetry of its debt to the pastoral, which some critics also see as a subversive political genre – the bucolic a space removed from the center of empire, and thus a safe distance from political power from which to launch critiques of said power – and that also seems true and useful – in the same way it is impossible to extricate ecopoetry from the nineteenth century legacy of nature writing that always puts the human anthropocentrically at the center, pastoral informs how we think of ecopoetics as a margin from which to critique the political and economic forces that harm ecosystems and species, hasten climate change, and poison resources like water – so while i think critiques of pastoral are often totally right on, a) it is not as if ecopoetics would exist without it, and b) it is not as if we can't critique it for its limitations and use it for its powers simultaneously, the way our language itself continuously betrays “nature” while we simultaneously use it in an attempt to “save” what we continually and problematically posit as “the natural” –

//

do these answers begin to address your questions ? i hope so –

and let me know what else you're thinking about –

all best

b.

II

dear haley –

thanks so much, again,

for your good questions –

i'm glad it's useful

and generative for you

to be in dialogue –

your questions goad me

into being specific and exact

when and where i might

be tempted to go on

by intuition alone –

or to be content with

what i think i already know

about what i think –

in short - i'm happy to be

answering them –

::

the list of ecopoets
who interest me is extensive –
but before i list just *some*
of those poets, i should
insist on marking the fact
that “the ecopoet,”

as i understand and use the term,
is resolutely contemporary,
borne both out of late
capitalism and very recent
postmodern poetics
in english – and thus
a marker of not just
a historical period,
but also of related turns
in ideologies both
political and literary –

::

ecopoetry “emerged”
at the 21st century’s turn
(issue 1 of *ecopoetics*
was published in 2001)
and the term’s current

pervasiveness attests to
its timeliness and
the way so much political
and aesthetic thinking
coalesces within it –
the major markers of
“ecopoetry” for me are
a) it is writing concerned
with and/or marked by
the anthropocene
specifically and b)
it emerges after both
new american poetics
and language poetry – so
i end up thinking of
some poets as eco poets
and others as environmental
writers or nature writers
or predecessors to these
various, distinct, and yet
overlapping and very
interdependent traditions –
why ? well, i take it seriously

that *ecopoetics* came out
of suny-buffalo, a program
where both olson and creeley
taught, as well as bernstein
and susan howe – both
traditions were strong
at the time jonathan skinner
was there, and it was also (given
olson and howe) an americanist one –
∴
though “ecopoetics” isn’t a single thing –
i seem to remember jonathan skinner
saying once it was more like a field
through which various poets pass –
and the term certainly gathers
a hugely diverse cast of practitioners
under its umbrella – with *ecopoetics*
i associate a certain heightened
awareness of poetic language
as both material and sign
coupled with a politics
that sees “nature” not
as “eden” lost to industry

but as one of the conditions
from which industry emerges,
the two of them symbiotically
and symbolically intertwined
the way they are in sustaining
human lives and communities
while the global capitalism fueled
by industry paradoxically undermines
the future of *all* lives on the planet –
gone is ecological lament by a poet
utterly unmarked by their complicity
with culture and industrial capitalism
in the same way that mimesis of “nature”
by an impartial observer/naturalist poet
no longer remains an untroubled fiction –
the task seems to me to write from within
the messy interdependence foundational
to all ecosystems, an interdependence
capitalism has infiltrated and converted
to the illusion of dominance – some eco-poets
attempt to restore us to relations based in
true interdependence and some attempt
to resist complicity with industrial capitalism

through a critique of dominance through profit
and some work to do both at the same time –
the attempts most meaningful to me are marked
by the tension between restoration and resistance,
recognition of interdependence and acknowledgment
of the difficulty of sustaining true inter-relations
under the rule and ruin of late industrial capitalism –

::

so poets like cecilia vicuña
and juliana spahr and joan
naviyuk kane and brenda
hillman and jonathan skinner
and ed roberson and allison cobb
and mei-mei berssenbrugge all figure
importantly to me as ecopoets –
earlier US writers, like gary snyder
or lorine niedecker or robinson
jeffers or ronald johnson
or a. r. ammons don't quite
seem to me like ecopoets
in the strictest sense, though
all have been useful and important
to me in various ways – niedecker

in particular – perhaps these
differences seem academic ? but
to me they register very real
differences, largely having to do
with how definitions of “nature”
have shifted since the mid twentieth
century, and how this series of shifts
is recorded by the body of work
of these poets read en masse – i love
watching the changes ripple like
the shadow of a cloud over “nature”
as i go from reading jeffers to
niedecker to snyder to vicuña
to hillman to kane – and i love
thinking about how these shifts
might be as much about historical
definitions of “nature” shifting
as they are about what “the natural”
looks, feels, and seems like from
the intersections of various gendered,
racial, and bioregional perspectives –
::
all of which is to say – i don’t see

poets engaged with writing “nature”
or environment who came before
ecopoetry *as* ecopoets – but many
of them have been hugely inspirational
and useful to me as companions, though
each of them (as with each ecopoet)
for very different reasons – hopkins
was one of the very first poets i ever loved,
and i continue to return to him because
of the relation he posits between prosody
and what he calls inscape – he really believes
beings have a rhythm that can be captured
by poetic meters, and i find that metaphysical link
between poetry and some sort of “essence” both
inspiring and frustrating (given that for him
this essence is both god-given and christological,
is always already reducible to a theological gloss) –
and it also shouldn’t be surprising i love john clare
for the bioregional details that show up not only
as imagery but also as dialect – his work shows this
link between the intimacy of a people with their place
and the language they develop to think/talk/write
about it – and of course it’s impossible not to love

his love of birds' nests and of walking and wildflowers
and his protest of the effects of the enclosure acts –
these two poets from the UK are rather exceptional
for me, who am such an americanist – i think it has
to do with the fact that both of them are such eccentric
writers within the british pastoral tradition, and their
prosody and syntax is a little bit “off” in relation to the high
polished accomplishments of a poet like wordsworth,
whose work i have never been able to stomach at all –
i could write in more detail about both hopkins and clare,
and address other poets as well, but my initial digression
really took me far afield from your original question –

::

as for “tall flatsedge notebook” –
the layout of that poem
mimics my actual notebook –
in which i had quotations
and a hiking journal interleaved –
the bracketed bibliographical material
was a way to “annotate” the hike
the way what i've read influences
what i see and how i think about
and experience what i see –

and so it's worth saying that,
for most of the poems in
companion grasses, my process
was one of writing *en plein air*,
hiking on site and writing
during the hike – those notes
went into a notebook that
also contained reading notes
and sometimes research
on the site itself as well –
this always seemed appropriate
because all description
of landscape *is* a reading of it,
and as i said before about the idea
i took from rebecca solnit's
savage dreams, all of those readings
are anyways always already
influenced by every reading of land
scape i've ever encountered – i like
the way my notebook writing kept
my proprioceptive relation to the site
in relation to my intellectual relation
to the site – and “tall flatsedge notebook”

marks how that knowledge is both
fully integrated into experience
and also in some way “marginalia,”
not consciously the focus of what is
primarily a physical, embodied experience –

::

as for pastoral elegy on the one hand
and a “‘working out’ of thought
within landscape” in “to begin with desire”
on the other – good questions !
though i’ve read peter sacks’ book
on elegy, i wasn’t conscious of writing
a “pastoral elegy” when working on
the poem – i was simply doing what
i was always doing during those years –
reading books and going on a hike
with a notebook – however, my father
had died and i did carry that ambivalent
grief with me on those hikes and so
that changed both my body and how
i saw the landscape i traveled through –
and as i hiked and worked on the poem
i saw that it was indeed a way of working

on / out my grief over him – and this grief
also changed / charged my relation to
the reading i was doing – the reason i like
hiking and walking is that the activities
engage both body and mind and also
own the fact that *all thinking always already*
takes place within landscape of some kind,
whether that be city or suburb or rural land

or what have you – we are always working
out our thought within and between bodies
and in relation to where we find our selves –
my attempt in *companion grasses* was to dilate
my own sense of that site where body, mind,
language, and landscape meet, to capture
as much of the richness of that meeting
as possible – and perhaps “to begin with desire”
was the poem in which i gave myself the most
permission to do so – it is certainly the longest
poem i’ve written, and was the most intense
and concentrated period of writing i’ve ever done –
there was the physical compulsion of the hiking
matched by the equally physical compulsion
of the writing, which just barreled out of me

at the end of each day as the poem began to take on
a rhythm and life of its own inside of me –
this rhythm of hiking and writing also drove
the reading i was doing, and took me into
a wide variety of texts over the ten days i took
to fully draft the poem and get its design in place –

::

okay – i feel i might be running out
of steam here – but i hope that these
answers stimulate more thinking –
please feel free to send more questions
as they arise –

as ever

b.