

SECOND AND FINAL CALL FOR PAPERS

“Poetic Ecologies: Nature as Text and Text as Nature in English-Language Verse”

Université Libre de Bruxelles, 14-17 May 2008

In the last fifteen years, the emergence of ecocritical theory has meant a radical challenge to the anthropocentrism and dualism between Culture and Nature inherited from classical humanism. Likewise, in its attempt to initiate a much more sustained dialogue between literature and the primacy of biological networks posited by Deep Ecology, ecocritical thought has also seriously questioned the very concept of “nature writing” as traditionally understood in the pastoral and Romantic traditions.

Within the framework of an ecocritical paradigm that is still constructing itself, this international four-day conference to be held in Europe’s capital city wishes to explore the *multiple and changing forms of ecological and ecocritical consciousness in English-language verse, past and present*. As such, this forum will not only interrogate the very notion of ecology and ask what actually constitutes “ecocritical” and ecologically-engaged poetic practice; various panels/sessions will also seek to shed light on the ever so complex issue of “Nature” versus “Text” and on the possible interrelationships between *ecological texts* and *textual ecologies*, between the systems of Nature and those of Culture.

The conference will not privilege any English-speaking poetic tradition in particular, but invites papers from all areas of the Anglophone world. *In its cross-boundary coverage of eco-poetics in English, the programme will include a number of sessions devoted to Canadian poets and/or to Canadian ecocritical scholarship. Papers exploring Canadian eco-poetic voices or comparing them with those of other traditions are thus particularly welcome.* Poetry will be given precedence over other genres, but papers devoted to texts breaking down the traditional boundaries between prose and verse or exploring poetry within the framework of multimedia experimentation (including digital and performance poetry) will also be accepted. More theoretically-oriented papers whose insights are mainly based on poetics and poetic corpora will likewise be considered. Contributions from poets addressing the questions of ecological/ecocritical aesthetics and compositional practice are equally encouraged.

The conference will include a series of plenary lectures by noted scholars and poets as well as a number of parallel paper sessions. The keynote speakers are: scholar and poet **Pamela Banting** (University of Calgary), ecocritical theoretician **Andrew McMurry** (University of Waterloo, Ontario), poet **Judith McCombs**, poet **Jack Collom** (Naropa University), and scholar **Mihai Stroe** (University of Bucharest & Yale, New York Academy of Sciences).

Possible topics and areas of investigation for twenty-minute paper submissions include (but are not limited to) the following:

- “Ecological texts” versus “textual ecologies”
- “Shallow” versus “Deep” Ecology
- The influence of ecological systems on textual ecologies
- Nature as “representation” versus Nature as “process”
- Nature as “simulacrum” versus essentialist visions of the natural world
- The place of human consciousness in the ecological web
- Bioregional sensibilities and the sense of place/space
- Urban and suburban ecologies
- Enclosed versus open spaces
- The “wild” versus the “tamed”
- The concept of landscape: re-invented landscapes, underrepresented landscapes, the interaction between “mindscape” and landscape, “landscape” versus “environment”
- The poetic shattering of the realist-naturalist “mirror of Nature”
- Verse experiments transcending the pastoral legacy; experiments in “cooperative” writing with Nature
- Contemporary ecologically-engaged poetic practices and aesthetics
- The interaction between scientific and poetic discourses
- The fluid boundaries between human and non-human organisms
- The utopia of biocentrism; the myth of anthropocentrism
- Eco-metaphors and the problem of translating Nature into Language
- Evolving images/metaphors of Nature within a given culture; parallel and contrastive images/metaphors of Nature across different cultures and poetic traditions
- Postcolonial challenges to traditional understandings of categories like “wilderness,” “species,” and “dwelling”; re-invented images of the postcolonial wilderness and of the “natural Other”
- The possible intersections between postcolonial and ecological discourses of emancipation
- Ecofeminist perspectives
- Mysticism, “ecopieties” and nature religions from First Nations to postmodernity
- Judeo-Christian versus non-theistic discourses on Nature
- The search for a possible site of reconciliation between Nature and Culture

To further enhance the sense of eco-community amongst the participants, the programme will also fuse praxis and pleasure by offering, on the Friday afternoon, an outing to the estate of Meise, which houses the national botanical gardens of Belgium, listed as one of the most important botanical collections in the world.

A selection of papers presented at the conference will be published in conference proceedings.

Twenty-minute paper proposals should be received no later than 31 October 2007. Please kindly e-mail abstracts of approximately 250-300 words, together with a short biography, in RTF format to:

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Acceptance of proposals will be notified in the second half of November 2007 so as to allow the authors of selected submissions to apply for travel funding from their universities in due course.