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I'm far more interested in the weeds, the things growing in the cracks, the things not quantifiable or qualifiable and what their relationship is to a larger picture that we may not be able to understand in terms of aesthetics.

mIEKAL aND

Early poets half shaman, half sibyl, spoke for this flow of our transformations into animals, kinds of weather.

Mei-mei Berssenbrugge

Instead of speaking of poems as "green life," I propose them to be mushrooms—as the fruiting bodies of a broad social mycelia.

Gary Snyder

Beginning with its first issue in 2001, *Ecopoetics* has grown fatter, fuller, and sassier with each issue. This most recent issue, comprising 324 pages, includes a special feature on Australian ecopoetics, edited by Michael Farrell, as well as interviews, essays on poets, poetic essays, poems written in circles, in multiple fonts, on the horizontal, in translation, black-and-white and color photography, photographs of art in nature, ekphrastic poetry, "a radio play in one act," a class assignment, the reproduction of a child's handwritten field notes. The language of these poems is in English, Spanish, beetle; they draw on scientific information, historical documents, astute observation of nature, newspapers, personal experience; they appear in traditional poetic forms, haiku, prose paragraphs, journal and diary entries; they interface with photographs, drawings, graphs, calligraphy. This issue of *Ecopoetics* includes a variety of weeds and mushrooms growing in the cracks of human culture, in general, and poetic aesthetics, in particular; indeed, the success of this issue lies in its diversity of expression, a diversity which collectively questions, explores, and expands the understanding of ecopoetics itself, its subjects and its praxis.

Ecopoetics has insisted from its first issue that ecopoetics be inclusive, opening up space to embrace place, opening up nature to include human nature. In his introduction to issue 6/7, *Ecopoetics* editor Jonathan Skinner, links the challenges for the contemporary environmental movement—"complexity, interconnectedness, fragility, and time"—with contemporary ecopoetics. However, the work in this issue addresses the planet's degradation and exploitation through imagery, allusion, form, and celebration rather than by statistics, prescription, and exhortation. *Ecopoetics* encourages us as readers and writers of ecopoetics to perceive global as local, ourselves as organisms, and poems as transformative. Although individual poems in *Ecopoetics* continue to represent nature, referencing a range of creatures and elements, the compelling energy of *Ecopoetics* emerges from living and breathing poems, created by processes beyond printed technology and exercising influence beyond printed technology.

By including a feature on Australia, *Ecopoetics* goes global. However, with few exceptions these Australian entries are grounded in particular Australian places: "the red pulsating land before me" (Alf Lord), "Somewhere among shifting sandhills / there is a fold, / a slit where the mind's eye grafts in dimensions that have no horizon" (Simon West). Several poems evoke desiccation and the yearning for water: "this sunburnt and arid desert continent" (John McBain), "Hedge fragile white in a southerly. / Tinder touchwood dry tender would touch" (Jill Jones), "see me for what I am, ploughing dry ground" (John Kinsella). Australia is, however, connected the world at large as Kinsella links the continent's farmers with "wheat markets in Iraq and India," Lucy Dougan thinks of a friend in Spain, considering that he "scout[s] the landscape / for shy traces of the local" and concluding that both of them are "listening for rustlings, tending weeds / and working quietly at the edges." Other entries in *Ecopoetics*, while evoking disparate world cultures, also focus on the specificities of locale. Translator Luis Aguilar-Moreno comments on Cuban Jose Marti's "War Journal," noting that it "bursts into nature," freed from line breaks to explore the wildness of a Caribbean landscape and of war. In the poems of Mexican Angelica Tornero and Antonio Ochoa, whose works appear in English across the page from the original Spanish, a specific sensual world is deeply felt as it also is in "Highest Rainforest" by Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo of Madagascar. While the linguistic experiments of Alec Finlay and Stuart Mills, both of whom are English, allow them to name natural images, their general allusions to field and garden are trans-Atlantic. North Americans, Alistair Noon and Kate Schapira, however, explicitly evoke Wuhan and Xiantao, China, in their writings—Noon through reference to myth, history, and contemporary environmental destruction,

Schapira through transcribing the changing contexts for a riverbank biking trip, a baby, a half-eaten peach. Writings by other North Americans in *Ecopoetics* wander the continent, grasping at strange weeds and familiar mushrooms in both city and country, but seeking to connect and explore with natural and unnatural growth in both places. In his poem, "Jerusalem Everywhere You Go," Timothy Bradford identifies the dangers of amorphous globalization which may dissolve into mere exotic travel, warning, "The Amazon tribes remain as remote as the ruins of Paris / or the sands of the Aracama Desert to the permafrost of Alaska. / They disappear like certain Maya Cities, never to deface the New Jerusalem of Zimbabwe."

Several writers in *Ecopoetics* perceive the origins of poetry in the structures, motions, and sounds of earth and human body. As if familiar with aboriginal songlines, Australian poet-essayist, Louise Crisp, claims, "The only way I know to write is to walk," and Bonnie Cassidy, writing of the Australian poet, Jennifer Rankin, finds Rankin's poems, not in archives, but most profoundly in the ever-evolving and flourishing land where Rankin lived. Visiting this land, Cassidy realizes that "The Mud Hut" about which Rankin wrote is not an architectural dwelling, but the earth itself, which, like her poem "transfers reality like water through a cell." North American poets also find walking a correlative for writing ecopoetry. An essay on John Muir discusses Muir, walker, climber, and observer of minute flower and massive glacier, also as poet correlating the patterns in his writing with his recognition of patterns in nature, "plotting his own narrative sequence as a way of tracing the unapparent sequence of lives shaped by the harmonious force and form of glacier flow." Other poet-walkers, Theodore Enslin and Gary Snyder, are also shown to correlate the body walking and breathing not only to the rhythm and meter of poetic lines but also within a particular place. Snyder points out the physical relationship of heart-beat, breath, pace, verse, and feet to poetic tradition. In his stunning essay on Enslin, which is followed by photographs of Enslin's notebooks and his poems, Matthew Cooperman notes that the poems have "an acute performativity" and "an incantatory quality" making their fabric "of the body." Poet Linda Russo, writing on soundscape and generating sound through poetic word play in her own "Achilles' Helix," discusses the defining particularities of sound in any environment and the importance of its evocation in referencing any environment, despite its ephemerality.

Several writers here suggest that the poems in *Ecopoetics* may be understood in relation to energy: they spring from creative energy, and they generate transformative energy—by experimenting with new poetic forms and language, by making change itself their subject, and by their impact on readers. Thus,

although Forrest Gander evades the question of identifying poetry in any essential way with ecology, he nevertheless relates the creation of coal to the creation of a poem in "The Future of the Past: The Carboniferous & Eco-Poetics," asserting that "A poem, even excavated from its context and the time of its writing, is a curiously renewable form of energy." Kyhl Lyndgaard and Gary Snyder expand upon this possibility in their interview in *Ecopoetics*, with Snyder proposing that "the best literature requires the deepest compost." The imagery in both of their poems implies that fire from deep compost—like poetry—warms the bones or lights the night. In his "Ecopoetics Statement," Benjamin Friedlander succinctly tells us that "Language is a / Dumping ground that // Produces its own / Content."

Among poems in the collection explicitly drawing on nature to illuminate transformation are Karen Leona Anderson's "Snowshoe Hare," Stan Apps' "Pumpkins Please," Mei-mei Berssenbrugge's "Green," Tyler Doherty's "R.I.P.," and John Estes' "Mantlepiece." Several of these poems refer to the transformative qualities of death and to the procreative possibilities of new life forms emerging from death. Thus, in Doherty's poem a Christmas bonsai is recycled among the spring iris, and Estes, perhaps like the gnawing saprophytes in his poem, "can't wait to repossess" the skull of a rotting steer carcass. In their poems, Anderson and Apps suggest the interconnections between humans and other living beings. In precise detail, Anderson's poem observes how humans have changed the environment for creatures, such as rabbits and ourselves, for we are not unlike them—"our blood and waste and water" also "shiver through the woods." The implication in Apps' poem, one of the few in this issue of *Ecopoetics* relying on formal meter and rhyme as well as humor, plays with the sense that we are what we eat, and that both pumpkins and poetry make for good eating. Berssenbrugge's long poem is like a walk in the woods, where shifts in color and form caused by light and wind and spatial juxtaposition change her very way of seeing: "The glow is an inner informational process connecting moment to moment in a kind of spontaneous karmic outline, crow in wind, elms."

Rachel Blau DuPlessis' "Draft 72: Nanifesto" is a poem of imperatives, on the one hand, a list of self-help guides for the individual to create a better personal life, on the other, a list of mandates for communities, towns and nations, for the world at large to reform life on the planet. Some of DuPlessis' imperatives are abstract—"Saturate the imperfect moment with intransigent audacity"; others demand new ways of interacting with nature—"Loop your vines between the trees"; "Respect honey, and even more, the bees." All of her imperatives, so emphatically addressed to readers, imply her conviction that the energy of poetry

creates change and can also create community, transcending national and ethnic boundaries, transcending species boundaries while attending to the particular place and the particular creature. In multiple ways, this issue of *Ecopoetics* embraces a similar ecopoetic dynamic. Matthew Cooperman, in his description of Theodore Enslin's work, gives eloquent expression to this dynamic: "The social contract of poetry might be founded on a principle of conservation: on the transference of energy, here to there, then to now, a movement of energy across space-time that locates, proprioceptively the living body of place and person."